

sturdiest of the garrison saw that fighting on against such odds was mere self-slaughter, so cries of "surrender" went up all round, and one after another cast down his weapon. Two men only neither cried for quarter nor ceased to smite—Brakespeare and De Marsan. But Gualtier was weak with loss of blood, and his sword-arm utterly weary, so he was soon borne down and lay in a swoon on the flag-stones. Yet was not the fray quite ended, nor Hacquemont quite won; for in the center of the hall there still was turmoil and clash of steel, and medley of voices—some crying out to "slay," and some, but these were few, to "spare"—and in that mid-eddy Ralph Brakespeare's mace still rose and fell. Twice he was beaten to his knee, and twice he rose again—hurling back his assailants as a brave bull, though a-dying, shakes off the ban-dogs. But, during the second struggle, the fastenings of his helmet burst, and when his bare head rose again half a span above the sea of helmets, the crisp, grizzled brown hair was red-wet. He swept his left hand across his brow, for the blood well-nigh blinded him, and whirled his mace round once more. His arm seemed not a whit less strong and dexterous than when, with one blow, it brained Geoffrey de Kerimel; and once again the assailants drew back from its sweep, so that for a second or two the Free Companion stood almost solitary in their midst, reared to his full height, and with a great bright light in his steadfast eyes. It was a strange sight, that struck most there either with wonder, pity, or fear, and something like a hush ensued; but almost immediately this was broken by a hoarse voice, crying—