

"He swallowed the bait?"

"Readily. I told him that the Cardinal Archbishop had sent him a hundred fighting men for his troops, and craved permission for the hundred begging friars to remain in the city until the pilgrimage southward could be resumed."

"Good."

"I brought the monks in," interposed Pascal. "A hundred tough stalwarts, every man as sober as a begging friar should be; all telling their beads with uncommon unanimity, uttering 'Pax Vobiscum' with fervid zeal, and praying as only Bourbons can pray—for a fight."

"Have a care, brother," cried Dubois quickly, as a knot of the townsfolk passed.

"Have I not always care, holy brother?" cried Pascal, taking his rosary in hand again and mumbling his Pater-noster in tones loud enough to reach the passers' ears. "A fine achievement, M. de Cobalt, but it will not last."

"What mean you?" asked Gerard quickly.

"Soldiers are soldiers, and it takes more than a monk's gabardine to change them. When pretty girls come buzzing round, craving 'A blessing, holy father,' and looking so sweet and piteous, it's not in nature, at least in soldiers' nature, not to kiss 'em. Cherry lips lifted in supplication are strong enemies of this new discipline. I know it myself."

"For shame, Pascal!" cried Dubois sternly. "Are we to betray everything for a pair of laughing eyes?"

"Anything can happen when there's a shapely nose, a kissable mouth, and two soft cheeks to complete the face. Let there be haste, I say, or, Bourbons or no Bourbons, those lips will get kissed; and then there may be the devil to pay."

"There is reason in his madcap words, Dubois," said Gerard after a pause.

"Aye, even a fool can tell the truth," laughed Pascal.