

SIR GALAHAD OF THE ARMY

That there was dissention amongst the confederates—Venice suspecting Milan, Milan fearing Venice and Florence heartily hating both—may have aided him somewhat to secure his object, but that in no way lessens the merit of the achievement.

That day the King lay at Salegna, a wretched cluster of huts with but two virtues: the walls and roofs were strong to withstand the terrific winds which at times swept down from the mountains, and a crescent of roughly-flat ground surrounded it, so that the few tents which still remained after the march from Naples and the passage of the Apennines could be pitched in tolerable comfort. Mercifully the month was July, and to eat or sleep in the open was no hardship, but food being scarcer than enemies, there had, of late, been more rest for the teeth than either brain or muscles.

Not so in Salegna. Thanks to the truce, even those hornet-wasps, the Greek mercenaries in the pay of Venice, ceased their harassments, and the village, poor though it was, furnished bread and meat of a kind. For once the King ate a sufficiency in peace: if the villagers thenceforward starved till the trampled residue of their scant harvest could be reaped it was the fortune of war. When great stones clash together the lesser which come between may look to be ground to powder, and if the mills of God grind exceeding small what shall be said of the mills of the devil?

The day was Friday, but Monsieur de Brissonet, the cardinal, had very wisely granted a dispensation. This was both politic and christianlike, two forces which do not always run in double harness even when driven by a churchman. If the proverb is right and a starved stomach has no ears neither has it a tender conscience; dispensation or no dispensation, fast day or no fast day, hunger would have eaten meat.

Partly because the housing was miserable, but chiefly because of the withering heat, the King dined under the shade of a great chestnut tree. Seated with him were the cardinal, Monsieur de Commynes