

forced to swear allegiance to their conquerors, though hating them in their hearts, and anxiously hoping for the time, when they might break into open revolt against their oppressors. Many families of wealth and importance likewise remained in seeming quiet beneath the sway of their invaders, yet only that they might guard their ancient homes and household gods from becoming the prey of the spoiler, whom they waited the first favourable moment, to expel with violence from their usurped possessions.

Yet, with such secret bitterness existing between the two parties, it was impossible to expect that the enforced peace would always remain unbroken—on the contrary, frequent insults were exchanged, and rude encounters sometimes took place, which gave ample evidence of the hostile state of feeling that existed. One of these affrays, which led to serious and unforeseen results, is now to be recorded.

It was towards the close of a brief autumn day, a few weeks subsequent to the battle of Poitiers, that Sir Enguerrard de Vaudemont, a brave and noble knight of Navarre, rode forth from the gates of Evreux, with a single follower purposing to gain before night-fall his Castle of Brunigull, distant about two leagues from the city. In common with many others, who seemed of a quiet and peaceable bearing, he was permitted to ride to and fro at his pleasure; but had it been known that he fought under the banners of the English at Poitiers, and that at this very moment he was preparing with his followers to join the Lord Philip of Navarre, in Normandy, an interdiction would have been laid forthwith upon his freedom.

The vesper-bell sounded from the tower of St. Geneviève as the knight passed the last barrier of the city, and he paced leisurely along, now lost in busy musings, and now exchanging a word or two with his follower, Denys, who at the same easy gait rode on behind his master. Thus he proceeded for nearly a quarter of a league, meeting occasionally a laden mule, or a group of peasants wending home from their day's toil, when just as he spurred at a brisker rate along the smooth road that skirts the dense forest of D'Artaç, a knight, well-mounted and accoutred, and followed by two stout men-at-arms, came dashing rapidly towards him. Reining up his steed directly across Sir Enguerrard's path, the stranger laid his hand, with a menacing air, upon his sword-hilt, and shouted:

"Montjoye! St. Denis for France!"

"Our Lady for Navarre!" responded Sir Enguerrard, boldly, and made an effort to pass the other without further parley; but the knight of France halted his purpose, by ordering his

followers to guard the road, and then, evidently heated by wine, he drew out his weapon, crying in a tone of insulting defiance:

"Come on, thou thief of a Navarrois, and let me deal with thee according to thy deserts."

The brave Sir Enguerrard waited for no second challenge, for he had already recognized the emblazoned arms on the surcoat of his assailant, and grasping his trusty sword:

"Thy blood be upon thy own head then, Lord of Valence," he exclaimed; "so haste thee and say thy last prayer, for if this tried blade play me not false in this encounter, thou wilt never breathe another, till thou art writhing in the fires of purgatory."

"Out upon thee, traitor!" shouted the French lord. "I know thee for a false villain, who on the field of Poitiers bore lance and spear against the breasts of my countrymen—and for that thou shalt now reap thy reward."

"And I know thee, Lord of Valence, as the sacrilegious wretch, who, with thy lawless hand, profaned the consecrated church of the Ascension—who —"

"Ay!" fiercely interrupted the other, "I it was who, in my burning thirst, seized the chalice from the hands of the astonished priest, and quaffed the draught which he had just pronounced the blood of God; and when he would have uttered entreaty and remonstrance, I clove his tonsured head with my battle-axe, and spilled his brains upon the altar where he ministered."

"And for this deed thou shalt die! ay, for this blasphemy, even wert thou of my own kin. So now, hold lord, defend thyself; and since thou hast provoked the combat, I give thee fair warning, that we part not till one of us bite the earth in our death-agony."

And, in earnest of his words, the knight aimed a stroke at his opponent, which would have silenced his boasting, had it not been quickly and adroitly parried. And then began the fight in earnest. Blow followed blow in rapid succession, the weapons of the two knights flashing like flames of fire in the rays of the setting sun, and their steeds advancing and retreating, wheeling swiftly round, or uprearing themselves in the air, with distended nostrils, and eye-balls strained and glaring fiercely at each other, as though they too were doing battle each in his master's cause. The slight and youthful figure of Sir Enguerrard seemed ill-matched against the burly and stalwart form of his antagonist, who was besides several years his senior in age; yet did he prove himself the better swordsman of the two, for scarcely a stroke of his weapon was dealt in vain, blood seemed ever to follow its glancing blade, till he gained an evident advantage over his