

A COURIER OF FORTUNE

CHAPTER I

THE "TIGER OF MORVAIX"

THE hot noontide sun was pouring down into the market place of Morvaix and in the shadow cast by the great Cross of St. Jean in the centre, a handsome but very soberly dressed cavalier was sheltering from the fierce July heat and closely observing the townspeople as they clustered here and there to engage in eager animated discussion. Every now and then he cast sweeping impatient glances in all directions in evident search of some one whose delay irritated him.

It was plain even to a stranger's eyes that the townsfolk were greatly excited, and that the reason which had drawn the people from their houses was both urgent and disturbing. All classes were present—burghers, merchants, shopkeepers, workmen, 'prentices, down to the poorest of the labourers and peasants. Men, women and children alike were gathered there; the men set-faced and bitter, the women sad and anxious. Discontent, anger, fear and sorrow were the emotions evinced among all save the many soldiers who moved among the excited knots, with leers for the women and oaths for the men, and jibes and ribald laughter one to another.

The young cavalier's face darkened as he listened, and more than once he started as if he would interfere, but