

the foremost assailants from retreating, had they been so minded ; but the stubborn Breton blood was fairly roused ; never a man of them flinched, though one after another dropped in his tracks, and never a foot of ground was gained.

If from without the shots went up lustily of "Clisson ! Clisson !" and "St. Yves Bretagne !" no less lustily rang the answer from within—"Hacquemont ! Hacquemont ! St. George Guienne !" Though the defenders too were falling fast, the gaps were filled as soon as made. In that front rank Ralph Brakespeare and his two esquires—all the three as yet unhurt—bore up the brunt of the battle. Sir Tristande la Roye himself was down, choking in his blood—a dexterous stroke, dealt by Gaultier de Marsan, had cloven through his camail, just beneath the fastening of his helmet—and the press was so great that his esquires could not win from their lord breathing-space, or even drag him from under trampling feet. Even while the din was at its height, a clear imperious voice made itself heard ever and anon—

*"Bretagne ! Bretagne ! Hardis mes gars ; point ne tresbuschez !"*

And that voice came nearer and nearer, till Olivier de Clisson himself stood in the forefront of his men—almost within arm's length of Ralph Brakespeare.

Then there came a lull in the fray ; for, as though by tacit consent, the meaner combatants on either side drew back a little, most lowering their weapons as those two famous champions were set face to face. So far as could be judged through their heavy plate armor they seemed very fairly matched—the Breton might have