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under my cheek, with the sobbing catch in the breath growing hoarser almost every stride, there was no time for conscious fear. If I thought at all, it was that the pace could not last, that Poitiers was far away and the dawn near, that the sob was growing hoarser, hoarser, till the breath in the wind-pipes roared like the rasping of a file. Then Lesellè shouted, Halt, halt, halt ! " and straining on the bit, I pulled the staggering beast to a stand.

Behind was the howling of the wolves, but down the road ahead came the clatter of hoofs.

"Life or death," said the lad, panting in sympathy with his moaning horse, "but in another furlong or two it would have been——Halt! halt there! Horses in the King's name; horses for life or death!"

No need now to tell that it was for life. A north bound train from Poitiers saved us; but as we rode on the dawn was grey even in the thick of the wood, and on our left the east flared to a red glare as of the Last Day.

Again it was whip and spur, nor, with no more than a scant league to go, was there need to spare the horses. Spare them? We drove them along at the dagger's point. But the throbbing exultation born of that wild burst had died away, and it was a weary, trembling, white-faced woman who, leading the Scots lad by ten lengths, splashed unhalting through the Clain and galloped up the hill to the newly opened gate, for the sun was fully risen, and down the valley of the Clain the morning mists were all a-swim with glory.

Before the gate the guard stretched themselves, yawning, and when I would have passed, one caught