

knight; who, in the last campaigns under the Constable, had acquired great renown; Sir Olivier de Clisson himself was a little to the rearward. All the withinside of the breach was lined with armed men; how deep they stood could not be discerned from without. In the center of these stood Sir Ralph Brakespear, swaying the mace that had done such terrible service on the first day of the siege; at either shoulder were his two esquires.

The ill-fortune of his brothers-in-arms seemed to cling to Alain de Beaumanoir. He and his next followers were much hindered by the slippery planks and sharp truncheons of the stockade, and while the knight recovered himself from a stumble a stone hurled from the battlements above struck him down with a severe though not a mortal wound. But Tristan de la Roche and the rest pressed on undismayed; sparing neither themselves nor their fallen comrades, who they pushed aside, or trampled on rudely. The stakes were all soon broken, and the oiled planks grew rough with blood and dust. So, ere long, besiegers and besieged came fairly hand to hand. The last-named were helped by firmer footing and vantage of ground; for the upward slope of the ruins was still somewhat steep, and at the crown of the breach there was a kind of rampart of disjoined stones and fragments of masonry—not much more than knee-high, but still no light impediment with a determined enemy beyond. Then there ensued a combat both obstinate and cruel. Spears were almost useless in the close mellay, and all the work was done with mace, glaive and gisarme. Mere weight of numbers in their rear would have kept