

**THE  
COURT  
AND REIGN  
OF  
FRANCIS  
THE  
FIRST  
KING  
OF  
FRANCE**



**JULIA  
PARDOE**

THE  
COURT AND REIGN  
Of  
FRANCIS THE FIRST,  
King of France

BY  
MISS JULIA PARDOE

TO  
MY BELOVED FATHER,  
THE PROTECTOR OF MY INFANCY,  
THE GUIDE OF MY GIRLHOOD,  
AND  
THE FRIEND OF MY RIPER YEARS,  
Mon  
ARE VERY AFFECTIONATELY  
INSCRIBED.

It has been the fashion with modern authors to pass lightly over this frightful episode of the reign of Francis I. It destroys the illusion which attaches to his name; it renders him less attractive as a sovereign; and converts the splendid sensualist into a gloomy and heartless barbarian. But let the thinking mind fall back upon the whole chain of his previous career, and its close will scarcely prove matter of astonishment. The morals of the age were unhappily lax; the example of the most exalted of the priesthood venal profligate, and degrading; Religion, even by the several pontiffs, made subservient to expediency; the cardinals more celebrated in the annals of gallantry than in those of piety; the ambition of the great nobles confined to personal aggrandizement; and the bulk of the people buried in ignorance and superstition.

That there were glorious exceptions in all ranks is most true but these have almost universally been overlooked,—many, too many of them, altogether forgotten. The pure gold sinks to the bottom of the stream, while the more worthless dross rises and sparkles upon the surface of the current. We admit, therefore, that the vices of Francis may find some extenuation in the character of the age, and the nature of his education; but we repeat, that those who have recorded only the brilliant and attractive portions of his career, and have wilfully and advisedly buried his backslidings in oblivion, have not done their duty either to themselves or to those who may be influenced by their researches.

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PREFACE.

IN attempting a record of the Court and Reign of Francis I, I did not for a moment seek to blind myself to the extreme difficulty of the task which I was about to undertake. The successor of Louis XII. has been so universally quoted as the most chivalrous Monarch who ever filled a European throne, that those who are only superficially acquainted with his history cannot fail to anticipate a succession of brilliant actions, generous self-sacrifices, refined gallantries, and noble feats of arms. Time and truth have, however, alike tended to place his character in a less elevated point of view; and the truth may well be said to have been born of time, for it is only of late years that any French historian has been permitted to allow that a sovereign of France could err.

Who that is acquainted with the anecdote, can have forgotten the caution given by the Cardinal de Richelieu to an honest and conscientious chronicler, whose zeal had betrayed him into sundry animadversions on a crowned head long laid in the royal mausoleum of St. Denis?

“Sir,” said the minister sternly to the scholar, whom he had summoned to his presence, “you must revise your work. You have been guilty of treason; you have dared to vilify a king.”

“I have only recorded well-authenticated facts, your Eminence.”

“Perhaps so; but those facts were not your property. The person and fame of a monarch are alike sacred.”

“*Monseigneur* will permit me to remind him that Louis XI has been dead two centuries.”

“And what of that, Sir?” retorted the Cardinal sharply. “Understand that it is treason to discuss the actions of a king who has only been dead two centuries.”

Upon the principle here educed, most of the ancient French historians appear to have scrupulously acted; and thus it is only by a reference to the more confidential records and correspondence of the period, that a modern writer can hope to arrive at a just estimate of the character and motives of the sovereign whom he seeks to portray “in his habit as he lived.”

There can be little doubt that much of the prestige which attaches to the name of Francis I. may be attributed to this circumstance. To the great mass of readers, alike French and English, he is necessarily known only through the medium of the old and well-tutored chroniclers, or rather, through the modern histories which have been compiled exclusively upon their authority; and thus, thanks to the timid and time-serving policy of those writers, the “divinity that doth hedge a king” has protected his renown throughout the lapse of centuries. For this impunity Francis I. is consequently mainly indebted to the scarcity of familiar chronicles during an age in which, the whole of Europe being almost perpetually in a state of warfare, few cared to register the mere domestic events of the period. Fortunately, however, for the after-labourers in the same vineyard, the love of court-gossipry was not altogether extinct, and thus some glimpses are afforded of the man as well as of the monarch.

It was with the witty and accomplished Marguerite de Valois, his sister, that the taste originated of perpetuating by the pen the current of passing circumstances; and it is to her example that posterity is indebted for that courtly *cacoethes scribendi* by which the annals of subsequent reigns have been so greatly enriched.

In this paucity of authentic detail has consisted, as I was aware that it must do, the great difficulty of my task; but, as I resolved not to insert a single incident into the Work for which I had not competent authority, the court scenes scattered through the following pages may all be

accepted as facts; and the reader will be enabled from them to form his own estimate of the claim which Francis I. could arrogate to himself of being considered as the chivalric monarch par excellence. The glorious day of Marignano saw the rising, and that of Pavia the setting of his fame as a soldier; so true it is that the prowess of the man was shamed by that of the boy. The early and unregretted death of one of his neglected queens, and the heart-broken endurance of the other, contrasted with the unbounded influence of his first favourite, and the insolent arrogance of his second, will sufficiently demonstrate his character as a husband. His open and illegal oppression of an over-taxed and suffering people, to satisfy the cravings of an extortionate and licentious court, will suffice to disclose his value as a monarch; while the reckless indifference with which he falsified his political pledges, abandoned his allies in their extremity in order to further his own interests, and sacrificed the welfare of his kingdom, and the safety of his armies, to his own puerile vanity, will complete a picture by no means calculated to elicit one regret that his reign was not prolonged.

Despite this drawback, however, the period was one of great and absorbing interest. The fierce and continual struggle for power between Francis and Charles V.; the well-earned renown of the several generals on both sides; the names of the Connétable-Duke de Bourbon, Bayard, Pescara, Da Leyva, Doria, Gaston de Foix, Lautrec, and a host of others equally brave; the bright galaxy of beauty which adorned the court; the fair and gentle Madame de Chateaubriand, the haughty and voluptuous Duchess D'Etampes, the magnificent Diane of Poitiers, the mature, but still attractive, Louise de Savoie, the strong-minded and intellectual Marguerite de Valois, and the beautiful Catherine de' Medici; all combine to invest the age with a charm and a romance totally independent of the personal character of the monarch; while the fact of its having been the period of the mission of LUTHER, and the crowning work of the REFORMATION, suffices of itself to render it the greatest landmark on the whole highway of history.

Never, perhaps, did the reign of any European sovereign present so many, and such varying phases. A contest for empire, a captive monarch, a female regency, and a religious war; the poisoned bowl and the burning pile alike doing their work of death amid scenes of uncalculating splendour and unbridled dissipation; the atrocities of bigotry and intolerance, blent with the most unblushing licentiousness and the most undisguised profligacy;—such are the materials offered to the student by the times of Francis I.

Here, as was the case in a former Work, I have commenced my volumes by a brief glance at the conclusion of the previous reign; and, although censured by one of my critics upon that occasion for the introduction of retrospective matter, I have in this instance advisedly pursued the same system, from a conviction that the book must fall into the hands of many individuals, who, from want of time or opportunity, must necessarily be unacquainted with the precise position of the French nation on the accession of Francis I. To the historical student this preliminary sketch will be, of course, supererogatory; but as this is not a period at which any author can feel justified in writing only for a class, I believe that a succinct narrative of preceding events will tend to render the Work more generally acceptable; and I have, consequently, not suffered myself to be deterred from acting upon that conviction. The scholar will therefore forgive me, if, in seeking to augment the gratification of the less learned reader, I have dwelt for a time upon persons and events which, although living and occurring before he ascended the French throne, were destined to exert a powerful influence over the court and reign of Francis himself.

THE SHRUBBERY, NORTHELEET, KENT,

August, 1849.

# BOOK I

## CHAPTER I.

### ACCESSION OF FRANCIS I

IN the person of Louis XII of France expired the elder branch of the House of Orleans. Only three months subsequent to his nuptials with the young and beautiful Mary of England, (the sister of Henry VIII) his third wife, he was seized with fever and dysentery at the palace of Les Tournelles in Paris; and breathed his last in the seventeenth year of his reign and the fifty-fourth of his age, leaving the vacant throne to Francis, Comte d'Angoulême, the husband of his daughter Claude.

The extreme personal beauty of this prince,- combined with his fearless and engaging qualities, his eloquence, courtliness of demeanour, and unbounded liberality, dazzled alike the courtiers and the people; and the dying king was probably the only individual in the nation who had reflected with misgiving upon the possible, and indeed inevitable, results of the uncalculating profusion and ungovernable ambition of his successor. In himself a model of integrity, and well deserving the title of the Father of his People, from his constant and zealous watchfulness over the interests of his subjects, he could not witness without anxiety the brilliant but dangerous qualities of the young Count; and it was consequently with earnestness and care that he applied himself before his death to the execution of such public measures as might at least tend to mitigate, even if they could not altogether avert, the evils which he deprecated. Although occasionally the dupe of his own kind heartedness and the treachery of his neighbours, Louis XII never lost his confidence in human nature; and constantly sought to remedy rather than to revenge the wrongs to which he was subjected by others; while carrying his prudence to an extreme which was on many occasions stigmatized by the young and inconsiderate with the name of penuriousness, he was accustomed, when this fact was hinted to him, to reply that <sup>M</sup> the justice of a monarch should teach him to render to everyone his due, rather than to sutler his generosity to induce him to display too great a profusion." It was therefore natural that the opposite qualities, which he early discovered in his son-in-law, should cause him to look with distrust into the future. "*Ce gros gargon nous gatêra tout*"; he was wont to exclaim whenever any instance of the improvidence of Francis was forced upon him; but not even the most serious of his delinquencies sufficed to diminish his affection, or to excite his anger towards the offender.

Moreover, it is certain that if Francis I became not only a chivalric, but also, for the age in which he lived, an accomplished sovereign, his predecessor may nevertheless be justly styled the Father of letters in France; learning having been greatly encouraged during his reign, and learned men especially honoured. Cicero was his favourite author among the ancients; and his collection of autographs was of considerable extent and value. He employed many Italian scholars at his court and in the public offices; and his directions to his judges were stringent, that they should upon all occasions decide such causes as came before them according to the dictates of their conscience; and utterly disregard, under every circumstance, even any orders to the contrary which might be wrung from himself during the progress of the proceedings. He also discouraged, in so far as he found it possible, the inordinate taste of his nobility for costly studs and extravagant establishments of hounds; declaring that, like Actæon, they were devoured by their dogs and



horses. Nevertheless, he was accomplished in all feats of joust and tourney; and so brave in the field, that upon one occasion, when his immediate attendants, who considered their own lives endangered by his impetuosity, ventured to expostulate with him, and besought him not to expose his sacred person with so little precaution, he replied disdainfully: "Let all who are afraid stand behind me!"

Neither would he, however great the provocation, ever suffer himself to be betrayed into an undue intemperance of speech or bearing, by which his kingly dignity might be compromised; and to such an extent did he carry this difficult self-government, that when, during the wars of Italy, d'Alviano, the general of the Venetian army, was brought before him a captive, and replied to his courteous and considerate greeting with an insolence which overpassed all bounds, Louis magnanimously controlled every symptom of indignation, and contented himself with directing his removal to the quarters which had been assigned to the other prisoners; simply remarking to those about him, as the arrogant soldier was led away: I have done well to dismiss him, as I might have lost my temper, which I should have regretted. I have conquered him; and it is no less essential that I should learn to conquer myself."

No wonder then, that when he expired, the watchmen of Paris announced the fatal event to the inhabitants of the city in these touching words: "Frenchmen! we declare to you the most fatal news that you have ever heard. The good King Louis, the Father of his People, is dead! Pray to God for the repose of his soul."

The greatest blot which rests upon the memory of Louis XII is his repudiation of his first wife, the unfortunate Jeanne de France, daughter of Louis XI, for the purpose of marrying Anne de Bretagne, the widow of Charles VIII; and even in this act there are extenuating points. Compelled by the last-named monarch to affiancè himself while yet a mere youth, and Duke d'Orleans, to Jeanne; and subsequently to complete an alliance which was repugnant to him, when he had already bestowed his affections elsewhere, he had the additional mortification of seeing himself united to a princess deformed in person, and totally deficient in beauty; although her meekness of temper and gentleness of disposition might perhaps have ultimately reconciled him to this fact, had he been heart-free at the period of his marriage; but with his imagination full of the splendid beauty, and courtly fascinations of the heiress of Brittany, his dislike to his enforced bride soon grew into disgust.

Unfortunately for the timid and neglected duchess, Louis had been a guest at the court of Duke Francois at a period anterior to their union; when Anne, although also affianced to the Archduke Maximilian of Austria, whom she had never seen, was in the first bloom of her maidenly beauty. As yet fettered by no definitive ties (for she was aware that her marriage treaty could be annulled as readily as it had been contracted), she was by no means insensible to the evident passion of the gallant and handsome Duke d'Orleans; and it was, consequently, with increased irritation and chagrin that he saw himself unable to profit by a preference which would have secured his happiness.

The Dauphin, afterwards Charles VIII, had been, in his turn, at the age of thirteen years, betrothed to Marguerite of Austria, the daughter of Maximilian, after his hand had been successively declined by the Princess Marie and Elizabeth of England; and powerless and timid as he was, he revolted at the idea of being thus fettered by an engagement to a child who had scarcely entered her fourth year. According to the command of the king his father, Charles had been reared in the most perfect retirement, in the fortress palace of Ambois, under the united guardianship of Madame Anne de France, his elder sister, and the Sire de Beaujeu, her husband. The feeble health of the young prince, who was very delicate, and of slight frame, but gentle and kind in disposition, was the plausible pretext of Louis for thus secluding him from the world, and maintaining him in profound ignorance of all public affairs; the ferocious and jealous monarch remembering, in all probability, that the example of filial turpitude which he had himself exhibited, might, should he suffer the physical and mental strength of his son to attain their just dimensions, be followed in the person of the Dauphin.

Thus Louis XI had found it difficult to secure such a wife for the young prince as he deemed worthy to share the throne of France; and it was not without considerable difficulty that Maximilian had at length been induced to grant to him the hand of his infant daughter, who was to remain under the immediate guardianship of the queen until she should attain a marriageable age.

The apparently profound indifference with which Charles went through the ceremony of his betrothal, had, however, a deeper source than was suspected by those around him; for he also, although only by report, had suffered his boyish fancy to become captivated by the charms of Anne de Bretagne. Again and again did he question his cousin Orleans, and M. de la Trémouille, by whom he had been accompanied to the Court of Brittany, of all they had seen and heard in that brilliant circle; constantly, but as if unconsciously, directing their reminiscences to the young duchess, and crowding his imagination with scenes of pageantry and pleasure in which she was always the most prominent object. To him, debarred as he was from all the pastimes suited to his age and rank, the bare outline of such festivities would have been attractive; but blent as they thus were with the image of the beautiful young heiress, they were the greatest luxury of his dull and weary existence. No wonder, then, that after the death of his father, who had confided the government of the kingdom during his minority to his sister and guardian, Madame de Beaujeu, he soon began to cherish hopes which had hitherto seemed more than chimerical.

Other, and more immediate matters of interest, however, in some degree withdrew the attention of the young monarch from this cherished secret. Madame Anne de France, who had hitherto preserved her purity of heart and rigid sense of morality, without one backsliding, even in thought, had been unable to resist the manly graces of the Duke d'Orleans, and had even permitted him to see the hold which he had obtained upon her affections, flattering herself that the attachment was reciprocal; but Louis, warned by the Count de Dunois not to allow himself to be dazzled by the blandishments of his royal sister-in-law, who was only anxious to enslave his feelings in order to divert him from prosecuting his claim to the regency after the demise of Louis XI—a warning which was overheard by Madame de Beaujeu, and never afterwards forgotten—caused the young duke to withdraw, with marked coldness from her advances; and converted a fond woman into an implacable enemy. When, therefore, Louis d'Orleans, who had taken up arms in support of the right which he claimed as first prince of the blood, to govern the kingdom during the minority of Charles, was defeated and captured at St. Aubin, in Brittany, by the Sire de la Trémouille; remembering only the slight which had been offered to her, and anxious to revenge, under cover of political expediency, the affront which she had sustained, she caused him to be confined in the prison tower of Bourges, where, during three long and weary years, he was treated with the greatest harshness and indignity. At the termination of this period, however, his wife, whom even his neglect and coldness had failed to wean from the deep and earnest affection which she bore him, threw herself at the feet of the young king, her brother, and besought him, in the most heart-touching terms, to restore the duke to liberty. Her tears moved Charles, who had always felt a strong affection for his gallant relative; yet for a while he remained irresolute. The period at which his sister's control was legally to cease, had already passed away; but, although by the death of her husband's brother, Anne de France had become Duchess de Bourbon, she did not appear disposed to relinquish her authority; and Charles had never ventured to oppose her will. The tears and entreaties of the unhappy Jeanne, however, ultimately overcame his constitutional timidity, although not so thoroughly as to induce him to give a public order for the liberation of the duke; for he was so well aware of the inflexible hatred which his elder sister bore towards the captive, that he had not courage to contend against the remonstrances which he was conscious must ensue from such a course. In order to escape the watchfulness of Madame de Bourbon, therefore, he affected to set forth upon a hunting party; and, directing his course towards Bourges, he sent forward two of his chamberlains to liberate the awhile rebel.

Anne, deeply wounded by this sudden assumption of authority on the part of her late ward, at once withdrew herself from all share in the government, and assumed towards the Duke d'Orleans an attitude of haughty animosity, which was as idle as it was innoxious.

Anxious to liberate himself from the trammels which had been cast about him, Charles lost no

time in causing the young Princess Marguerite, his affianced bride, to be reconducted to Flanders, with great honour indeed, and attended by a magnificent retinue; but this parade of respect did not reconcile the pride of the mortified girl to so degrading a dismissal, nor calm the anger of her justly irritated father. The resentment of Maximilian was, however, of slight importance to France; and, consequently, the prospect of his commencing a war in order to revenge his wounded honour, did not induce Charles to renounce his hopes of a marriage upon which his heart had long been fixed; and which, moreover, promised to be so advantageous to the nation. Dunois, De la Trémouille, De Commines, and all the principal advisers of Louis d'Orleans, had incurred the disgrace of Madame de Beaujeu, and sought to gain the favour of the young king by forwarding his union with Anne; which was rendered the more desirable from the fact that her father and younger sister being dead, she had become sole heiress of the noble duchy of Brittany, which would thus be reunited to the crown of France.

Their chief difficulty lay, however, with the young duchess herself. Pretexting her betrothal to Maximilian, and voluntarily overlooking the fact that, after having espoused her by proxy, he had never made any effort to remove the obstacles which had prevented their definitive union; and that his age, habits, and temper were, moreover, in complete discordance with her own; she affected to cover her distaste to the alliance now offered to her, by asserting her determination to fulfil the pledge that she had given. But Anne was ambitious; and ere long she remembered that the frail and feeble Charles VIII was King of France, Louis d'Orleans the husband of the Princess Jeanne, and Maximilian lukewarm, and in the decline of life. Her most zealous friends urged her to accept the crown which she was so well fitted to adorn; and ultimately she consented to solicit from the Pope a dispensation which might enable her to yield her hand to the French monarch.

Shortly after her marriage with Charles VIII, which took place with great pomp at Langeais, she was crowned at St. Denis; and her exulting husband then conducted her to Amboise, to which, as his birth-place, he was exceedingly attached, and which he proposed to embellish. An expedition to Italy, whence he had fondly flattered himself that he should return a conqueror, retarded, however, the execution of this project; but on his return to France he hastened to put it into execution; various plans were submitted to him, and he commenced the construction of a new edifice which was destined to be regal in its decorations. But a fatal accident once more rendered his design abortive. As he was one day conducting the queen to the tennis-court, to reach which it was necessary to traverse a dark and low-roofed gallery, he struck his head against the archway of a door; and although he affected to treat the accident lightly, and even joined in the game, it soon became evident that he had received his death-blow; for on again entering the gallery to pass into his apartments, he was seized with a sudden giddiness, and fell to the ground senseless. In the agitation and terror of the moment his attendants made no effort to remove him from the close and gloomy spot where he had fallen, but laid him upon a squalid mattress which had been flung down there by some menial of the castle, and on which he expired during the night in his twenty-eighth year.

The frightful nature of his death may perhaps account in some degree for the excessive grief displayed by the queen, for a husband of whose infidelities she had frequent and flagrant proofs, and whom she had never professed to love. Certain it is that, as if in order to render her affliction more conspicuous, she assumed the deepest sables as her mourning garb, although white had hitherto been the habitual dress of all royal widows in France. Despite these outward demonstrations, however, Anne received with undisguised pleasure the consolations tendered to her by the new king, through the medium of two of his confidential nobles, who played their part so well that they mingled their tears with hers, and prepared the way for their royal master; who, when her first burst of grief had subsided, hastened to assure her of his deep sympathy in her affliction. By his command, and at his cost, a funeral service of extraordinary magnificence was celebrated in the chapel of Amboise for the repose of the soul of Charles VIII.; and this duty was no sooner performed than he endeavoured to turn her thoughts from the husband whom she had lost, to the days in which, at the court of her father, they had first met, and yielded to an attachment which neither had yet forgotten.

“Obtain the dissolution of your marriage with Jeanne de France,” had ultimately whispered the new-made widow, “and I abandon my hand to you.”

Louis XII needed no second bidding; and while Anne hastened to conceal her present sorrows and her future hopes in the castle of Loches, the husband of the unhappy Jeanne took instant measures for effecting that divorce which was to be the last trial of her married life.

Only nine months after the death of Charles, Caesar Borgia, the nephew of Alexander VI, delivered to the French monarch the bull by which the sovereign declared null and void the union contracted between Louis d'Orleans and Jeanne de France; and upon its receipt the dissolution of the marriage was publicly announced in the church of St. Denis at Amboise. The unfortunate daughter of Louis XI, whose meek virtues and devoted affection had been unable to obtain for her the heart of the man on whom she had been taught to look from her earliest childhood as the companion and protector of her future life, roused herself from the dejection and apathy into which she had fallen, and made one faint struggle while the divorce was still pending, to maintain her right; but she was unable to contend against her destiny; and when the fatal dissolution was announced, she retired to Bourges, and passed the remainder of her piteous life in works of piety and benevolence. Among other good deeds she founded the convent of the Annunciation, visited the sick, and fed the hungry; and when, in 1504, she breathed out her peaceful soul, her body was followed to the grave by the tears and blessings of the poor.

The marriage of Anne de Bretagne with Louis XII. followed immediately upon the divorce which had broken the heart of the forsaken Jeanne; but the new queen did not revisit Amboise until the following year; when, although the monarch added to its attractions by the vast and magnificent plantation known as the royal garden, and made other improvements calculated to render it a more agreeable residence for his beautiful and idolized wife, Anne soon discovered that she had too many displeasing and still recent memories connected with the spot, willingly to become its habitual occupant; and thus the royal pair, after a short stay in the antique castle, abandoned it, and held their court successively at Blois, Loches, Chinon, and Paris.

The second marriage of Louis XII was the first shadow cast over the brilliant prospects of the young Count Francis. The alleged sterility of Jeanne de France, and the feeble constitution of Charles VIII, had alike tended hitherto to raise the hopes of those who were interested in his succession to the throne; but those hopes now became much less sanguine as they reflected that Anne de Bretagne was not only still young, but also tenderly beloved by her husband; and that there was, consequently, every reason to anticipate the birth of a Dauphin, Nevertheless, the queen herself looked upon the heir-presumptive with a jealous eye; all the children whom she had borne to Charles had died in their infancy, and the continual presence of the young prince at court was irksome to her.

Francis Count d'Angoulême was born at Coignac on the 12th of September, 1494, an event which Louise de Savoie, his mother, has recorded, in her somewhat heterogeneous journal, with true maternal exultation. He was only two years of age when he lost his father, and became the ward of his kinsman the Duke d'Orleans, who at once evinced the sincerity of his affection for his young charge by selecting as his tutor the learned Artus de Gouffier Boisy, a gentleman of Poitou, who laboured assiduously to render both the mind and character of the boy-prince worthy of the eminent station which he might one day be called upon to fill. Madame d'Angoulême had passed the first years of her widowhood at Romorantin, where she devoted herself to the education of her son Francis, and her daughter Marguerite; until she was summoned to the court by the monarch, who was anxious to promote a close friendship between his queen and the mother of his young ward. In this endeavour, however, he signally failed. Anne de Bretagne and Louise de Savoie had too many conflicting jealousies at heart long to maintain even the semblance of friendship. Both were young, both eminently beautiful, and both eager to give a king to France; and thus a mutual distrust and dislike was engendered, which ere long increased to such an extent that they mutually threw off all disguise, and harassed alike the sovereign and his ministers by the cabals into which they severally entered. Time, instead of softening, served only to increase this unhappy animosity;

and on the successive death of two infant sons, in each of whom Anne had for a few brief weeks fondly believed that she beheld the inheritor of the French crown, the exultation of Louise was so unbounded as to assume the character of insult; while the queen, irritated by a display of triumph which doubled the bitterness of her disappointment, became only more confirmed in her hatred of both mother and son.

Under these circumstances Louis XII resolved to withdraw Madame d'Angoulême once more from the court; and in the year 1504, he appointed Amboise as her place of residence; and confided to Pierre de Rohan, Marechal de Gié, whom he greatly esteemed, the important office of governor to the young prince.

The selection was a happy one; as during his sojourn in Italy, when general of the king's armies, M. de Gié had devoted himself to literature and the arts; which, together with his other manly accomplishments, had conduced to render him one of the most distinguished nobles of the age. He was, moreover, the descendant of one of the first families of Brittany, very wealthy, and celebrated for the loyalty and frankness of his character. Under the guidance of such a man as Pierre de Rohan, Louis consequently felt assured that his ward would never suffer from the want of his own superintendence; and the result justified his confidence; for the zealous efforts of the governor were soon apparent in the rapid progress of the pupil, who under his auspices imbibed that refinement of taste, and that manly bearing, for which he was afterwards so famous. Not content, however, with making him a scholar, M. de Gié sought also to render the very defects of the young prince subservient to his future greatness; and early observant of the impetuosity of his character, as well as the quickness of his intellect, he spared no pains to inculcate the necessity of his acquiring that most difficult of all lessons, the art of self-government.

As regarded his martial exercises, Francis required little tuition; for, addicted from his earliest boyhood to manly and chivalrous pastimes, and gifted by nature with a person at once tall, robust, and graceful, he soon excelled all his companions, alike in the noble accomplishment of brilliant horsemanship, and in the use of weapons of every description; while by his natural cheerfulness, urbanity, and frankness of deportment, he effectually secured the affection of the friends of his boyhood, who subsequently became alike the ornament and the support of his throne.

Unfortunately, while devoting himself to the education of his royal pupil, the mare chai suffered himself to be captivated by the attractions of Madame d'Angoulême; who, far from scrupulous in her conduct, encouraged his evident admiration by her coquettish blandishments. It is probable that Louise de Savoie, deprived in her honourable exile of those opportunities of seduction of which she was so perfect a mistress, did not reflect upon the possible consequences of her imprudence upon the mind and heart of such a man as the Marechal de Gié; for it is certain that she sought only to beguile the time which hung so heavily upon her hands, when she suffered him to believe that he was daily possessing himself of her affections, and had no inclination to return a passion which she regarded only with contempt. Thus the deluded noble was ultimately beguiled into a declaration, which was repulsed with a disdain so haughty and so undisguised, that he uttered an internal vow that the scornful princess should one day bitterly repent the indignity which she had cast upon him.

Just at this juncture a letter reached the castle informing M. de Gié that the court had left Chinon for Blois, and would remain for a few days at Amboise; upon which the Marechal gave the necessary orders, and then, with his accustomed deference, hastened to communicate the king's intention to Madame d'Angoulême; whom he did not again meet until the arrival of the king and queen, with their brilliant retinue.

Anne de Bretagne was the first female sovereign of France who had ever conceived the idea of enhancing her dignity by the formation of a regularly organized household of ladies; and Brantôme expatiates with enthusiasm upon this novel addition to the court circle, so well calculated to increase the attraction of those receptions where heretofore all had been stately tedium; while he also asserts that so earnest was Anne in the accomplishment of her object, that

she never refused to admit into her service any dame or damsel who was authorized to aspire to it by gentle birth; but, on the contrary, frequently questioned the nobles by whom she was approached, as to the extent of their families; and authorized them to invite their wives or daughters in her name to join the royal suite. Thus she soon accumulated a train of eight-and-twenty maids-of-honour, at salaries varying from thirty-five to one hundred annual livres; and sixteen ladies, either princesses, or the wives of men of the highest quality in the kingdom, all of whom were likewise salaried; and her court soon became the school in which the noble youth of both sexes, who were permitted to study it, sought to fashion themselves.

Nor did even this new splendour satisfy the magnificent tastes of Anne, who felt that while she was thus increasing her own personal consequence, she was at the same time humiliating her haughty rival, Louise de Savoie; for her female circle was no sooner organized than she asked and obtained of the king that she should be permitted to increase the number of the body-guard which he had already conceded to her, to two hundred; most of whom were well-born gentlemen of Brittany, who were accustomed, when she left the palace of Blois, either to attend mass, or for the purpose of exercise, to await her upon the terrace, which was accordingly soon known as the "Bretons' Perch", from the fact that when she reached the door which led to her apartments, she never failed to remark, "There are my Bretons on their perch awaiting me."

Thus brilliantly attended, therefore, did she arrive at the castle of Amboise; and among her graceful suite two lovely young princesses were equally conspicuous—the one was Germaine de Foix, the niece of the king, and the sister of the brave and accomplished Gaston, who perished in the bloom of youth at the battle of Ravenna; and the other, Suzanne de Bourbon, the only child of Anne de France and the Sire de Beaujeu.

The train of the king was less numerous, as most of the young nobles who were of an age to encounter the fatigues of a campaign had sought and obtained permission to join the army in Italy, where Louis still maintained the disastrous struggle which had been commenced by his predecessor Charles VIII.

Nevertheless, he numbered in his retinue more than one scion of the most illustrious families of France; among others the Duke d'Alençon, then considered as the future husband of Mademoiselle de Bourbon, but who subsequently married Marguerite d'Angoulême, the sister of Francis; the Count Charles de Montpensier; M. de Vandenesse the younger brother of the Marquis de la Palice and Guillaume Gouffier, Seigneur de Bonnavet.

M. de Gié had arranged a series of festivities for the amusement of the court during their residence at Amboise, but the health of the king had become so much shaken by the unfavourable intelligence which daily reached him from Italy, and by the obstinate opposition of Anne to various resolutions with which a wise policy had inspired him, that he was incapable of the exertion which they would have required. Devotedly attached to her person, he had accustomed himself to yield to her wishes, not only in every instance wherein she considered that her personal interests or dignity as queen of France were in any way involved, but even on points of more importance; and so anxious had he shown himself to maintain by every means in his power the respect and deference which he considered as her due, that no ambassador or foreigner of rank who visited the court, after he had been received by the king himself, was exempted from the necessity of proceeding at once to the queen's apartments with the same ceremony, in order that it might be understood how completely he identified her in all the honours of his own regality.

Naturally arrogant and ambitious, this new innovation upon the accustomed etiquette of the court sufficed to fill up the measure of her self-appreciation; but the measure, nevertheless, proved to be one of sound policy; for the extreme grace and courtesy of manner which distinguished Anne de Bretagne, coupled with an erudition which, if it failed to be profound, was at least remarkable at that period, and a superficial knowledge of several languages, in which she constantly laboured to perfect herself, enabled her to address the various strangers who presented themselves in their own native idiom; and thus to secure to herself a popularity which increased the charm of her

conversation, and admirably assisted her views.

Although she had lost her sons, she had become the mother of a princess, whom Louis was anxious to affiance to the young Count d'Angoulême, his heir-presumptive; but this project met with the most resolute opposition on her part. Duchess of Brittany in her own right; and permitted, through the affectionate indulgence of her royal husband, an absolute control over all the affairs of the duchy, she openly avowed her desire to render it an independent government; and, probably instigated as much by her dislike of the Countess d'Angoulême as by any more political consideration, she was no sooner made aware that Louis was already meditating a marriage for the infant princess, than she proceeded to negotiate an alliance with the Duke de Luxembourg, the grandson of the Archduke Maximilian, to whom she had herself been betrothed, and of which the principal condition was to be the cession of Brittany as a portion of the bride's dowry. The monarch, actuated at once by his affection for his consort, which rendered him averse to oppose her wishes, and by his desire not to aggravate the animosity between herself and Louise de Savoie, suffered the negotiation to proceed; and thus encouraged her to interfere in the differences which existed between himself and Pope Julius II. Anne, who was deeply tainted with the superstition of the time, affected, or perhaps felt, the greatest horror upon seeing her husband in open animosity against the sovereign pontiff; and regardless of the fact that Julius was the enemy of the King, and the sworn foe of France, she so warmly and pertinaciously supported the cause of the Holy See, that Louis was once surprised into exclaiming: "By heaven! my Breton dame, any one, to hear you so decidedly condemn what the most celebrated universities have approved, would imagine that you esteem yourself more learned than the age! Have your confessors never told you that women have no voice in the church?"

The reproof came, however, too late. Anne had become accustomed to follow the dictates of her own will; and notwithstanding this remonstrance, she availed herself of her right of sovereignty over Brittany, which was secured to her by her marriage contract, to forbid the attendance of all the bishops of that province at the council which was about to assemble at Pisa, with intentions evidently hostile to Julius. Addicted both to political and social intrigue, she seldom suffered either to become conspicuous; and it was only when her pride or her vanity was outraged, that she was betrayed into a vehemence that revealed the true extent of the passions by which she was governed.

On the departure of the court from Amboise, the King, at the request of Madame d'Angoulême (who had fulfilled her duties of hostess with a composure and courtesy which considerably diminished the anticipated triumph of the Queen), consented to leave at the castle three of the young nobles of his suite, as companions to her son. These were Charles de Montpensier, Guillaume de Gouffier, and M. de Vandenesse. The latter, by his handsome person and courtly manners, had attracted the attention of Louise de Savoie, and in her desire to retain him at Amboise, had originated the idea of making this application.

Of the new inmates of the castle, all of whom were several years older than the young count, Francis soon learnt to prefer Gouffier, whose joyous temperament and supple nature admirably adapted him for the companionship of princes. The proud, self-centred, and reserved temper of Charles de Montpensier, at once chilled and irritated him; while de Vandenesse appeared absorbed rather by his mother than himself.

The only person towards whom Charles de Montpensier wholly unbent, was Mademoiselle d'Angoulême. Although she had scarcely attained her thirteenth year, her grace, intellect, and acquirements were remarkable; and ere long the heart of the proud and reserved young noble was at her feet. Two years the senior of Francis, she was born on the 11th of April, 1492, in the old castle of the city of Angoulême. The early death of her father affected her interests but little; as, although "one of the best men among the princes of the blood", according to the declaration of Charles VIII, he committed the education of his children entirely to his wife, whose stronger mind and higher attainments rendered her more competent to such a charge. The nurture of the young, and beautiful, and high-spirited Marguerite differed in almost every particular from that of the

pious and gentle princess Claude, whom Anne de Bretagne was rearing in the most absolute seclusion. The audacious, unscrupulous, and ambitious spirit of Louise de Savoie, did not even seek to leaven itself by religion; and thus the atmosphere breathed by the young countess, from her earliest girlhood, was redolent of gallantry, pleasure, and intrigue. Nature had richly endowed her both in mind and person; and the extraordinary aptitude and perseverance with which she devoted herself to study, even from her infancy, was, probably, her best safeguard against corruption. As she emerged from girlhood, her proficiency as a linguist excited universal astonishment; while in philosophy and poetry she delighted; and such of her compositions as are still in existence, however grievously and painfully they may be wanting in morality, are yet distinguished by an ease and grace of expression which contrasts in a marked manner with the inflated and extravagant style of contemporary writers.

The mutual affection which subsisted between herself and her brother became a proverb among all who witnessed it. The whole soul of the boy-count appeared to be wrapped up in his graceful and richly endowed sister, to whom he referred his tastes, his wishes, and his pursuits; while, on her side, Marguerite guided him by her counsels, assisted him by her riper attainments, and gladdened him by her love. Both in person and in mind they resembled each other greatly: in each existed the same marked and commanding features, the same quickness of intellect, and the same thirst for knowledge. Nor were they less similar in their love of pleasure, and we use the word in its most comprehensive sense. No wonder, therefore, that Francis idolized his sister, whom he was accustomed to call his pet, the *Marguerite of Marguerites*, and the *pearl beyond price*.

Notwithstanding all the caution of Montpensier, the secret of his attachment for Mademoiselle d'Angoulême was soon discovered by Gouffier, who had become equally enslaved by her attractions; and from that moment commenced a hatred between the two young nobles, which was destined to endure throughout their lives. Marguerite, still a mere girl, and hitherto engrossed by her studies, knew nothing of love save in theory, and was consequently some time ere she was able fully to comprehend the devotion of the Count Charles; but she had no sooner done so, than she returned his passion with all the ardour of her young and guileless heart. With the natural timidity of an inexperienced girl, she, however, shrank from confiding the state of her newly awakened feelings to her boy-brother; who, instigated by Gouffier, his favourite companion, soon evinced a decided distaste to the young Montpensier, which at length obtained such a mastery over him, that, after a quarrel in the Tennis-court, Francis, whose warlike temper revealed itself upon all occasions, declared his determination to meet him in single combat; nor was it without considerable difficulty that M. de Gié succeeded in calming him. The habitual authority of the Marechal over the proud spirit of the prince assured him, however, of an ultimate, even if a hardly-won triumph; but it was far otherwise when he sought to pacify Charles de Montpensier; who, although infinitely less demonstrative in his indignation than his antagonist, felt far more deeply. He replied briefly to the expostulations of M. de Gié; evinced no disposition to make the slightest concession; and, after having asked a parting interview with Madame d'Angoulême and her gifted daughter, left the castle the same day; but instead of proceeding to Blois, where the king almost immediately upon his arrival, had complained of serious indisposition; he at once directed his steps to Paris, where he rejoined his relative and god-mother, Madame de Bourbon, from whom he had been separated when the court left Amboise.

His sudden and abrupt departure inflicted upon Marguerite the first heart-pang that she had ever experienced; but by her mother it was scarcely remembered beyond the hour. The passion which Louise de Savoie had permitted herself to encourage for M. de Vandenesse, had created an ideal world about her which shut out all that it did not involve within its own vortex; while the young noble, flattered by the love of so great and handsome a princess, not content with the favours which she lavished upon him, had the extreme imprudence to assume her colours; and, discarding the gray and green in which he had formerly appeared, to assume the blue and silver in which she had usually attired herself. This change did not escape the keen eye of the Marechal,



who felt that his hour of revenge was come; and he accordingly kept so strict a watch upon the movements of his favoured rival, that he at length surprised him as he was stealthily making his way through an obscure gallery which led to the apartments of Madame d'Angoulême.

"Sir," said the vigilant M. de Gié sarcastically, "I am aware that this corridor leads only to the chambers occupied by the female attendants of the countess; I will not, therefore, demand to know, as I have every right to do in my capacity of governor of this castle, upon what errand you are bound at so unusual an hour. I will confine myself simply to the request that you will immediately retrace your steps, and leave Amboise by dawn tomorrow; as I can allow no one to remain within these walls whose example may prove pernicious to my royal pupil."

M. de Vandenesse, fearing to compromise the princess by a resistance which would, moreover, have proved useless, as he could not successfully contend against the official authority of the Marechal, made no reply; but, bowing respectfully, returned to his own chamber; where, having summoned his valet, and made the necessary arrangements, he remained until daylight, when he mounted, and rode from the castle of Amboise without even having an opportunity of paying his parting respects to his late hostess.

Louise de Savoie, on ascertaining the hurried and unceremonious departure of the young noble, was instantly convinced that he had retired at the instigation of M. de Gié, who had thus seized the first opportunity of revenge for his own dismissal; and even amid the bitterness of her annoyance, she smiled a haughty smile as she reflected that the time might yet come when she would make him rue his interference; nor did she once condescend to allude to the circumstance. Madame d'Angoulême, unlike the generality of her sex, rarely sought her vengeance in words.

The malady of the king soon assumed the most alarming aspect; and as, notwithstanding her habitual self-sufficiency, Anne de Bretagne was by no means insensible to the affection which her royal husband had so constantly lavished upon her, she devoted herself to him in this emergency with the most exemplary solicitude, seldom absenting herself from the sick-room, save when compelled to do so by her public duties. For a time, however, her cares were vain. The disease daily acquired strength; and the court physicians at length reluctantly confessed their inability to arrest its progress. This declaration fell like a thunderbolt upon the anxious queen. At one glance she saw and appreciated all the difficulty of her position when Louise de Savoie should become the mother of the reigning monarch; and resolved not to subject herself to the insults of a triumphant enemy, she determined to retire into Brittany the moment that the king had ceased to live; as there she could still maintain her sovereign state, and enjoy the undivided power which had always been the dream of her ambition. Thus, while she still continued to bestow the most affectionate attentions upon her royal consort, his apparently desperate condition by no means absorbed the whole of her reflections; and she lost no time in causing all her most costly furniture, jewels, and every other article of value which, from having been devoted to her use, she considered as her own property, to be hastily packed up, and despatched to Nantes by the Loire.

"By St. Yves!" exclaimed the indignant Marechal de Gié, when he learnt the somewhat premature measures adopted by Anne; "the Breton Dame never loses her wits where her interests are concerned; but, *vrai Dieu!* I will show her that I am a Breton too; and that I know how to perform the duties of the office that has been intrusted to me. She is a trifle too hasty in her movements, and has acted like the wife of a trader, rather than that of a great monarch. Our good and well-beloved king and master is not yet, perhaps, upon his deathbed, as she imagines; and it is somewhat of the earliest for Madame la Heine to remove, upon her own authority, and from the royal palaces, effects which the successor of her husband may reclaim as the property of the crown."

These impolitic and somewhat intemperate words were, unfortunately for the fiery Pierre de Rohan, uttered in the presence of several individuals; and, among others, in that of Madame d'Angoulême, and M. de Pontbriant, the chamberlain of the young prince; but, as his zeal had been awakened by his anxiety to protect the interests of his pupil, and that Pontbriant was his *protégé*,

and indebted to him for the very appointment which he then held, M. de Gié could not anticipate that either would be guilty of a breach of trust.

His threat was speedily followed up; for, leaving the apartment with the mien of a chafed lion, he gave immediate orders for stopping the boats which the queen had freighted, upon their passage; but he had received his information too late to render this practicable, as they had passed Amboise before the news reached him; when, resolved not to be thwarted in his design, he no sooner ascertained the fact, than he despatched his mounted men-at-arms to seize their lading at Namur. The haughty spirit of the queen, on being apprised of this bold proceeding, was instantly aroused; and when, contrary to all expectation, Louis XII began slowly to recover from his malady, she availed herself of the increased influence which she had obtained over him during his sufferings, to represent the conduct of the governor of Amboise in the darkest colours; carefully avoiding the main subject of her displeasure, and basing her accusations upon the fact that the Marechal had indulged in insulting reflections, not only upon herself personally, but also upon the king; and treated with contemptuous disapprobation many public acts of his government. The great regard which Louis had long felt for M. de Gié rendered him reluctant to give credence to this report; but Anne met his doubts by affirming that she could produce witnesses to the truth of what she had advanced; and thus the king found himself compelled to put the Marechal upon his trial.

Numerous witnesses appeared against him, when he was cited before the parliament of Toulouse on the charge of *lèse-majesté*; and among the rest, Madame d'Angoulême; who, in her thirst for vengeance, was arrested neither by the consideration that the Marechal had fallen under the displeasure of Anne in order to protect the interests of her own son, nor even by the fact that in her eagerness to injure M. de Gié, she was furthering the views of a woman whom she hated.

The Marechal treated alike the accusation and the witnesses with haughty contempt; and the only reproach which he uttered to Louise de Savoie, when he perceived that the most virulent of his accusers were herself and Pontbriant, was contained in words which cannot fail to remind the reader of the dying exclamation of Wolsey: "And you too, Madam? Had I only served my God as I have served you, I should have little to regret upon my deathbed".

Aller numerous deliberations and delays, the parliament ultimately acquitted M. de Gié of the crime of *lèse-majesté*; but, by a singular inconsistency, which savoured strongly of extraneous influence—an inference which is, moreover, strengthened by the fact that Anne, whose natural cupidity was notorious, had employed no less a sum than thirty-two thousand livres in urging his judges to greater severity and despatch—pronounced that for *certain excesses* and other delinquencies, the Marechal de Gié should be deprived of the title and office of Governor of the Count d'Angoulême, and his command of the castles of Amboise and Angers; and that for the space of five years he should abstain from the exercise of his functions as Marshal of France, during which period he should be exiled from the residences of the court.

M. de Gié bore his disgrace as philosophically as he had borne his prosperity; and resigning his forfeited dignities, retired to Anjou, where he lived surrounded by splendour, and totally indifferent to the exultation of those who had conspired against him.

The implacable nature of Anne de Bretagne displayed itself upon this occasion in a marked manner. When urged by Pontbriant to suggest that the culprit should be subjected to the question, in order to compel him to a confession of his crime, she declared that she had no wish to see him condemned to die, as were he to lose his head he would soon be unconscious of the degradation to which he was now subjected; but that, on the contrary, her desire was that he should live, in order that he might contrast his present disgrace and insignificance with his former greatness; and amid regret, suffering, and mortification, endure a lasting agony, which to his proud spirit would be more bitter a hundredfold than death itself.

Meanwhile her late alarm had rendered her only the more determined to accomplish her project regarding the disposal of Brittany, and to crush the hopes of Louise de Savoie that her son

would one day inherit her beloved duchy; and she accordingly urged on the secret correspondence into which she had already entered with the son of the Archduke Philip with increased eagerness; and with so much success, that this prince, in conjunction with Maximilian, finally opened a negotiation with Louis XII, which terminated in the treaty of Blois, by which it was stipulated that the Princess Claude, with the present possession of the counties of Ast, Boulogne, and Blois, and the duchy of Brittany in perspective, upon the death of her mother, should be given in marriage to the young Duke de Luxembourg.

This matrimonial compact was a fatal blow to the ambition of Louise de Savoie, and the prospects of her son. Madame d'Angoulême had, until that moment, never ceased to flatter herself that upon a point so vital to the interests of the nation, as well as so interesting to his own feelings, the will and wishes of the king must ultimately prevail; and now she was fated to witness the failure of her anticipations; while Francis, who had long considered the infant princess as his destined wife, not only found himself robbed of his bride, but saw his future kingdom shorn of some of its most important and valuable provinces.

CHAPTER II.

[1504-7.]

WHEN the failing health of Louis XII induced the belief that his life was drawing to its close, the hand of Marguerite d'Angoulême, the sister of the heir-presumptive to the throne, was asked by Henry VII of England; but after mature deliberation the Grand Council declined to sanction the marriage, being apprehensive, as they affirmed, that it would involve the two countries in perpetual warfare, and tend to undermine the salic law in France. A second proposition of the same nature was also declined from similar motives; while the king himself opposed her union with Charles of Austria, and declared his determination to bestow her in marriage upon Charles III, duke d'Alençon; a decision at which the high and already matured spirit of Marguerite revolted; perceiving, as she at once did, the intellectual inferiority of the man to whom she should thus be compelled to promise obedience and respect. It was, consequently, with bitter tears that she submitted to the commands of the monarch, and the wishes of her mother; for she foresaw how little suited they were to each other, and how cheerless was the prospect thus opened before her. The duke was deficient in all the brilliant qualities for which Marguerite was herself distinguished, nor did he even possess the negative merit of appreciating them in another; and thus the young princess perceived that she must be sufficient to herself, while the bright illusion was for ever vanished which had led her to believe that she should be valued at her own hearth for the acquirements which it had cost her so much labour to attain.

The only apparent motive by which Louis XII had been impelled to insist upon this ill-assorted marriage, was his desire to terminate a process then pending between the Duke d'Alençon and the Count d'Angoulême as the conflicting heirs of Marie d'Armagnac; and it was accordingly arranged that on its celebration, the latter should abandon his claim in favour of his sister, whose dowry thus amounted to 450,000 livres.

No pecuniary consideration could, however, reconcile Marguerite to so repugnant a union; and, when she found it inevitable, she declared that thenceforth she gave her heart to God, as she could never bestow it upon her husband; an engagement which it was, perhaps, beyond her power to fulfil; for it is certain that however actually innocent she may have been, she was nevertheless morally guilty, inasmuch as she carried her predilections beyond the due bounds of female delicacy and warrantable friendship, although she may never wholly have forgotten her dignity as a woman and a princess. Her attachment to Charles de Montpensier militated moreover against that perfect self-abnegation which she professed; while her disgraceful adventure with Bonnavet, which she has triumphantly recorded in the fourth tale of the Heptameron, is so far from redounding to her honour either as a woman or a wife, that the reader involuntarily feels the utter impossibility of its occurrence without a previous levity on her part which appeared to sanction the indignity to which she was subjected. Moreover, even her panegyrist Brantôme is betrayed into the confession that "*En fait de joyeusetés et de galanteries, eUe montrait qu'elle en savait plus que son pain quotidien*". No marvel, however, when it is remembered that she was reared by Louise de Savoie, and became the willing confidante of her brother's gallantries. Among other frivolities unworthy of so superior a mind, the Duchesse d'Alençon originated the custom between friends of opposite sexes, which, by authorizing them to style each other allied brothers and sisters, gave them the privilege of openly declaring their mutual attachment, to which, whatever might really be its nature or extent, it was understood that no scandal was to be attached.

Even with all due consideration of the lax state of society in that age, the mind and heart which could suggest and share in so unseemly a folly, and so immodest an exhibition as this, must have

been perverted at the core; and, as we read, we cease to wonder, and to mourn over the prostitution of her fine talents, when we remember that so polluted a stream could produce no current of pure and healthful fancy.

In other respects the character of the Princess Marguerite did credit to her mother's training. With all the natural energy of Madame d'Angoulême, she had more self-government; and it was only in moments of great excitement that she suffered herself to be betrayed into any exhibition of unwomanly vehemence; while her devotion to those she loved was almost chivalric. But her moral profligacy casts a dark shadow over the brilliancy of her other and more estimable qualities, by which they must ever be clouded in the eyes of posterity.

The treaty of marriage between Claude de France and Charles de Luxembourg had scarcely been concluded, when the king suffered a relapse of the same malady to which he had so nearly fallen a victim during the preceding year; and the Cardinal d'Amboise, who foresaw the most dangerous results, should it be accomplished, absolved the king from the fulfilment of his pledge, and induced him to execute a will, by which he directed that the Princess Claude should become the wife of her cousin Francis, the Count d'Angoulême, so soon as their respective ages should render their marriage practicable; and appointed the queen and Louise de Savoie joint regents of the kingdom in the interim. This testamentary document was drawn up on the 31st of May, 1505, and contained the following passage:—"Item. We very expressly will and command that our said daughter make her residence within our kingdom, without departing hence, until her marriage with our very dear and beloved nephew, the Duke de Valois, Count d'Angoulême, be duly solemnized."

The recovery of the king, however, which shortly supervened, rendered the will nugatory; and thus this extraordinary regency was not fated to take effect. It will, at the first glance, appear extraordinary that Anne de Bretagne should offer no opposition upon this second occasion to the betrothal of her daughter with Francis, after having so strenuously laboured hitherto to prevent it; but those whom she admitted to her intimacy were well aware that, although apparently passive, she was as much averse to it as ever, and as firmly resolved to discountenance their actual marriage; a fact which her inconsequent contribution of 100,000 crowns to the dowry of the princess sufficed ultimately to prove. The truth was, that she had by no means lost confidence in her final success; she had not yet relinquished the hope of again becoming a mother; and she had every reason to conclude that Louis XII, having so unhesitatingly released himself from his solemn obligation towards Charles de Luxembourg, would, should he find it expedient to shake off the trammels of this second engagement, be even less scrupulous than before; and she, therefore, continued to pursue her negotiations with Austria, as though the betrothal determined by the monarch was to have no influence over the ultimate disposal of her daughter.

The death of Isabella of Spain, which took place during this year induced Ferdinand to make overtures of peace to France; and, in order to affect this object, he demanded of Louis the hand of his beautiful niece, Germaine de Foix, the daughter of his sister Mary, who had married Jean de Foix, Vicomte de Narbonne; and the same time that he gave his ambassadors authority to make this demand, he also accredited them to Francis, the heir presumptive to the throne, believing that Louis was then near his end. The proposition was accepted; and by a treaty signed at Blois, on the 12th of October, and destined on this occasion to prove valid, Louis ceded to his niece his claim to the kingdom of Naples; on the condition, however, that should the princess die without issue, the Neapolitan territories should return to the crown of France. Ferdinand, on his part, pledged himself to pay to the French king 100,000 ducats annually for the space of ten years; while the two monarchs were to ally themselves and their respective interests so closely as to form, according to their own expression, "two souls in one body"; and to render to each other reciprocal assistance in every emergency without exception; Louis XII to furnish a thousand lances, and Ferdinand three thousand foot. The Spanish king moreover bound himself to grant a free pardon to all the Neapolitans who had embraced the French cause, and to restore their property.

The marriage was accordingly solemnized; and Ferdinand immediately left Spain, and proceeded to Naples.

Delivered for a time from all prospect of foreign aggression, Louis applied himself to the internal economy of his kingdom; and more desirous than ever to accomplish the union of his daughter with Francis, from having discovered the secret, and therefore more irritating opposition of the queen, he caused an assembly of the States-General to be convened at Tours, which was understood to originate with the nobles themselves, but where the counsellors of the king instructed them beforehand in the *rôle* which they were expected to enact; and directed them to enforce upon the monarch the expediency of annulling the treaty to which he had previously bound himself by oath. This done, Louis repaired to Tours, to give them the audience they had demanded; and received the deputies in the great hall of Plessis-les-Tours. On the right hand of the throne were stationed the Cardinals of Amboise and Narbonne, the chancellor, and a number of bishops; and on the left, Francis, Count d'Angoulême, upon whom he had already bestowed the title of Duke de Valois, the princes of the blood, the principal nobles of the kingdom, the president of the parliament of Paris, and some of the members of the council.

Thomas Bricot, a canon of Notre Dame, and senior deputy of Paris, was selected to open the proceedings, which he did with considerable eloquence; and after having expressed to his royal hearer the gratitude of the nation for all the benefits which his subjects had experienced under his rule—the reduction effected in the public taxes—the cessation of the formerly unrestrained licentiousness of the soldiery—and the reformations which had taken place in the courts of justice, alike in Paris and in the provinces, he concluded his harangue thus:—“For all these reasons he should be called Louis XII, the Father of his People!”

Loud acclamations greeted this burst of loyal affection; and the king was so much moved by the general enthusiasm that he could not control his tears.

When silence was restored, the orator sank upon his knee, an example which was followed by the whole of the deputies; and, in this position, he resumed: “Sire, we are here by your good pleasure, in order to proffer to you a request which involves the general good of your kingdom; and this is, that your very humble subjects beseech you to bestow Madame, your only daughter, in marriage upon Monsieur Francois here present, who is in all respects a Frenchman.”

By order of the king, the Chancellor Gui de Rochefort replied to the States' deputies, informing them that his majesty would confer with the princes of the blood upon the subject of the proposed alliance; and the assembly was then adjourned to the following day; when Louis, with a feigned reluctance which he was far from feeling, announced that “he condescended to their demand and request,” and desired that the betrothal of the two children should take place on the second day from that time, which was the feast of the Ascension. The youthful pair were accordingly solemnly affianced by the Cardinal d'Amboise in the presence of the whole court; and, previous to the ceremony, the chancellor read aloud the marriage articles, which secured to the Princess Claude, even in the event of sons being subsequently born to the king, the counties of Ast and Blois, the lordships of Soissons and Coucy, and 100,000 crowns, given, as we have already stated, by the queen.

Thus, long after she had despaired of such a triumph, Madame d'Angoulême witnessed her son's betrothal to the daughter of his sovereign, and saw him publicly recognised as heir-presumptive to the crown; and, had she not been compelled to look through so long a perspective of time—for, at this period, Francis had only attained his fourteenth and Claude her fourth year—even her restless ambition would have been satisfied.

The bad faith exhibited by Louis XII in this uncompromising violation of a solemn treaty, and the ambiguous manner in which he sought to excuse himself to the Austrian court, in an autograph letter which he addressed to Guillaume de Croy, Sire de Chièvres, to whom Philip had confided the government of the Low Countries during his absence in England, and in which he declared that he had liberated himself from his engagement “for reasons which would be too long

to relate”, convinced its recipient that a war must necessarily ensue between France and his own sovereign; and he accordingly took instant measures to fortify his frontier; but Philip, whose position in Spain was precarious, and who feared to engage in foreign hostilities while still contending with his father-in-law for the possession of Castile, replied evasively to the announcement which he received of the betrothal of the Princess Claude to the Duke Francis; asserting that he could not express any sentiment upon the subject “until he had first communicated and consulted with the king his father, and the king of Aragon his father-in-law, whom it concerned.” The letter terminated with fervent expressions of attachment to the person of the French monarch, but afforded no clue to the real feelings of the writer upon the point in question.

The death of the Archduke Philip, who perished of pestilential fever at Burgos, on the 25th of September, 1506, at the age of twenty-eight years, and only three months after his entry into Castile, suspended for a time all the warlike demonstrations which were beginning to develop themselves. The miserable and morbid state of mind of his widow, *Jeanne la Folle*, elder daughter of Isabella the Catholic, in right of whom she inherited the kingdom, necessitated the election of a more efficient governor. The condition of Queen Joanna was indeed deplorable; and forbade all hope of her ever again being enabled to assume the functions of a sovereign. Weak and suspicious, as well as jealous to a fearful excess, she had seldom, during the lifetime of her husband, left the suite of apartments appropriated to her use; where, incapable of pursuing any occupation or amusement, she passed her time in wandering through the rooms, uttering incoherent menaces, and occasionally indulging in still more incoherent bursts of grief. The death of Philip had confirmed this incipient madness. She caused, his body to be embalmed, and laid upon a bed of state in her own chamber, dressed in the most magnificent manner; while she sat beside it, with her eyes fixed upon the motionless countenance, waiting for the first sign of that returning life which she believed was by some miracle to be restored to him. Her jealousy still continued as great as ever; and from the period of the embalmment of the corpse, she suffered no female to enter the room in which he lay. Nor did she falter in her task even for an instant; it was in vain that she was entreated to open despatches, authorize orders, or sign state documents; she answered every appeal by pointing with her attenuated finger towards the lifeless body, and briefly uttering, “Wait!”

The helpless condition of her children awakened all the best sympathies of Louis XII; and he caused a letter to be written to Marguerite of Austria, in which he declared that he was willing to treat the sons of Philip as though they were his own. Maximilian, however, asserted that to him alone belonged the guardianship of his grandson, Charles de Luxembourg, who, in default of his mother, must be recognised as King of Castile; while Ferdinand, who had learnt the death of his son-in-law at Genoa, continued his route to Naples, calculating that the confusion which must exist in the kingdom at such a juncture, would materially conduce to his own popularity and welcome.

The calm was not, however, destined to be of long continuance; for while Spain, Germany, and France were passively awaiting the progress of events, Julius II, who filled the pontifical see, and who, in addition to his restless and warlike tastes, felt, or affected, as much contempt as dislike towards the two latter nations, which he qualified with the title of “barbarians,” resolved to take the initiative; and to restore to the dominion of the Church all the domains which had from time to time been wrested from it. His first object was the subjugation of Venice, as the most arrogant and the most powerful of those states which had openly declared their independence; but the cause which he had most at heart was the destruction of the French interest throughout Italy.

The costume which had been adopted by the sovereign pontiff, his flowing beard, and bent figure, gave him an appearance of extreme old age, although, according to one of his historians, he had at this period only reached his sixty-third year; but his mind was still strong and clear, and his passions violent. Haughty, irascible, and unscrupulous, he was nevertheless brave, judicious, and

full of love for his country; but the clerical habit sat loosely upon him, while his fingers clutched firmly the hilt of the sabre, or the bridle of the war-horse. As a warrior Julius II would have been a hero; as a pope he was only a licentious and grasping churchman.

Having raised both money and troops, the chagrin of Julius was excessive upon finding that a treaty into which he had induced Louis XII to enter with Maximilian, for their joint invasion of the Venetian territory—a treaty which had, moreover, been subsequently renewed at Cambray—was set aside by the more recent alliance formed between the French king and Ferdinand; a circumstance which compelled him to abandon for a time the reduction of the Venetians, and the recovery of the cities of Faenza and Rimini, of which, upon the death of Caesar Borgia, they had possessed themselves. Nevertheless he resolved not to delay the punishment of other delinquents, who had flung the yoke of the papal government from their necks; and the first against whom he directed his arms were Jean Paul Baglioni, the hereditary sovereign of Perugia, and Jean Bentivoglio, who held a similar sway over Bologna, two of the most powerful cities of the pontifical states. The latter had purchased the protection of France by the payment of a considerable tribute, and might therefore justly anticipate the aid of that country in an emergency like the present; the rather, moreover, that Bologna, over which his family had reigned for more than a century, was esteemed essential to the defence of the Milanese; but Julius was not to be deterred by this consideration; and, resolved at once to assert his own will and the authority of the Church, he called upon Louis to furnish him with troops, and upon the Venetians to remain neuter.

Taken by surprise, both the one and the other agreed to his demands against their better judgment; and the warlike pontiff left Rome on the 27th of August at the head of four hundred men-at-arms, and with a suite of twenty-four cardinals. He found no enemy to combat, however, in Baglioni, who terrified at his approach, advanced as far as Orvieto to meet him, and placed himself in his hands; a confidence which was repaid by the pope on his entrance into Perugia on the 13th of September, by the restoration of his patrimonial property, with permission to reside as a private citizen in the city which he had hitherto ruled; while to the city itself he restored its republican administration under the control and direction of the holy see. The Prince Bentivoglio proved less amenable to the pontifical pleasure, and calculated upon that assistance from France for which he had paid so heavy a price; nor is it doubtful that Louis himself, on recovering from his first panic at the unforeseen movement of the pope, would have willingly afforded it; as on hearing that Julius had announced in public that he could calculate upon the support of the French monarch in his attack upon Bologna, Louis vehemently denied that he had given any pledge to that effect. The Cardinal d'Amboise, however, who was anxious to avoid a rupture with the pope, so worked upon his mind that, once more falsifying a solemn engagement, he gave orders to M. de Chaumont, his lieutenant-general in the Milanese, to march upon Bologna with a force of six hundred lances, and three thousand Swiss; and thus pressed on the one hand by the army of the pope, and on the other by that of his anticipated ally, Bentivoglio had no resource save to take refuge with his family in the French camp; to abandon a principality which he had inherited from his ancestors; and ultimately to accept an asylum in Milan; which, together with a guarantee for the preservation of his property, was tendered to him by Chaumont. Julius II established at Bologna, as he had previously done at Perugia, a government which was almost republican, and which continued to support itself in all its integrity until the close of the 18th century.

The revolt of Genoa, which had been annexed to the crown of France at the same time as the duchy of Milan, immediately supervened; and Chaumont had no sooner interdicted all communication between that city and Lombardy, while Yves d'Allegre marched upon Monaco in order to compel the Genoese to raise the siege of the fortress, than the rebels, thus driven to engage in an open and decided warfare with France, calculated upon the assistance of their allies to enable them to sustain so unequal a conflict. The Pope was their countryman, and, as they well knew, favourable to their interests; while Maximilian had already warned Louis not to molest the Genoese, whom he regarded as members of the empire: thus, believing themselves secure, they threw off the authority of France; and in compliance with their ancient custom, elected a new doge from among their own citizens, one Paul de Novi, a silk dyer by trade, and a man of extraordinary



judgment, vigour, and decision.

Louis XII, enraged by the wanton and barbarous cruelties exercised against the French prisoners who fell into the hands of the enemy, and whom they crucified, mutilated, and tortured, without distinction of age or sex; and moreover convinced that he owed the revolt to the machinations of the emperor Maximilian and the Pope, at once placed himself at the head of an army of 50,000 men; and, accompanied by the Dukes of Bourbon, Alençon, and Lorraine, proceeded in person to attack the rebels. The royal forces had no sooner reached the entrance of the mountains of Genoa, than the troops whom Paul de Novi had intrusted with the defence of the defiles, fled before them, and the French encamped without opposition in the valley of Polsevera. Still, however, the city itself was enabled to offer a formidable resistance; its natural resources being so great as to render it impregnable at a period when war had not yet become a science; and the generals of Louis XII were prepared for a long and murderous campaign. But Genoa was already divided against herself; intestine contentions had sapped her strength; the wealthy citizens, apprehensive that should the city be captured it would be delivered over to pillage, refused to offer any resistance; while the lower orders, who had eagerly taken up arms in the hope of profit, upon finding themselves forsaken by their leaders, lost courage; and although one body of men fought bravely on the height of the Belvidere, and had even, by their preparations for defence, caused considerable anxiety to Louis, it was a solitary effort; which was frustrated through the valour and intrepidity of Bayard, who having been appointed equerry to the king, had accompanied him in this expedition, while still suffering from the effects of a wound received at Garigliano.

The defeat of this outpost, upon which great hopes had been based, was so complete and so rapid that it struck terror into the garrison of the citadel, who immediately abandoned their post; and although the Genoese made a vigorous attempt to re-take it, they were repulsed; and thus found themselves compelled to send deputies to the French king, to announce their submission; while Paul de Novi evacuated the city with a strong body of his companions in arms.

On the 29th of April, Louis entered the conquered city on horseback, with his drawn sword in his hand; while the magistrates and people received him on their knees, holding olive branches, and uttering loud cries for mercy. They were answered by a promise of pardon, but that pardon was far from unconditional; seventy-nine individuals having been exempted from the amnesty, and hanged upon gibbets erected in the public streets; while the city, although protected from pillage, was condemned to a fine of 300,000 florins, equal to half the amount of the national taxes of France; 100,000 of which were, however, remitted, in consequence of the utter inability of the citizens to meet the demand; but in lieu thereof a strong fortress named Codifa was constructed near the outworks at their expense; all their privileges, as well as their treaty with France, were committed to the flames; and a new municipality was finally established; while, on the 5th of June following, Paul de Novi, who had taken refuge in Corsica, and Demetrius Giustiniani, another of their generals, were also executed. Louis then disbanded his army, and with a small suite proceeded to Milan, “where”, says ‘the Loyal Servant’, “Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, called by the French, the Sire Jean Jacques de Trivulce, gave him one of the grandest feasts that ever was beheld in the house of a private nobleman; for, from all one can learn, there were present at it more than five hundred guests, not including ladies, of whom there were an hundred or an hundred and twenty; and it was impossible to be better entertained than they were, with dishes of the first and of the second course, with farces, plays, and other pastimes”. Moreover, another historian informs us that, at this entertainment, “the king opened the ball with the Marchioness of Mantua, and that the Cardinals of Narbonne and St. Severin were among the dancers.”

Such an assurance appears startling until we remember that the higher churchmen of that period emancipated themselves without scruple from all the trammels of their, holy calling; and thus, while the cardinals above named joined in the *bransle*, the Bishop of Liège, another of the thirty prelates who had accompanied the monarch to Genoa, was studying the art of war, which he afterwards practised so skilfully in the cause of Charles V.

From Milan Louis XII proceeded to Savona, in order to have an interview with Ferdinand, who was about to resume the government of Castile, vacant by the early death of the Archduke Philip. The Spanish sovereign was accompanied by his young wife, by Germaine de Foix, and Gonsalvo di Cordova, of whose popularity he had become so jealous that he feared to leave him at Naples. The admiration and respect which Louis entertained for this great captain were shown in the reception which he gave him; nor did he appear to remember how greatly he had suffered through the very qualities which elicited his regard. At his request, the highest honour which could then be accorded to a subject was conceded to Gonsalvo, who was permitted to occupy a seat at the royal table; while towards his niece the French king exhibited a warmth of affection, which, however it might tend to advance the interests of her husband, was far from pleasing to his nobility, towards whom she conducted herself with singular haughtiness and disrespect, not even excepting her brother, the young Duke de Nemours; showing herself, upon every occasion, as inimical to the French as though she had been born of another and an antagonistic nation.

Louis had been desirous, during his sojourn in Italy, to secure an interview with the pope; but although the restless and ambitious prelate had availed himself of the French arms to subdue Bologna, and was even contemplating a fresh demand upon their services for the reduction of the Venetians, he affected to feel aggrieved and degraded by what he denominated the introduction of the barbarians into Italy; and, consequently, when the Cardinal d'Amboise solicited him to remain at Bologna in order to receive the French king, he immediately departed for Rome; it being no part of his policy to conciliate, where it was his ambition to command.

CHAPTER III.

[1508-12.]

INTENT upon the subjugation of Venice, Julius II, conscious of the unpopularity of that republic with the other European states, craftily endeavoured to increase the general feeling of dislike and suspicion which had been excited by her arrogance and prosperity, into jealousy and disgust, nor was it difficult for him to attain his object. By her downfall, every other neighbouring kingdom became more or less aggrandized; and thus, having previously demanded from the senate the restoration of the possessions of the Church in Romagna, a demand with which he was aware they would not comply, and thus, by their refusal, secured the pretext which he desired for commencing hostilities; he addressed himself simultaneously to Louis, Maximilian, and Ferdinand, pointing out the several advantages to be secured by each, when they should have conquered the haughty republic against which they were leagued. His proposition was eagerly accepted; ambition and cupidity alike tended to render it palatable; plenipotentiaries were appointed; and on the pretext of arranging the settlement of the Low Countries, they met at Cambray, in October, 1508, and in the course of December, the stipulations of the treaty were concluded.

Meanwhile, the Venetians, who had been made acquainted that a league was forming against them, despatched an ambassador to Louis, to expostulate with him upon this breach of faith; while they endeavoured to propitiate both Maximilian and Ferdinand, and solicited help on all sides, but ineffectually; and they at length boldly resolved to brave the danger unaided, even perilous as it appeared.

One of the conditions of this treaty stipulated that the French king should enter the Venetian territories forty days before any of the other sovereigns took the field; an arrangement which, however suspicious it appeared, did not deter Louis XII from his project, and immediately (at the close of Easter, 1509) he placed himself once more at the head of his finest mounted troops, amounting to a force of 20,000 men, an equal number of Swiss, and a strong body of infantry, and descended into Italy. The first division of his army was commanded by Trivulzio and Chaumont; the second, by the king in person; and the third, or rear-guard, by Francis Duke de Longueville; while a number of the most distinguished captains of France, either in that or any subsequent age, followed his banner. It was, indeed, a gathering of her best chivalry; for they numbered among them Charles de Bourbon, the future Connetable; Gaston de Foix, fated to die so early and so honourably; Robert de la Mark, the Marquis de la Palice, the Scottish hero d'Aubigny, Bayard, and many other individuals of note; including the Seigneurs de Molart, Richemont, Vandenesse, and La Crote, the Comte de Roussillon, the Captain Odet, and the Cadet de Duras, who were each accompanied by their separate band of followers.

The royal army passed the Adda without molestation, but were compelled to retreat before the Count of Pitigliano, who drove out the French garrisons of Trevi and Rivolta, and sacked both those cities; a fact which decided Louis immediately to force the Venetians to an engagement. The rashness of their general, d'Alviano, seconded his wishes, despite the opposition of Pitigliano, who refused to act in concert with him, and actually retreated with a portion of his cavalry. The admirable position of d'Alviano's troops enabled him to make a very successful attack, the nature of the ground not permitting the French horse to lend any efficient aid; and, for a brief interval, the main body, or battle as it was then called, which was led by Louis in person, was in considerable jeopardy; when a skilful movement of the rear-guard, commanded by Bayard, robbed the enemy of their advantage, and enabled the cavalry to advance to their support. D'Alviano

fought with desperation, and was severely wounded several times during the conflict; but it was not until he saw fourteen or fifteen thousand of his best troops lying dead upon the field, that he suffered himself to be made prisoner by the young Seigneur de Vandenesse, and conducted to the lodging of the king. This battle, so glorious to the French arms, took place in a village called Agnadello, on the 14th of May, 1509.

Success continued to attend the French army; and although Louis remained a couple of days upon the field, he had, within a fortnight, possessed himself of the districts of Ghiara d'Adda and Caravaggio. On the 17th of May, Bergamo sent the keys of the city, and laid them at his feet, while the citadel only held out three days longer. Caravaggio was taken by assault, its inhabitants hanged from the battlements; and not only the garrison, but even the citizens of Peschiera, which had attempted to defend itself, were put to the sword without exception, although some among them offered a heavy ransom for their lives. Louis XII, exasperated by their opposition, refused all mercy, declaring that he would, by striking terror into his enemies, preserve himself from all future attempts at rebellion;—a resolution which was received with much dissatisfaction by his nobility, who were indignant to see gentle blood thus wantonly spilled by the desecrating hand of the executioner. Brescia, Crema, and the fortress of Pizzighettona, were his next conquests; and, finally, the citadel of Cremona, having held out for fifteen days after the city had surrendered, capitulated in its turn. Thus, before the termination of the month, Louis XII once more found himself in possession of all that portion of the Venetian territory which had been apportioned to him by the treaty of Cambray; and which augmented the royal revenues of the duchy of Milan by the enormous sum of two hundred thousand ducats.

The haughty republic, reduced to utter despair, used every effort to propitiate the powers which were leagued against her; and Louis, although his own task was ended, remained two months longer in Italy, in order to watch the progress of events. The Pope at once rejected the overtures of the humbled senate; and only replied to their petition by sending an army into Romagna, under the command of his nephew, Francesco-Maria de la Rovera, Duke d'Urbino, who in the course of a few days made himself master of Faenza, Rimini, Ravenna, and Cervia; while Maximilian, who had hitherto been delayed by want of funds from aggressive measures, prepared to attack Trevisa; which had, however, through his enforced tardiness, secured time for resistance. The king of Spain obtained by cession both Brindisi and Otranto in his own kingdom of Naples; and the keys of Verona, Vicenza, and Padua, which had been delivered to Louis, were by him transferred to the emperor. The Duke of Ferrara, who had joined the invading armies on the 30th of May, possessed himself without resistance of Polesina de Rovigo, Este, Montagnana, and Monselica, the ancient patrimony of his family; and the Marquis of Mantua occupied Asola and Lunato, which had been adjudged to him. Finally, Ferdinand had at last undertaken the siege of Trani; and the Venetians had ordered their generals to deliver up to the Spaniards all the territory which they still held in the kingdom of Naples.

Venice, thus dismembered, was considered to be totally subjugated. The weakness and vacillation of Maximilian, however, tended once more to give them hope. He had no army; all his monetary resources, great as they had recently been, were utterly exhausted; while, too suspicious to entrust his ministers with the conduct of public affairs, and professing to be sufficient to himself, no one could fathom his ultimate designs, and thus all his measures were futile and perplexed; and he spent his time in hurrying from one frontier to the other, harassing his attendants, and accomplishing nothing. On receiving the keys of Padua he had sent only eight hundred lansquenets to form its garrison, a force totally inadequate to such a duty, the city being six miles in circumference; and the Venetians were no sooner apprised of this fact, than they determined to retake it, which they did by stratagem, and with great bloodshed, the lansquenets destroying about fifteen hundred of the citizens and soldiery, before they were themselves killed to a man.

The Count de Pitigliano was immediately apprised of this event; and, with the survivors of Agnadello, hastened to throw himself into the city, exerting all his energies to repair and fortify it, and resolving to defend it to the last; a resolution which enraged the tardy Maximilian, who vowed

to go thither in person, and avenge himself: but when he arrived before the gates, he found himself without men, money, or courage to undertake such a task single-handed; and accordingly he applied to Louis for assistance; who, being on the point of recrossing the Alps on his return to France, did not allow the temporary prosperity of the Venetians to delay his journey; but contented himself with leaving on the frontier of Verona, five hundred French lances, under the command of the Marquis de la Palice, with orders to march to the succour of the emperor, should he require their aid; a concession to which he was influenced by the hope that Maximilian, crippled for want of money, might be induced to sell to him Verona and its dependent territory to the banks of the Adige, which he was desirous to secure as a sale frontier to the duchy of Milan.

Chancing to encounter Bayard as he was quitting the castle to obey these orders, M. de la Palice invited him to join the expedition; to which he joyfully consented. The departure of Louis had, however, inspired the Venetians with new confidence; they materially strengthened the garrison of Padua, retook Vicenza; and were marching upon Verona, when the French general compelled them to retreat, and once more to evacuate Vicenza; but the courage and success of the French captains was neutralized by the imbecile conduct of Maximilian, who, full of great projects, suffered present opportunity to escape him. Moreover, the Swiss mercenaries, who formed a very considerable portion of his force, deserted in great numbers; and he at length abandoned all further effort, and with a pusillanimity which disgusted his whole army, decamped suddenly in the night, with a few of his personal attendants, leaving his generals to raise the siege, and retreat as they best could.

On the return of Louis XII to France, the queen advanced as far as Grenoble to welcome him, accompanied by Francis, Duke de Valois, and his sister Marguerite; an attention to which she was the rather urged by the peculiarity of her position, which enabled her to render it the more marked and welcome to Louis, for Anne de Bretagne was once more full of hope. She was about again to become a mother; and she was anxious to rejoin her royal husband before her hour of trial and, as she trusted, of triumph also, should arrive. The result, however, offered only a new disappointment in the birth of a second princess, Madame Renée de France. The king did not, as had been anticipated, take up his residence in the capital, but proceeded at once to Blois; and merely visiting Paris at long intervals, held his court at the former place, or at Tours, Bourges, and Lyons; occasionally making a brief sojourn in Normandy or Brittany. Nor had he long returned to his own kingdom before he began to experience great inconvenience and uneasiness from the effects of the treaty of Cambray. The pope, whom he had in some degree constrained to second his views, had never forgiven what he considered as the undue and excessive exercise of his power; while he was compelled to perceive that he had destroyed the equilibrium of Italy by subjecting the Neapolitans to the supremacy of Spain, and putting the Germans in possession of Venice. The Swiss had, moreover, demanded from Louis an increase of pay, to which he was unwilling to accede; a circumstance which encouraged Julius to make an effort to detach them from his service; and in this attempt he readily succeeded through the medium of a crafty churchman, named Matthew Scheiner, the nephew of the Bishop of Sion, whom he created cardinal under the same title; and whose impassioned eloquence and martial spirit soon enabled him to induce a belief among them that a war with Louis XII would be as acceptable in the eyes of Heaven as a crusade against the infidels. It was not long, therefore, ere they consented to make a descent upon Italy, as the servants of the church; and thus the French king saw himself not only deprived of their assistance, but even called upon to include them among his enemies.

Ferdinand, true to his treacherous and truckling character, having made his profit of the treaty of Cambray, renounced it without a single scruple; and entered into a league with the pope, urging upon his son-in-law, the king of England, the expediency of following his example; and accepting from the warlike pontiff a full investiture of the kingdom of Naples.

Thoroughly awakened to a sense of the evil which threatened him on all sides, Louis would gladly have taken the field, and defied the pope and his allies, with the single aid of Maximilian; but the instability of that prince rendered such a measure hazardous, and he consequently resolved, as a more judicious medium, to call a council of his own prelates at Tours; and to

demand of them if Julius II had the right to levy a war of which neither religion nor the interests of the church were the ostensible objects; or if opposition to a conflict purely secular in its interests might not be righteously opposed. The reply of the council was favourable to his wishes; the king was authorized by its unanimous voice to act on the offensive as well as the defensive; and was, moreover, assured that any papal excommunication which the war might induce would be null and void; while, in addition to this solemn decision, they raised a large subsidy on the church possessions in furtherance of his views.

Meanwhile the pope, who appeared to disregard both his age and his infirmities where his ambition was enlisted, and who was extremely anxious to repossess himself of the duchy of Ferrara, assembled a considerable army; and in the midst of one of the most severe winters which had ever been experienced in Italy, proceeded in person to Mirandola, where he forgot for a time the churchman in the soldier; encouraged and superintended the labourers in the trenches; and to the dismay of the cardinals by whom he was accompanied, not only directed the planting of the artillery, but even commanded the assaults, and exposed himself with the greatest recklessness until a breach was effected, which, owing to the moat being deeply frozen, rendered all further defence on the part of the besieged impossible. On arriving at Santo Felice, a large village near Mirandola, Julius had despatched a herald to the Countess Francesca, the natural daughter of Gian Giacomo Trivulgio, and widow of Ludovico Pico, to summon her to deliver up the city into his hands; but she resolutely refused to betray her trust; nor was it until the breach was effected that she surrendered.

From Mirandola the pope turned his arms against Ferrara, and again attacked Bologna; but failing in his attempt, returned to Ravenna.

The death of the Cardinal d'Amboise, which occurred at Lyons on the 25th of May, 1510, where Louis XII was then holding his court, in order to keep a strict eye upon the events transpiring in Italy, was a heavy blow to the French monarch, who resolved thenceforward to govern in his own person; a determination which proved fatal to his administration; and meanwhile the pope perfected a league which he dignified with the title of "Holy," and in which he prevailed upon Ferdinand to join, and on Henry VIII to accede; while the Swiss were engaged to attack the Milanese.

Louis XII met this emergency with a kingly spirit; his army in Italy was augmented, and he made every preparation for resisting the combination which had been formed against him. Gaston de Foix, Duke de Nemours, his nephew, was appointed general of his forces, although yet a mere youth who had not attained his twenty-third year; and the result justified the confidence which had been placed in him. He saved Bologna, which the papal troops were about to besiege; and had not his little army been exhausted by forced marches in the most inclement weather, would have had an opportunity of utterly defeating the combined forces of the league. He had, however, scarcely taken possession of Bologna, when he learnt that the city of Brescia had been treacherously delivered over to the Venetians, and that the garrison was incapable of long resistance; upon which, with incredible exertion and fatigue, he hastened to the rescue of that place, fought two battles, achieved two victories, and on arriving before the gates, summoned the city to surrender, being anxious if possible to avoid further slaughter. The summons was, however, disregarded, although the citizens were desirous that it should be complied with; the attack commenced, and the carnage which ensued was fearful. The Venetians fought desperately, but in vain. The city was taken; the garrison and population put to the sword, and the town delivered up to all the horrors of pillage and violence. Bayard fell wounded by a pike through the thigh, which broke in the wound, and was borne to the rear by two archers; the citizens, women, and children harassed the invading troops by hurling bricks and stones, and even pouring boiling water from the windows of the houses; but ultimately, between seven and eight thousands of the Venetians fell in action, or were butchered as they attempted to escape; while the loss of the French did not exceed fifty men. Unhappily, these no sooner saw themselves masters of the city than the most brutal

excesses supervened. Monasteries and convents were invaded, private families were ruined and disgraced, and the gross booty secured by the conquerors was estimated at three millions of crowns; a circumstance which ultimately proved the destruction of the French cause in Italy; numbers of the individuals thus suddenly enriched forsaking their posts and returning to their homes; enfeebling the army of De Foix, and conducing to the fatal termination of the battle of Ravenna.

Apprehensive, despite the brilliant commencement of this campaign, that the coalition formed against him might prove too powerful to admit of his ultimate success, Louis XII forwarded instructions to the young prince to compel the enemy to a speedy engagement before the impression produced by his recent good fortune had time to become weakened; and, in obedience to this command, the duke advanced upon Ravenna by Finale and Modena; but his eagerness to engage the army of the league was not greater than the determination of Raymond de Cardona, the Viceroy of Naples, to evade the encounter. Near Bologna he was joined by the Duke of Ferrara, whom he appointed, in conjunction with La Palice, to the command of the vanguard; and this arrangement made, he advanced to Castel St Piero, where he was met by the combined armies of the pope and the King of Spain. The Cardinal de Medici (afterwards Leo X) was the supreme head of the adverse forces, of which the military command was entrusted to Cardona, Fabrizio Colonna, and the Marquis de Pescara.

“They formed one of the finest armies for its size,” says the Loyal Servant, “that hath ever been seen, and one of the best appointed. Don Raymundo de Cardona, Viceroy of Naples, was at the head of it, and had with him twelve or fourteen hundred gendarmes, whereof eight hundred rode barbed horses. They were all gold and azure, and mounted on the best chargers and Spanish horses that were ever beheld. Moreover, for the space of two years, they had enjoyed the free range of Romagna, a good and fertile land, where they had provisions to their hearts’ desire. There were only twelve thousand foot; two thousand foot under the charge of a Captain *Ramassot*, and ten thousand Spaniards, Biscayens, and Navarrese, conducted by the Count Pietro da Navarro, who was captain-general of the whole body of infantry. He had formerly led his men into Barbary against the Moors, and with them had gained two or three battles. In short, they were all men experienced in war, and skilled to a marvel in the exercise of arms”.

This brilliant army waited under the walls of Faenza until the French general should take the initiative, which he speedily did; and, after having despatched Bayard to reconnoitre the enemy’s position, he at once prepared to give them battle. Cardona, acting upon the advice of Pietro da Navarro, had resolved to keep within the entrenchments, but the guns of the French soon compelled him to abandon this attempt; and they were no sooner forced than the engagement became general. For eight weary hours the work of carnage went on; but the Viceroy of Naples, soon losing faith in the success of his troops, took flight early in the day, with a number of his cavalry; and never drew bit until he had reached Ancona, a distance of nearly thirty leagues.

The Duke de Nemours was no sooner apprised of this fact than he sent the Sire Louis d’Ars and Bayard in pursuit of the fugitives, many of whom were overtaken and cut to pieces. The infantry, meanwhile, remained firm; but after having received the murderous fire of the artillery of the Duke of Ferrara, as well as that of the French themselves, they became shaken; although not until the French foot, which had been exposed throughout the whole action, while their enemies were partially covered by the ditch, had lost thirty-eight out of the forty captains who accompanied them to the field.

When he saw them waver, the impetuosity of Fabrizio Colonna could no longer be controlled; he beheld not only his own safety, but also that of the brave men who followed him, perilled by the cowardice of the recreant Cardona, whom he stigmatized as the “Miscreant Moor”; and, disregarding the orders of Navarro, he passed out of the camp with a small body of cavalry, and entered the open plain, boldly charging the centre of the French forces. It was, however, too late; his troops were already enfeebled, and the enemy were masters of the field. After a desperate but hopeless conflict, during which the archers of the guard, being unable in the *mélee* to make use of

their legitimate weapons, availed themselves of the small axes, which they carried in their belts, and with which they made fearful havoc, the fortune of the day was soon decided. Colonna himself was made prisoner by Alphonso d'Este, who, subsequently, granted him both liberty and life; and among the other captives of note were the Cardinal de' Medici, Count Pietro da Navarro, the Marquises de la Paluda and Pescara, with many others of less mark; while their slain amounted to nearly sixteen thousand men, among whom were many of their bravest leaders.

Nevertheless the victory of Ravenna was a melancholy triumph for the French arms, and bought by some of the best blood of the nation. Two companies of the enemy who had been successfully engaged with some Gascon and Picardy troops, and who were anxious to make their way to Ravenna, were encountered by the Bastard du Tay, and compelled to retreat along the canal. During this movement some of the number fled; one of whom chancing to pass near the Duke de Nemours, and anxious to escape from this new danger, answered his inquiry by declaring that the Spaniards had beaten them; an announcement which maddened the young prince, who had long ere this considered the victory no longer doubtful; and who, rendered desperate by his fears, sprang upon the causeway by which the two bands were retreating, accompanied only by fourteen or fifteen gendarmes. Unfortunately the fugitives had reloaded their firelocks, which they instantly discharged, and then rushed upon the little party with their pikes. The position of the duke and his followers did not admit of their defending themselves with any effect, the causeway being narrow, and bordered on one hand by the canal, and on the other by an impassable ditch; but they, nevertheless, struggled bravely to the last; nor did they yield until every man was either killed or disabled. The duke's horse was hamstrung; upon which he flung himself to the ground, and continued the fight on foot; Adet de Foix, Sire de Lautrec, who was beside him, defended him with his own body until he fell covered with wounds; and he then exerted all his remaining strength in calling out to the Spaniards to spare the life of the prince, who was the brother of their queen. The appeal, however, was made in vain; and the unhappy young hero fell covered with wounds.—“From the chin to the forehead”, says the Loyal Servant with affectionate simplicity, “he had fourteen or fifteen; clear proof that the gentle prince had never turned his back.”

Thus, in his twenty-third year fell the brave Gaston de Foix, by the hands of a small band of fugitives, in whom his very name inspired terror. Within three months he had gained four battles; the future was bright before him; he was the idol of the army which he led; and secret treaties had already been set on foot to secure to him the kingdom of Naples. But now all was over; and the maimed and disfigured corpse was borne through the camp, amid the tears and lamentations of those who had so lately thrilled at his battle-cry.

The brave young Sire de Viverots, the only son of the Seigneur Yves d'Allègre, who was in the train of the prince, fell mortally wounded into the canal, where he perished miserably; and his father also perished during a charge of infantry. Lautrec, although grievously wounded, ultimately recovered; but the slaughter in the French army was estimated at six thousand men; among whom were many great and noble names. Well might Louis XII, when congratulated upon the conquest of Ravenna, exclaim, in the regret and sadness of his spirit: “Wish my enemies such victories!”

On the day after the battle, the French adventurers and lansquenets pillaged the ill-fated city, despite the opposition of the Sire de la Palice, who had been unanimously elected general-in-chief of the army after the death of Gaston de Foix. Ravenna had capitulated, and he had consequently been anxious to spare to its inhabitants the horrors of a sack; his anxiety was, however, unavailing; the volunteers and mercenaries of his army entered the gates by stratagem, and the unhappy and conquered citizens were outraged and despoiled.

At this juncture intelligence reached the French army from the Seigneur Trivulzio, that the Venetians and Swiss were contemplating a descent upon the duchy of Milan, and that suspicions were entertained of the good faith of the emperor; upon which it was decided that they should immediately return to the Milanese, carrying with them the body of Gaston, which was interred within the Dome with regal pomp; upwards of ten thousand mourners following it to the grave, the greater number mounted, and in deep sables; while forty standards, which had been captured



from the enemy, were borne before him trailing in the dust, and his own banners held aloft immediately in the rear, as emblematic of their triumph over these prostrate trophies.

The battle of Ravenna cost Louis XII one of the brightest jewels of his Crown,

CHAPTER IV.

[1513.]

THE consternation created in France by the dearly-bought victory of Ravenna, was not less deep in Rome. The holy conclave saw, in the success of the French arms, the ultimate subjugation of Italy; and were alarmed accordingly. Bitter as the concession could not fail to be, they urged the pope to offer terms to Louis, which might avert the evil; and Julius appeared inclined to satisfy their wishes; but at that precise juncture, the arrival of Giulio de' Medici at Rome once more determined him to pursue his own designs. He came on a mission from his cousin the captive cardinal, whom he had visited in his prison, after having himself fled from the field with Cardona; and now hastened to see the pope, in the name of his relative, and to represent to him the crippled condition of the French army, bereft of its general. He found instant attention. Julius had already secured the support of the vacillating Maximilian; he was aware that Louis, continually harassed by the pious scruples of the queen—who, never having regained her health after the birth of the Princess Renée, either felt, or affected to feel, that her sufferings were a consequence of unholy and sacrilegious warfare in which he was engaged—would gladly terminate the struggle; and, accordingly, he refused all overtures towards a reconciliation; and instructed the cardinal of Sion to raise as many Swiss troops as might offer themselves, in order to effect a descent into the Milanese, under the specious pretext of restoring the duchy to the young Maximilian Sforza, the son of Ludovic the Moor.

The Swiss answered readily to the call of the pope, and engaged themselves to the number of twenty thousand in his service; while Maximilian, although still considered as the ally of France, and the enemy of the Venetians, did not hesitate to accord to the latter, on the receipt of an equivalent in money, a truce of ten months; with permission for the Swiss to march through his territories, in order to join them in their attack upon the army of Louis.

La Palice, who had succeeded to the command on the death of the Duke de Nemours, made every preparation for resistance; but his exertions were rendered nugatory by the fact that, on the day which succeeded his occupation of the fortress of Pontevico, as a central position whence he could communicate with the other divisions of his army, a letter arrived from the emperor, commanding all his subjects to withdraw from the French service; and as a considerable portion of his troops were German lansquenets, M. de la Palice at once saw himself rendered powerless, and was enabled with difficulty to retreat to Ast. The young archduke Maximilian entered Milan without opposition; the Genoese revolted, and elected as their doge one of the Fregosi, a declared enemy to France; and the vaunt of Julius, that he would expel the barbarians from Italy, was at length accomplished.

Nor was the loss of the Milanese the only subject of disquietude to which Louis was at this period exposed. Ferdinand of Spain, who was anxious to possess himself of Navarre, had entered into a negotiation with Henry VIII, in which he pretexted a desire to regain Guienne, to which England still affected a claim; and solicited a passage through the kingdom of Navarre, which was refused, upon the plea that the king had resolved to observe a strict neutrality. The Marquis of Dorset, who had already landed in Spain with a force of fifty thousand men, and marched towards the French frontier, was no sooner apprised of this circumstance, than he applied to the Spanish king for further instructions; when Ferdinand, who had only sought for help from England in order to effect the conquest of Navarre, of which Jean d'Albert was the sovereign in right of his wife, the spirited but unfortunate Catherine de Foix, endeavoured to impress upon the English general the necessity of conquering that country before the attempt upon Guienne could be

accomplished; a proof of perfidy which so disgusted the marquis, that he at once abandoned his cause, and withdrew with his troops, who had already suffered severely from the effects of the climate.

Nevertheless Ferdinand pursued his purpose, and demanded from the Navarrese sovereigns that they should place in his hands either the Prince de Viana their son, or all the fortified places throughout their dominions, as a guarantee that they would offer no assistance to France against the Holy League; but Jean d'Albret, aware that he could place no reliance upon the word of the Spanish king, after having in vain protested his intention of remaining neuter, and perceiving that the Duke of Alba was advancing into his territories at the head of the Aragonese army, caused his queen to retire to Bearn, and threw himself into Pampeluna, where he awaited in vain for a time the arrival of succour from France. Nor did he even find support from his own subjects, who, far from taking up arms in defence of their country, talked only of submission; and he at length found himself compelled to retreat beyond the Pyrenees, when Pampeluna opened its gates to the Duke of Alba, an example which was followed by all the cities of Spanish Navarre, within the space of a few days.

Louis XII, even disheartened as he was by a series of reverses which had overthrown all the previous glory of the French arms; driven from Italy; shorn of his allies, all of whom had suffered like himself; and menaced upon his frontiers, by the emperor, the Swiss, the Low Countries, England, and Spain; could not, however, see the King of Navarre, whose allegiance to himself had been the alleged pretext of his overthrow, thus made the spoil of his treacherous enemy; and he accordingly marched an army to his assistance, under the joint command of the dukes of Bourbon and Longueville; but as these two powerful nobles could not agree upon points of precedence, and their misunderstanding was likely to injure the interests of the expedition, Louis decided upon investing the young Duke de Valois with the supreme command.

Inflamed by the glorious example of the youthful Gaston de Foix, his predecessor, Francis eagerly assumed the post thus tendered to him; and had no sooner reached the camp than he marched the French forces to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, of which Colonel Villalva had possessed himself, and where the Duke of Alba had shortly afterwards taken up his position with the whole of his army. The troops which had lately evacuated Italy, joined the forces of the Duke de Valois; and La Palice, their most experienced general, became his counsellor.

On arriving near the position of the enemy, Francis endeavoured to force them to an engagement; and for this purpose sent a message of defiance to the Spanish general, which was, however, declined; whereupon La Palice seized the pass of the valley of Roncal, one of the mediums of communication between Navarre and Bearn; and in the course of the month of October, conducted one of the three divisions of the French army by this defile within two leagues of Pampeluna, under the nominal command of the King of Navarre; while the Duke de Bourbon overran Guipuscoa, taking and demolishing several fortified places; and the remaining division held the Duke of Alba in check at Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port. Nevertheless, the Spanish general succeeded in occupying Roncevaux a few hours before La Palice, and thence marched into Pampeluna, where he was besieged by the French troops. It was, however, too late to retrieve the fatal mistake which had been made in suffering him to reach the city. The weather had become severe, snow had fallen to a great depth, provisions were scarce and uncertain, and the roads almost impassable for artillery. Moreover, the Aragonese were advancing on all sides to support the besieged city; and after a few inconsequent skirmishes, the French were compelled to strike their camp, and to demolish the battery which they had raised, in order to repass the Pyrenees: an effort which they only accomplished at the expense of their heavy baggage, and thirteen cannon taken by the Spaniards during their retreat.

Unpropitious as the campaign had proved, it had at least enabled the young prince to display alike the talent and the courage which gave earnest of his future prowess; and he was received on his return with all the honour due to a more successful general. The gloom which overhung the nation could not quell the animal spirits consequent upon his youth and temperament; and while

his royal uncle was absorbed in anxiety and irresolution as to the new alliance which it had become imperative upon him to form either with the emperor or the Venetians, in order to make head against the enemies by whom he was threatened, Francis entered with enthusiasm into all the amusements of the capital; and at the head of a reckless band of young nobles, indulged himself in every species of dissipation.

The extreme youth of his affianced wife offering no check to his libertine propensities, they soon became uncontrollable; and it was at this period that he formed a *liaison* which affords upon several points so perfect an insight into his character that it cannot be passed over in silence.

A certain advocate in Paris, whose professional acumen and skill had secured to him an immense reputation, had married, in the decline of life, a beautiful young girl of eighteen or nineteen years of age, whose parents, dazzled by the wealth and station of the suitor, had induced her to bestow her hand upon him. Unfortunately for both parties, she acted only up to the strict letter of her bond; and, although surrounded by luxury and indulgence, rather tolerated than loved the husband who had thus been forced upon her. Nevertheless, although fond of pleasure and admiration, her conduct had been sufficiently circumspect to satisfy the worthy advocate; who, conscious that he was no longer of an age to command the devotion of a young and pretty woman, suffered her to participate in all the amusements which were offered to her acceptance without objection or mistrust. It chanced, however, that at a marriage festival she was remarked by the young Duke de Valois, who, although only in his sixteenth year, had already begun to yield to that passionate admiration of female beauty, which throughout life formed one of the distinguishing features of his character; and who, despite the indulgent testimony of Madame d'Alençon and Brantôme, his uncompromising panegyrists, sacrificed to this licentious propensity, not only his sense of personal dignity, but even his respect for religion, the semblance of which he did not scruple to assume in order to veil his irregularities. Upon the occasion just named, the prince made the acquaintance of the fair citizen; nor did he hesitate before the close of the evening to declare to her the passion with which she had inspired him. The young beauty listened without displeasure, for she was aware of the rank of her new admirer, and her vanity was flattered by such a conquest; nor was it long ere she yielded to his passionate protestations so far as to consent to receive him under the roof of her husband when that husband should be from home. Accordingly a rendezvous was appointed; and the prince, disguised in order that the honour of the lady might not be unnecessarily compromised, directed his steps towards her residence, accompanied by certain of his gentlemen, whom he quitted at the entrance of the street, directing them, should they hear no noise within a quarter of an hour, to retire where they pleased, but to return during the course of the night in order to conduct him back to the palace; after which he proceeded to the house of the advocate, where he found the door unfastened, as had been previously arranged; and hastened to ascend the staircase to the apartment of the lady. It appeared, however, that the husband, from some cause or other, had returned home unexpectedly; and the young prince had not reached the first floor ere he encountered him, taper in hand, and was aware that retreat had already become impossible. In this emergency the precocious presence of mind of Francis did not desert him for an instant; but courteously greeting the man of law with a smile upon his lips, he said in his blindest tone:

“M. l'Advocat, you know the confidence which I, and all the princes of my house, have ever placed in your probity, and that I have ever considered you to be one of my best and most faithful servants : I have, in consequence, come privately to visit you, in order to request that you will be careful of my interests; and also to beg that you will give me a draught of wine, of which I stand greatly in need; be careful, however, not to suffer any one to know that you have seen me, as I am going hence to a place where I do not wish to be recognised.”

The worthy advocate, delighted that the prince should confer upon him so great a mark of condescension and esteem, was profuse in his professions and acknowledgments; and, leading the way, conducted his unexpected guest to his best apartment, where he desired his wife to set forth the best collation of fruits and sweetmeats she could collect; an order which was promptly and efficiently obeyed; and while she was thus engaged, the young duke continued to converse with his

host upon his private and pecuniary business, without once turning his eyes upon her after the first courtesies had been exchanged. At length, however, the lady dropped upon her knee as she presented to him the refreshment he had required; and while her husband was pouring out a goblet of wine at the sideboard, whispered to him not to leave the house, but to conceal himself in a wardrobe on the right hand of the gallery, where she would soon join him. When he had swallowed the wine, the young prince made his acknowledgments to the advocate, took an indifferent leave of the lady, and rose to depart; but as the unsuspecting lawyer prepared to escort him, taper in hand, on his return, he stopped him with a gesture of his hand, declaring that he required no attendance, and would rather gain the street alone in darkness. Then, turning to the lady, he said courteously: "Moreover, madam, I will not deprive you of the companionship of your good husband, who is one of my oldest servants, and whom you are very happy to possess; a happiness for which you should praise God, and both cherish and obey him; for should you do otherwise you would be very blameable". Having said these words, he withdrew, carefully closing the door behind him, in order not to be detected in his purpose; and, once enclosed in his place of retreat, awaited the promised summons of his frail conquest, who did not fail to fulfil her engagement.

Had the adventure ended here and thus, we would not have sullied our pages with its record; but such was far from being the case; the beauty and devotion of the handsome citizen had enthralled the heart of Francis; and as their liaison lasted for a considerable period, he became anxious to abridge the distance between them, and for this purpose passed habitually through the cloisters of a monastery; with whose prior he ultimately rendered himself so great a favourite that the porter was instructed to leave the gates open for him until midnight, and to give him egress at any hour when he might be required to do so. As the house of the advocate was situated in the immediate neighbourhood of this monastery, he always entered the holy pile unattended; and although he traversed it rapidly on his way to his appointment, he never failed on his return—fresh from the pollution of his orgy, and yet flushed with the fever of his sin—to remain for a considerable period in prayer in the silent chapel, to the marvel and edification of the community, who, on entering the sacred fane for matin service, constantly found him on his knees before the altar!

Divided, as we have already stated, between Maximilian and the Venetians, Louis was unable to decide upon his course of action; but, strongly urged by his council rather to trust to the good faith of the latter than to place any trust in the emperor, he at length consented; and a league defensive and offensive was entered into by France with the state of Venice, at the urgent entreaty of Trivulzio. Nevertheless, Louis, in his secret heart, still inclined towards Maximilian. He was dazzled by the imperial dignity; and influenced by Anne de Bretagne, who was ambitious to unite her second daughter, as she had previously been to marry her first, to Charles of Austria, in whom she saw a future emperor. A treaty to this effect was consequently commenced, in which it was stipulated that the Princess Renée should convey to her husband, as her dowry, all the rights of France over the kingdom of Naples, the duchy of Milan, and the republic of Genoa. To these conditions the emperor affected to consent; but he exacted, as a preliminary, that the young princess should be consigned to his charge, and be educated at his court—a precaution in which he was undoubtedly authorized, when he remembered how his own marriage with Anne de Bretagne, and those of his daughter Marguerite and his grandson Charles, had been unceremoniously set aside by France. The French monarch, however, refused to accede to such terms; nor could Anne be induced, even when her ambition was aroused, to separate herself from her infant daughter.

Meanwhile the treaty with the Venetians was accomplished; and those who had so lately met as enemies were collected under the same banners. La Tremouille was appointed to the command of the forces, with which Louis still hoped to reconquer the Milanese; and d'Alviano, who had been retained a captive since the battle of Agnadello, was restored to liberty, and placed at the head of the Venetian army.

While the approaching war was thus still in abeyance, and that it was as yet impossible to decide who would act as allies, and who as enemies, during the next campaign, Julius was indefatigable in undermining the interests of France; while he menaced, each in their turn, the Duke of Ferrara, the republics of Venice, of Lucca, of Sienna, and of Genoa; Ferdinand of Spain, the Medici at Florence, and the Baglioni at Perugia—in short, all the powers who were not sufficiently pliable in his hands, and who disputed his entire supremacy. But in the midst of an arrogance by which the general peace of Europe was threatened, he was seized in the spring of 1513 with a fever, followed by dysentery, which soon assumed a serious aspect; notwithstanding which, the restless and ambitious old man, so soon to be called before a tribunal from which he, even as the sovereign pontiff, had no appeal, laboured to the last in the partial completion of the work which he had so zealously commenced; and having assembled all the cardinals about him to confirm a bull which he had fulminated; and secured, so far as he was able to do so, the independence of the conclave which was to name his successor, he expired on the evening of the 21st of February, exclaiming, in his last moments; “Out with the French from Italy! Out with Alphonso d’Este!”

Although the death of Julius II had, undoubtedly, delivered France from an implacable enemy, it still remained questionable in how far she would profit by the rule of his successor. The Cardinal de’ Medici, who assumed the triple crown under the title of Leo X, was a man of high birth and acknowledged acquirements; but although on ascending the papal chair he had declared his anxiety to maintain the peace of Europe, it could not fail to be remarked that he had chosen for the ceremony of his coronation the anniversary of the very day upon which he had been made prisoner by the French at the battle of Ravenna; and that he had even rode the same horse which carried him upon that occasion. Moreover, he had not been indebted for his liberty to any respect felt by his enemies for his sacred character, as he had been rescued from the hands of Trivulzio by some insurgent peasantry; while the revolution, which had restored to his family their rule in Florence, had been undertaken in hatred towards the French. Nevertheless Louis XII was anxious to effect a reconciliation with the Holy See; while the queen, still more eager than himself to make her peace with the church, urged him continually to propose such terms to Leo as might tend to that result. Accordingly, the French king offered to submit the arrangement of a peace to the judgment and justice of the sovereign pontiff, on condition that no opposition should be made to his designs on Milan; however, the concession was met with evasive coldness; and Louis became at once aware that Leo X was bent, like his predecessor, upon the expulsion of the French from Italy. He, therefore, hesitated no longer; but, concluding a treaty of peace for twelve months with Ferdinand of Spain, and ratifying that into which he had entered with the Venetian states, endeavoured once more to induce the Swiss to enter into his interests. Here, however, he was destined to disappointment; they would scarcely listen to the proposals of his ambassador; and would concede no more than that they would continue favourable to Louis so long as he attempted nothing against either the pope or the Duke of Milan, whom they had, as they affirmed, taken under their protection; and when they discovered that the French monarch, undismayed by their opposition, was resolved to enforce his claims, they at once took up arms to oppose his entrance into Italy.

Leo, meanwhile, had not been idle. With little difficulty he induced the hollow-hearted Ferdinand once more to break his faith with the French king, and even to induce Henry VIII, his son-in-law, to invade France, and to secure the co-operation of Maximilian, by the payment of 100,000 crowns for the maintenance of his army. Yet Louis still persevered. Indignant at the bad faith of his false allies; exasperated by the cool impassibility of the pope; and more than ever anxious to regain the supremacy of the Milanese; he marched a formidable army into Italy, under the command of La Tremouille, who, fourteen years previously, had taken Milan, and made prisoner Ludovico Sforza. Nor was his confidence misplaced, for that general crossed the Alps before the Swiss were cognizant of his design, relieved Milan, and took possession of Asti and Alessandria. The star of Louis was once more in the ascendant. His fleet made themselves masters of Genoa; the Venetians attacked and gained Cremona; and everything appeared to favour the French arms, and to promise a speedy and glorious termination to the war. Ultimately La Trémouille arrived before Novara, and commenced the attack, but soon discovered that he had

been premature; a breach had been effected, but at the moment when he was about to avail himself of it, he received intelligence that a strong reinforcement was coming up; when, convinced too late of the error which he had committed, and forgetting that it could now only be retrieved by pursuing the advantage he had gained, he withdrew to Vivegano, a distance of about two miles, and thus enabled the enemy to enter Novara during the night, where a council was immediately called, by which it was decided to attack the French camp. This bold resolution was acted upon without delay, and the Swiss accordingly commenced their march before midnight. Well acquainted with the nature of the ground, and aware that the troops of La Trémouille were surrounded by marshy land, where their cavalry would be crippled and almost useless, they formed their own force, consisting entirely of foot soldiers, into two divisions, one of which was instructed to prevent the approach of the mounted troops, and the other to attack the French artillery. As daylight dawned they had taken up their position: and La Trémouille, unprepared as he was to anticipate such a demonstration, at once made every arrangement to receive them.

He soon perceived that the enemy, whose success had depended upon their celerity, had not brought a single gun into the field; and he accordingly advanced his artillery, consisting of two-and-twenty pieces, to the front of his line, under a guard of German lancers. His first fire committed great ravages among the Swiss ranks; but as the foremost men fell, their vacancies were instantly filled up from the rear; and they dashed forward gallantly to the very mouths of the cannon, and engaged with the lansquenets by whom they were supported. For two hours the battle waged fiercely; but at the termination of that period, the Germans, bravely as they had borne themselves, gave way; and the Swiss, having obtained possession of the guns, turned them against their former owners, and committed terrible slaughter. Meanwhile the cavalry had been compelled to total inaction, being hemmed in on one side by a dense wood, and on the other by a bog deeply trenched, in which the horses buried themselves to their knees at every plunge. In one instance only did they succeed in taking any share in the fortunes of the day, but that one must not pass unrecorded. Robert de la Mark, who commanded the lansquenets, and who was accompanied to the field by his two sons, the Seigneur de Fleuranges, and the Seigneur de Jamets, having lost sight of them in the *mélee*, feeling convinced that they must be either slain or captive thus to fail at such a moment, leaped the trenches at the head of a hundred of his own troop, and charged the Swiss so vigorously that he broke their ranks, reached the spot where his sons had been engaged, both of whom were lying on the ground disabled by their hurts, and carried them off in safety; having himself received nearly fifty wounds.

The capture of the cannon, had, however, decided the issue of the battle; and La Trémouille, himself severely wounded, was compelled to order a retreat, which was not effected without great sacrifice of life. The gendarmes suffered little, as their enemies had no mounted force with which to pursue them; but the infantry were slain on all sides. The Gascons, who were the first to fly, were allowed to escape almost unimpeded; for the Swiss concentrated all their fury upon the lansquenets, the objects of their most bitter hatred, whom they considered as their rivals in the mercenary trade which they had so long exercised alone. Five thousand of these wretched men perished upon the field, and the remainder were compelled to surrender. A similar number of French were killed, either in action or during the retreat; for many of the Gascons, whom the Swiss had spared, were murdered by the peasantry. The loss of the victors were nearly as great, and their leader Mottino, was among the slain; but their triumph was complete; and after remaining for an hour or two upon the scene of their success, they returned to Novara, carrying with them the twenty-two pieces of ordnance, as well as all the draught-horses and baggage of the French army.

Once more the troops of Louis XII were driven out of Italy. All the places which they had taken opened their gates to the conquerors; and public rejoicings were held in Rome, where the pope congratulated the Swiss upon their victory; while he flattered himself that the defeat at Novara would so undermine the energies and cripple the strength of the French king, that he would be unable to contend against any new enemy. And, in truth, the prospects of Louis were anything rather than encouraging. Invaded upon every one of his frontiers, he saw himself compelled to recall the remnant of his army from the Riotta; he could place no faith in Ferdinand, and he

anticipated an attack from the English upon Normandy; while, despite all his caution, the national treasury was exhausted. The campaign in Italy had been at once disastrous and expensive; Paris had been heavily taxed, and he had no resource save in mortgaging a portion of his territory. Meanwhile Henry VIII had raised an army of twenty-five thousand men, under the command of the Earl of Shrewsbury and Lord Talbot, in the month of May, of which the French fleet had found it impossible to impede the landing; and himself embarked to join them at the end of June, proceeding immediately from Calais to the frontier town of T rouanne, before which he sat down with his troops. The city was well fortified, and garrisoned by two hundred horse, and two thousand foot, under Franois de T ligny, Seneschal de Rouergue, and Antoine de Cr qui, Seigneur de Pondormy; but it was ill-provisioned for a siege, and its position was consequently very precarious.

Louis XII, during his period of suspense as to the point upon which he should be attacked, had resided alternately at Paris and at Blois; but on learning that the English had landed in great strength at Calais, although suffering painfully from gout, he caused himself to be conveyed to Amiens in a litter, in order to be nearer to Louis de Hallwin, Seigneur de Piennes, who was his lieutenant-general in Picardy; and hastened to issue a stringent order to his generals not to hazard an engagement with the enemy, which, should it prove disastrous in its result, might tend to involve the ruin of the kingdom. Meanwhile the French army condensed itself at Blangy near Hesdin, where it was successively joined by M. de la Palice, Imbercourt, Bayard, Aymar de Prie, Bonnavet, Bonneval, La Fayette, Fontrailles, with his Albanian light-horse, and Fleuranges with his lansquenets; while they still awaited the Duke of Suffolk, who had espoused the cause of Louis against Henry VIII, whom he regarded as the destroyer of his brother; a Lancasterian, and a usurper.

The English king left Calais on the 1st of August with nine thousand infantry, to join his army at T rouanne, and was encountered by all the French horse, amounting to twelve hundred lances; when, as he had no cavalry with him, the two armies had no sooner approached within cannon-shot than he became apprehensive of treachery; and, dismounting, placed himself in the centre of the lansquenets. Bayard, whose gallant and impetuous spirit ill brooked through the rear-guard of the enemy with his own troop, and carried off one of the twelve cannon which Henry VIII had named *the twelve apostles*. The Sire de Piennes, whose heart was with him, but who was too good a general to disobey orders, reminded him that the king his master had strictly forbidden all aggressive measures, and, therefore, reluctantly summoned him to desist; but Bayard did not relinquish his prize, which was safely conveyed to the French camp.

When, on the 2d of August, Henry joined his army before T rouanne, he was received with loud acclamations; and a few days subsequently he was joined by the Emperor Maximilian, with some thousands of Hainaulters and Burgundians; nor had a week elapsed ere a number of Flemish and other nobles from the Low Countries, despite the neutrality declared by Marguerite, flocked to his banners as volunteers.

Meanwhile, moreover, the garrison of the besieged city saw themselves threatened by famine; their provisions were nearly exhausted, and Louis XII, aware of this circumstance, instructed M. de Piennes that T rouanne must be victualled at any risk. Surrounded as it was on all sides by the enemy, this enterprise was, however, one of immense difficulty and certain danger; and, after mature consideration, it was decided that the Sire de Piennes and the Duke de Longueville should march a body of fourteen hundred horsemen to the heights of Guinegatte, to distract the attention of the enemy; while Fontrailles, with his Albanian light-horse (or stradiots) should charge the English troops at a particular point, and fling into the moat of the city the salted provisions and powder which they carried before them. The attempt was skilfully made and vigorously carried out. At the head of eight hundred men, the young commander charged so resolutely that he broke through the ranks of the besiegers; and, riding directly to the fosse, each man cast down the bag of powder and the pork which he bore upon his horse; and then, making face upon the enemy, succeeded in regaining the main body with a gallantry as daring as it was successful. This was, however, the only favourable moment for the French arms; and even this had met its counterpoise



on the heights of Guinegatte, which the gendarmes had no sooner attained than they saw in their rear ten thousand English archers, four thousand lansquenets, and eight pieces of artillery. Maximilian had been apprised of their intended stratagem by his spies, numbers of whom were employed in both the adverse camps; while, in many instances, there were double traitors among them, who alternately served or betrayed either, as their interest prompted.

The French soldiery, who were aware that they had not been ordered to that point to come to an engagement with the enemy, retrograded at the command of their leaders, but so confusedly, that, from a trot, they soon broke into a gallop, and threw themselves pell-mell upon a rearguard of cavalry, headed by the Duke de Longueville and the Marquis de la Palice, which they scattered; and, passing through the midst, continued to fly until they reached Blandy, where the infantry were encamped, who were hearty driven, in their turn, from their position by the impetuosity of this unexpected charge. An attempt was made by a few of their leaders to make head, with a handful of men, against the German cavalry, who were in pursuit of the fugitives; and among these the foremost were the Sire de la Palice and the Duke de Longueville. In vain, however, did the former shout, "Turn, men-at-arms, turn; this is nothing!" The alarm had spread through the whole body; the terrified troops passed on, regardless of his cry; and, although he still strove to cover the disorderly retreat of the infatuated troops, supported by some of the most gallant spirits of the army, his self-devotion, although it tended to save the French army, was unfortunate for himself and his friends, as they were nearly all taken prisoners; among others, Longueville, La Palice, Bayard, La Fayette, Clermont d'Anjou, and Bussy d'Amboise.

This flight from Guinegatte, which took place on the 15th April, 1513, obtained for the encounter the name of the Battle of the Spurs; these having been the only efficient weapons made use of by the hostile armies; very few lives were sacrificed on either side; but of the principal prisoners, M. de la Palice alone succeeded in effecting his retreat; while Bayard won his ransom in so gallant a manner that we must, to do it ample justice, give the episode in the very words of his biographer. "The good knight without fear and without reproach retired very sorrowfully, and ever and anon turned upon his enemies with fourteen or fifteen gendarmes who had stood by him. In retreating he came to a little bridge, whereon no more than two men could pass abreast; and there was a great ditch, full of water, which came from a distance of more than half a league, and turned a mill three furlongs further on. When he was upon the bridge he said to those that were with him:—'Gentlemen, let us stop here, for the enemy will not gain this bridge from us in the space of an hour'. Then he called one of his archers, and said to him 'Hie you to our camp, and tell my Lord de la Palice that I have stopped the enemy short for at least half an hour; that during that interval he must make the forces draw up in order of battle; and let them not be alarmed, but march hither slowly, for, should the adversaries advance to the camp, and find them in this confusion, they would infallibly be defeated.'

"The archer goes straight to the camp, and leaves the good knight with the inconsiderable number of men by whom he was accompanied, guarding that little bridge, where he did all that prowess could achieve. The Burgundians and Hainaulters arrived, but were obliged to fight on the hither side of the bridge, as they could not very easily effect a passage. This gave the French, who had returned to their camp, leisure to place themselves in order, and in a posture of defence, in the event of its proving necessary. When the Burgundians found themselves withstood by such a handful of men, they cried out that archers should be sent for with all speed, and some went to hasten them. Meanwhile about two hundred cavaliers followed the course of the stream until they discovered the mill, by which they crossed. The good knight, thus enclosed on both sides, then said to his people:—'Sirs, let us surrender to these gentlemen, for all the daring we might display would avail us nothing. Our horses are weary, our adversaries are ten to one against us, and our forces full three leagues off, so that, if we tarry but a short while longer, and the English archers come up, they will cut us to pieces'. At these words the aforesaid Burgundians and Hainaulters arrived, shouting, 'Burgundy! Burgundy!' and made a mighty onset upon the French, who, having no further means of resistance, surrendered, one here, another there, to those of most seeming consideration. While each was endeavouring to take his prisoner, the good knight espied, under

some dwarf trees, a gentleman in goodly attire, who, by reason of the excessive heat he was in, whereby he was completely overcome, had taken off his helmet, and was so turmoiled and weary that he cared not to be at the trouble of taking prisoners. He spurred straight up to this person, grasping his sword, which he pointed at the other's throat, and exclaimed, 'Surrender, cavalier, or you die.' Terribly dismayed was this gentleman, for he thought that his whole company were made prisoners, and being in fear of his life, he said, 'I give myself up, then, since I am taken in this manner: but who are you?' 'I am Captain Bayard,' replied the good knight, 'who surrender to you. Here is my sword; I pray you be pleased to carry me away with you. But do me this kindness: should we meet with any English on the road who may offer to take our lives, let me have it back again'. This the gentleman promised and fulfilled; for, as they drew towards the camp, they were both obliged to use their weapons against certain English who sought to slay the prisoners; whereby they gained nothing.

"Then was the good knight conducted to the camp of the King of England, and into the tent of the gentleman by whom he had been captured, who entertained him very well for three or four days. On the fifth, the good knight said to him, 'My worthy sir, I should be right glad if you would have me conveyed in safety to the king, my master's camp, for I am already weary of being here'. 'How say you?' asked the other, 'we have not yet treated of your ransom'. 'My ransom' said the good knight; 'your own, you mean, for you are my prisoner. And if, after you gave me your word, I surrendered to you, it was to save my life, and for no other reason'. Great was the amazement of the gentleman, especially when the good knight added, 'Sir, if you do not keep your word, I am confident that I shall make my escape by some means or other; but be assured that I shall insist upon doing battle with you afterward'. The gentleman knew not what reply to make, for he had heard a great deal about Captain Bayard, and by no means relished the idea of fighting with him. However, being a very courteous knight, he at length said, 'My Lord of Bayard, I am desirous of dealing fairly with you; I will refer the matter to the captains'.

"The brave but disconcerted captor scrupulously kept his word; and as the arrival of Bayard in the hostile camp soon got bruited abroad, Maximilian caused him to be summoned to his tent, and, as he entered, exclaimed gaily: "Captain Bayard, I am delighted to see you. Would to God that I had many men like yourself; for, if I had, I should not be long ere I requited the king your master for the good offices which he did me in times past. I believe that we formerly fought together, and I think it was then said that Bayard never fled."

"If I had done so upon this occasion, sire", was the proud reply, "I should not now have been here."

At this moment Henry VIII entered the tent, to whom the emperor presented the good knight, who received their courtesies with respect and modesty, after which the peculiarity of his position was discussed; and it was decided that he should be restored to liberty unransomed, on condition that he should not bear arms for six weeks, during which time he should remain on parole, but free to reside in such Flemish cities as he should desire to visit. Bayard bent the knee in acknowledgment of this concession; and a few days subsequent took leave of the allied sovereigns, and proceeded to Flanders, where he amused himself by giving fetes, and endearing himself to the people by the chivalry and courtesy of his deportment. In such pursuits the period of his probation rapidly wore away, and he once more girt on his armour, and joined his standard.

Meanwhile Louis had profited by the supineness of his enemies, who, instead of pursuing their advantage after the history of T erouanne, had allowed the favourable moment to escape them, and withdrew his army from Blangy into Picardy, while Henry and Maximilian returned each to his own territories.

CHAPTER V.

[1513-14.]

UNHAPPILY it was not alone against foreign animosity that Louis XII had, at this period, to contend. Constant misunderstandings, which were even said to have influenced the late defeat, had taken place between the Duke de Longueville and M. de Piennes; and the king became so seriously alarmed for their consequences, upon finding that the troops were split into factions, each siding with their favourite commander, that he determined to confide to the young Duke de Valois the conduct of the forthcoming campaign; his prowess of Navara having given him confidence alike in his personal courage and his judgment, only insisting upon a continuance of the same system of defensive operations of which he had already ascertained the policy.

Francis eagerly embraced this new opportunity of distinguishing himself; and, notwithstanding his youth, carried out the wishes of his royal uncle with great forbearance. He marched the army back to Encre on the Somme, where he could effectually resist any attack, while he protected the frontier; and the enemy soon convinced him of the prudence of this first measure by capitulating with the defenders of Téroouanne upon more favourable terms than had previously been anticipated; after which Henry VIII, acting upon the selfish suggestion of Maximilian, who had on former occasions been frequently kept in check by that fortress, utterly demolished the fortifications for whose possession he had exhausted a large amount both of human life and treasure; and then proceeded to lay siege to Tournay.

The French monarch had, however, another enemy to contend against. The peace of Burgundy, which province the emperor had never ceased to reclaim as the inheritance of Marie de Bourgogne, his first wife, and the mother of his children, was threatened with a new invasion; and although the bulk of the population were decidedly favourable to the rule of Louis, the nobility, from old association, pecuniary interest, or national vanity, leant generally to their ancient independence, and the sway of their hereditary dukes; while, aware of this fact, the Swiss, whose dislike to the French monarch had never abated, and who were flushed, even to arrogance, by their recent success at Novara, resolved to carry the war into Burgundy. Some trifling insurrections had broken out in Switzerland, and the magistrates had affected to believe that they were instigated by French agents; although they might have been readily traced to the immense booty gained by the troops in the late struggle, whence resulted every description of licentiousness and disorder, naturally ending in insubordination and misrule. The Helvetic diet, whose tranquillity was disturbed by these outbreaks, was not slow in discovering an escape-valve for the heated and restless spirits who opposed its authority; and consequently determined at once to release itself by organizing a distant expedition, and at the same time to recruit its treasury by the pillage of France. A force of eighteen thousand Swiss was accordingly collected in the different cantons, which were reviewed on the 9th of August at Zurich, and marched on the following day, under the command of Jacques de Watteville, an advocate of Berne, supported by a council formed of the chiefs of the several divisions. They traversed Franche-Comté as far as Gray, where they were met, on the 27th of the month, by the Duke Ulrich de Würtemberg, who was awaiting their arrival at the head of the German and Comtois cavalry; and thence they proceeded to Dijon, which they reached on the 7th of September.

The city was ill calculated for resistance; and M. de la Trémouille had, with very indifferent success, endeavoured to put it into such a state of defence as might enable him at least to guard against any surprise. He therefore resolved to temporise; and, if possible, to conciliate an enemy against which he was totally unable, with his inadequate force, to contend. By a lucky chance, he made prisoners of several Swiss officers in a sally which he ventured beyond the walls, and he

availed himself of this circumstance to impress upon them the policy of renewing the old attachment which had formerly subsisted between the two countries; expatiating on the value which his own monarch attached to their alliance, and his earnest wish to renew the good understanding which had been lately broken. As some among them evinced no reluctance while listening to these arguments, he concluded by lauding their late bravery, distributing a few presents which were well received, and finally restoring them to liberty without exacting any species of ransom; a courtesy to which they were by no means insensible, and of which the good effect became soon apparent, by the arrival at Dijon of a safe conduct, and an invitation for him to pay a visit to their chiefs. He at once accepted this overture; and was so successful during the interview, as to induce his late adversaries to conclude a negotiation which was not a mere capitulation for the beleaguered city, or a momentary truce, but a definitive treaty, involving not only the interests of France and Switzerland, but also those of all Europe. By this treaty it was arranged that he should pay over upon the instant the sum of 400,000 crowns (part of which was immediately raised among the officers of his little army, and deposited in the hands of the council); pledge himself to the liquidation of all arrears of pension due to the Swiss from France for former services performed—to the restitution of all cities, strongholds, or territory held by Louis XII which were appurtenances to the Holy See—to the speedy evacuation of the castles of Milan, Cremona, and Asti; and also guarantee that the French king should renounce all future pretensions, both for himself and his successors, to the duchy of Milan, and the lordships of Cremona and Asti; and that none of the individuals who had joined the Swiss in their expedition to Burgundy should suffer any damage in such properties as they might possess within the kingdom of France.

On these conditions peace and amity was to be sworn between Louis XII, the Swiss League, Franche-Comté, the Duke de Würtemberg, and the Sire de Vergy. The pope was to be at liberty to accede to this treaty should he see fit to do so, as were also the emperor and the holy Roman empire; and finally, M. de la Trémouille pledged himself that the confederates should, on their return to their own country, receive the sum of 400,000 crowns, payable at Zurich, one moiety within a fortnight after their arrival, and the remainder at the ensuing festival of Saint Martin. As the whole amount of forfeit-money claimed could not be collected upon the spot, they consented to receive 20,000 crowns on account: but as surety for the remainder, they carried away with them, in the character of hostages, the Baron de Mézières, the nephew of M. de la Trémouille; Rochefort, the Seneschal of Dijon, and four citizens. The former having been, however, forewarned by his relative that the treaty would not, in all probability, be ratified, took the first opportunity of effecting his escape.

Louis XII either felt or affected the greatest indignation at the concessions made by his general, and refused to fulfil conditions which he declared to be degrading and unfavourable to himself. He even addressed an autograph letter to M. de la Trémouille; in which he asserted that he considered such a treaty as that to which he had given his assent to be marvellously strange; a truth which was admitted in the reply; “But, by my faith, Sire”, added the straightforward soldier, “I was constrained to give it, by the wretched provision which had been made for the preservation of your kingdom”.

The displeasure of the king was of short duration; and although he still adhered to his resolution of resisting the conditions of the treaty, he nevertheless endeavoured to conciliate the Swiss; and empowered M. de la Trémouille to raise a loan of 50,000 crowns in Burgundy, to satisfy the most importunate of their demands; he even condescended to dissimulate, and sought to gain time, but he could not deceive the Swiss, who, already prejudiced against him, felt that they were overreached; and vowed a vengeance which they fearfully executed during the succeeding reign.

Fortune had declared itself adverse to Louis; nor were his allies exempted from their own share of disaster. The Venetians were signally defeated by the Spaniards; and the unhappy James IV of Scotland lost his life at Flodden Field. The French king had however no time to indulge regret for the reverses of others. On the 15th of September, Maximilian and Henry had, as we have already stated, sat down before Tournay, which, situated within the boundary of the Low

Countries, had enjoyed a government almost republican under the protection of France, and considered as one of its most precious privileges, its exemption from the necessity of admitting a garrison within its walls. Consequently, when at the commencement of the campaign Louis had offered to send them troops for their defence, they arrogantly replied, that "Tournay had never yet turned, and would not turn now a vaunt which left them in the power of their enemies, who treated with contempt the undisciplined citizens by whom they were opposed; and in the course of a few hours, stormed their walls, and compelled them to a capitulation, wherein, however, Henry VIII guaranteed to them the continuance of their privileges.

After having made his entrance into the city with a puerile ostentation totally disproportioned to the circumstances, and which tended to excite the ridicule of all by whom it was witnessed, Henry, satisfied with the result of a campaign which, had it been efficiently conducted, must have tended to enhance both his own honour and the interests of his kingdom, returned at once to England, and thus relieved the French king from an enemy who might at any moment have become formidable.

On the 13th of March, 1514, a treaty was signed at Orleans by the several sovereigns who had been engaged in the wars of Italy, by which a truce of twelve months was determined on; while the Swiss, who were not included in the negotiation, laid down their arms in accordance with that of Dijon. Louis XII had acceded to all the demands of the Pope, and no longer possessed any portion of the papal states; a circumstance which afforded great relief to the mind of Anne de Bretagne: but which was nevertheless so far from conducing, as she had anticipated, to the restoration of her shattered health, that, although she eagerly watched the progress of events which were rapidly working out this result, she was not destined to witness it; for, at the close of the previous campaign, when her royal husband, after having distributed his forces in the fortified places of Picardy, returned to Blois for the winter, he found her sinking under the disease to which she had long been a victim, and which finally terminated her life on the 9th of January.

The grief of the king was unbounded when he became convinced that she had really ceased to exist; and when, on the following Friday, her body had been conveyed with great magnificence to St. Denis, and there pompously interred, he immediately retired to the Bois de Vincennes, where, during eight days, he shut himself into his private apartments, forbidding all access to his person, in order that he might give free course to his grief. He not only assumed a sable habit himself, in conformity with the taste of his lost wife, but he compelled his whole court to do the same; nor would he, when he again appeared in public, receive any foreign ambassador who was not similarly attired. Nevertheless, he did not fail in the pledge which he had given to the States-General at Tours; and on the 10th of May the Princess Claude was publicly married, at St. Germain-en-Laye, to her cousin Francis, Duke de Valois. But, even upon this occasion, the king would not permit that the mourning garments of his court should be laid aside; and accordingly an old *chroniquer* quoted by Brantôme, declares that "when he gave his daughter to M. d'Angoulême, afterwards the king Francis, the mourning was not remitted by his court; and, on the day of the espousals in the chapel of St. Germain-en-Laye, the bridegroom and the bride were simply attired in black cloth, handsomely, and in funereal fashion, for the death of the before-mentioned queen, Madame Anne de Bretagne, in the presence of the king her father, accompanied by all the princes of the blood, and noble lords, and prelates, and princesses, and ladies, each dressed in a mourning robe of black".

How evil an omen was this for the gentle-hearted princess Claude!

The marriage was no sooner accomplished than Louis XII. invested his son-in-law with the administration of the duchy of Brittany; somewhat; as the Breton historians declare, contrary to his wishes; but although Madame Claude de France, who was its heiress, had espoused the presumptive heir to the crown, the contract by which they were united contained no clause which assured to her husband the actual possession of the coveted duchy; while this circumstance was rendered still more unpalatable to the young prince by the fact, that about the same period, Louis was himself induced by his counsellors to entertain the project of a third marriage, than which no

step could have been more inimical to the prospects of Francis; while the selection, ultimately made by the king and his advisers, was probably as little calculated to insure his own happiness, had the union been fated to be of long duration.

Still newly widowed, and deeply attached to the memory of Anne de Bretagne, for whose sake he had repudiated his first wife, state policy on the one hand, and on the other his anxiety to become the father of a son to whom he might bequeath his crown, induced the French king to lend a willing ear to the suggestions of those about him; and although in his fifty-third year, when his constitution had become seriously undermined by severe and constant attacks of gout, to give a new queen to France. The Austrian party formed by Anne de Bretagne, fearing the future influence of Louise de Savoie when her son should attain the throne, having been unable to prevent the marriage of Francis with the Princess Claude, assailed the king with perpetual expostulations; and proposed to him, in the first place, the hand of Marguerite of Austria, *gouvernante* of the Low Countries; but although this princess, owing to her betrothal to the dauphin, had been educated at the court of France, and had, at that period interested the affections of Louis, then duke d'Orleans, she had now attained her thirty-fourth year, and was the childless widow of two husbands; a sterility which he declared to be an insuperable objection to their alliance. Ferdinand of Spain then offered to him Eleanora of Austria, the niece of Marguerite, and sister of the archduke Charles, at that time in the very bloom of youth. To this union Louis advanced no objection, and the rather as it was to form the pledge of a reconciliation between himself, Maximilian, and Ferdinand; nor did the three monarchs lose any time in deciding on the outline of a treaty to be executed at the expense of their ancient allies the English, the Venetians, and the Swiss.

This project was, however, rendered abortive by the suspicions of Henry VIII, which suggested some occult and important reason for the delay of Maximilian in concluding the nuptials of the archduke Charles with the Princess Mary of England, his own sister. Nor was it long ere they were confirmed through the agency of the Duke de Longueville, who had been taken prisoner at the "Battle of the Spurs", and whom the pleasure-loving king had admitted to his intimacy, and favoured so greatly, that he was in the habit of playing tennis with him, and permitting him to win until he had gained the sum appointed for his ransom, which amounted to 50,000 crowns.

The resentment of the English monarch upon finding himself duped both by Maximilian and Ferdinand, encouraged the duke during their frequent conversations to introduce upon every favourable occasion some well-timed allusion to the injury sustained by both France and England from the continuation of a war which exhausted the resources of both without benefit to either; and to propose a peace which he was aware would be highly welcome to his own sovereign. As Henry listened without any manifestation of displeasure to these frequent hints, De Longueville became in time still more explicit; and at length insinuated that the death of Anne de Bretagne had opened up a medium of union between the two nations which might tend to their mutual advantage; declaring, at the same time, that although the marriage of a princess of sixteen with a sovereign of fifty-three might appear in some respects unsuitable, yet that this inequality in years would find its compensation in many circumstances too obvious to be overlooked, and of which he would consequently adduce but one; namely, that Henry would, by acceding to an alliance between his sister and the French king, withdraw himself from the perfidious Ferdinand, upon whose faith he could no longer rely, and connect himself and his interests for life with those of a prince whose probity and honour were above suspicion.

The English monarch listened, and was convinced. Broken faith and a harassing war on the one side, and a firm ally and a speedy peace on the other, left little opportunity for hesitation; and, accordingly, about two months subsequent to the death of Anne de Bretagne, Louis XII, who readily welcomed the prospect of a union which would convert a formidable enemy into a fast friend, deputed De Longueville, whose ransom had been paid in English crowns, and whose liberty had been thus easily acquired, to ask for him the hand of the young and beautiful princess Mary, the affianced but unclaimed bride of Charles of Austria.

The articles were concluded, after some difficulties, originating in the desire of Louis to hasten

the decision of his brother-monarch by a hostile demonstration, on the pretext that Henry had not yet ratified the treaty of Orleans; which he effected by marching eight thousand men and a brigade of artillery against the castle of Guines, near Calais; a want of tact of which he was immediately made conscious by the indignant retort of the English sovereign, who at once resented the practical threat by declaring that he had an army of twenty thousand men ready to cross the channel in defence of his stronghold, should need be.

This mutual defiance necessarily caused a temporary suspension of the negotiations of marriage; but the Duke de Longueville, unwilling to see all his exertions rendered nugatory, addressed himself at this delicate juncture to Wolsey, then Bishop of Lincoln; and, authorized by his royal master, made such proposals to the English minister as induced him to espouse his cause. The anger of Henry gave way before the flattering overtures of the French plenipotentiary; and it was ultimately agreed that the marriage should take place, upon condition that Tournay should remain in the hands of the English; that Richard de la Pole, (the fourth son of Elizabeth, sister of Edward IV) then an exile in France, and who affected to revive the pretensions of the house of York, should be banished to Metz, and remain a pensioner of the French king; that Henry should receive the payment of a million of crowns, being the arrears due by treaty to his father and himself; and that the royal bride should be portioned with four hundred thousand crowns, and enjoy as large a jointure as any previous queen of France, not even excepting her immediate predecessor, Anne de Bretagne, although the latter had been heiress of Brittany.

Not only were the respective ages of the contracting parties wholly disproportioned, but the previous education of Mary had rendered her, in every respect, ill-suited to perform the duties which she was thus called upon so suddenly to fulfil. Her heart had, moreover, already been bestowed elsewhere; while, as she afterwards proved, her affections were by no means so stable as to hold out any rational hope that she would attach herself in earnest and good faith to her mature husband, although she had been so well tutored in courtly dissimulation as effectually to conceal her real feelings. Having lost her mother when she was only five years of age, she had been allowed a greater license of thought and action than was compatible with her sex and rank; and although scarcely sixteen at the period of her marriage, she had already encouraged the attentions of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, the foster-brother and favourite of Henry VIII, whose comparatively obscure birth had been concealed, even if not forgotten, under the splendour of his new title. The partiality of the king, and his own universal popularity, rendered the new-made duke bold; while the evident admiration of Mary, upon whom his great personal beauty and manly bearing had not failed to produce their effect, combined with the constant opportunities which were afforded to him of prosecuting his ambitious suit, would probably have insured its ultimate success, had not the overtures of Louis at once opened the eyes of the English monarch to the impolicy of such a concession.

Thus far, Mary was beyond all doubt more to be commiserated than condemned; and, had she more perfectly fulfilled her mission as a wife and a queen, every heart must have sympathized in the cruel constraint to which she had been subjected; but she was vain, reckless, and careless of that dignity which would have compelled respect, and taught those who approached her to overlook the young and blooming woman in the self-governed and virtuous sovereign.

Before the ratification of the marriage treaty, the princess declared in the presence of a notary and witnesses, that she had pledged her faith by compulsion to the Archduke Charles, who was to have married her by proxy on attaining his fourteenth year, which he had failed to do; and she further asserted that she had received assurances to the effect that his counsellors and confidential friends had exerted all their influence to infuse into his mind a spirit of resentment against, and dislike to, her royal brother.

The treaty was then completed, and the months of August and September were spent in making the necessary preparations for the voyage of the young queen; one of the conditions agreed upon having been that Henry should defray all the outlay of her journey to Abbeville; and that one moiety of her dower should be expended in jewels.

On the 13th of August the marriage took place by proxy at Greenwich, the Duke de Longueville representing his royal master; after which the princess crossed to Boulogne, attended by a splendid retinue, where she was received upon her landing by the Duke de Vendome, who a day or two subsequently conducted her to Abbeville. The king, whose impatience had been excited by the florid descriptions which he had heard of her beauty, and who was anxious to ascertain their truth, had already arrived in that city; but, unable to control his desire to see her at the earliest moment, he mounted his horse and proceeded to a village upon the road, where they were privately introduced, and he remained for a few moments in conversation with his bride and the triumphant ambassador. Fascinated and elated, he then returned to Abbeville as unostentatiously as he had left it; while the princess continued her stately progress to the city gates, where she was welcomed according to the prescribed ceremonial by the Duke de Valois, and greeted by a succession of the most costly and magnificent pageants that human ingenuity and knightly courtesy could invent.

We have already alluded to the brilliancy of the young queen's retinue, which was worthy the sister of one sovereign and the bride of another; but perhaps the most interesting circumstance connected with it exists in the fact that the fair and unfortunate Anna Boleyn, then in her first girlhood, was one of her four maids of honour, and of the thirty-six female attendants by whom she was accompanied.

Even at that early age, however, it would appear, from the testimony of a contemporaneous historian, that the court beauty had already imbibed that thirst for admiration, and that baneful ambition which were fated to be her downfall; for even when by her grace and beauty, and above all by the seductive attraction of her manner, and the vivacity of her intellect, she had captivated the mind of the princess Claude to such an extent that she caused her to be attached to her own household, she soon wearied of the wholesome restraints to which she was there subjected, and passed into the suite of the Duchess d'Alençon; where she became the idol of the courtiers by whom she was surrounded, and whose attentions she encouraged until she felt that they were likely to interfere with her more serious projects.

The impression produced upon the feelings of Louis XII by the extraordinary loveliness of his new consort, has been duly recorded by all contemporary historians; but the emotions of the young and blooming princess, thus abruptly compelled to receive to her heart and arms the mature and already infirm monarch, have nowhere been registered. Suffice it, that the marriage was once more celebrated at Abbeville on the 11th of October; and that an alliance, which had originally been dictated by state policy, was at once cemented by the charms of the girl-queen; while it was rendered as welcome to the nation as to its monarch by the fact that it put a termination to a disastrous war with England, and to some difficult negotiations with Austria.

The ceremony was not performed in the cathedral, but in a vast saloon of the palace, which was hung throughout with cloth of gold, and so spacious that all present could command a view of the contracting parties. The king and queen were seated side by side under a canopy at the upper end of the apartment; and the royal bride, with her hair totally unconfined, and scattered over her shoulders, wore a small hat above the luxuriant tresses, which were unanimously declared to be unrivalled throughout Christendom, in lieu of the crown, which could be assumed only when her coronation took place at St. Denis. The Duke d'Angoulême officiated as bridesman, and the Princess Claude was the principal attendant of the bride, although her fair brow was clouded as she remembered the recent death of her mother. A splendid banquet, followed by a ball, concluded the ceremony; after which the court proceeded to St. Denis, where, on the 5th of November, the ceremonial of Mary's coronation took place with great pomp in the cathedral; and on the succeeding day she made her entry into Paris as Queen of France, accompanied not only by all that was great and noble in the country, but also by her English suite, and a number of foreigners of distinction; all of whom were entertained during the marriage festivities at the expense of the king. These tourneys and banquets were continued for the space of six weeks; after which the English retinue of the young queen returned home, laden with valuable presents, leaving the Duke of Suffolk as ambassador at the French court; a short-sighted piece of policy, of which Henry VIII in



after-life would assuredly never have been guilty.

The advent of the new sovereign at once changed the mourning of the court into festivity and splendour: nor was it long ere the fancy, if not the heart, of Mary became thrall'd by the handsome person and chivalric accomplishments of the young Duke de Valois; while not even the recollection that he was the husband of her stepdaughter sufficed to compel her to that self-control which might have concealed her weakness. Suffolk himself was forgotten in this new passion; and by her own levity and want of caution it ere long became a subject of comment to the whole court. In the tilts and joustings which daily succeeded each other for her entertainment, Francis was, unhappily, always the most prominent figure; thus affording a dangerous contrast to her royal husband, who, despite the efforts which he made to assimilate himself in prowess with the young and gallant cavaliers about him, soon evinced unequivocal symptoms of his inability to persevere in such a career of dissipation and fatigue.

The natural result supervened; Louis in a short time fell into a state of languor and exhaustion, which betrayed that over-taxed nature was revenging herself for these untimely excesses; and the hopes of Francis once more became buoyant. Meanwhile, however, he succeeded in establishing a closer intimacy between his young step-mother and his gentle wife, by which he was enabled to enjoy the society of the former without any apparent effort, and at the same time to secure himself against any new rival in her affections.

To the Princess Claude such a friend was doubly welcome, from the fact that she already suffered severely under the rigorous rule of Louise de Savoie, who, profiting by her timid and yielding nature, revenged upon the daughter her old hatred of the dead parent; and condemned her to a life of almost perfect seclusion, in which she was wholly dependent for amusement upon the nun-like court which had been formed for her, her breviary, and her spinning-wheel. Little did the pure-hearted and neglected wife of the brilliant Francis apprehend, when she received with sisterly affection the beautiful young queen, that she was daily undermining her in the affections of a husband whom she idolized. But this, according to Brantôme, did not fail to come to pass. Mary was, on her side, as much dazzled by the showy qualities of Francis, as he was enthralled by her surpassing beauty; nor was it long ere she listened without displeasure to an avowal of his passion, rendered doubly culpable as it was from their relative position. The same author even ascribes to the young queen the still more odious desire of securing an heir to the throne, of which she already despaired in her marriage, through the medium of her step-daughter's husband; but his evidence is scarcely to be received in so extreme a case, based as it is upon the single fact that M. de Grignaud, a noble of Perigord, who had been *chevalier d'honneur* to Anne de Bretagne, and then held the same office under Mary, considered it necessary to warn the Duke de Valois against the possible consequences of so undue an intimacy; and upon finding his remonstrances disregarded, subsequently informed Louise de Savoie of the peril to her son's interests which must supervene, in order that she might keep a strict watch over the progress of their attachment.

That Mary should ever have contemplated so heinous a crime is, however, more than improbable. Guilt is ever prone to assume a veil of caution, and to garb itself in the robe of prudery and dissimulation, while there was nothing bordering upon these in her common deportment. On the contrary, she constantly addressed the duke as "my son-in-law" and admitted him publicly to all the privileges of so near a connexion; openly evincing the preference which she felt for his society, and exceeding on many occasions the limits which a more delicately constituted mind would have conceded even to the claim of so intimate a relationship. That she not only admired Francis, but also loved him, is her reproach; and that reproach should surely suffice (for it was a heavy one 1), without attributing to a mere girl, who had only attained her sixteenth year, an excess of moral turpitude which the heart withers even to contemplate.

The subsequent attempt imputed to her by the same authority, to impose a surreptitious heir upon the nation, is deserving of quite as little credit; for Mary, who had already given proof of her aptitude in conforming herself to circumstances in the almost affectionate letters which she had addressed to Louis XII before their marriage, and who, on the demise of the king, saw herself

closely surrounded by the very individuals who were the most vitally concerned in unmasking such a deception, was not likely to degrade alike herself and her high station by so base and shallow an artifice; while her almost immediate union with the Duke of Suffolk, however much it tended to confirm the previous opinion of her levity, is nevertheless also the best refutation of the coarse and unmanly slander. That she was eminently imprudent during the brief period of her royalty, is unfortunately undeniable; but from imprudence there is, happily, a long step to flagrant culpability. In any case, she was not long destined to retain the dignity of Queen of France; for she had been but eighty-two days a wife ere she became a widow. The first symptoms of the languor which proved fatal to Louis XII manifested themselves, as we have already stated, before the festivities consequent upon his marriage had yet terminated. An alarming attack of gout supervened; and he became so much enfeebled by its violence, that he was at length compelled to attend the jousts and tourneys upon a litter; while so rapidly did the disease progress, that ere long he was unable to leave his bed. Nevertheless, his physicians, unwilling to believe that he was really sinking, continued to declare that he would rally; but Louis himself repudiated the idea. He too surely felt that the grasp of death was upon him, and met his fate with a calmness worthy of a great monarch and an honest man.

When he became conscious that his end was near, he summoned the young Duke de Valois to his bedside; and having, with considerable difficulty, raised himself to a sitting posture, flung his arms about his neck, and embracing him with affectionate emotion, said feebly, but firmly, "Francis, I am dying! I consign our subjects to your care". The prince burst into tears, and implored him to dismiss such gloomy thoughts, as his physicians augured more favourably. The dying king, however, only shook his head; he was aware that earthly help could avail him no longer; and as his weeping successor established himself beside his pillow, he exerted his last remaining powers to impress upon him the awful extent of the responsibility with which he would, in a few hours, be invested. Acute suffering at length terminated his efforts; and he expired in the arms of his royal nephew, with a smile of gratified affection upon his lips.

Thus, while yet deeply enamoured of his fair young wife, surrounded by worldly grandeur and festivity, and meditating, in his graver moments, future expeditions against Italy, Louis XII, whose hurried journey to receive his bride, and whose exertions during the subsequent rejoicings to assume the semblance of a youth and vigour which he no longer possessed, had overtaxed his physical powers, fell a victim to his imprudence about midnight of the 1st of January, 1515.

CHAPTER VI.

[1515.]

FRANCIS I. was no sooner proclaimed king, than Queen Claude, in consideration of the pledge which he had given to provide the dowry of the Princess Renee, her sister, formally ceded to him the duchy of Brittany, and the counties of Nantes, Blois, Etampes, and Montfort, to be enjoyed and governed during his life, as veritable Duke of Brittany.

This first cession took place on the 22d of April; but on the 28th of June following, as it did not by any means secure to her royal husband the whole extent of the desired benefit, the queen was induced to execute a new deed, by which she conferred these privileges upon him for ever, in failure of her own children, should they die before him. This wife-like divestiture was, however, only partially valid; as the marriage contract of Anne de Bretagne had distinctly endowed her second son with the possession and sovereignty of the duchy, while, as there had been a failure of male issue, and the clause had never been revised, the Bretons, who were anxious to throw off the yoke of French supremacy, and who contended that the crowns of Brittany and France could not legally be united upon the same head, unless it were that of an only son, would not admit the claim of Claude; but declared the right of succession to be in favour of her younger sister, this alienation and disposal having been, moreover, stipulated when negotiations were pending for a marriage between Madame Claude and the Count de Luxembourg. In this opinion they were supported by another clause, which bestowed the duchy upon the second child, were it male or female; and in virtue of the said contract, the Bretons declared that the Princess Renée was the legitimate heiress.

Consequently, the donation made by the queen of Francis I met with no ratification from the Bretons themselves; and the rather that there still existed certain families in the duchy, who possessed collateral claims to the succession; but who, seeing the king already the father of a young family, every individual of which must inherit before them, remained passive, and awaited future events.

The acclamations of the army, the lays of the most distinguished national poets, the tumultuous shouting of the vassals, and the congratulations of all the feudatory nobles, were the welcome of Francis as he ascended the throne of France. His first act of royalty was to proclaim a suspension of arms; and once more the country for a brief space breathed freely. On the 25th of January, he was crowned with great pomp at the cathedral of Rheims, by Robert de Lenoncourt, Archbishop of Paris; and never had either of those two great cities made so profuse a display of magnificence as upon that occasion; while previously, as if to refute the most heinous slander of Brantôme on Queen Mary, a contemporary writer asserts that Francis waited upon her daily to condole with her upon her bereavement, accompanied by Madame Claude his wife, during the lapse of six weeks—the period assigned for the royal widows of France to remain in their beds, seeing no light save that of the wax tapers by which their apartments were illuminated—and that he then and there formally demanded to know whether he might consider himself as the legitimate sovereign of France, a question which she alone was competent to answer; when the young widow at once and unhesitatingly replied that such he was; that she knew of no king save himself; and that she was unaware of any cause in herself which could destroy his right to the succession.

Moreover, Francis had long been cognizant of the attachment which had formerly existed between Mary and Suffolk, and formally warned the latter against any proceeding which might excite the displeasure of the English monarch.

“I am aware, duke,” he said gravely, “of your whole history, of your affection for the queen of Louis XII, of the influence which you possess in England, and of much more than you can be

prepared to suppose. I am anxious that nothing should occur to dishonour me, nor to cause umbrage to my brother, the King of England, towards whom I desire to exhibit the same friendship and cordiality which were felt by the late king, my father-in-law; I, therefore, entreat of you not to take any steps which may involve our good understanding; and should a promise have been exchanged between yourself and the queen, to be careful of my dignity, by taking immediate measures to secure the approval of the king your master; and by inducing him to inform me in writing of his good pleasure, at which I shall rejoice, should it be favourable to your wishes. But, if it prove otherwise, I warn you on your life to beware of what you do; for, should you disobey me, I will make you bitterly repent your imprudence.”

This caution the duke received without evincing the slightest resentment, declaring on oath that he would attempt nothing derogatory to his own honour, or to the will of the king his master; a pledge which he, however, falsified almost on the instant, urged, as some historians declare, by the representations and entreaties of Mary herself; for only four or five days subsequently to this interview, a secret marriage took place, and the dowager-queen of France became Duchess of Suffolk.

Francis, indignant at this want of faith, summoned the duke to his presence, and reproached him vehemently for his perfidy; he even concluded his remarks by saying: “If I were strictly to perform my duty, I should, this very hour, strike your head from your shoulders, for you have violated your oath.”

The duke, terrified by the menace, hastened to justify himself: “I beseech of you, Sire,” he exclaimed; “to pardon me. I confess that I have erred; but I entreat your majesty to remember the strength of the affection by which I have been misled, and to extend your mercy in so extreme a case.”

“Sir”, was the stern reply, “you require more than I am disposed to grant; for you appear on your part to have forgotten that the lady whom you have induced to become your wife, was not only a princess of England, but also the dowager-queen of France. Let the king your master only require it of me, and I shall at once know how to avenge alike his dignity and my own.”

But however the young king might have felt it incumbent upon him to exhibit this display of indignation, it is not the less certain that the clandestine marriage of Mary with one of her brother’s subjects, was by no means unwelcome to him, as it precluded the possibility of her hand being hereafter bestowed upon some prince who might be at enmity with France, and induce the English monarch to espouse his interests; a consideration which decided him, in accordance with the request of the queen-duchess, to intercede with Henry VIII, and to procure the pardon of the culprits. In this undertaking he easily succeeded, the influence of the favourite being still great over the mind of his royal master; and he then lost no time before,—governed by the same policy, and, moreover, instigated beyond all doubt by the human weakness which, whatever might be his own line of conduct, led him to conceal the mortification that a nature so vain as his could not fail to experience, on perceiving the facility with which Mary had cast off the yoke of his fascinations, and restored her wavering affection to its first object,—Francis hastened to repay to the princess the dowry which she had brought to Louis XII, and to expedite her return to England with her new bridegroom.

The solemn entry of the young king into his good city of Paris was hailed with delight. His commanding person, splendid horsemanship, and urbane deportment won all hearts, and made his progress one unbroken triumph. All the princes and noble ladies of the kingdom, as well as many foreigners of rank, were in his train. Jousts and tourneys occupied the succeeding days, at the whole of which the highborn dames and damsels of the court were present, as well as at the balls and banquets, which filled the streets with equipages and torchlight throughout the entire nights. Above twelve hundred princes, dukes, counts, and cavaliers assisted at these memorable festivities, which were rendered still more brilliant by the presence of the queen, the Countess d’Angoulême, Madame de Bourbon, and all the ladies of their respective suites. Nor did even this

magnificence suffice to satisfy the superb tastes of Francis; for he no sooner felt the crown firmly fixed upon his brow, than he became anxious to exhibit his splendour to the whole of his people; and, accordingly, as if to form as startling a contrast as possible with the staid and sober state of his predecessor, the court galas were divested of their exclusiveness, and not only the whole of the nobility, but even the *bourgeoisie* were admitted; a popular measure, which for a time blinded all ranks to the enormous outlay that they involved; and it was not, consequently, until it was found necessary to increase the national taxes in order to supply the exhausted treasury, that the more prudent of the citizens began to question the expediency of thus impoverishing the revenues of the country for the mere purposes of amusement.

The young king no sooner found himself at liberty to regulate his own studies, than he laid aside all books, save those chivalrous romances in which, from his earliest boyhood, he had delighted, and upon which he sought to model his own character. Nor was it long ere he infected all the young nobles about his person with the same extravagant and romantic fancy. The Knights of the Round Table became the models of the French courtiers, and the palace of Charlemagne their ideal habitation; while the beauties of the court eagerly welcomed a state of society in which they were outwardly worshipped as goddesses, despite the concealed contempt which the frailties of too many among them might induce. Moreover, Louise de Savoie, who idolised her son, and was proud of his personal beauty and accomplishments, in order to retain her power over his mind, encouraged him in every caprice which could flatter his vanity, or consolidate her own influence; and she, consequently, offered rather furtherance than objection to a puerile ambition beneath the dignity of a great monarch, who soon learned to consider animal courage as the highest virtue to which a sovereign could attain; and to neglect the more important tactics of modern warfare, while he attached an undue value to mere personal prowess.

Nor was this vital mistake in the field compensated by prudence in the internal economy of the nation; for, already constitutionally enamoured of whatever was magnificent and striking, the favourite studies of Francis led him to suppose that all minor considerations should give way before the regal state by which it was his passion to surround himself; a fatal error, which was destined to be expiated by his subjects; while, in order the more thoroughly to embody the personage of his excitable imagination, he taught himself to believe that a monarch who was also a true knight should neither give battle, nor retreat before a superior force. His leading ambition was to be at once a great king and a *preuz chevalier*; courteous and liberal towards the other sex, and absolute with his own. To him the members of the national parliaments, the most powerful of his nobility, and the bulk of his people, were alike as regarded his sovereign will and rule; he admitted no opposition to his power, recognised no right of opinion save his own, and brooked neither dissent nor delay when once his pleasure was made known.

These were sufficiently dangerous elements in the nature of one called at so early an age to govern a great nation; but the redeeming quality of Francis was an elevation of character that led him to emulate both the physical and moral heroism of which he had made his idol; and thus, his very errors wore an aspect of kingly splendour, which dazzled even those who were capable of appreciating their danger; and which has subsequently served as their palliation with the majority of his historians. Moreover, the young monarch, reared in the midst of an admiring court, had imbibed no prejudices, and nourished no jealousies. The liberality of Louis XII, who had been too high-minded to treat him with distrust because he was destined to succeed to the crown, had effectually prevented the existence of all cabals and party-spirit; and thus his first act of royal power was not, as is so frequently the case on an accession, to displace, but to confirm, the ministers of the late king in their several offices; while he was equally regardful of his personal friends.

Upon his mother Francis bestowed the title of duchess, with an increased revenue, and the palace of Amboise as a residence. His sister Marguerite was invested with the dignity of *Madame*, and was thenceforward called both Madame de France, and Madame de Valois; while two years subsequently she was created Duchess de Berri. The vacant office of constable of France was, at her earnest request, bestowed upon Charles de Montpensier, who had, by his marriage with his

cousin Suzanne, daughter and heiress of the Sire de Beaujeu and Madame Anne de France, become Duke de Bourbon; a marriage in which, notwithstanding the amiable qualities possessed by both parties, no happiness could be anticipated, from the fact that bride and bridegroom had alike already bestowed their affections elsewhere, and to which a desire to escape from certain disagreeable discussions which might have arisen from sundry clauses in the will of a common ancestor of the two contracting parties, had alone induced Charles to consent.

In conferring the dignity of constable upon the duke, Francis I had made a great concession to his affection for Marguerite; for he had never forgotten the quarrel which had taken place between them ten years previously at the castle of Amboise; and the favour was enhanced by the fact, that, since the treason of Saint-Pol in the reign of Louis XI, this, the highest official dignity in the kingdom, had only been granted long subsequently to the death of that noble, by Anne de France, then Dame de Beaujeu, to the Duke Jean de Bourbon, her husband's elder brother; while, since that period, the post had remained vacant, and was supposed to be virtually annulled, although not formally abolished; neither Charles VIII nor Louis XII having appointed a successor to Jean de Bourbon. The Count de Vendôme became governor of the Isle of France; M. de Lautrec was invested with the government of Guienne; Bonnivet was created Admiral of the Fleet; the Sire de la Palice made Marshal of France; M. de Boissy, who had completed the education of the young king, received the appointment of Grand Master, vacated by the promotion of M. de la Palice, as well as the superintendence of affairs; and Anthony Duprat, the protégé of Madame d'Angoulême, was, at her earnest request, created Chancellor of the Kingdom.

This was the most unfortunate of all the appointments made by Francis; as to the machinations of this unworthy minister, many of the subsequent calamities of his reign have been universally attributed. Rendered far-sighted by his ambition, Duprat had, pending the misunderstanding which existed between Anne de Bretagne and Louise de Savoie, (at which period he was first president of the parliament of Paris,) attached himself to the party of the latter during her temporary exile from the court, assisted her with his advice and support, and finally secured her unbounded gratitude.

As an equivalent for this unhappy selection of a chancellor, Francis, however, distinguished by his most marked affection and favour, Anne, Seigneur de Montmorency, and Philippe Chabot, Sire de Brion; two young nobles who subsequently made themselves famous by the services which they rendered to their country.

In the month of May, Francis, probably somewhat alarmed by the deficit which had already betrayed itself in the national exchequer, removed his court to Amboise, whither Madame d'Angoulême had preceded him, for the purpose of celebrating at that castle the marriage of Mademoiselle de Bourbon, the sister of the connétable, with the Duke de Lorraine; and it is upon record that, on this occasion, being desirous to give some variety to the festivities, which were limited in their nature by the fact that, in a private residence, the etiquette of mourning for the late king did not permit either balls or masquerades, the young monarch caused a wild boar, which had been taken alive in the neighbouring forest, to be turned loose in the great courtyard of the castle, having previously ordered every issue by which the savage denizen of the woods might escape, to be carefully closed. This being, as it appeared, fully accomplished, the courtly company then assembled at Amboise stationed themselves at the windows, whence they amused themselves by casting darts and other missiles at the enraged and bewildered animal.

Highly excited by this novel pastime, bets ran high between the young nobles on their respective skill; and bright eyes watched anxiously the flight of every weapon as it was hurled from the respective casements. Suddenly, however, shrieks of terror echoed through the spacious apartments. The boar, tortured beyond endurance, had made a furious plunge at the door which opened upon the great staircase; had dashed it in, and was rapidly ascending the steps which led to the state rooms, and which were protected only by a hanging drapery of velvet; when the king, rushing from the apartment where the horror-stricken ladies were crowding about the queen, and thrusting aside the courtiers who endeavoured to impede his passage, threw himself full in the

path of the maddened animal, and adroitly avoiding his first shock, stabbed him to the heart.

The Duchess d'Angoulême lived in sovereign style in the castle of Amboise. Like Anne de Bretagne, she retained a numerous household, and it was one more calculated than that of her predecessor to increase the attraction of a season of display and festivity; for, while her female attendants had been selected for their personal beauty, they were totally untrammelled by the wholesome and decent restraints which Anne had laid upon her ladies; and already had the licentious tastes of the prince her son corrupted the little court which she had collected about her, and which had become the focus of intrigue, gallantry, and imprudence. For a time, indeed, the pollution of the heart was not suffered publicly to pollute the lips; but ere long even this tacit observance of propriety was disregarded; and, as it is always easy for a woman to be witty when she lays aside her modesty, so the circle of Madame d'Angoulême soon became renowned as the centre of gay humour and sprightly fascination.

And in the midst of this polluted court lived on the meek and pious Queen Claude, surrounded, like her step-mother, with a band of highborn dames and damsels; but, unlike her, giving to those about her person an example of virtue and self-respect which was strictly imitated; conscious of the irregularities of her husband—for where is the royal personage long permitted to remain in happy ignorance of her own wrongs?—but uncomplaining and patient; a martyr to that keenest of all woman's suffering, a despised and neglected affection. The abandoned conduct of Louise de Savoie, far from vitiating the pure nature of her son's wife, tended only to strengthen her in her own better principles; and like the moon which can look down upon pollution without sullyng the purity of its beams, so did the unhappy young queen witness on all sides the degrading progress of licentiousness without losing one virtue, or imbibing one vice. Trained in the most delicate reserve by her mother Anne de Bretagne, she could not condescend to pander to the dissipated tastes of Francis, who soon wearied of her circle, and found a fertile subject of sarcasm in the austere restraint to which she subjected the ladies of her suite; who, although they were permitted to share in the festivities of the court, were compelled to be so guarded in their conduct and deportment that they were never sullied by its impurities. "Her circle," says Brantôme, "was a paradise on earth, a school of honour and virtue, and the ornament of France, as foreigners were wont to declare when they were admitted within it; for they ever met a courteous reception; and when they were expected, it was the queen's express command that her ladies should attire themselves richly, and exert all their talents for the entertainment of her guests, without absenting themselves in the pursuit of other amusements." It was at Amboise, on the 19th of August, that the queen gave birth to her elder born, the Princess Louise; whose sex, although doubtless a bitter disappointment to both parents, was not fated to affect the interests of the succession, as she died in her infancy.

The first and greatest anxiety of Francis was the recovery of the Milanese; a design which had been delayed by the death of Louis XII; and, in order to supply the necessary funds for this expedition, he was induced by the advice of his chancellor to renew all the taxes which his predecessor had abolished, and even to expose the offices of the crown for sale; thus endeavouring to replenish his treasury by the most impolitic and arbitrary measures. His claim to the duchy of Milan was declared openly and boldly, as he considered his honour to be involved in its recovery. Louis XII had based his presumed right upon the title of a female, and had transferred it to his daughter, the princess Claude, as a portion of her dowry; but Francis, in order to secure it more effectually, caused his wife, as we have already stated, to make over to him her sovereignty of the duchy; and thus to enable him to advance a personal and legitimate claim to its possession.

Charles of Austria, the sovereign of the Low Countries, at the instigation of M. de Chièvres, his governor—who was anxious to preserve a peace with France upon which the prosperity of Flanders was so greatly dependent, as well as to secure to his royal pupil, who was by five years and a half the junior of the French king, the support of that monarch against Ferdinand the Catholic, his maternal grandfather—had already sent ambassadors to congratulate him upon his accession, and to request his friendship; which was not only accorded, but coupled with the promise that Francis would accord to him the hand of his sister-in-law, the Princess Renée. Her extreme youth,

however—for at this period she had only just attained her sixth year—rendering the immediate celebration of the marriage inexpedient, it was stipulated between the two princes that the ceremony should be deferred until she should have reached the age of twelve years, when she was to become the wife of Charles, with a dowry of 200,000 silver crowns in money, and the duchy of Berri, estimated at 400,000 more. A treaty of alliance, both offensive and defensive, was also signed by the contracting parties; and Charles of Austria, although numbering Ferdinand among his allies, pledge himself not to assist him in any attempt which he might make against France, if he did not, within the space of six months, terminate the misunderstanding existing between the two courts on the subject of the kingdom of Navarre. This treaty was executed at Paris, on the 24th of March.

The ostensible object of the Flemish envoys had been merely to do homage for the counties of Artois and Flanders, which were held by the archduke of the crown of France; and it was so far fortunate for Francis that they should have selected that precise period to visit his court, as it rendered Charles unable to unite with the emperor in any designs which might have proved inimical to the French interest. The mission was entrusted to Count Henri de Nassau, who arrived at Paris splendidly attended, having both nobles and prelates in his train; and it was through his agency that the Archduke, who had already been affianced to half the princesses of the civilized world, was once more engaged in a matrimonial compact, destined, like so many others, never to be ratified. Moreover, it is probable that Francis himself never contemplated its completion, while it is certain that the ministers of the young prince had been urged to effect a friendly alliance with France, from their suspicion that Ferdinand the Catholic proposed to bequeath the crown of Spain to his other grandson and namesake, who had been educated in that country; while Charles, who had passed his youth between Germany and the Low Countries, was comparatively unknown to him.

Nor was the errand of M. de Nassau destined to be a bootless one for himself; it being secretly stipulated that he should receive the hand of Claudine de Challon, sister of the Prince of Orange, who had been educated with the young Queen of France; and the marriage was accordingly celebrated with a magnificence worthy of so renowned a court.

The state of Europe at this time offered nothing sufficiently alarming to induce the young king to abandon his design upon the Milanese. Spain was for the moment tranquil. The death of the Archduke Philip had restored to Ferdinand his dominion over Castile; while his title to Naples, Roussillon and Cerdagne was not sufficiently valid to enable him to take the initiative with safety in any aggressive measures towards France. Germany was also at peace; and so divided and subdivided into petty and independent states, as well as kept in check by the moral and commercial strength of her free towns, and the impotence of her emperor—who, although the head of the Germanic body, by which, in the national diets, the laws were passed, was a mere shadow-king, despised both at home and abroad—that she was in no condition to volunteer a war of which the issue, under such circumstances, must at the best be doubtful; while England, who had upon Flodden Field delivered herself from her most threatening and mischievous enemy, had already gained sufficient experience of the bad faith and perfidious vacillation of both Maximilian and Ferdinand, to induce Henry VIII to shun any alliance with either against the interests of Francis, who, in the late negotiations between them, had won his good will alike by his frankness and courtesy.

Thus the pope and the Swiss were the only formidable enemies against whom the young monarch of France could be called upon to contend; and the arrival of the several embassies to compliment him upon his accession, afforded a favourable opportunity for consolidating his friendly relations with such of the different powers as were already on terms of amity with France; and also of ascertaining, and providing against, the possible hostility of those whose alliance was still doubtful.

To the English envoys he suggested that the treaty of peace concluded between Louis XII and Henry VIII should be renewed; and that Scotland, did the necessity arise, should be included in



the negotiations; that the most perfect liberty of commerce should be assured to both nations; that no vessel of war intended to threaten either should be admitted into any of the ports of the other kingdom; and that they should mutually respect each other's allies; but that Milan and Genoa, which Francis was about to invade, should be exempted from this arrangement. To all these conditions Henry acceded at once, with the exception of that which concerned Scotland; the jealousy of the English monarch being awakened by the circumstance that the Duke d'Aubigny, the cousin of the late King of Scots, and the subject of Francis, had been invited thither as regent. He accordingly called upon the young sovereign to pledge himself that D'Aubigny, who was well known to be inimical to the English interests, should abandon his intention of visiting Scotland; and declared that should this concession be made, he would at once affix his signature to the treaty. Francis, however, would not consent to withdraw his plighted word to the Scotch; but offered himself as surety for the loyalty of his general; and agreed, that if in the space of three months D'Aubigny did not succeed in reconciling the adverse factions, he should be recalled.

Henry accepted the offered terms; and the treaty was concluded in the month of April.

The Swiss cantons, excepting only the Grisons, still maintained their hostile position towards France. During the reigns of Louis XI and Charles VIII they had considered themselves as an integral portion of the French armies; and had conducted, in no trifling degree, to their success in the field. Even under Louis XII they had done good service, and proved their efficiency; while the benefit was rendered mutual by the fact that the poverty of their over-populated country was lessened by the escape-valve thus afforded; and that support and employment were obtained for considerable bodies of men who must otherwise have diminished its already scanty resources. Conscious of their importance in European warfare from their high state of discipline and undaunted courage, the Switzers had, however, by presuming upon these advantages excited the indignation of Louis XII; who, anxious to emancipate himself from pretensions and demands which ultimately exceeded all due bounds, declined their further assistance; and substituted for them a large body of German infantry, or lansquenets, who, while they were utterly free from the insolence and waywardness of the Swiss, were from the first their equals in courage, and soon worthily rivalled them both in order and discipline. This was at once an affront to the honour, and an injury to the interests, of the mountaineers, which they vowed never to forgive. They forgot that even if they had twice assisted the French king to subdue Italy, they had twice also, in order to gratify their own dislike, lent their aid to divest him of his conquest; and although they had amply revenged their supposed wrongs both at Novara and Dijon, they bore in remembrance only the refusal of Louis to ratify the treaty of La Trémouille; and suffered the relentless Cardinal of Sion to keep them in a state of perpetual and unyielding animosity to France. Thus the attitude which they assumed could not be utterly disregarded by Francis, although, with the chivalrous feeling natural to him, he looked upon them with contempt as mere mercenaries, and did not suffer their demonstrations to interfere with his darling project; although he deemed it expedient to make an effort to regain their alliance; and accordingly sent the Sire de Jamets, one of the sons of Robert de la Mark, as his envoy to the diet of the Cantons, in order that an accommodation might if possible be effected with them, and the differences adjusted which had arisen out of the non-fulfilment of the treaty of Dijon. This concession was, however, far from conducing to the object which he had in view. Rendered insolent by their recent successes, the Swiss ascribed to fear an overture which had been dictated simply by policy, and arrogantly refused to admit the envoy of France; threatening, moreover, that if the conditions of that treaty were not immediately performed to the letter, they would forthwith invade the provinces of Burgundy and Dauphiny.

Francis treated the insolent menace with contempt; and contented himself by marching a strong body both of native and foreign troops towards Burgundy; ostensibly to defend that province from aggression, but actually to bring them nearer to the point where they were to be employed.

Consequently, this movement, ominous as it was, created no alarm either in the pope, or the Italian states which were in his interest. They looked upon the French king as a mere youth, devoted to pleasure, who would not hazard an encounter with the papal forces; nor could even the

representations of Ferdinand induce them to alter their opinion. In vain did he represent that Francis had suggested a treaty with himself and Maximilian, which had failed to take effect owing to the refusal of the young monarch to forego his claim upon the Milanese; and that he had already confirmed that which Louis XII had formerly made with the Venetians. Leo X disregarded the caution; and even declined to join a league which had been secretly formed between Maximilian, Ferdinand, the Swiss, and the Duke of Milan, for the defence of Italy; declaring that he was urged by his holy office to promote peace rather than war, and would not provoke, or even appear to anticipate, hostilities from any European power.

In confirming the treaty with the Venetians to which Ferdinand had alluded, Francis had secretly induced Ottavio Fregosa, the Doge of Genoa, to give a pledge that he would abdicate, and place himself under the protection of France, whenever the presence of a French army sufficiently strong to protect him from the indignation of the other powers should be assembled in Italy; a promise which the young king hailed with joy, as Genoa commanded the passage into the Milanese by sea, and was consequently of great importance to his design. This done, he pursued his negotiation with the Pope, who at length consented to remain neuter; but who, at the same time, entered into an engagement with Maximilian, Ferdinand, and the Swiss, to assist them in protecting the Duchy of Milan.

In the meantime Francis had continued quietly but diligently to strengthen the forces requisite for his intended expedition. While he himself led Paris, and took up his abode at Amboise, his army was gradually advancing to the frontiers of Dauphiny. It consisted of a band of ten thousand lansquenets, raised in Germany by the Sire de Sedan, and the Duke of Suffolk; six thousand foot, furnished by the Duke de Gueldres; and a like number levied in Gascony and Languedoc by Pietro da Navarro, whom the ingratitude and bad faith of the King of Spain had driven into the service of France: four thousand volunteers; two thousand five hundred lances; a strong body of artillery, which had already been sent forward to Lyons; and six thousand Gascon foot-soldiers, led by Pietro da Navarro, who had formerly commanded the Spanish infantry; composing altogether an army of between thirty and forty thousand men.

While this force was unostentatiously in progress of organization, Francis—who, however little he deprecated the hostility of the pope, whom he knew to be more occupied in the aggrandizement of his family than in that of his states, thought it wise to conciliate his alliance—sent an embassy to Rome to open a negotiation between them, which he entrusted to Guillaume Budée, the contemporary and friend of Erasmus, and one of the most accomplished scholars in France. Already aware of the particular ambition of Leo X, who was anxious to secure the supreme rule in Florence to his nephew Lorenzo de' Medici; and to his brother Giulio a principality compounded of the states which his predecessor Julius II had wrested from the Duke de Ferrara and the Milanese; Budée offered on the part of his royal master to assist His Holiness in effecting the marriage between his brother Giulio and Marguerite de Savoie, the aunt of the French king, which had already been mooted, and which must have tended to convert the two sovereigns into firm allies; but the pope could not willingly resign his own darling scheme; and amiable and learned as he was, and fully competent to appreciate the compliment paid to him by Francis in the person and through the medium of so celebrated an ambassador, he was nevertheless possessed of all the craft peculiar to his nation; and hesitated between this amicable proposition and that of Maximilian and Ferdinand, which he believed would be ultimately more advantageous to his house. He consequently amused Budée for a time with objections, exactions, and mystifications so obviously unmeaning and insincere, that the frank and straightforward scholar at length resolved to request his recall; alleging that he was unable to cope with the diplomatic cunning of the sovereign pontiff; and humbly praying his majesty to release him from a responsibility to which he was unequal. He was, however, instructed to remain at the papal court, and to continue the negotiation, whatever might be its probable issue, in order to divert the attention of Leo from an intrigue in which his interests were involved, and which was then pending.

CHAPTER VII.

[1515.]

MEANWHILE the warlike preparations of Francis were completed; and he formally assisted the queen and his mother to receive at Amboise the parting compliments of his generals in the presence of the whole court. The queen had a public reception on the day upon which the Constable-duke de Bourbon, who was to take the chief command of the invading army, arrived at the castle. His advent had been already announced; and it chanced that either by accident or design the Duchess d'Alençon, who had accompanied her husband to the castle, there to remain while he was absent with the king in Italy, was standing in the deep bay of a window in the apartment of her royal sister-in-law, conversing with some of the courtiers, at the moment when the connétable galloped into the courtyard, attended by an escort of gentlemen and pages very richly attired. At the noise made by the horsemen every eye was turned upon the brilliant spectacle which thus suddenly presented itself, and was instantly riveted on the person of Bourbon himself. He was attired for war; and wore over his mail a sash of cloth of silver; a diamond-studded poniard flashed in his belt beside the golden pommel of his sword, and his casque was surmounted by a plume of white and crimson feathers. In such a costume the fine person of the duke was necessarily more than usually striking; and the beautiful sister of Francis, after gazing for an instant, like those around her, upon the majestic and noble figure of the only man whom she had ever loved, turned away with a shuddering sigh, and involuntarily glanced with a look of superb contempt upon the insignificant prince to whom the policy of her uncle Louis XII had given her unwilling hand.

Neither the sigh, the shudder, nor the glance, brief as each had been in its duration, had, despite all her caution, passed unobserved. Among those immediately about her was Bonnivet, who had neither forgiven nor forgotten the past, and whose jealousy of Bourbon continued as lively as ever, although the marriage of the duchess had rendered the suit of both alike hopeless. A bitter whisper reached her ear: "Monsieur le Connétable," said the voice, "whose haughty spirit has become a proverb throughout the country, might today be pardoned his presumption were he to learn the effect produced by his arrival."

Marguerite blushed deeply, frowned haughtily, and turned away; but the arrow had stricken home, and she could not encounter the mocking eye that she felt was turned upon her.

By this time the connétable had ascended the great staircase; had been announced by the usher on duty; and had entered the royal apartment, still attended by the gentlemen of his suite, superbly attired in vests of velvet heavily embroidered with gold. It was now the king's turn to frown. It was true that by his marriage with the daughter of Anne of France, Bourbon had become the most wealthy, as well as the most powerful noble of the kingdom; but Francis could not endure that his own magnificence should be eclipsed by that of a subject, and his reception was more chilling than the occasion seemed to warrant. The duke did not, however, appear to remark the discomposure of his sovereign; and the warm greeting of Madame d'Angoulême, who was by no means insensible to the attractions of her new guest, was returned with grace and composure. Nor did even the stately coldness of the Duchess d'Alençon bring a shade upon the brow of Charles de Bourbon: he could appreciate her real feelings, for he judged them by his own; and as he raised her fingers respectfully to his lips, he did not detain them there a moment.

Bonnivet, however, who had watched both parties closely, was not to be deceived. He had marked the slight flush which mounted to the brow of the duke, and the deadly paleness that had

overspread the features of the princess; and as, after this act of homage, Bourbon moved away to join the circle which was formed about the king, he turned to the Count de Saint Valier, the captain of the royal guard, and in a tone of mysterious confidence bade him remark the agitation of Madame d'Angoulême, and the constraint of her daughter.

“It is sufficiently evident”, was the reply; “but why do you draw my attention to the circumstance?”

“To initiate you into a state secret. The mother and the daughter have the same passion in their hearts.”

The quick-sighted Bonnavet was correct in his conjecture; but he was unable to discriminate the very different nature of the passion which Bourbon had awakened in the breasts of those two royal ladies. The love of Louise de Savoie for the gallant and handsome prince was, like all her other attachments, alike sensual and selfish; while that of Marguerite was an affection compounded of memory, regret, and self-pity, without one stain of earth. The duke had been the first love of her girlhood, and had peopled the past with associations of happiness and hope, both of which had proved fallacious, but were still dear. Whatever may have been the errors of Marguerite, it is certain that she loved Bourbon well and worthily; with that womanly affection which forgets self in the object beloved, and can endure in all its intensity alike through time and trial.

In the utterance of her murmured farewell to the brilliant connétable, the Duchess d'Alençon had exhausted all her regrets; and it was consequently with courteous composure, that she afterwards received the parting compliments of François, Duke de Châtelleraut, his brother; the Marshals de la Palice and Trivulzio; the Dukes of Lorraine, Vendôme, Gueldres, and D'Aubigny; the Bastard of Savoy, the king's uncle, the veteran Louis de Brézé, Grand Seneschal of Normandy; the Counts of Saint-Pol and Guise; La Trémouille, and his son the Prince de Talmont, Imbercourt, Téligny, Béarn, Sancerre, Orval, Lautrec, Bayard; and, in fine, all that was noble and chivalrous in France.

The necessity of raising money to meet the exigencies of so formidable an undertaking as the recovery of the Milanese, was the first difficulty to which Francis had been exposed since his accession to the throne; and it is probable that, at so important a moment, he regretted the immense sums which had been wasted upon mere courtly magnificence; but Duprat, ever equal to every emergency, at once suggested the dangerous and impolitic measure of increasing the number of judicial offices for sale. The young king, eager to carry out his plans, thoughtlessly welcomed the suggestion; and a new chamber of parliament was created, consisting of twenty councillors, all of whom purchased their places; while the provincial courts throughout the kingdom were augmented in the same manner. For a time the parliament of Paris refused to sanction so glaring an innovation upon their rights, and declined to register the royal edict; nor was it without considerable and avowed reluctance that they were ultimately induced to do so; the measure being regarded as one of great injustice and impolicy, tending to diminish the national confidence in the monarch, and to excite distrust towards the minister by whom it had been proposed.

Their objections were, however, disregarded; and Francis, satisfied that he was about to place himself at the head of the finest army which had ever been raised in France, made instant preparations for crossing the Alps. The number and resources of his enemies, concentrated by the powerful confederacy formed against him by Maximilian, Leo X, and the Swiss, served only to stimulate his ardour; and, on the 15th of July, at Lyons, he issued an ordinance, by which he appointed his mother, the Duchess d'Angoulême, regent of the kingdom during his absence. “Considering,” thus ran the document, “that it will be necessary to leave in our kingdom some personage representing ourselves, whose affection towards our person is undoubted, and to whom our subjects may have recourse as to ourselves; considering also that all the princes and nobles of our blood accompany us on our enterprise, we have decided to confide this charge and power to

our very dear and well-beloved lady and mother, the Duchess d'Angoulême and d'Anjou, as to the person in whom we have full and perfect confidence; and of whom we know, for a surety, that she will wisely and virtuously acquit herself of the same."

In how far Francis could answer to his conscience for such a declaration, it is not for us to decide. Certain it is that the overweening indulgence and undiminished influence of his mother may have blinded him in a great degree to her defects: but it is no less true that he possessed sufficient shrewdness and discrimination to be aware that, with so vehement and vindictive a character as hers, there was not that perfect assurance for his subjects which his words were intended to convey.

Although, upon the accession of her son, she had reached her fortieth year, Louise de Savoie was still one of the handsomest women at court. The peculiar charms of her face and person were scarcely diminished by time, and she possessed, physically, all the elements of popularity. She was, moreover, eminently qualified for government in so far that she did not lack courage, either personal or political; and was gifted with penetration, decision, and a self-possession which no adversity could shake: but these essential qualities were counterbalanced by an ambition and thirst of power absolutely insatiable; while her better reason was frequently overwhelmed by the impetuous torrent of her passions; a circumstance which sullied her administration with all the faults and weaknesses of her sex. Greedy of admiration, and vain to an inordinate excess, she was at the same time a bitter enemy, implacable in her resentments, impatient of control, actuated by the most malign jealousy, and covetous of the national treasures to such an extent, that the wisest projects were disconcerted, and the most important enterprises baffled, by her insatiate rapacity.

The regency being thus definitely arranged, Francis turned his whole attention to the organization and distribution of his army,\*which, after the new levies were completed, consisted of two thousand five hundred men-at-arms; amounting, in fact, from the peculiar constitution of the "lances", as they were then termed, to a force of nearly fifteen thousand horse; each member of the *compagnies d'ordonnance*, or regular cavalry, having in immediate attendance upon him, three archers, an esquire, or knife-bearer, whose name was derived from a short dirk which he carried in his belt, and a page; the whole of whom were mounted; and thus fifteen hundred "lances", fully equipped, comprised a strength of nine thousand horse; while in addition to this conventional suite, they were generally accompanied by a strong body of volunteers, similarly followed, who served without remuneration of any kind, and who were invariably individuals of good family, like the gendarmes themselves, and frequently entered the regular army after having gone through a campaign upon their own resources.

The command of the vanguard was confided to the Connétable de Bourbon, and in it were to serve his brother the Duke de Chatéllerault, La Palice, Trivulzio, Talmond, Bonnavet, Imbercourt, and Téliigny; while Pietro da Navarro, with his Gascons, Basques, and pioneers, were also attached to this division of the army. The rearguard was committed to the Duke d'Alençon, the husband of Marguerite: and the king himself commanded the main-body or "battle"; having about his person the Dukes of Vendôme and Lorraine, the Seigneur d'Aubigny, the Bastard of Savoy, the Sire d'Orval, La Trémouille, Lautrec, recently advanced to the rank of Marshal of France, Bayard, newly appointed Lieutenant-general of Dauphiny, the Duke de Gueldres, and Claude de Guise.

But when this powerful army, amounting in the aggregate to upwards of 40,000 men, with a strong train of artillery, was completed, the greatest difficulty was yet to be surmounted, by accomplishing its passage into Italy. The month of August had arrived, the snow had dissolved in the mountain-gorges, it is true; but some unforeseen circumstance might impede the march, and subject the troops to a scarcity of provisions, while it was moreover imperative that they should penetrate into the Milanese before the rainy season set in. "A safe but circuitous route presented itself" says Bacon, "by which one part of the army might penetrate to Savona, and the other might march by the county of Tende, towards Montferrat, but the delay which would ensue rendered this plan ineligible". The passes between Mont Cenis and Mont Genièvre were so strongly guarded by the Swiss, as to render it highly inexpedient to expose the army to the inevitable losses which must

accrue from any attempt to force them, and thus weaken its resources; and consequently great doubt existed as to the practicability of making good the passage of horsemen and ordnance across the Alps. The difficulty was, however, happily overcome by the proposal of a Piedmontese peasant, a vassal of the Count de Moreto, the cousin of Bayard—whose perfect acquaintance with all the intricacies of the mountain-chain rendered him an admirable guide—to point out a path which was comparatively unknown, and of which the Swiss had evinced their entire ignorance by leaving it totally unprotected. For a time the count treated the suggestion with indifference, declaring that it was impassable for a large army; but the pertinacity of his follower at length induced him to explore it, when his doubts were shaken; and having waited upon the Duke of Savoy to solicit his permission to profit by the discovery, he immediately started for Lyons to communicate to the king the result of his investigation. The proposition was submitted to the council, who, after some deliberation, decided that if, after a careful survey of the pass, the attempt appeared practicable, it should be made; and as a preliminary measure, the Sire de Lautrec and Pietro da Navarro, who were esteemed the most competent judges upon such a subject—the one from his fondness for adventure and boldness in confronting difficulties, and the other from his mechanical skill and knowledge—were despatched to examine the pass, and to report upon its practicability. They were accompanied by the Marechals Trivulzio and La Palice, the Count de Moreto, and his vassal; and the whole extent of the formidable pass was strictly surveyed; when it was ascertained that the difficulties, although great and various, were nevertheless not insurmountable if effectual measures were taken; and, upon the delivery of this opinion, it was at once resolved that the attempt should be made.

Detachments were marched towards Mont Cenis and Mont Genièvre to distract and mislead the attention of the enemy; and, all being in readiness, the vanguard of the French army forded the Durance; and, followed by the remainder of the troops, entered the mountain-chain on the Guillestre side, and commenced their gigantic undertaking. Never had the zeal and skill of Navarro availed so much. Under his directions roads were levelled, ravines filled up, trees felled, and rocks rent from their bases; bridges thrown over torrents, and the cannon dragged by hand across precipitous heights, and along narrow ledges, where it was impossible to entrust their safety to other than human strength.

No one who has not traversed the Alps—not by the roads now formed, but among the wild and rugged ravines known only to the mountain hunter, who even to this day reveals them grudgingly to the inquisitive and adventurous traveller—can for an instant comprehend, and for less appreciate, all the labour, danger, and uncertainty of such an enterprise as that now undertaken by the French army. As the troops advanced upon their perilous way, their difficulties increased. Nature, in all the majesty of her most formidable horrors, appeared to frown upon their audacity. The roaring of the winds that growled through the deep and dark gullies by which they were surrounded; the hollow crashing of the tools with which the pioneers seemed to be cleaving into the very heart of the rocky mountains; the avalanches which, disturbed by this unwonted obtrusion, came thundering down with an impetuosity that mocked the most steady gaze; the cataracts which leapt from ledge to ledge until they poured their vexed and boiling tide into some unseen depth below; the perpetual loss of life which was occasioned by the sudden dislodgment of loosened masses that rolled into the abyss, and ultimately fell with a crash which sounded like the ruin of a world;—these impediments failed to discourage the ardour of the French soldiery. Conquest was before them, and they toiled on uncomplainingly until the mighty task was accomplished, and they descended safely into the valley of Stura, near the town of Coni, in the territories of the Marquis de Saluzzo, a firm ally of the French crown, with all their heavy cavalry, and seventy pieces of ordnance. All the estates of Saluzzo had been invaded by the enemy, and all his strongholds taken, save the castle of Ravello, which, owing to its extreme strength, had been enabled to make an effectual resistance; while the other fortresses, whence his troops had been driven out, were occupied by Swiss garrisons, and his lands harried and laid waste by the forces of Prosper Colonna, an able and experienced general, who commanded the army of the coalition, and to whom the Duke of Milan had entrusted the passes of the Alps, which were defended by a force of 20,000 Swiss.

Courageous as he was, however, the personal bravery of Colonna was not more conspicuous than his arrogance; and while he awaited the approach of the French army, he affected the utmost contempt for the enemy against which he was to contend; even carrying his presumption so far as to appropriate to himself the county of Carmagnola, after having arranged with the Swiss to dispossess the Duke of Savoy of his dominions, as the forfeit which he was to pay for aiding and abetting his nephew, Francis I, in his designs on the Milanese.

The vanguard of the French army had scarcely descended into the plain of Stura, when they were informed that Colonna had established his quarters in the fortress of Carmagnola, where, confident in his security, he had even disdained to take such precautions as a better policy would have prompted. The spirit of French chivalry was at once aroused by this intelligence; and La Palice, D'Aubigny, Imbercourt, Bayard, Montmorency, and Bussy d'Amboise, resolved to make an attempt to surprise him in his stronghold. They accordingly advanced towards Carmagnola at the head of a body of men-at-arms carefully selected for the purpose; and while the Roman general was watching the progress of the main army over a pass which he considered as the most hazardous that could be contemplated, he never anticipated that a little band of adventurers would make their way by that of Rocca Sparviera, which he believed to be utterly impracticable for cavalry.

Such an attempt was, however, made, and successfully accomplished; but, on their arrival at Carmagnola, the courageous party found that Colonna was no longer there, but was moving towards Villa Franca, a small town upon the Po, where he frequently halted, and, as they ascertained, was that day to dine, before he proceeded to Pignerol, where he had convened a council of war.

Bayard earnestly proposed an immediate pursuit; which being acceded to by his companions, the Count de Moreto was despatched, disguised as a peasant, to hang upon the skirts of the enemy's army, consisting of three hundred mounted gendarmes, and some troops of light horse, and to ascertain the order of their march. Upon his return he confirmed the intelligence they had already received, that in full assurance of his security, Colonna was advancing leisurely towards his destination, rather like a private traveller riding through his own territories, than a general who was prepared to encounter an enemy.

Once assured of this fact, their arrangements were speedily completed, and they were forthwith in movement. Imbercourt led the van with a hundred archers, supported by Bayard with a like number of picked men, about an arrow's flight behind; while the rear was closed by La Palice and D'Aubigny. But although they advanced silently and with great precaution, they did not succeed in escaping observation; and Colonna was soon apprised by one of his spies that a French force was tracking his footsteps. He however treated the matter lightly; and being at the moment on his way to attend mass, he merely remarked that it could only be Bayard and his band, unless the remainder of the army had flown over the mountains; and contented himself, as he was entering the church, by despatching a second emissary to ascertain the real strength of the advancing party.

On the conclusion of the service he was informed by his messenger that he was pursued by more than a thousand French cavalry; but, although startled by the intelligence, he was still doubtful of the fact, declaring that the man's fears had exaggerated the number of the enemy, but that he would, nevertheless, ere long, repay Bayard for the inconvenience to which he was subjected through his agency, by taking him like a pigeon in a trap; and as he seated himself at table, he impatiently desired one of his gentlemen to put himself at the head of a score of horse, to ride back a mile or two on the road to Carmagnola, and to inform him if any danger of a surprise really existed.

He then quietly commenced his repast; but he was not long destined to retain his arrogant tranquillity, for the meal was not concluded when a cry of alarm became audible, and shouts of "France! France!" echoed through the narrow streets of the little town.

The reconnoitering party had come in sight of the French troops, long ere they anticipated an encounter for which they were totally unprepared, and on witnessing their numbers they at once turned and fled. Imbercourt, however, followed them up so closely that he entered the gates of Villa Franca simultaneously with the fugitives, and before the sentinels, who were fearful of injuring their own comrades, had time to fire a shot. The post once gained, he retained it, although wounded in the face, until he was joined by Bayard; nor could all the after-attempts of the garrison enable them to retake it.

For a brief time the conflict was a severe one; but the arrival of La Palice and D'Aubigny soon rendered all further opposition on the part of the papal forces utterly hopeless. Both the gates were secured to prevent their egress, and only two Albanian soldiers escaped over the plank adjoining the drawbridge, who fled wildly towards a strong body of Swiss, encamped within three miles of Villa Franca, with intelligence of the disaster.

Surprised, but not subdued, Colonna made a futile attempt to defend himself; but the house which he occupied was surrounded, his garrison made prisoners, and all escape rendered impracticable. In this strait, he demanded to be informed who were his captors, and he no sooner ascertained their names than, with all the vehemence of his nation, he abandoned himself to the most violent grief, cursing his fate, and lamenting that God had not permitted him to meet them in the field.

Bayard received the sword which he at length reluctantly and sullenly resigned, with a courtesy and respect which, in a calmer moment, must have gone far to console him; but he could remember only the mortification to which he had subjected himself by his own want of caution, and continually exclaimed, "Would to God that I had met them in a fair field, even if I had perished there!"

Many other prisoners of rank were taken, and among the rest the Count de Policastro, Piero Morgante, and Carolo Cadamosto, all good and approved soldiers; while the booty exceeded even the wildest hopes of the victors. "Had it been well managed," says the *Loyal Servant*, in the true chapman spirit of the age, when it is certain that all ranks of the army thought nearly as much of the ransom to be obtained for their prisoners as of the glory of defeating them, "it might have been made to yield a hundred and fifty thousand ducats." Suffice it, that by the capture of Villa Franca the French secured, besides other spoils, seven hundred horses, of which about four hundred were of pure Andalusian race; while Colonna himself lost on that disastrous day more than fifty thousand ducats in gold and silver plate, jewels, and money.

Nor was this the only success with which the campaign opened for Francis. A body of troops had been despatched to Genoa by sea, under the command of Aimar de Prie, the grand master of the cross-bow men, and intelligence was received a short time subsequently to the capture of Colonna, that they had reached their destination in safety, had been warmly welcomed, and that their strength had been augmented by a force of four thousand Genoese who had enlisted under their banner, and with whose co-operation they had surprised and taken Alessandria and Tortona, and possessed themselves of the whole of the Milanese on that bank of the Po.

The discomfiture of Colonna had, meanwhile, disconcerted all the measures taken by the allied sovereigns to secure the defence of Lombardy. The pope hastily issued an order to his nephew, Lorenzo de Medici, to halt the pontifical army within the frontiers of Modena; and at the same time despatched a trusty messenger to assure the French king of his neutrality; while Raymond de Cardona, who had concentrated the Spanish forces in the neighbourhood of Verona, awaited in vain the money which had been promised to him by Ferdinand, and the German troops with which he was to have been reinforced by Maximilian; and meanwhile, closely pressed by the Venetian general, who occupied the Polesino de Rovigo, he could neither advance nor retreat.

Thus the Swiss found themselves, at a most critical moment, abandoned by their allies. Moreover, their arrears of pay, amounting to forty thousand florins, had not reached them; they considered themselves disgraced by the success of the French army in crossing the Alps, which



they had undertaken to prevent; and were exasperated by the contempt with which they were regarded by the better disciplined and more soldier-like forces of a nation towards which their hatred was unmitigated: but the wound which rankled the most deeply in the hearts of the mercenary mountaineers was the non-arrival of their salary, which so enraged them against both the pope and the Viceroy of Naples, that they robbed the chest of the pontifical commissary, and retired in disorder to Verceil.

At this precise moment the French generals were pressing forward to Milan, without any other impediment to their entrance into that city than these same Switzers, who, at Galerata, on the road from Milan to the Simplon, appeared to be about to abandon the defence of Italy. Anxious to effect a reconciliation with these mischievous antagonists, Francis, who had never entertained towards them the same dislike which had been manifested by his predecessor, and who was aware that several of their most esteemed leaders were in his interest, particularly Jean de Diesbach, Albert de la Pierre, and George de Supersax Valaisan, caused them to be followed to Galerata by commissaries who were empowered to accord to them whatever sum they might demand; on condition that they would lay down their arms. Aware of their value in the field, he was anxious to purchase their friendship, and to repay their allegiance to himself at their own price; and, as the proposition met with no repulse, and they thus saw an opportunity of at once satisfying their rapacity and their revenge, M. de Lautrec and the Bastard of Savoy ultimately agreed to promise them seven hundred thousand crowns.

Meanwhile the coalesced princes, desirous, as soon as they witnessed the formidable attitude assumed by Francis, to consolidate by a treaty of peace the few days of truce which were rapidly waning to a close, and if possible to induce the king to withdraw to a greater distance from Milan, entered into a negotiation with him to that effect; but so certain did it appear that the young monarch would, should he comply with their wish for a cessation of hostilities, be enabled to dictate his own terms, that the Duke de Gueldres, whose presence was needed in his own dominions to check the aggressions of the Brabanters, withdrew from the army; leaving his troops under the command of his nephew, Claude de Lorraine, Duke de Guise, brother of the reigning prince. He was, however, premature; for while the negotiations were still pending, and before the arrangement could be concluded, a reinforcement of ten thousand Switzers who had just crossed the Alps to share the fortunes of their countrymen, and the powerful exhortations of the celebrated Cardinal of Sion, the sworn enemy of France, sufficed to dissuade the mercenaries from their purpose, and to put an end to the treaty altogether. The new-comers, resolved not to have made a bootless journey, declared that they would not return home empty-handed while those who had preceded them were gorged with booty; and proposed that the money which the French king had deposited at Buffaloro for the payment of his troops should be carried off. The scheme was a tempting one to the avaricious mountaineers, and met with almost universal welcome; but Jean de Diesbach and Albert de la Pierre, who had hitherto possessed great influence, finding themselves unable to dissuade their followers from so disgraceful an enterprise, returned to their own country with six or seven thousand men; and, it is believed, warned Lautrec of the contemplated attack.

Inspired by the eloquence of the Cardinal, the Swiss were once more eager to meet those in arms to whom they had been about to sell their services; and their old hatred against France was again revived by the voice of the unholy churchman, who, as the troops defiled before him, shouted exultingly: "Grasp your spears, beat your drums, and let us march without loss of time to glut our hate upon them, and to quench our thirst with their blood."

Under this sanguinary influence the Swiss made their attack upon Buffaloro, where, as we have already shown, they failed in their object; and thence marched from Monza towards Milan, plundering alike friends and foes, quarrelling among themselves, and spreading desolation upon their path.

The impatient spirit of Bayard chafed at the insolence of the ill-governed mercenaries, who were thus impeding the progress of the French arms; and aware that they were weakened by internal divisions, and that the opportunity was not one to be neglected, he wrote to the king, who

was then at Lyons, to solicit his permission to attack them with that portion of the army which was then upon the spot, and which he declared to be sufficient to insure success. Francis, however, would not listen to the suggestion, but gave stringent orders that no engagement should be hazarded until the whole of the troops could be brought into the field. He however hastened his own departure from France, and proceeded with all speed to Turin, where he was warmly greeted by his uncle, Charles III, Duke of Savoy, that wavering prince, who had ever a ready reception for every successful sovereign. Several strong places were taken on his way without an effort at defence; and many a bronzed cheek flushed as the keys of Novara were delivered up. At this point he was joined by the Duke de Gueldres, the ever-faithful and loyal servant of France, with six thousand lansquenets; and while the Swiss entered Milan with their whole army, amounting to a force of thirty-five thousand men, Francis established his headquarters at Marignano, a small village about two leagues from the city gates, pushing his vanguard to San Donato and Santa Brigitta, which diminished the distance between the hostile troops about one-half.

To prevent any junction between the Swiss and the papal and Spanish armies, was now an object of the utmost importance; and accident effected for the young king what must otherwise have been hopeless. The Spaniards had made prisoner a confidential messenger of the pope, and affecting not to credit the account which he gave of his character and mission, they took possession of his despatches, and discovered from their contents that not only was Leo in treaty with Francis, but that his nephew had also addressed to him a letter of compliment and congratulation. This discovery naturally created a mutual jealousy and distrust, and Cardona refused to pass the Po unless the papal general were in his company; a resolution which, by the delays which it produced, prevented any co-operation with the Swiss, and moreover gave D'Alviano time to reach Lodi, ten miles further forward, with a large body of mounted troops; while Cardona himself, with the papal and Spanish armies, was at Piacenza, beyond the Po, twenty miles further off in the rear of the French forces.

Indignant at the sordid treachery of the Swiss, Francis was now as eager to attack them, as he had previously been to conciliate; while the Cardinal of Sion was equally desirous that they should meet the enemy single-handed, without either papal or Spanish interference; a suggestion which aroused alike the vanity and enthusiasm of the excited mountaineers, who had begun to esteem themselves invincible. From an elevated spot he harangued the restless host, calling upon them to do themselves justice, to remember their late successes, and the pledge which they had given to restore the young Duke of Milan to his lawful rights. He reminded them how much and how often they had themselves contributed to the glory of the French arms; and bade them recollect that in return for their services, France had broken her treaties, violated her most solemn pledges, and insulted them in their honour, by opposing to them the lansquenets of Germany, who now sought to arrogate to themselves a fame which the Swiss had purchased with their blood in many a well-fought field. He spoke with contempt of the superior force to which they would be opposed, declaring that the remembrance of Novara should be sufficient to render such a consideration idle; and he terminated his impassioned address by calling their attention to the fact that should they conquer, not only all the glory, but all the spoil would be their own, an argument which proved how perfectly he was master of the art of eloquence.

A wild shout of applause welcomed his words; but, ere he could resume his speech, the young Marquis de Fleuranges, who had approached the city gates to reconnoitre with more boldness than caution, was seen and recognised by Mutio Colonna, who instantly gave the alarm; the Swiss flew to arms, and on Thursday the 18th of September, at three o'clock in the afternoon, they marched out of Milan, still under the excitement of the words to which they had been listening, and burning with the thirst of gold and hatred, advanced to Marignano to attack the enemy. Disdaining to delay the moment of their charge by any precautionary measure, they moved forward in a compact body along the direct road, flanked on either side by a deep ditch; and the fire of the artillery which was turned upon them, produced no other effect on their order of march, than to cause them to draw their ranks closer, and to fill up with celerity and steadiness the gaps which were made from time to time in their column; and ere the twilight fell they had overthrown the first body of lansquenets,

who had been entrusted by the Connétable de Bourbon with the guard of the guns.

The king was conversing with D'Alviano, previously to seating himself at table, when Fleuranges galloped into the camp with information from de Bourbon that the Swiss were approaching. All was immediately in movement; and while Francis assumed his arms, he urged D'Alviano to join him with all speed with the Venetian army; and this done, he sprang into the saddle, and hastened towards the enemy, followed by his body-guard; while D'Alviano hurried back to Lodi, to bring up such troops as he could collect upon the instant.

History scarcely affords an example of a battle disputed with greater obstinacy than that of Marignano. The Swiss, intoxicated with vanity, hate, and greed, fought as though all their renown as soldiers were to be staked upon this one die; while Francis was surrounded by able and experienced generals, and although ignorant of the art of war, was full of intrepidity and courage. When the young king reached the field, the action had, as we have stated above, already commenced; and although the connétable had taken every precaution to strengthen his position, the serried attack of the enemy placed the French troops at a disadvantage, from the impracticability of their acting simultaneously. A large ditch had been dug to protect the guns, which were flanked by the cavalry; but although a murderous fire continued to be turned upon them, the mountaineers did not swerve or hesitate for an instant. On they moved in silence, darkening the causeway with their numbers, filling up the places of their dead, and marching straight upon the guns. Not even the appearance of the cavalry, destitute as they were of such a force, appeared to startle them; but still they pressed forward, concentrating all their efforts against their detested rivals, the lansquenets, and apparently regardless of the mounted troops. This fact, unfortunately, aroused the suspicions of the Germans, who, perceiving that they were the sole objects of attack, began to apprehend treachery; and as this fatal idea gained ground, they wavered and gave way, ultimately retreating in disorder behind the ditch, where the Swiss followed them so closely as to gain possession of four of the guns.

The rapid eye of the connétable detected the truth at a glance; and, resolved to convince his startled allies of the fallacy of their suspicion, he caused the cavalry to attack the flank of the Swiss column; which they did with considerable effect, although from the nature of the ground they were unable to manoeuvre, and could only advance by five hundred at a time. Meanwhile Francis himself advanced at the head of the Black Bands, and made a vigorous attack upon the opposite flank; when the lansquenets, at once convinced of their error, attempted to regain the advantage they had lost, and, after a desperate struggle, succeeded in driving the enemy beyond the ditch, and once more turning the guns against them. The dauntless courage of the young monarch, who fought on foot, pike in hand, like the force which he led, animated the enthusiasm of the troops, and, for a moment, shook the arrogant tranquillity of the Swiss; but nevertheless, nothing important had been accomplished. Still the very sky seemed to bristle with their long pikes, and their ranks were as dense as at the commencement of the action. In vain did the connétable and his generals exert the most desperate valour; in vain did the panting horses press closely upon the foremost files, while their riders endeavoured to cut their way through the thickclinging mass; again and again they returned to the charge, only to be foiled; and at length, exhausted by their unsuccessful efforts, they were compelled to fall back in some disorder upon the infantry; when the king suddenly charged one of the Swiss wings, consisting of four thousand men, with two hundred gendarmes, so opportunely and so vigorously, that the division was completely routed, and with a cry of "France! France!" laid down their arms.

The similarity of uniform that existed between the two armies, each of which bore the white cross, was a serious disadvantage to the French, as amid the clouds of dust raised by the horses and artillery, and the deepening twilight, it was difficult for them to distinguish friends from enemies,—a circumstance which had nearly led to the capture of the young king; who, while at the head of his gendarmes, imagined that he was approaching a body of lansquenets, and galloped towards them shouting his rallying cry; when instantly a score of pikes were levelled at him, and he was compelled to make a hasty retreat with his squadron. The Swiss, on the other hand, having no cavalry of their own, could direct their weapons fearlessly against the mounted force, nor did

they fail to profit by such an opportunity whenever it occurred; but still, conscious that they were indebted to the same manoeuvre for their success at Novara, they made every other object subservient to the capture of the artillery, and were never for an instant diverted from their purpose.

As the moon rose, less difficulty was experienced by the French, who were once more enabled to distinguish friends from foes; and Francis having rallied a body of lansquenets, joined the French infantry, led by the connétable, and succeeded in driving back the battalion which was marching upon the guns. This was the most fearful moment of the battle; the two armies became intermixed, the ditches were filled with dead, and no longer offered an impediment to the passage of either party; La Trémouille, who yet writhed at the remembrance of Novara, and his son, the Prince de Talmont, who was equally anxious to avenge the honour of the French arms, remained throughout the whole conflict upon this one spot, feeling that here, and only here, would the fortunes of the fight be decided; while Bayard, who was close beside them, having had his own warhorse killed under him, mounted a second just previously to the last charge; and more intent upon the enemy than his own safety, suffered the bridle to escape from his hand; when the spirited animal, excited by the clashing of weapons and the shrill battle-cries which resounded on every side, no sooner found itself freed from restraint, than it galloped madly towards the Swiss lines, broke through the foremost ranks, and would inevitably have carried its rider into the very thick of the enemy's forces, had not its feet become entangled in some trailing vines, which checked its headlong career. The position of the good knight was perilous, but not for a moment losing his presence of mind, he threw himself from the saddle, cast off his helmet and tasses, and crept along one of the ditches on his hands and knees, until the shouts of "France, France!" which pealed out close beside him, gave him assurance that he had reached the French lines.

The Duke de Lorraine, by whom he was immediately recognised, supplied him with a third horse, and he obtained another helmet from a comrade in the field. Little more, however, could for the present be accomplished. Before midnight the moon went down, and darkness compelled both hosts to pause in a confusion which promised them ample work for the morrow. The two armies were completely entangled; several batteries had been taken; and one Swiss battalion was so close upon the artillery beside which the king had taken up his post, that it was found necessary to extinguish the matches in order that the enemy might not discover how slenderly he was attended. No signal of retreat having been sounded by either party, the confusion was complete, each corps or detachment being compelled to make its bivouac where it had been surprised by the darkness; and thus friends and enemies, the living and the dead, lay side by side, sharing one common couch, until the daylight should once more call the survivors to recommence their struggle. The young king spent the remainder of the night stretched on a gun-carriage, completely armed, where he snatched a few intervals of broken rest; and having complained of thirst, and demanded a draught of water, it was brought to him in a helmet, but so discoloured with blood, that, exhausted as he was, he put it from him with loathing.

The hours of seeming rest, were not, however, suffered by the French leaders to pass in total inaction. An Italian trumpeter, who was stationed near the person of the king, and the sounds of whose brazen instrument at intervals broke upon the stillness of that field of blood like the trump of the archangel, rousing the dying and awakening the requiem of the dead, gave out signals to the different French regiments, who one by one approached the royal person; and thus, when the day broke, Francis found himself once more surrounded by a force of twenty thousand lansquenets, and all his horse; while at the same time the horns of the mountaineers were heard as if in response or defiance, although no corresponding movement took place among their forces.

At break of day the Swiss renewed the attack, the artillery was impetuously assaulted, and the Germans who defended it were driven back; but the present disposition of the French army enabled it to withstand this first shock without any apparent discomfiture; and the well-directed fire of the guns opened a passage for the cavalry through the hostile ranks, and turned the tide in

favour of the assailed. The Swiss soon became aware that they could not successfully contend against the enemy upon this point; and accordingly detached a strong force to attack the French in the rear; but in this attempt also they were destined to be foiled; as the troops of the Duke d'Alençon, which had hitherto taken no part in the conflict, and the cross-bowmen of De Prie, having discovered the manoeuvre, charged them with vigour, and totally routed the whole body.

It soon became evident that the star of Francis was in the ascendant; the Swiss began to give way, but slowly, reluctantly, and with unbroken ranks, contending for every inch of ground with a tenacity which was heroic; but at length they abandoned all hope and retreated undisguisedly, although still with their faces turned towards their enemies. When the victory was complete the young king called a council to decide upon the expediency of pursuit, but the project was ultimately abandoned; even Bayard, ever the foremost where glory was to be won, declaring that the day might yet come when the co-operation of the Swiss would be valuable to France; and the most adventurous remembering that the number and rank of their own wounded demanded their first attention. The fugitives were consequently permitted to re-enter Milan without opposition, where they passed the remnant of the eventful day which had witnessed their defeat; and at dawn the following morning marched out in mortified silence on their way towards their own mountains.

D'Alviano, who, by forced marches had reached Marignano with some Venetian cavalry, only arrived in time to attack the Swiss upon their homeward path; but the exertion which he had undergone proved, nevertheless, fatal to his shattered constitution, and soon brought him to his grave. The Swiss had suffered enormous loss, computed at from twelve to fifteen thousand men; nor had the French, conquerors though they were, unalloyed cause for rejoicing. They also had paid a heavy price for their victory. Six thousand of their troops had fallen, and among them were some of the most chivalrous blood of the nation: François de Bourbon had been killed by his brother's side; the brave young Prince de Talmond, who had so nobly supported his father, was struck down before his eyes; Pierre de Gouffier Boisy, the gallant D'Imbercourt, the Count de Sancerre, the Sire de Mouy, Bussy, the nephew of the Cardinal d'Amboise, La Meilleraye, the king's standard-bearer, De Roye, and the young Count de Petigliano, were all among the slain; while the list of wounded was even more appalling; and Bourbon owed his life to the intrepidity of a squadron of his own cavalry. Even Francis himself, as we have already shown, barely escaped capture; while, true to his knightly tenets, he had exposed his person throughout the whole conflict so unsparingly that he was on more than one occasion in imminent peril, and had a portion of his dress transfixd by the blow of a pike.

The letter addressed by the young monarch to his mother immediately after the battle, is highly characteristic alike of his personal courage, and his total want of power to understand, even at its close, by what precise strategy the victory had been secured to his own arms. "Because the avenue," he says, "by which the said Swiss were approaching was rather narrow, it was not so possible to place our gendarmes in the vanguard, as though we had been in the open country, which threatened to throw us into great disorder.... And however well and gallantly these men-at-arms charged, the Connétable, the Marechal de Chabannes, Imbercourt, Téligny, Pont-Remy, and others who were there, they were thrown back upon their foot-soldiers, so that, owing to the great dust, they could scarcely see each other, especially as the night was coming on, and there was some slight confusion; but God did me the favour to guide me to the side of those who were pushing them so hotly; I thought it well to charge them, and so they were, and I promise you, Madame, however well led and brave they were, our two hundred gendarmes overcame four thousand Swiss, and routed them rudely enough, making them throw down their pikes, and cry France... And you must understand that the conflict of that night lasted from three o'clock in the afternoon until between eleven and twelve, when the moon failed us. And I assure you, Madame, that I saw the lansquenets measure pikes with the Swiss, the lances with the gendarmes; and it can no longer be said that the gendarmes are mounted hares, for, without fail, it was they who did the business; and I do not believe that I lie when I say that by five hundred and five hundred at a time, thirty fine charges were made before the battle was won."

The entire letter is long, often playful, and occasionally even flippant, when the gravity of the subject is considered; but Francis was still young, greedy of renown, and, consequently, almost careless of the means and price at which it was acquired; while the generosity of his character is apparent in the fact that he speaks of his own exploits as though they were mere matters of course, while he withholds no praise from those by whom he was surrounded.

On the Friday evening, the same upon which this letter was written, the whole camp was loud with rejoicing, and the bearing of each separate leader was warmly discussed; when it was generally admitted that Bayard was the hero of the two days, as he had ever been in the field of honour; and Francis himself was so fully impressed with the same conviction, that before the night set in, he resolved, previously to creating knights with his own hand, to receive knighthood himself at that of Bayard: the romantic tastes in which he loved to indulge having caused him to overlook the fact that every monarch of France was necessarily understood to be a knight even from the cradle.

Nevertheless the ceremony must have been an imposing one, as the young king stood upon the battlefield where he had subdued his enemies, in the midst of the brave and devoted chivalry of a great nation; the dead, who had fallen in his cause, yet unearthed; the living who had fought beside him, still at their post; the gallant men who survived the conflict marshalled about him, girding with their strength the proud group clustered about their youthful, and fearless and victorious sovereign; the banners of their beloved France streaming upon the air, and the weapons which had so well and so recently done their duty gleaming on all sides; feathers streaming, proud war-horses champing the bit, and the artillery-men leaning upon their guns, now dark and silent.

Mistaken as the act may have been, and worse than supererogatory in a powerful monarch, the scene must, nevertheless, have been one to make high hearts leap, and bold brows flush, as Francis called Bayard to his side, and with the noble and endearing courtesy familiar to him, declared his intention of being there and then knighted, by the hand of a warrior esteemed one of the most renowned, not only of his own nation, but of all Christendom; and, despite the disclaimers of his astonished subject, he persisted in his determination.

“In good sooth, Sire,” then exclaimed Bayard, who would have held further objections to the command of his sovereign as discourteous and irreverent, “since it is your royal pleasure that this should be, I am ready to perform your will, not once, but many times, unworthy as I am of the high office to which you have appointed me”; and grasping his sword proudly and firmly, he continued, as the young king bent his knee, “May my poor agency be as efficacious as though the ceremony were performed by Oliver, Godfrey, or Baldwin; although, in good truth, you are the first prince whom I have ever dubbed a knight; and God grant that you may never turn your back upon an enemy.” Then brandishing his good weapon, and glancing sportively at it, as the last rays of evening flashed upon its polished blade, he apostrophized it as though it were a thing of life, which could participate in his own hilarity of spirit, exclaiming, “Thou art fortunate indeed today that thou hast been called upon to confer knighthood upon so great and powerful a monarch; and certes, my trusty sword, thou shalt henceforth be carefully guarded as a relic, honoured above all others; and shalt never be unsheathed again, save it be against the Infidel!” Then, lowering the point with reverence, he thrust it back into its scabbard, amid the enthusiastic shouts of the excited army.

Many of the French officers, among whom one of the most distinguished was the gallant young Marquis de Fleuranges, then received the honour of knighthood in their turn by the hand of Francis himself; and three days having been consumed in these ceremonies, and in the burial of those who had fallen upon that memorable field, the French struck their tents, and marched towards Milan.

The Cardinal of Sion had already taken refuge in the coveted city, trusting still to retrieve the disasters of Marignano; but he was soon undeceived by the bearing of the fugitives, who poured through the gates after their defeat. So far from acknowledging his authority, the mortified Swiss

bitterly reproached him with the result of his pernicious counsels, upbraiding him with the blood which had been spilt, and the disgrace of which he had been the author; and so fierce was their resentment, that he was wholly indebted to the sacredness of his character for his escape from the vengeance of the infuriated troops, who saw all their previous glory and power annihilated by their present overthrow. Nor did he long venture to trust even to this safeguard; for, having convinced himself that his influence was at an end, he found it expedient to escape by stealth from the city, carefully carrying with him, however, the young Francesco Sforza, the brother of the reigning duke, upon whom he looked as the earnest of future dissension.

Milan gladly opened its gates to the conquerors, for the terror which the battle of Marignano had inspired forbade any further effort at resistance on the part of its citizens; but the citadel into which Maximilian Sforza had retired still held out. Although by the late defeat of his mercenary allies he was rendered almost powerless, the duke had been encouraged to defy his enemies to the last extremity, by the fact that ere they vacated the city the Swiss had encouraged him to defend the fortress, declaring that they would shortly return in increased force to effect his deliverance. Unfortunately, however, the promise was accompanied by a demand of their arrears of pay, which Maximilian, who in losing his duchy had lost all, was no longer in a position to satisfy; and thus, with a display of magnanimity at the outset, they were finally enabled to secure what they had become anxious to obtain—a plausible pretext for abandoning the weak prince to his fate.

Dissensions had, moreover, broken out among the Italian subjects of the duke, and the small force of Swiss who had determined to share his fortunes; and thus besieged from without, and weakened by jealousies and differences within, the citadel with its slender garrison of two thousand men was unable to withstand the ardour of the French led on by the Duke de Bourbon; and it accordingly surrendered, twenty days after the battle of Marignano, together with the city of Cremona; the only portion of Sforza's territories which were not already in the possession of the French king.

Francis proved himself, however, a generous conqueror; conceded honourable conditions to the conquered; suffered the entire garrison to evacuate the citadel without molestation; and offered to Sforza himself a safe asylum in France, with a pension of thirty thousand crowns. Destitute alike of talent and ambition, Maximilian eagerly embraced these terms; and gladly retired from a position to which he was unequal and to which he would in all probability never have aspired, had he not listened to the advice of pretended friends whose interests were served by his advancement, rather than to the promptings of his own inclination. He accordingly renounced his ducal rights in favour of the French king, passed into France, and, after lingering through fifteen years of insignificance, ultimately died in Paris, on the 10th of June, 1530.

Francis was now master of the whole of the Milanese; and a few days subsequent to the completion of the treaty, made his ceremonious entry into the captured city at the head of his army, attended by five princes of the blood, when the oath of allegiance was once more taken by the authorities as readily and as glibly as though it had not already been pledged and violated on many previous occasions; congratulations, equally unmeaning, poured in from all sides; and the young king saw himself at last sovereign of Milan.

CHAPTER VIII.

[1515-17.]

LEO X, versed in all the refinements of Italian policy, abandoned with their success the cause of his allies; and as the victory of Marignano had secured the ascendancy of Francis in Italy, he lost no time in seeking to obtain his friendship. A nuncio was despatched immediately that the result of the battle became known, ostensibly to congratulate the French monarch, but the real object of whose mission was to propose a treaty, by which the sovereign pontiff volunteered to relinquish his pretensions to Parma and Piacenza, and to withdraw the papal troops which were serving under the emperor; on condition that, as a compensation for these territories, Bologna should be ceded to him, as well as a monopoly of the commerce in salt from Cervia.

To this proposition Francis acceded, and the treaty was ratified at Viterbo, on the 13th of October. The two forfeited cities opened their gates, the garrisons marched out, and they were left at the disposal of the French. In the second clause of the treaty, Leo was, however, less honest; for instead of recalling the troops who were serving under the standard of Maximilian, he simply disbanded them; thus leaving each individual free to re-engage himself in the same army; while he acted with the same prudent reserve when proposing to Francis that ere he left Italy they should meet and confer together upon such subjects as might concern their mutual interests. Having once given his assent to this arrangement, the young king prepared to proceed to Rome; but the wily pope had already imbibed a suspicion that the conqueror of Marignano had designs against Naples; and, resolved not to smooth his path towards this new object of ambition, he affected to deprecate the idea of his undergoing the inconvenience and fatigue which such a journey must involve, and suggested Bologna as the more desirable point of meeting.

Thither, therefore, Francis repaired brilliantly attended, and was met on the confines of the ecclesiastical states by a body of thirty cardinals, who welcomed him with every demonstration of respect and regard; and by whom he was at once conducted to the consistory in great state, in order that he might without loss of time, pay that spiritual homage to the pontiff which was enforced from every Christian monarch by whom he was approached. The French king entered the church supported by two cardinal-bishops, and followed by his chancellor and barons, habited in vests and haut-de-chausses of cloth of gold; himself holding the train of the pope's robe until he approached the altar, when he took his seat upon a low stool beside him, rising and kneeling with the assembled cardinals. When the pontiff communicated, the king presented the water and napkin with which he washed his hands; while the former was warned not to raise his hand to his cap, as he was in the habit of doing upon such occasions, lest the action should be observed, and construed into an intentional courtesy towards his royal assistant, which it would be indecorous in the vicar of Christ to exhibit in public towards any temporal monarch.

The great ambition of Francis having been for some time a reconciliation with the sovereign pontiff, he was at once fascinated by the urbane bearing and specious sophistry of his host, who, although he had nearly reached his fortieth year, possessed all the tastes and habits of a younger man; and enamoured rather of military glory than ecclesiastical probity, spent his life in dreams of conquest, and a round of pleasure and dissipation. Having by his reckless extravagance exhausted the immense treasures accumulated by his predecessor, Leo X was desirous of subjecting additional provinces to the authority of the Holy See, in order that he might be enabled to levy new tributes; and he accordingly felt it expedient to conciliate his most dangerous rival in this game of warfare, by every means in his power.



Nothing could exceed the brilliancy of the festivals given in honour of the young conqueror. The streets through which he passed were draped with silks and tapestry, and strewn with leaves and dowers; while, equally devoted to splendour and pleasure, the two potentates passed several days in the most magnificent dissipation, before they proceeded to the more serious business which had induced the meeting.

These days were not however lost to the crafty Leo; who, sufficiently skilled in physiognomy to discern at a glance the principal failing of his princely guest, assailed him by an excess of flattery which he was constitutionally unable to withstand; and, this point gained, induced him to purchase his reconciliation with the church, by conditions which were degrading alike to a sovereign and a conqueror.

While the two contracting parties formed a league of strict alliance, not only between themselves personally, but also between their separate states, Francis, in addition, conceded his guarantee of protection to all the ecclesiastical possessions; and pledged himself not only to assist the pope to recover all the properties of the church to which he could advance a valid right, but even to place implicit trust in the word of the pontiff, whenever these claims might be disputed. He likewise promised not to receive under his protection any vassal, feudatory, or churchman of his holy ally, who might have rendered, or should hereafter render himself obnoxious to his spiritual sovereign; and to withdraw his favour from all such as he should have already provided with an asylum in France. He assured to the pope, as we have stated above, the commerce in salt, which, in point of fact, secured to him a monopoly of the whole trade in that essential article throughout the Milanese; and promised to the Florentine republic, or, in other words, to the house of Medici, by whom it was governed, the same guarantees as to the church itself; and he especially pledged himself to support the power of Giuliano and Lorenzo de' Medici, the former of whom had been constantly associated in all public measures of the pontiff, and to grant to them titles of honour in France, and large pensions.

Meanwhile, in return for all these important concessions, Leo did no more than promise to support the king in his sovereignty of the duchy of Milan, such as he then held it; and to restore the cities of Parma and Piacenza, which he had himself detached from that province.

Three days were consumed in this unequal, and, to Francis, unfavourable conference; during the course of which the Italian pontiff succeeded, moreover, in inducing him to abandon all present designs upon Naples; representing to him that the health of Ferdinand was becoming sufficiently precarious to justify the anticipation of his early demise, at which period he should himself be freed from his engagements towards that monarch, and at liberty to assist the views of France. Anxious to retain the newly acquired friendship of the pope, Francis was induced to comply with this request also, although not altogether unconditionally. He could not overlook the fact that the Duke of Ferrara, who was a feudatory of the Holy See, had forfeited, through his fidelity to his own cause, the territories of Modena and Reggio; or that the Duke d'Urbino, a kinsman of the previous pope, had been deprived of the estates which he held of the See of Rome, for having fought throughout the recent war under the French banner; and he accordingly stipulated that the former should be reinstated in his possessions, and the domains of the latter restored to him.

The first proposition was, after some difficulty, accepted by Leo X; but even then only upon the condition that he should personally be reimbursed in certain sums which he declared that the defalcation of the duke had caused him to expend; to the latter he merely replied that he would give all necessary consideration to the subject; and with this equivocal answer Francis suffered himself to be satisfied.

The question of the Pragmatic Sanction, involving as it did more serious and important consequences, was deputed to the investigation and discussion of commissioners, who were empowered to examine and to decide upon the conflicting interests which must be affected by its arrangement. This was ultimately accomplished by a mutual concession, and the terms being

carefully arranged and specified, the treaty received the name of *Concordat*; the pope granting to the French king the privilege of nominating to all the vacant benefices in his kingdom; and Francis, on his side, engaging to pay to the pontiff the year's revenue of benefices so bestowed.

The university of Paris, however, saw with a jealous eye the project of an arrangement which annihilated the freedom of ecclesiastical elections; and refused either to register, or to recognise, the right of the monarch thus to limit the powers of the Gallican church, and to divert its revenues; accusing him of having bartered its unalienable rights in order to further his personal interests. Having, by an assembly at Bourges in 1438, liberated themselves in a great degree from all interference with the internal economy of their church on the part of the pope, and released themselves from his exactions, the French clergy were naturally averse to feel the yoke of papal despotism once more upon their necks; and thus this, one of the most unpopular measures of Francis, became at once a source of heartburning and suspicion.

The next attempt of the wily pontiff was to induce the young sovereign to undertake a crusade against the Turks; a project which he considered as eminently suited at once to excite the ardent and chivalrous nature of Francis, and to deliver himself for a time from a dangerous neighbour; while in order the more to please his fancy and to arouse his ambition in favour of such an expedition, he proposed to bestow upon him the title of Emperor of the East. Francis accepted the courtesy, but regarded the whole transaction as nothing more; declining to assume a dignity which he was conscious that his host had no power to confer; and confining his ambition to other and more feasible enterprises. Nor were the two high contracting parties the only ones who were, at this important crisis, occupied in the furtherance of their individual interests at Bologna. All who directly or indirectly assisted in the negotiations put forth their several claims; money, pensions, honours, and ecclesiastical benefices, were lavishly distributed among the adherents of the Pope. The hand of Philiberte de Savoie, the sister of Madame d'Angoulême, but two-and-twenty years her junior, was promised to Giuliano, de' Medici, with the duchy of Nemours as her dowry; while Adrian de Boissy, the brother of the grand master, received a cardinal's hat.

Altogether the negotiations became, ere their close, so lengthy and complicated, that the *Concordat*, by which they were finally terminated, was not signed until the 18th of August, 1516.

The conquest of Milan assured, and that of Naples suspended for a time, Francis proceeded to disband his army, retaining only seven hundred lances, six thousand lansquenets, and four thousand Basques, whom he placed under the command of the Connétable de Bourbon, as his lieutenant-general in the Milanese, for the protection of that duchy; and he then departed for France, where he arrived in February, 1516, and was welcomed at Lyons by the queen, and the duchess, his mother, surrounded by a brilliant court, composed of all that was fairest and noblest in his dominions.

The whole kingdom rang with acclamations. All was for the moment at peace both within and without; and although clouds might lower upon the political horizon, they had not yet burst. The Swiss had been pacified, if not thoroughly conciliated, by the payment of their claims; the Venetians, with the assistance of Lautrec and his little army, were still occupied in endeavouring to repossess themselves of their former territories; but Francis soon became aware that Ferdinand, alarmed at his success, had feeble and failing as he was) endeavoured, with a view of distracting his attention from Naples, to excite against him the jealousy of Henry VIII; and had already succeeded in forming a cabal at the English court, with the assistance of Wolsey, in which the French monarch was accused of a secret enmity towards England; an intrigue which had already attained to a height that threatened an approaching war between the two powers. This evil was, however, averted, through the sound judgment and good policy of the English council; but Henry had been sufficiently prejudiced by the representations that were made to him, to furnish the emperor secretly with a considerable sum of money in order to assist him in a new attempt to recover the Milanese, and to place Francesco Sforza, the brother of Maximilian, upon the ducal throne.

The subsidies which he had recently received from both Henry VIII and Ferdinand, and which he had not yet dissipated, enabled the emperor to raise a formidable army of sixteen thousand German cavalry, fifteen thousand Swiss, and ten thousand Spanish foot soldiers. The French troops, under Lautrec, were at that period (March, 1516) besieging Brescia, in conjunction with the Venetians, and considered themselves secure of taking the city, the garrison having determined to surrender in thirty days, should they not receive succour from without. Before that time had elapsed, however, a force of six thousand Germans succeeded in introducing themselves into the fortress; while the emperor appeared in the field at the head of his army; and the besiegers found themselves compelled to retreat, first beyond the Mincio, and subsequently to abandon not only that river, but also those of the Oglio and Adda; and to shut themselves up in Milan, which the Duke de Bourbon hastily fortified as well as circumstances would permit, destroying for that purpose the extensive and populous faubourgs.

Fortunately for the French, Maximilian did not pursue his advantage with the promptitude which would have insured his ultimate success; and time was accordingly secured for the arrival of a reinforcement of thirteen thousand Swiss, raised by Albert de la Pierre in the eight cantons which had accepted the peace proffered by Francis I the preceding year, as well as of a considerable body of troops from France. The former, however, were not destined to prove serviceable to Bourbon, the influence of the Bishop of Sion, who was in the enemy's camp, being once more exerted to separate them from the cause of France; in which he so far succeeded as to induce them to declare that they would not take the field against their own countrymen. In vain did the duke expostulate; they remained firm in their determinations, and he at length indignantly disbanded the whole force, with the exception of the company commanded by Albert de la Pierre, which also stipulated that it should only be employed against the Germans; and the army of mercenaries marched out of the garrison, an event which greatly rejoiced the emperor, who now conceived the success of his enterprise secure; and sat down before Milan, declaring that he would raze the city to the earth, and strew its site with salt, unless it instantly capitulated.

This threat was, however, disregarded by the French general, and the siege proceeded; but unfortunately for Maximilian, the Genoese bankers to whom Henry VIII had confided the sum promised to the emperor, having failed before it was transmitted, he found himself unable to fulfil his engagements with his mercenary allies, who began to murmur, and to demand the immediate payment of their stipends. Maximilian strove to pacify them by promises, but they had already experienced the fallacy of similar pledges upon his part, and refused to listen to any compromise. He pointed to Milan, the plunder of which city would, as he anticipated, shortly enable him to pay up the arrears of his whole army; but the Swiss reminded him that the town was not yet taken; and, with the knowledge of his helplessness, their insolence soon exceeded all bounds, and they threatened, should he not satisfy their claims upon the instant, to offer themselves in a body to the Connétable de Bourbon, by whom they should be paid for their services. In this strait Maximilian found himself compelled to send sixteen thousand crowns to their leaders, by the Cardinal of Sion, desiring him to assure them that he would immediately proceed to Trent to obtain a further supply in order to liquidate all their claims; but this was no sooner done, than fearing that he should in his turn be abandoned, or even delivered over to his enemies, as Ludovico Sforza had formerly been by these very troops, he left the camp in the night, accompanied only by two hundred horsemen; and escaped into Germany, leaving his army without a leader.

His flight was no sooner ascertained than the troops disbanded themselves; the siege of Milan was raised; and a few days subsequently the Swiss of both armies received an order from the diet immediately to return home, which they obeyed in their usual manner—plundering, as they went, every town and village which was not strong enough to venture upon resistance, and thus indemnifying themselves for the non-payment of their salary. About three thousand German and Spanish mercenaries joined the army of the Duke de Bourbon; while the confederated troops retired rapidly from the country, harassed in their retreat by the French, whom they left once more in undisputed possession of the Milanese; and Maximilian found himself in ignoble security, having forfeited the military reputation which he had acquired in his youth by a pusillanimity per-

haps unequalled.

Brescia was once more besieged, and capitulated; but Verona still refused to admit the French troops, and as its means of defence were great, and the abilities of its military governor, Antonio Colonna, well known, the siege promised to become interminable. At this particular period the death of Ferdinand of Aragon delivered France from her most formidable enemy, and removed from the path of Francis himself the only monarch whose long experience, subtle arts, and numerous resources, he had reason to apprehend.

Contrary to the previsions of all around him, who were aware of his jealousy of his grandson Charles, and equally at variance with his previous resolve, which had been to constitute the younger of the brothers heir to the crown, only on the day which preceded his death Ferdinand had executed a new will, by which he bequeathed his kingdom to the elder; an act of justice which had been reluctantly wrung from him even at the eleventh hour by his most faithful counsellors, who had induced him thus to gainsay his own wishes by representing that as Charles was already heir-apparent to the throne of Austria, the union of that kingdom with the crown of Spain would tend to weaken the power of France; a consideration which absorbed all others. Thus, the accession of the Archduke Charles united under one sovereign the Netherlands and Franche-Comté, the kingdoms of Castile, Aragon, and Naples, with the newly discovered treasures of the western world; but that sovereign had as yet scarcely emerged from boyhood; his dominions lay distant and disjointed; the various people over whom he was called upon to rule, were unconnected by laws, by customs, and by language, and regarded each other with jealousy and distrust; while many of the states, attached to their ancient rights and privileges, and apprehensive of their subversion, were inimical to his interests, and considered Francis as their most natural ally. Nevertheless, the French king suffered the favourable moment to escape him; and even while he foresaw the gathering storm, neglected the measures by which it would probably have been averted; and, instead of attacking the infant power of his rival, permitted it peaceably to attain to maturity and strength, trusting to the delusive arts of negotiation to effect that which a wiser policy might have compelled.

Thus, while the evil gained ground apparently unappreciated, Francis, withdrawing his attention from subjects of more vital importance, turned it upon the internal organization of the kingdom; and profited by the momentary calm to issue several new ordinances, some of which were highly unpalatable to his subjects. His first edict, prompted by Duprat, had already awakened murmurs, which although ultimately silenced, were not altogether suppressed; but in March, 1516, he published a new ordinance at Lyons, purporting to protect the forest-rights of himself and his nobles, which roused the indignation of both parliament and people. The young king, says Isambert, "angered by the fact that many persons, not having the right of chase, do take certain brown and black animals, such as hares, pheasants, partridges, and other game, thus committing felony, and impeding and curtailing our pastime", fulminated the most severe threats against all poachers and unlicensed sportsmen; condemning them, according to the flagrancy of their crime, to fines, floggings, banishment under pain of the gibbet, confiscation of property, the galleys, and even death itself. He, moreover, inflicted severe punishment on those who within the limits of the royal forests, possessed arms suited either to war or sport; and, finally, he gave to all the princes of the blood, nobles, and proprietors of forest-lands or warrens throughout the kingdom, the right of maintaining the exclusive privilege of sporting upon their property, which was guaranteed to them by punishments equally severe against all intruders.

The parliament at once refused to register such an ordinance; and presented a remonstrance to the monarch, entreating him to mitigate the extreme stringency of this new edict, which must tend to exasperate such of his faithful subjects as not only paid the tax, but also supported all the burthen of the state. Its representations were, however, received with indifference and disregard; and the chancellor declared that the king was both indignant and surprised that the parliament should presume to oppose his will, when it must be aware that the sovereign alone had the right to regulate the administration of his kingdom. "Obey", he concluded, "or the king will recognise in you only rebels, whom he will punish like the meanest of his subjects." The parliament

nevertheless resisted during twelve months; but, at the termination of that period, the unrighteous ordinance was registered.

Charles had scarcely attained his sixteenth year when he succeeded to the Spanish crown; but, young as he was, the rigid training to which he had been subjected by the prudent foresight of his governor, M. de Chièvres, had long accustomed him to the transaction of public business and the duties of a monarch. Every despatch which arrived from the provinces, even during the course of the night, was immediately presented to him; and when he had informed himself of its contents, he personally communicated them to his council, where they were discussed in his presence. A remonstrance having been made to the Seigneur de Chièvres on this subject upon one occasion, by the French ambassador, who testified his surprise that he should inflict such an amount of tedious and frequently untimely labour upon a mere boy when he might so easily relieve him from it; the wise preceptor replied firmly: "Cousin, I am the tutor and guardian of his youth, and I wish that, when I die, he may be independent of all extraneous help; whereas, if he were unacquainted with public business, he must, after my decease, have a new guardian, from his ignorance of his own affairs."

Thus, even from his boyhood, Charles had acquired habits of thoughtfulness and foresight which gave him throughout his whole life a great advantage over the volatile and romantic Francis I, who seldom suffered more serious subjects to interfere with his personal gratification. The moment of his accession was, however, critical; he had to fear that Spain would persist in bestowing her ducal crown upon his younger brother Ferdinand; who, unlike himself, had been entirely educated under the eye of the late king, and who had long been regarded as his destined successor. By the will so tardily destroyed the junior prince had been declared grand master of the military orders of Spain, and endowed with revenues and power well constituted to render him an effective leader in any civil contention: and a cabal existed in Aragon in favour of his claims to the sovereignty which he had been led to expect; while even in Castile, doubts were expressed as to the right of Charles to assume the crown before the death of his mother, whose hopeless derangement nevertheless precluded her from ascending the throne.

At the decease of Ferdinand, Charles was in Flanders; and, although naturally desirous to take possession of his new dominions, he was detained by powerful obstacles in the Low Countries. The war in Italy was not yet terminated; and, with the crown of his grandfather, the young king inherited his love of enterprise and thirst for conquest; but he could not inspire the Flemish people with his military ardour; they shrank, on the contrary, from a prospect of hostilities with France which must tend to injure their commercial interests; and Charles was not in a position to enforce his views. He had, therefore, no alternative, save to seek the friendship and alliance of Francis, to which he was urged by the representations of M. de Chièvres, who impressed upon him the imperative necessity of conciliating his new subjects before he attempted any foreign aggression; the Cardinal Ximenes, Archbishop of Toledo, who had, by the will of the late king, been appointed regent of the kingdom until the arrival of his grandson, having, despite his great age, rigorously commenced the discharge of his trust; and already began to interfere with the privileges of the nobles, and to enhance those of the citizens and municipalities. Moreover, M. de Chièvres was anxious to avoid, in so far as it might be practicable, any familiar intercourse between his royal pupil and the powerful prelate, of whose influence he was apprehensive. Thus Charles, upon his accession, found himself surrounded by difficulties; and at once became aware that his wisest policy would be to conciliate the friendship of France, and thus secure an efficient ally in case of need, as well as a safe passage into Spain.

To effect this important object, Charles despatched the Sire de Ravenstein as his ambassador to the French court, who on the part of his master requested Francis to appoint some convenient spot where the delegates of the two sovereigns might confer together, for the purpose of terminating any differences which existed either between themselves or their allies. The proposal was an acceptable one to the French king, who on his side was desirous to establish by a peace his recent conquests in Italy; and accordingly commissioners were appointed in the persons of Arthur Gouffier, Seigneur de Boissy, and Antoine de Croy, Seigneur de Chièvres, the ex-governors of the

two young monarchs, while Noyon was selected as their place of meeting.

On the 1st of August they entered the city; and on the 13th of the same month a treaty of alliance between Charles and Francis was signed, by which they separately bound themselves to assist each other, not only in reciprocal defence, but also in the attainment of such conquests as they might legitimately attempt. The question still pending on the subject of Navarre was arranged by the pledge of M. de Chièvres that Charles should, so soon as he had secured peaceable possession of the Spanish crown, carefully investigate the claims of Henri d'Albret, and render him ample justice; or that Francis should be left free to give him whatever assistance he might deem fitting. The pretensions of the French king to Naples, based upon the treaty of Ferdinand on his marriage with Germaine de Foix, were undeniable; and consequently engaged the more serious attention of the plenipotentiaries, by whom it was ultimately decided, that in order to reconcile the interests of the two sovereigns, Charles should pledge himself to espouse the infant princess Louise, the daughter of Francis, then about twelve months old; receiving as her dowry all the claims of her father to the Neapolitan dominions; but as it was stipulated that the baby-bride should remain under the guardianship of Queen Claude until her eighth year, and that the marriage should not be solemnized until she had attained her twelfth, Charles, who was at that moment in possession of Naples, was to pay the annual sum of a hundred thousand crowns to the King of France until the period of the union; and one half the amount yearly, so long as the princess should continue childless.

Such were the conditions of the peace of Noyon, which afforded a transient season of repose to the respective subjects of both potentates, and was accordingly welcome to all; but it is nevertheless certain that the more able diplomacy of M de Chièvres had rendered the treaty infinitely more favourable to his master than it would have been had the actual position of Francis been brought more skilfully to bear upon the several questions at issue. Charles could command no sure ingress to his Spanish territories; party spirit was strong against him; he was inexperienced in war, and had yet to establish the reputation as a soldier which Francis had already acquired; while even his claim upon Naples was a divided one. Yet no real advantage was secured to the French king by the league into which he had just entered; the project of marriage was a mere chimera, advanced as a pretext rather than considered as a condition; which, however well it served to disguise the fact that Charles was in truth paying, or about to pay, an annual tribute to his brother monarch for that moiety of the crown of Naples which was thus ceded to him, by no means enhanced the interests of Francis, to whom such an equivalent was altogether inadequate. The Navarrese question, moreover, was virtually still as undecided as ever; for while Charles had bound himself vaguely to see justice done, he had been careful not to specify any particular point upon which his intentions might at once be brought to bear; while Francis had retained his right, in the event of this not being accomplished, not only to assist the interests of the queen of Navarre against Charles himself, but even to uphold the Venetians in their opposition to Maximilian.

As this latter privilege, however, threatened to overthrow the designs of Charles, he prevailed upon the emperor to join in the league; and his Imperial majesty was induced to acquiesce in the suggestion by the offer of a hundred thousand crowns from the state of Venice, and a conviction that Verona could no longer resist the combined attacks of the army of Lautrec, and the famine by which the garrison was already exposed to great and hopeless privations. The accession of Maximilian to the treaty hushed the tempest of war which had so long agitated Europe; for although Francis restored the evacuated city to the Venetians, who once more saw themselves in possession of nearly all the provinces which Louis XII had endeavoured to wrench from them in 1508, they were still so despoiled and depopulated, that they were deprived of all the elements of self-defence; while the continued animosity of the Swiss towards France had weakened the resources of Francis himself; a feat of which he was so well aware, that the league was no sooner formally completed than he took instant measures to conciliate all the neighbouring nations; and despatched his uncle, the Bastard of Savoy, Louis de Forbins, and Charles du Plessis to Fribourg, to open a fresh negotiation with the whole Helvetic body; and to propose to them an extension of

the peace which had been concluded between himself and eight of their cantons during the previous year. This treaty of “perpetual amity” between France and Switzerland, was discussed, framed, and signed on the 29th of November, 1517; and the pledge then given by the Swiss never again to bear arms against the French was strictly observed, save in the case of a few adventurers, who incited by the prospect of greater gain, or influenced by the violent and undying hatred of the Cardinal of Sion, occasionally enrolled themselves in the ranks of the enemy.

By the same document the Swiss recognized the claim of Francis I to the Milanese; while he agreed to accord a free amnesty to all the natives of that province who had taken refuge in Switzerland; and to pay off the demands of the troops for past services by the sum of seven hundred thousand golden crowns; with other donations and privileges, which were all clearly defined.

CHAPTER IX.

[1515-17.]

THUS far the rapid inarch of more important events has compelled us to pass over in silence the domestic, or rather the private, avocations of Francis; who, finding himself at length enabled by a temporary peace to indulge in those libertine pursuits to which he was so painfully addicted, soon wearied of the staid and rigorous circle which his virtuous queen had gathered about her, as well as of the strict retirement to which she was at this moment complied by the delicate condition of her health, which gave renewed hope of the birth of a dauphin; and for a time he passed all his leisure hours in the lighter court of his mother, where beauty and licentiousness alike attracted him. Unlike Anne de Bretagne, who had stringently discountenanced the presence of ladies at the public festivities, and only suffered them to appear upon occasions of ceremony, where they might serve to enhance her own dignity and that of the royal circle, Madame d'Angoulême had urged upon her son the expediency of including them in all the amusements and pageantries which were constantly recurring; and of permitting them to assume their station as an integral portion of his court; a recommendation to which he at once gave his unhesitating assent; and thus the wives and daughters of all the principal nobility found themselves emancipated from the shackles of that severe etiquette to which they had previously been subjected; and unfortunately soon overstepped in their pride of freedom the limits of that decorum which should have been their greatest charm.

Soon, however, the young monarch wearied of the fair and frail beauties of his mother's circle, and aspired to still wider conquests. It did not suffice that he had sacrificed the honour, and blighted the home happiness, of many of the brave men who had fought beside him; France still contained much that was at once lovely and highborn; but he ere long resolved to form a court for himself which should surpass all those of the rest of Europe, alike in grace and magnificence, and in which women should reign supreme; declaring that a "court without ladies was a year without a spring, or rather a spring without roses."

In furtherance of this design, he summoned about him all the wealthy nobles who habitually resided in their ancestral castles, and who eagerly responded to the call of their sovereign, and arrived at Amboise accompanied by the females of their families, many of whom were both beautiful and accomplished, and all flattered by so signal a mark of royal favour. One, however, failed him; and that that one was precisely the individual whom he had been the most anxious to attract; the young and brilliant Françoise de Foix, Countess de Chateaubriand, whose extraordinary attractions, despite the retirement in which she lived, had been a frequent subject of discourse among his courtiers.

This beautiful woman was the daughter of Phébus de Foix, Viscount de Lautrec, and of Jeanne d'Aydie, elder daughter and heiress of Odet d'Aydie, Count de Comminges, and was born about the year 1495. The family of Foix was both ancient and illustrious, and recognised no superiors save the princes of the blood, although so much impoverished from the number of its male descendants as to leave the lovely and only daughter of the house without a portion consistent with her rank. Her extreme beauty, however, sufficed to overrule even this consideration, so important in all ages to eligible marriage in France, and brought to her feet the young and accomplished Jean de Laval de Montmorency, Seigneur de Chateaubriand, when she had barely attained her fourteenth year. In 1509 she became his wife; and, happy in a union which left her young and affectionate nature nothing to desire, accompanied him to his castle in Brittany, where she passed the first period of her wedded life in peace and seclusion, without a wish or a care beyond the narrow circle of her home.



This tranquillity was not, however, destined to endure. The Count de Chateaubriand could not evade compliance with the expressed will of his sovereign; but tenderly attached to his young wife, he was anxious before he suffered her to appear in the circle of the king, to form his own judgment as to the safety with which he might permit her presentation. The known morals of Francis I were not calculated to inspire confidence; and in the fair, and graceful, and gifted partner of his home, the count had garnered up his all of hope and happiness. Thus then he revolved in his mind, with all the jealousy of deep affection, every method by which he might secure to himself the treasure of whose value he was so keenly conscious; and so great was his apprehension that some of the profligate companions of the king might devise a method of wiling his wife to court, that he finally decided upon causing two rings of curious workmanship to be made precisely similar; and on the eve of his departure he placed one of them upon her finger, which he enjoined her carefully to examine, and on no account to follow him to Amboise, even should he write and direct her to do so, unless the letter contained another precisely similar. The young countess, overwhelmed by grief at his departure, totally unacquainted with the court, and who desired no greater splendour than that by which she was already surrounded, at once promised obedience; and M. de Chateaubriand, saddened by her tearful caresses, and satisfied that he had made "assurance doubly sure," at length tore himself from her encircling arms, and, leaving her to preside over his stately and gloomy castle, proceeded on his ill-omened journey.

Unfortunately for the count, his heart was too full to be subservient to his reason; and as he saw the distance increase between himself and the beautiful young creature who had so lately wept upon his bosom, his caution gave way before his jealousy, and he entrusted his secret to an old servant, of whose fidelity he believed himself secure. On his arrival at Amboise he was courteously received by the king, who greeted him with half jesting and half ironical reproaches that he had come alone to a court where grace and beauty were estimated at their full value; an address to which he gravely replied, by assuring the disappointed monarch that the countess had remained in Brittany at her own request; volunteering, moreover, to prove the fact of his assertion by writing in the royal presence, should his majesty desire him to do so, an urgent invitation for her to join him. Francis accepted the offer, which necessarily produced no effect; and again and again the experiment was renewed at his request, but always with the same result, until the faithless varlet, to whom the count had confided his cherished secret, won over by the gold of M. de Guise, (who at once conjectured that there was a mystery attached to the unnatural persistence of the lady), and his lavish promises of the king's favour and protection to the delinquent, betrayed the trust which had been reposed in him, and told the whole story of the mystic ring.

The result of such a discovery may be conjectured. The lacquey was easily bribed to possess himself of the important talisman, which was placed in the hands of an able craftsman, who in a very short time manufactured a third, precisely similar to the duplicate provided by the count. The stolen trinket was then carefully replaced in its usual receptacle, and the counterfeit introduced into a new letter which the duped husband was induced to write; and which, in affectionate and urgent terms, invited the young and innocent recluse to repair without further delay to the court, of which she was constituted to form so bright an ornament.

On the receipt of the important jewel, the countess did not hesitate to obey the summons; nor can it be doubted that she did so with alacrity. Buried in an old castle, with no other society than that of her confessor and her maids, and with no occupation save what she derived from her breviary and her tapestry-work; separated for the first time from a husband to whom she was fondly attached; and not without some of those vague yearnings after novelty so natural to her age and sex; it can scarcely be matter of surprise that her leave-taking of the sombre residence which she had so long occupied was rendered as brief as possible, and that she was soon upon her road to that court whence she had been hitherto shut out.

At this period the royal circle had removed to Chambord, a locality to which Francis was greatly attached. The château, standing about four leagues from Blois, on the vast plain of Sologne, and between the extensive forests of Boulogne and Bussy, had originally been a mere country house of the Counts of Blois; and was, even at the time of which we write, rather a hunting

rendezvous than an actual residence. Situated in the near neighbourhood of the Castle of Romorantin, so long the abode of Louise de Savoie, it had been the scene of many of the boyish sports of the young king; and was, to him, full of agreeable associations, for it was there that he had enjoyed the pleasures of the chase during the banishment of his mother from the court; and he still retained his partiality for the old spot endeared to him by so many delightful recollections.

It was to Chambord, therefore, that Françoise de Foix hastened on the receipt of the treacherous trinket, never doubting for an instant that in so doing she was implicitly obeying the will of her husband; and this very fact was only another link in the luckless chain of the count's misfortunes; as, had the court been assembled either in Paris or at Amboise, the arrival of the countess might have passed unobserved, and time have been thus afforded for an explanation which would have enabled him to effect her instant return to Brittany; but the comparative solitude of Chambord rendered every new event of importance as matter of momentary amusement; and, consequently, the fair traveller no sooner reached the château, attended by her escort, than the news of her advent became universally known; and the astonished and mortified husband found himself utterly unable to avert the evil against which he had believed himself to be so securely guarded.

Cold and constrained, however, was the welcome with which he greeted his beautiful young wife; and they had no sooner retired to his apartment than he upbraided her bitterly for her want of good faith. The countess, bewildered in her turn by such a reception, sank into a chair, overcome by terror and distress; and extending her hand to her irritated husband, displayed upon one of her slender fingers the two rings by which he had himself desired that she should govern her conduct. More and more astonished, the count flew to the casket in which his treasure had been concealed, and there, in its velvet envelope, still lay the ring in which he had confided for safety.

"Are you now convinced, Jean?" asked the weeping countess, who had anxiously watched his movements.

"I am, madam," was the stern reply; "and I have learnt that to your other accomplishments you add that of a duplicity and talent for intrigue of which I had assuredly never suspected you to be possessed. Henceforward we shall better comprehend each other."

"Count!" exclaimed the agonized wife, wringing her hands, "explain to me what you mean. Have I done wrong in coming here? Did you not yourself summon me? Have I not remained contentedly in Brittany until the ring reached me, which was to assure me that I acted in obedience to your wishes by rejoining you? Speak! In what have I failed in my duty as a wife?"

"The question is now needless, madam," was the rejoinder; "and a few weeks hence you will, in all probability, no longer have the courage to ask it;" and he turned to leave the room.

"Nay, Jean, you shall not leave me in anger", cried Françoise springing from her seat, and grasping his arm; "only let me understand my fault, and repair it."

"It is too late," said the count moodily; "the evil is now, as you must have foreseen, totally irreparable. I never sent that ring, as you well know; I have been deceived in you; but from this hour I shall be enabled to estimate your affection at its proper value."

"You never sent that ring?" echoed the young countess, upon whom the remainder of his words had been lost. "Whence came it then?" and she looked earnestly upon the hand which bore it.

"Nay, nay; this is idle, madam," replied the count with a bitter laugh. "From whom could it have come save from him, who through your courteous and indulgent agency was enabled to have it made? But let us bandy words no longer. You have taken your destiny into your own hands. You are now at court, and have duties to perform with which even your husband will have no right to interfere. Dry your eyes, therefore, for within an hour you must wait upon the queen, and you have

little time to spare. I will order your women to attend you". And shaking off her grasp, he strode coldly from the apartment.

But even yet the young and pure mind of Françoise de Foix was unable to fathom the meaning of her husband. She only felt that he was changed; how changed! She only comprehended that he had ceased to love her; for she could not estimate the force of that engrossing and jealous affection which thus played the traitor to its own interests, and converted an attached husband into an ungenerous tyrant. But she had, as he had just declared, few moments to spare to such reflections. The queen held a reception-circle that very evening, at which it was necessary that she should be presented; and accordingly, with a sick and trembling heart, she resigned herself to the hands of her women; and when at length the count reappeared in order to conduct her to the queen's apartments, he shuddered as his eye fell upon her, radiant in youth and beauty, and sparkling with jewels.

The opposition which had been offered to his wishes, had, as a natural consequence, only heightened the curiosity of the young monarch; and accordingly, the countess had no sooner paid her respects to the queen, than, waving back the courtiers by whom he was immediately surrounded, he advanced a step forward, and with a courteous smile awaited her approach.

"Nay, nay," he said graciously, as she would have bent her knee before him, "it is not for the fair Countess de Châteaubriand to kneel even to a king. You are welcome, madam, even although your advent has been a somewhat tardy one."

"Sire,"—commenced the lady with a burning blush.

"We know all, madam," interposed Francis with a gay laugh, through which pierced a triumph he was unable altogether to conceal. "You are a votary of solitude; a lover of silent streams and hoary mountains; but, believe me, these are not the only objects for bright eyes to dwell upon. We must make a convert of you, madam, or it will be said that our court has lost its charm. M. de Châteaubriand"; and his lip curled for an instant as he addressed the count, whose moody brow sufficiently betrayed his secret annoyance, and formed a singular contrast with the curious and supercilious looks which were turned upon him; "we depend on you to inspire your charming wife with less gloomy tastes: you have already done this most loyally by letter, and must now complete your work. Once more, madam, you are welcome. In a few days your fitting post at court shall be assigned to you. And now, gentlemen, to our games." And without awaiting the acknowledgment of the count, he turned upon his heel, and approached a table covered with dice and playing-cards, which had been originally introduced into France in the reign of Charles VI, by the beautiful and devoted Odette de Champdivers, the amusement of that monarch during his paroxysms of insanity.

In a few moments all the nobles of the court circle were absorbed by the chances of the different games in which they were engaged, save only M. de Châteaubriand, who stationed himself behind the chair of the queen, while his wife, at her desire, seated herself on a cushion at her feet. The gentle Claude, accustomed to the triumphant demeanour and coquettish bearing of those beauties whom Francis, on their first presentation, had honoured by his particular notice, and totally unaware of the unworthy intrigue by which the young countess had been allured to the court, found herself singularly attracted by the timid and lovely woman, from whose cheek the blush had not yet faded; and, as if to complete the discomfiture of the count, added her own courteous reproaches to those of her royal husband.

"But you have a child," she said, suddenly checking herself with a fond smile of maternal love; "and I can understand your reluctance. We must endeavour to compensate to you for such a sacrifice."

For a moment the brow of the count cleared. His wife might yet be saved if attached to the circle of the pure-minded queen! But again he glanced at her, as her beaming eyes were raised in gratitude to her royal mistress, and he felt the utter futility of such a hope; for the conviction fell

cold upon his heart, that amid all the galaxy of beauty by which he was surrounded, he must look in vain for loveliness like hers.

Nor was Francis, who from the first moment of his meeting with the young countess, was, or believed himself to be, deeply enamoured of her personal charms, and attracted by her graceful timidity, much more at ease than the count himself. Unaccustomed to opposition, and habituated, when it chanced to present itself, to overrule it by such extreme measures as tended to prove that neither his chivalry towards the weaker sex, nor his gratitude towards the most zealous of his subjects, could turn him from his purpose, he was well aware that M. de Châteaubriand was likely to prove less plastic in his hands than most of those yielding husbands with whom he had hitherto been brought into contact; while, conscious that the countess herself was as yet wholly unaware of the deception to which she had fallen a victim, and detecting in her proud, although simple bearing, a sense of personal dignity which could not fail to delay, even should it not eventually altogether thwart his projects; he was, for the first time, almost at a loss how to proceed; and it is extremely probable that had not the count, blinded by his ungenerous suspicions, himself alienated the affections of his young wife, Françoise de Foix might have escaped the snare which had been laid for her. As it was, however, the occasional privacy of M. and Madame de Châteaubriand was embittered by tears and reproaches; and as every fresh courtesy of Francis towards his wife furnished the count with a new subject of invective and violence, it was not long ere the unhappy countess began to sigh for the hour which would summon her to the circle of the king, and thus release her from invective and contempt.

On the return of the court to Amboise, Madame de Châteaubriand was welcomed with especial courtesy by Louise de Savoie, who had already ascertained the feelings of her son towards the young and brilliant stranger, whose eyes were even thus early learning to forget the use of tears; and whose cheek flushed, perhaps, but no longer burnt, under the gaze of the king. The heart soon loses its bloom beneath the language of flattery; Françoise had a sovereign at her feet; the atmosphere of a licentious court was around her, and evil advisers at her side; while a deeply rooted terror of the resentment of a husband whom she had unwittingly offended, unhappily combined with these to dazzle, bewilder, and subdue her. She still trembled, but she did not turn away from the abyss which yawned before her eyes. Suspected by the man on whom she had lavished all the affection of her girlhood; and separated from her infant, whose purity might have enfolded her as with the wings of an angel, and saved her from herself, she sickened at her utter helplessness; and at length forgetting all, save her own vacuity of heart, and dreading lest in some moment of exasperation her husband should brave the anger of the king, and immure her once more in his ancestral castle, with himself as her sole companion, she yielded to the dishonour which had been prepared for her, and added another to the list of those victims whom the licentiousness of Francis had already sacrificed to his selfishness.

Madame de Châteaubriand, however, fallen as she was, still shrank from the publicity of vice in which some of her predecessors had discovered the proudest result of the king's attachment; and for a time the unfortunate liaison was carefully concealed; although this could not be so skilfully accomplished as to deceive the anxious and watchful husband, or the experienced Louise de Savoie; who, discerning nothing more dangerous in the countess than her beauty, and satisfied that she had little to apprehend from her ambition, affected not to remark the devotion of the king, and continued to lavish upon the new favourite all the graceful courtesies which could encourage her in her precarious and sinful career.

Far otherwise was it, however, with the injured count; who no sooner ascertained that his dishonour was accomplished, than he instantly withdrew from the theatre of his disgrace, and retired to that peaceful home in Brittany which the absence of his wife's affection had rendered a desert. He vouchsafed neither expostulation nor reproach; the past, as he bitterly remembered, could never be recalled : his child was motherless, and she was now his only earthly link; he had done with the world, and the world with him. Others who had been subjected to the like indignity might haunt the saloons of royalty, and sweep the earth with their plumed hats before the spoiler of their homes; M. de Châteaubriand was not of these; he could suffer, but he could not stoop to

kiss the hand that smote him; and thus, without a word, without a sign, he departed from the court, and his existence was ere long forgotten.

CHAPTER X.

[1517-18.]

FRANCIS having at this period repaired, in so far as it was possible, the error of which his predecessor had been guilty, by conciliating the Swiss; and believing himself to be at once free from any immediate risk of foreign aggression, and secure of the Milanese, in whose conquest he had alike consumed the revenues of the state and the first years of his reign, began to turn his attention to the embellishment of his kingdom, and the interests of literature. Himself, as we have already shown, but a superficial scholar, he was, nevertheless, fully aware of the importance of introducing and encouraging a taste for polite learning among his subjects; and although his mind, when not engrossed by his passion for Madame de Châteaubriand, which soon ceased to be a secret to the court, was occasionally disturbed by doubts of the acceptance of the *concordat*, he amused himself in forming splendid projects, both as regarded the public edifices, and the establishment of a great national college.

For a brief period he was, however, diverted from this new and worthy ambition by the birth of a dauphin, an event which was hailed alike by the young king and his subjects with enthusiastic delight. The infant prince was born at Amboise on the 28th of February, 1517; and he had scarcely seen the light before Francis despatched M. de Saint-Mesme, a nobleman of his household, to Rome, at once formally to communicate this intelligence to the sovereign pontiff, and privately to invite him to become sponsor to the royal infant, and thus consolidate the friendly alliance which existed between them. The envoy was most graciously received, nor did the pope attempt to conceal the satisfaction which he experienced from the proposition; and, after having sumptuously entertained M. de Saint-Mesme during several days while the baptismal presents were in preparation, he finally dismissed him with great honour; and he left the Holy City, accompanied by Lorenzo de' Medici, the nephew of the pontiff, who was appointed to officiate as his proxy, and the Florentine ambassadors.

On the arrival of the illustrious party at Amboise, they were met beyond the gates of the city by all the princes of the blood, and great nobles of the court, by whom they were conducted to the king. The other sponsors selected by Francis to assist at the august ceremony were the Duke de Lorraine and Madame de Bourbon; and there was a smile upon every lip save that of the meek mother of the new idol, who at length found her last hope of regaining the affections of her volatile husband extinguished for ever. She had trusted with all a woman's confidence that the birth of a son would restore him to her; but in the very tone of his address, as he coldly thanked her for the present which she had made to France, she read all her lone and loveless future; and as her pale cheek fell back upon the pillow, she closed her heavy eyelids to conceal the tears which would not be suppressed, and humbled herself in prayer.

None, however, save her immediate attendants, were conscious, amid the general joy, that there was a bursting and a bleeding heart beneath the proud roof of the palace of Amboise. Princes and nobles feasted at the table of the king; the silvery sound of women's laughter echoed through the vast apartments; the guards were merry at their posts, and the varlets at their toil. France at length boasted a dauphin; and every other consideration was swallowed up in that one joyous conviction.

The ceremony of baptism was invested with all the splendour of which it was susceptible. Plumed hats and jewelled vests were mingled with brocades and laces; the fairest and noblest of France were grouped with distinguished individuals of other nations, among whom one of the

most remarkable was the Prince of Orange, who arrived, attended by a magnificent retinue, to offer his congratulations to the king; but was so coldly received as to retire in disgust, and to volunteer his services to Charles V, by whom they were eagerly and courteously accepted. The altar of the palace-chapel blazed with precious stones, and its aisles were heavy with the fumes of frankincense; gorgeously attired prelates lined the sanctuary, and majestic women filled the galleries of the tribune; harmonious voices pealed out the hymn of praise; and the infant prince, shrouded in ermine and velvet, received the name of Francis from the courtly lips of Lorenzo de' Medici. The service once concluded, the brilliant crowd swept onward from the chapel towards the great courtyard, which had been entirely enclosed both above and around with party-coloured draperies, in order to protect the guests from the weather during the banquet; the grand saloon of the palace having been found inadequate to afford accommodation to so numerous an assemblage. After the repast, which was prolonged until a late hour, this magnificent temporary hall was illuminated by torches; and dancing, lotteries, and dice occupied the remainder of the night.

Nor were the baptismal festivities confined to Amboise, for throughout the whole realm of France the people vied with each other in testifying their joy at the birth of a dauphin. The streets of Paris were filled with revellers, who were entertained at the expense of the authorities; and at Orleans two temporary fountains were erected in front of the Hotel de Ville, which poured forth white and red wine from sunrise to sunset. The glad shouting of the populace responded to the pealing of the cannon from the fortresses; and for several days all business was suspended.

Accustomed as he had been to the pontifical splendour of his uncle's court, Lorenzo de' Medici was dazzled by the magnificence of all around him. The chivalric courtesies of the king, the gracious smiles of the regent, the lavish profusion of the great nobles, and the extreme beauty of the fair women who thronged the palace, so far exceeded all his previous experience, that he at once became reconciled to the will of his uncle, by whom he had been charged to propose a treaty of marriage between himself and Madelaine de la Tour-d'Auvergne, the younger daughter of the Count de Boulogne and Auvergne, whose sister had married the Duke d'Aubigny. This lady, who was young and extremely beautiful, was connected with the royal family through her mother, who had been a princess of Bourbon; and it was not without considerable disappointment that some of the wealthiest nobles in the kingdom saw her hand bestowed upon a foreigner.

Francis, however, effected a sagacious stroke of policy by the concession, as he required in return a pledge from Lorenzo, that both he and all his family should bind themselves to uphold the interests of France, with which this marriage would tend so closely to unite them. The Florentine at once acceded to this arrangement; but, even enamoured as he was of the fair girl who was about to become his wife, he was still wary enough to stipulate in return, that the French king should withdraw his protection from the Duke d'Urbino, whose ally he then was, and offer no impediment to his own attempt to possess himself of the duchy. To this proposition, Francis, after some demur, in his turn consented; and preparations were forthwith commenced for the celebration of this ill-omened marriage, which was fated to exert so mighty an influence on the destinies of France, by giving birth to Catherine de' Medici.

Once more the halls of Amboise were loud with festivity, and radiant with splendour; and, on the return of the bridal party from the chapel, Francis invested the bridegroom with the cross of St. Michael, having previously presented him with an annual revenue of ten thousand crowns; and lavished upon the bride presents of the most costly description.

In this munificence he was, however, even exceeded by the pope; who, in the height of his self-gratulation at the new aggrandizement of his family, despatched both to the Queen of France, and to the bride, gifts of so costly a nature as to excite universal astonishment; among which, (probably the most remarkable at the period,) was a state bed, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, tortoise-shell, and ivory; while so great was his profusion, that a train of thirty-six horses were required to convey all these treasures to the capital.

The most novel feature of the court-festival at this marriage, was the introduction of distinct

character dances, executed entirely by the youngest and most beautiful women of the royal circle; who, divided into parties of twelve, each assumed some national costume, of which the illusion was further heightened by the accompaniment of corresponding instruments. As the number of these courtly *coryphées* amounted to seventy, the whole of the morning was consumed in witnessing their performances; after which the king conducted the bride to the banqueting table, followed by her new-made husband leading Madame d'Angoulême; and having in their suite all the princes of the blood, foreign ambassadors, and nobles, each according to his order of precedence. As the last of the guests passed the threshold, the trumpets sounded, and the king, advancing to the upper end of the hall, placed his mother upon his right hand; and then, raising his feathered hat for an instant, motioned to the courtly party to take their seats. With the exception of the Duchess d'Angoulême and the bride, no lady had a place at the royal table; Madame de Châteaubriand herself, upon this stringent occasion of court etiquette, being compelled to forego her ordinary privilege. As the several courses were removed, the trumpets again pealed out, and, during the intervals, the royal musicians kept up an uninterrupted stream of harmony. At the close of the banquet, dancing was resumed, and continued until an hour past midnight, amid a blaze of flambeaux and torches which rivalled the light of day.

On the morrow the festivities were resumed; and jousts, skirmishes, sham-fights, sieges, and other manly sports, were varied by balls, mysteries, hunting-parties, and such pastimes as might be shared by the young beauties of the court, during several weeks; after which the king took leave of the newly-married pair, who departed for Italy accompanied by the Duke d'Aubigny, the brother-in-law of the bride, whom he had appointed his ambassador to the pope; and who, in that capacity, acquitted himself so admirably as to insure the lasting alliance of the Medici with France.

Never again, however, was the unfortunate Madelaine de la Tour-d'Auvergne destined to visit her beloved country, to whose interests she had been a passive although a reluctant victim. In little more than a year, she had become the mother of Catherine de Medici, and was in her grave; whither she was followed in the short space of five days by her husband, both having fallen martyrs to a contagious disease in April, 1519.

As the court slowly subsided into tranquillity, after the long effervescence of almost delirious dissipation in which it had been immersed, the increasing influence of Madame de Châteaubriand became more and more apparent. She assumed no personal consequence, it is true; but, urged on by her family, she evinced the most anxious desire to enrich her three brothers; and, in order to accomplish this project, began to interfere in the affairs of state with a pertinacity which aroused all the jealousy of Louise de Savoie, who had been so long accustomed to mould her son to her will, that she could ill brook the rivalry of power which was thus forced upon her. Nor was it long ere she became painfully aware that the contest was altogether unequal; and that the indulgence with which she had, from his very boyhood, visited, or rather encouraged, the passions of her son, was destined to prove her own punishment. Hitherto she had been all in all to him; for the patient and neglected queen had put forth no claim to popularity; and had shrunk alike from every cabal which had been formed about her; devoting herself entirely to her children, of two of whom she was soon to be bereaved; and to whose works of charity and acts of devotion by which she hoped one day to purchase the affections of her husband. The previous intrigues of the young king had been merely the result of a passing fancy, and, as such, incapable of weakening the influence of his mother; and even in her first judgment of Françoise de Foix the sagacious duchess had not deceived herself; but she had committed the grievous and irreparable error of forgetting, that little as the young countess might seek or estimate self-aggrandizement, there were those about her, who, unlike her high-hearted husband, would not disdain to make her dishonour the pedestal of their own fortunes; and this was precisely that which came to pass.

It has been already stated, that noble as they were by birth, the family of Françoise de Foix were by no means wealthy; and it was consequently inevitable that, having once accustomed themselves to look upon the dishonour of their sister with indifference, her three brothers, Messieurs de Lautrec, de Lascun, and de Lespare, should regard her as the destined architect of their fortunes; and thus involve her in intrigues and cabals, for which she was totally unfitted by



nature. The first glaring instance of her unbounded influence over her royal lover, was exhibited in the recall of the Connétable de Bourbon from Milan, where he had remained since its conquest as the Lieutenant-General of the king; and the substitution of the Marechal de Lautrec, whose ambition could be satisfied only by the highest and most honourable charge in the army.

It was during a hunting-party in the forest of Bussy, when, fatigued and heated with the chase, Francis reined up his panting horse beside the palfrey of the young countess; and with one hand caressing its silken mane, received with a fond smile her whispered compliments upon his prowess, that this great and eventful change was fated to be arranged. Long as she had meditated upon it, and anxious as she had become to insure its success, a certain timidity had hitherto restrained her from entering formally upon the subject; but on this occasion, a single question from the enamoured monarch liberated her at once from her difficulty. They were alone, and secure for a time from all interruption; the hunt having led the whole of the royal suite to another and a distant quarter of the forest; the sunlight fell in living mosaics upon the mossy turf, when the quivering leaves afforded it a momentary passage; and the low sweet wind, as it wandered past, swept the long ringlets of the countess almost to the cheek of her companion as he leant towards her.

“On the faith of a gentleman!” exclaimed Francis, “you have followed the hunt bravely today, and have shamed many a cavalier, who will nevertheless vaunt of his prowess at the banquet ere-while. But where were your thoughts, *ma mie*? I could not watch them as I did your bright eyes, and your slender figure.” And he looked tenderly in her face, as though he already anticipated the flattering answer.

“I need surely not inform your majesty that they were, as ever, fixed upon yourself; but, alas I not with undivided happiness,” said the lady.

“And why so?” demanded the king abruptly. “These are strange words from the lips of Françoise de Foix.”

“They are, Sire; but they are at least truthful. Are you not all the world to me! And can I reflect upon any possible injury to your august name without dismay?”

“You speak in enigmas, Madame. I scarcely know you in this new character. Explain your meaning, and let us once more understand each other.”

“My duty is obedience,” said the beautiful countess, as she suffered her large lustrous eyes to rest for a moment upon the hand which was still plunged amid the mane of her palfrey, and then raised them timidly and tearfully to the face of the king. “With your image was blended that of the Connétable de Bourbon.”

“Ha! our good cousin Charles de Montpensier;” smiled Francis. “And what of him, fair dame?”

“Simply, Sire, that your royal favour has rendered him too arrogant for the subject of such a master; and that I have certain advices from Milan, which lead me to suspect his loyalty. Already the most wealthy and powerful noble of France, he has nothing to anticipate at home and his ambition is no secret.”

Francis started, and sat erect in his saddle.

“The duchy of Milan,” pursued the countess, “would be a tempting exchange for the sword of Connétable; and M. de Bourbon has already secured the hearts of his vice-regal subjects.”

“Ha, indeed!” exclaimed her listener vehemently. “Is it so? In good truth this must be looked to. But in whom can we trust, if Charles de Montpensier, whom we have raised to the highest dignity in the realm, turn traitor to our interests?”

“One for whom your majesty has done less,” said Françoise steadily. “One who still remembers at whose hands he holds his favour; and who has already afforded proof both of his loyalty and his devotion.”

“True,” replied the king thoughtfully, and with a moody brow; “doubtless there are many such in our good kingdom of France; but the choice will be no easy one. Besides, Marguerite loves Bourbon like a brother, and will reproach me should I offer him an affront.”

“The loss of the Milanese would be an affront to your majesty which no reproach could reach” ; retorted the favourite.

“On the faith of a gentleman, you are right, madam!” almost shouted Francis, who was stung to the very core by the bare supposition of such an indignity. “The Connétable shall be recalled. And now, since you have become a counsellor, and plunged into the stormy sea of state affairs, you must complete your work, and help me to select his successor.”

“Your majesty has not forgotten Ravenna?” asked the countess with her most sunny smile.

The eye of the young king brightened. “Ha! I read the meaning of that fair plotting face. No, ma mie, I have forgotten neither Ravenna, nor the brilliant services of your brother; but you should also remember that he is already a Marshal of France.”

“The Duke de Bourbon is Constable,” said the countess boldly; “and, like Lautrec, owes his dignity to your majesty.”

“Why! you have suddenly become as uncompromising as Duprat himself!” laughed Francis, as he touched her cheek lightly with his fringed glove. “Enough, however, for the present; this shall be considered.”

“You will not consult the duchess, Sire?” asked Franchise anxiously.

“Not if you forbid it; but here come the hunt, with De Guise and Fleuranges in the van. Ha! on the faith of a gentleman, they have lost their quarry!”

“And I my cause, Sire—the first which I have ever undertaken. Pardon me; I overrated my influence with your majesty.” And the spoilt beauty burst into tears, half of mortification and half of disappointment.

“Francoise!” exclaimed the young king, hurriedly extending his hand, which she clasped in her slender fingers; “dear Francoise, dry your eyes, or you will unman me. Your cause is won. Lautrec shall have the Milanese.”

The countess had no time for thanks. In another instant all the sportsmen were grouped about the king, the plumes of their hats mingling with the manes of their horses, as they were respectfully withdrawn; the details of the unsuccessful hunt were rapidly given; and then, with tightened reins, the whole noble party galloped back to Chambord.

Francis redeemed his pledge. The Connétable was recalled, and the Marechal de Lautrec formally invested with the government of the Milanese; to the great disgust of Bourbon, who received with undisguised coldness the assurances of the king that he could no longer forego the gratification of his presence in France. In how far the arguments of Madame de Chateaubriand had wronged this haughty noble cannot be ascertained; although from the almost regal state which he affected while at Milan, and the facility with which he afterwards transferred his services to a hostile sovereign, it appears probable that his loyalty might have failed before his ambition, had he once felt himself assured of success in seizing the sovereignty of the duchy; an inference which is, moreover, strengthened by his resolute and undisguised hostility to Leo X, the ally of his own monarch. Suffice it, however, that whatever might have been his ulterior projects, they were now overthrown for ever; and he found himself compelled to exchange his quasi-royalty for a less exalted station.

Meanwhile, the indignation of Madame d’Angoulême exceeded all bounds when she discovered that so important a measure had been effected without her sanction; and as the identity of the new viceroy sufficiently explained by whose influence his elevation had been accomplished, her hatred towards the favourite became more apparent. It was not, however, for

the compulsory return of the Connétable that Louise de Savoie felt exasperated against the countess, but simply because the event demonstrated the immense power which she had obtained over the mind of Francis, and the assurance that thenceforward she must content herself with sharing the supremacy which had once been entirely her own. The arrival of Charles de Bourbon at the court was, on the contrary, a source of satisfaction; for, as we have already hinted, she had suffered herself to conceive a passion for that prince to which, despite the maturity of her age, she still trusted that he would not ultimately prove insensible. She was ignorant of his attachment to her daughter; and conscious that she was still one of the handsomest women in France, as well as the mother of the sovereign, she pleased herself with the belief that opportunity alone was wanting to bring him to her feet.

Strange, however, are the mysteries of the human heart. Never for an instant had Bourbon forgotten Marguerite; he still worshipped her as his first love; and when he crossed the frontiers, her image rose as freshly before him as on the day when her murmured farewell had fallen upon his ear like muffled music in the saloon of Amboise; yet, nevertheless, he no sooner encountered the smile of the Countess de Châteaubriand, his active enemy, against whom he had vowed an undying enmity, than he became her slave. Françoise, whose heart had, as a natural consequence, become vitiated by a career of avowed profligacy, did not view with indifference the effect produced by her beauty; and the prejudices and suspicions of the king, already awakened against the duke by her own representations, acquired strength from the interest which she suddenly and unexpectedly took in all that concerned him. Herein, however, Francis wronged the Connétable; who, thrall'd as he might be, and undoubtedly was, by the charms of the young countess, was too proud to volunteer a rivalry with the Admiral de Bonnivet; and he had not passed eight-and-forty hours at the court ere he heard the name of that noble coupled with that of the king's favourite in a manner which reflected no honour upon either party.

Some rumour of the same nature had also reached the ear of Francis himself, and he had even mentioned the circumstance to the countess with an asperity which might have satisfied her that she had little indulgence to expect should he prove the truth of the report; but Françoise had only found food for mirth in the accusation, and even mimicked with such charming talent the amorous looks and gestures of the suspected courtier, that the wrath of the king was converted into amusement. Brantôme asserts, that in order the better to hoodwink her royal paramour, she did not disdain to make sport of the credulity of the admiral, in supposing that one who was loved by Francis could for a moment be induced to listen to his own suit; declaring that she permitted his familiarities only because his conversation entertained her, and that he made her merry even when her heart was sad; and by these devices she turned away the attention of the young monarch, and directed his jealousy to a wrong quarter in order the better to pursue her intrigue. Be this as it may, it is certain that the distaste of Francis for the Duke de Bourbon increased daily; while the passion of Bonnivet for the fair favourite, which had become sufficiently notorious to furnish matter for the gossips of the court, never for an instant affected his favour. His early attachment to the Duchess d'Alençon had been no secret to the king; and as he still affected the same hopeless devotion, Francis, convinced by the arguments of the countess, learnt to regard his attentions to herself as the mere chivalric services of a true knight to the most beautiful woman of his acquaintance.

Amid all these intrigues the chancellor continued his efforts to secure the recognition of the *Concordat* by the parliament of Paris. Francis had solemnly pledged his word to the pope that he would compel its observance, and was necessarily anxious to see his promise fulfilled; not only because it involved his good understanding with the sovereign pontiff himself, but because upon that understanding hinged his tranquil possession of the duchy of Milan. The debates upon the Pragmatic Sanction had also tended to increase the previous difficulties under which he laboured to a fearful extent. His personal influence in the elections had sensibly declined; the morals of the clergy had degenerated, and serious abuses had arisen in the religious houses; the most sacred considerations were sacrificed to party feeling; all such individuals as were known to be in favour of rigid discipline were rejected, and men of more than suspicious morals were elevated to the

highest ecclesiastical dignities. No unanimous suffrage could be secured even for the most eligible candidate; at every election there was a division of votes ; and as no final arrangement could be effected without rancour and vindictiveness, the one party insisting upon their majority of voices, and the other accusing their opponents of simony, the most disgraceful processes at law ensued, in which neither exposure nor invective were spared.

Although the conditions of the *Concordat* had never been officially promulgated, it had nevertheless created universal discontent. The magistrates, indignant that their privileges had been invaded, and wilfully overlooking the fact that the church could not exist in its primitive state in the sixteenth century, loudly accused both their own monarch and the pope of having assumed to themselves a power to which they had no pretension; and, as a natural consequence, this bold assertion coming from a body of men deeply versed in ecclesiastical law, and basing their arguments upon the maxims of the two great councils of Constance and Bale, produced a strong effect upon the minor clergy and the middle classes, who had long been accustomed to regard the decisions of those councils as their code of action.

Nevertheless, Francis urged forward the recognition of the *Concordat* with the pertinacity of a monarch who will tolerate no opposition to his will. In the month of June it was presented for registration to the parliament of Paris, where it occasioned the most stormy discussions; and was openly opposed by M. de Sièvre, the advocate-general; which so enraged the king that he despatched the Bastard of Savoy, his uncle, during one of the sittings, to insist upon its immediate recognition and acceptance; instructing him, moreover, to remain until the registration had taken place. The first president expostulated warmly upon this innovation; representing to M. de Savoie that he could not be present at the deliberations of the chamber without *taking the oath* as a member of its body; and requested him to retire, which he was compelled reluctantly to do, leaving his mission unaccomplished. The parliament, in their turn, sent their president, M. de la Haye, to remonstrate with the monarch; alleging that as M. René de Savoie was not a member of their body, his interference was illegal; an expostulation to which Francis only replied by the reiterated exclamation :—"He shall be there! He shall be there! I will no longer tolerate the cavillers who oppose my pleasure; I can replace them by better men who are ready to do their duty like loyal subjects."

The delegates then ventured respectfully to remind him of the deference with which his predecessor had invariably received every remonstrance offered by his good and faithful deputies; but they had soon reason to repent their boldness. Francis was at this period at Nempont, near Montreuil, where he was engaged in strengthening the fortresses of Picardy, and in no mood to be controlled by forms, or schooled into submission by his own subjects. He was piqued, moreover, by the inferred distinction between himself and the late king, and had no sooner heard the president to an end than he exclaimed haughtily:—"I am aware that there are men in my parliament who are both wise and worthy; but I know also that there are others who are audacious, turbulent, and mischievous. I am not ignorant either of their identity or their arguments. You expatiate to me upon the justice of Louis XII, I am just also; but like him I shall know how to compel obedience."

M. de la Haye would still have remonstrated, but the anger of Francis, who ill brooked opposition at any time, only became more and more violent; and he finally dismissed his unwelcome visitor with a threat that he would send all who opposed his will to Toulouse or Bordeaux.

Nevertheless, when he became more cool, he suffered the parliament to delay the registration of the *Concordat* under divers pretexts, lest by too great a precipitation he should increase the distaste of the nation to a law which he considered necessary to insure the welfare of the church, and the tranquillity of the kingdom. The discussions accordingly continued from the 13th of July until the 24th of the same month, in the presence of M. de Savoie; at the expiration of that period the whole body came to the decision that they could not register the *Concordat*, its provisions being at variance with the Pragmatic Sanction, which they were compelled to observe; declaring at

the same time that in order to enact an affair of such paramount importance, it was necessary to convene a national council.

Renewed negotiations were then opened between the court and the parliament, but no satisfactory result could be obtained; and on the 13th of January, 1518, the counsellors, Messrs, de Soyen and Verjus, were deputed to wait upon the king, for the purpose of presenting to him a document in which they represented that he would compromise the independence and dignity of his crown by such a submission to the pope, and at the same time diminish the public revenues.

The court was then sojourning at Amboise; and although apprised of the arrival of the delegates, Francis gave no orders for their reception or accommodation, nor was it until the 24th of the month that he condescended to receive them; when in reply to their communication he coldly and haughtily remarked, that his chancellor had overruled all their objections in a document which he considered as peremptory and conclusive. The two counsellors respectfully requested a copy of this important paper, upon which the king lost his temper, and angrily declared that he would not consent to have an interminable process created out of a subject upon which his pleasure should suffice. "It would appear," he added sternly, "that my parliament desires to constitute itself a second Venetian senate; but I will let them know that I am King of France, and that my will is law. The ecclesiastics who form a portion of your body, listen to nothing save what affects their own personal interests; they have become counsellors only the more readily to possess themselves of bishoprics and abbeys, and to delude themselves with the belief, that under cover of certain privileges they are no longer my subjects, and that I cannot take their heads should such be my royal pleasure. They are deceived, however, as some among them may ere long discover to their cost. I will have no more of them in my parliament; that they were ever admitted there at all was the act of my predecessors; and my power is equally great to expel them, and to establish a contrary law. The whole body has become over arrogant, and shall in future confine itself to the administration of justice, which is now worse dispensed than it has been for the last hundred years."

It was at the close of the evening banquet that this unsatisfactory interview took place; and Francis finally dismissed the discomfited delegates with an order to leave Amboise by six o'clock on the following morning, warning them that if they did not obey, he would cause them both to be flung into the castle moat.

After an audience of this description all further attempt at remonstrance was abandoned by the parliament, although they still pursued their discussions upon the question; but the patience of the king being finally exhausted, on the 12th of March M. de la Trémouille, the grand chamberlain, presented himself to the chamber during one of its sittings, and commanded its members, in the name of the monarch, to proceed immediately to the registration of the contested *Concordat*, and to waste no more time in deliberating upon a subject which was already decided. As they still hesitated, some of his followers warned them to beware of further exasperating the anger of Francis, who had declared that should they persist in their contumacy, not only their own lives should be the forfeit of their disloyalty, but that he would annihilate the parliament, and destroy the city. This threat proved successful, and the parliament consented to withdraw its opposition.

The fact was no sooner promulgated, than the university issued an order that solemn services should be performed in the churches, and penitential processions traverse the streets, as on occasions of public calamity; while the parliament protested on oath that its liberties had been infringed, and that it had only yielded by compulsion to the will of the king. This done, the *Concordat* was eventually registered on the 16th of March, in the presence of M. de la Trémouille, with this final clause, which was a last and useless protest against the act:—"By the very express command of the king several times repeated."

Nor was the opposition of the university less strongly demonstrated; the most popular preachers denounced the new law from their pulpits, and the most learned professors from their

chairs. All the printers of the capital were forbidden to put the obnoxious document into type; and so intemperate were some of the speeches made by members of both bodies, and so gross the strictures passed upon the king and his court, that Francis at length found himself compelled to imprison several of the most distinguished of the orators, and to keep them in close confinement until the popular ferment had subsided; passing meanwhile an edict condemnatory of the proceedings of the whole university, whose members were forbidden under heavy penalties thenceforward to discuss this or any other decree which had received the royal sanction.

Thus the *Concordat* became a portion of the national law; but although all open opposition was necessarily at an end, it had to encounter evasions and quibbles so artfully conceived and skilfully executed, that Francis derived little benefit from its enforcement; while he was made painfully aware that by his pertinacity he had sacrificed his popularity, and estranged the affections of his people.

CHAPTER XI.

[1518.]

It has been already stated that the early studies of Francis I, however judiciously planned and admirably conceived, had failed to render him an accomplished scholar; but they had nevertheless taught him to estimate at their true value those more highly gifted than himself; and to render him eager to assemble about him all who were most distinguished in literature and art throughout Europe. Accordingly the *Concordat* was no sooner registered than he turned his attention to this important point; and the first celebrated man whom he invited to his court was Leonardo da Vinci, who had founded the schools of Florence and Milan; and through whom he entered into correspondence with the most famous architects of Italy, in order to secure their advice and assistance in the construction of the public monuments which he was anxious to erect. The Royal College, to which allusion has already been made, was, however, the principal object that occupied his mind. The encouragement afforded to literature by Louis XII, and the services rendered to oriental learning by the Greek savant John Lascaris, during the same reign, had given an impetus to native talent, which had already produced most beneficial effects in the persons of Budée, Danés, Du Chatel, Cop, and many other distinguished students; while the amiable and accomplished Etienne Poucher, bishop of Paris, Guillaume Petit, Jacques Colin, Guillaume Pelissier, and several more individuals of equal reputation for talent and erudition, formed a nucleus worthy of the great names which ere long gathered about them from all the European nations. Gifted with extraordinary facility and a correct taste, Francis soon supplied, or rather concealed, his own mental deficiencies by the aptitude with which he appropriated the ideas of those about him; and as he passed every moment which was not devoted to Madame de Châteaubriand, or some one of her temporary rivals, in the society of the learned men who ere long thronged his court, and whom he skilfully and unweariedly questioned upon the particular subjects for which they were especially celebrated, he succeeded in obtaining a vague and general idea of every branch of literature, which deluded the unlearned into a belief of his scholarship; while it even deceived himself sufficiently to persuade him that he could acquire by this erratic system of study all the results which had only been attained by his interlocutors through long and weary years of labour and application. That he had thoroughly convinced himself of so flattering a fact is rendered evident, by the *naïveté* with which he on one occasion remarked, while speaking of M. Du Chatel, "He is the only man the whole of whose science I have not fathomed in a couple of years."

As a natural consequence, the anxiety of Francis to attract about him all those celebrities by whose assistance he could either illustrate his reign, or increase his own slender stock of knowledge, exposed him to the artifices of many pretenders; and among the rest an anecdote is related by Alcyat in one of his letters, of an Italian charlatan named Julio Camilla, who boasted to the monarch that he could render him a proficient both in Greek and Latin in the short space of a single month, provided that he would devote an hour daily to that particular study. He, however, exacted that no third person should be present, declaring that so important a secret must be divulged only to crowned heads; while the remuneration which he claimed in the event of success, was a yearly income of two thousand crowns. Francis consented to these terms, and received the impostor alone in his cabinet; but having, before the close of the second lesson, satisfied himself of the audacious presumption and utter incompetency of his master, he ordered him to leave the palace, and never more to appear in his presence, a command which was promptly obeyed; and the more readily that, instead of punishing the offender, he presented him with the sum of six hundred crowns, "to remind him that he had been closeted with a king of France."

Other deceptions of a similar nature, to which he was occasionally exposed, did not, however, deter Francis from pursuing his great and laudable purpose. The object nearest his heart was still the foundation of the Royal College; and by the advice of Budée, whose modesty was as remarkable as his learning, he resolved to confide its direction to the celebrated Erasmus, who was universally recognised as the most erudite individual of the age. After having for a time adopted England as his country, where he had been entrusted with the education of the Prince of Wales, afterwards Henry VIII, Erasmus had made the tour of Italy, and resisted all the efforts of Jean de' Medici, subsequently Pope Leo X, to retain him in Florence; preferring to return to the land of his predilection, which he declared to be the most advantageous and honourable sojourn for men of genius; but again wearying for change, he had ultimately taken up his abode in the Low Countries, of which he was a native, and whither he had been invited by the princess-regent Marguerite, who was a zealous and liberal patron of letters.

Erasmus had been recently invested by his royal mistress with the dignity of honorary counsellor, when Francis I decided upon offering him the presidentship of the Royal College through the medium of Budée, whom his brother student was accustomed to distinguish by the honourable appellation of "the prodigy of France" and who was authorized to accede to the terms of the learned Hollander, even should they include a bishopric. Dazzling as such offers were, however, Erasmus requested time for reflection; and the negotiation extended over the space of eighteen months; a delay which increased the anxiety of the king to such a height, that he ultimately declared himself ready to subscribe to any conditions upon which Erasmus might insist.

Nevertheless, the offers of Francis were ultimately definitively, although respectfully, declined, with every becoming expression of gratitude for the distinction which had been conferred upon him, by the gratified scholar; who, it was ascertained, had determined, should he again leave the Low Countries, to return to England once more, where Henry VIII was urging him, by offers as brilliant as those of Francis himself, to establish his permanent abode.

This disappointment, which had been utterly unforeseen by the French king, necessarily delayed the organization of the college; but more serious considerations diverted his mind for a time even from this engrossing project, and compelled him to turn his attention to a subject of more immediate and vital importance to the welfare of his kingdom.

The court of Rome having triumphed over the councils of Constance and Bale, through the submission of the parliament and university of Paris, Leo X hastened to profit by his advantage, and to degrade religion into a mere matter of financial speculation. Impoverished by his love of splendour and dissipation, and believing himself to be above all further opposition or worldly responsibility, he had authorized the mendicant monks of the order of St. Dominic to disperse themselves over all the nations of Christendom, and to remit sins for certain stipulated sums, as well as to announce certain indulgences from the pulpit, which were to be secured by the same venal means. As a natural consequence, his instructions were not only implicitly obeyed, but so perverted, through the anxiety of the community to find favour in his eyes by their success, that the people, scandalized by such an abuse of authority, revolted against what they justly considered as a violation of the most sacred privileges; and while the parliament of Paris and the wisdom of the Sorbonne alike continued passive; while the Council of the Lateran, having abdicated its authority, offered no protest against enormities which struck at the root of the religion they had been entrusted to uphold; and worldly prelates, sold to a corrupt and venal court, looked on unmoved; a nobler and a purer spirit was aroused in an obscure class of the community, at which the proud sneered, and the powerful scoffed.

A poor monk of St. Augustin, the child of needy parents, himself vowed to poverty and privation, MARTIN LUTHER, already celebrated even in his comparative obscurity for the lucidity of his judgment, the extraordinary energy of his mind, and the unpretending piety of his character, scandalized at the dishonour brought upon the religion to which he had devoted himself, by the unblushing extortions of Leo X,—Luther, careless of the danger to which he was exposed by so hazardous a proceeding, first inveighed from the pulpit against the demoralizing and mischievous



tendencies of these indiscriminate indulgences; and then, perceiving how little effect was produced upon the passions of his auditors, who were all, more or less, interested in securing for themselves what, despite their disgust, their old associations led them to believe were a guarantee of impunity for their misdeeds, he abandoned the pulpit for the desk; and with equal rapidity and skill composed no less than ninety-nine brief propositions, which he first read in the church of St. Wittemberg, and afterwards affixed to the door of the same church, inviting discussion, and declaring himself ready to maintain the position which he had assumed. He appealed to the authority of the Holy writings; he contrasted these with the fallible and interested testimony of human beings; and finally, with the eloquence of inspired truth, he called upon the people of Christendom to release themselves from the shackles of a superstition which degraded their most sacred associations, prostrated their most divine hopes, and rendered them the slaves of a deception which they must hereafter expiate by an eternity of unmitigated and unmitigable repentance.

There can be no doubt that the objections thus suddenly and boldly advanced by “The solitary monk who shook the world,” had long been germinating in his mind, and were thus abruptly called forth by the exigencies of the moment which opened up an extraordinary opportunity for their demonstration. It is at least certain that they produced, under the force of existing circumstances, an effect tenfold greater than they could possibly have done at any preceding period. The reason of all, and the consciences of many, were offended by so open and undisguised an exhibition of papal profligacy; while the character, talents, and even defects of the reforming monk, secured for him a sympathy and an attention which gave weight and authority to his arguments. His impetuous and uncompromising spirit disdained all restraint, while his extraordinary and colloquial eloquence carried conviction with it. For a time, in all probability even himself unconscious of the extreme lengths to which his desire to abolish certain abuses must inevitably lead, he equally blinded his disciples to the fact that he was rapidly and surely undermining the foundations of that faith of which he had hitherto professed himself the humble follower; but, as in an ill-constructed edifice the removal of one prop loosens the tenure of the whole building, so did the energetic denunciations and objections of Luther, fed by the opposition which he experienced, shake the entire fabric of Romanism to its very base; and as his capacious mind grasped the whole system of papal supremacy, he each hour discovered fresh reasons for a secession which changed the face of Christian Europe, and was prolific of the most important results.

For a considerable time both the pope and the superior clergy regarded with contempt what they considered as the heretical but impotent endeavour of a vicious and powerless monk to reorganize the religious world; a mere ebullition of vanity and verbal license which could be suppressed at any hour, but which might be more fittingly allowed to perish of its own insignificance in the little city which had witnessed its birth. They had miscalculated alike the nature and the talents of Martin Luther. Obstacles had no power to deter him from his purpose; contempt passed him by unheeded; conscious of a mighty mission, he despised the suffrages of the powerful; and still, in that quiet town, and within the hoary walls of its silent monastery, the work of God went on, to be emblazoned thereafter in characters of never-dying light.

Meanwhile, the favour of Madame de Châteaubriand continued unbounded, and she was recognised as the channel through which all court favour might the most readily be secured. Louise de Savoie was, it is true, still at the head of a party, who, aware of the volatile character of Francis, were confidently anticipating the early disgrace of the favourite; but although they secretly predicted, and even desired her downfall, they were not the less assiduous in their services. Her beauty, far from decreasing, appeared only to augment by time, and the passion of the king kept pace with it. Her smile was a sufficient recompense for the greatest concession; and her wish was a law which he implicitly obeyed. Stern and unyielding towards his ministers, in her hands he was plastic as wax, and she moulded him to her pleasure. Her ambition, as a natural consequence, increased with her consciousness of power; and so completely did she contrive to thrall the reason of her royal lover, that although her liaison with Bonnavet had become notorious,

and her advances to the Duke de Bourbon had long been a theme of sarcasm to the whole court, her influence over the infatuated monarch was stronger than ever.

Nevertheless, either from indolence, or from habit, Francis permitted his mother to take an active share in the affairs of government, and to treat with the legates and ambassadors who visited his court; her splendid person, insinuating manners, and powerful understanding, enabled her to bring to his councils the most efficient aid. Equally indulgent to her own social vices and to those of her son, she troubled him by none of those representations or reproaches of which he was so impatient; and he consequently felt for her a deferential affection which secured her lasting supremacy. The queen, who, on the 28th of February in the preceding year, had become the mother of a third daughter, having at length abandoned all hope of enjoying the domestic happiness to which she was so admirably constituted to contribute, had ceased to evince the slightest interest in the events which were taking place around her, and was seldom seen in public, save on occasions of court ceremonial; while the wily Duprat, anxious to maintain himself in the exalted post to which he had attained, encouraged the libertine propensities of the young king, and surrounded him with companions little calculated to enhance his moral character.

Francis had, at this period, reached his twenty-fourth year; and to his naturally dissipated tastes he added a supreme contempt for all classes of his subjects, save such as blindly lent themselves to his single will. He refused to assemble the States-General, or to recognise their right of opinion upon any public measure adopted by himself; nor would he suffer them to have a voice in the financial concerns of the kingdom. If Louis XIV, in the plenitude of his satisfaction upon finding himself King of France, was betrayed into the arrogance of exclaiming "L'État c'est Moi", it is certain that the same sentiment had previously been stringently enacted by Francis I.

Nevertheless, however he might despise the opinions or the prejudices of his people, it is not the less certain that the young king avoided as much as possible any lengthened sojourn in the capital, where his immediate circle was exposed to the scrutiny and comments of the citizens; and, contenting himself by inhabiting the palace of the Tournelles during the winter months, he commonly spent the remainder of the year in travelling from castle to castle, accompanied by his whole court; generally selecting the western provinces; and issuing his orders in turn from Blois, Amboise, Ancenis, Verger, St. Germain-en-Laye, and even occasionally from some obscure hunting rendezvous.

The enormous outlay necessitated by this perpetual migration may be imagined, when it is stated that Francis exacted under all circumstances the same ceremonious magnificence; and according to Brantôme, his establishment exceeded all parallel. "Nothing," says the quaint old chronicler, "could approach it; for there was his own table, that of the grand-master, that of the grand-chamberlain and chamberlains, of the gentlemen of the chamber, of the gentlemen on duty, of the valets de chambre, and many others; all so well provided that nothing was wanting; and what was most remarkable is, that in a village, or in the forests, or at a meeting, all were as well provided for as though they had been in Paris."

Nor was this the only species of profusion in which Francis indulged. Careless of the calamities which he caused by overwhelming his people with taxation, he was lavish of the money thus obtained to all by whom he was approached; and this to so extreme a degree, that the same writer from whom we have just quoted, proceeds to say: "Every one was astonished how he could sustain and furnish the outlay of such immense sums in war, and in gifts, above all to the ladies, for he made them great presents, and in such pomps, sumptuousnesses, magnificences, and superb buildings. No great weddings were celebrated at his court which were not solemnized either by tournaments, or combats, or masquerades, or rich vestments, both male and female, or suits of state liveries. I have seen the chests and wardrobes of some of the ladies of that period so full of dresses which the king had given to them at different fetes and ceremonies, that they were a fine fortune of themselves."

It will be readily understood that it was not amid such a career as this that Francis was likely

to recall to mind the duties which he owed to the people over whom he had been called to govern; or to disentangle himself from the shackles of an unholy attachment; yet, nevertheless, the favour of Madame de Châteaubriand, had it been less steadfastly founded, might have sustained a perilous shock from the unbridled arrogance of her brother, the Marechal de Lautrec, who at this period had by his extortions and assumption so disgusted the Milanese as to create great discontent, and to aggravate their dislike to their conquerors to a pitch which threatened the most serious consequences. He had, moreover, given great umbrage to the court of Rome, by subjecting all ecclesiastical affairs to a species of military ordeal; while his demeanour towards the veteran Marechal de Trivulzio, who had formerly held the government of Milan, and now shared it with himself, completed the exasperation of the people.

Trivulzio was descended, as we have elsewhere stated, from one of the noblest of the Lombard families, and had been induced to join the French army in order to assist in the extirpation of the tyrannical Ludovico Sforza: nor had his services ended there; for he had subsequently devoted himself to the interests both of Charles VIII and Louis XII with a valour and fidelity which was not exceeded by those of any of their own subjects. Age had, however, tamed his gallant spirit, and he had retired to Milan in order to pass the short remainder of his days amid the friends of his early years. Unfortunately, his universal popularity, and his great wealth, which enabled him to maintain a magnificent style of living, offended the vanity and aroused the jealousy of Lautrec, who could not brook to see himself eclipsed upon the very theatre of his triumph; and who, finding himself powerless to injure the brave old man at his own hearth, could invent no other method of gratifying his selfish malice than that of representing him in his letters to the court as a dangerous and intriguing individual, who, profiting by his knowledge of the internal economy and resources of the French nation, had placed himself at the head of a faction hostile to the authority of Francis, which, should it be permitted to mature its plans, might endanger the tenure of the Milanese.

Urged on the one hand by the wishes of the pope to recall Lautrec from his government, and apprehensive on the other that, should his report of the defalcation of Trivulzio prove correct, he should be favouring the views of the disaffected portion of the duchy by removing the man who had detected their intrigue, Francis wavered. His irresolution was not, however, long fated to endure, for Madame de Châteaubriand was near him at all hours, to silence his doubts, to strengthen his decision, and to stifle his remorse. Lautrec triumphed; his acts of government were justified; and the gray-haired Trivulzio declared a traitor to his adopted country.

This accusation, uttered by Francis in a moment of passion, was soon communicated to the veteran Marechal; who, jealous of his honour, could not brook so foul an insult, but forgetting his age and his infirmities, (for he had attained his eighty-second year,) made immediate preparations for leaving Milan in order to justify himself in person to the sovereign by whom he had been so cruelly misjudged.

The summer was at its height; and, thus compelled to travel slowly alike from physical weakness and the sultriness of the season, it was not until the beginning of October that the heart-stricken old man reached Ancenis, where the court were then residing; but, worn and suffering as he was, he lost no time in soliciting an audience both of Francis and his mother. Madame d'Angoulême, who had personal reasons for siding with the Countess de Châteaubriand in this emergency, peremptorily refused to receive him; and although the king permitted his presentation, he simply addressed him with a few cold and civil words of welcome, and then turning upon his heel continued a conversation which the reception of the unwelcome visitor had apparently interrupted. Again and again did the veteran warrior entreat only to be heard; Francis was inexorable; and at length, finding that it was in vain to hope for a formal audience, and learning that the king was to pass on a certain day through the town of Arpajon, where he was then residing, Trivulzio being too much enfeebled to stand, caused himself to be carried in a chair to the centre of the street; and as Francis approached, addressed him with the noble and touching entreaty of—"Sire, condescend to listen for one moment to a man who has risked his life in seventeen battles for you and your ancestors."

Francis looked towards him for an instant, but the influence of Madame de Châteaubriand was too powerful; his better nature sank before it; and withdrawing his eyes, he passed on in silence.

“Sire! oh, sire! only one word,” again uttered the failing voice, but the king coldly pursued his way; and the wretched old man, throwing himself back into the arms of his attendants, suffered them to carry him once more to his bed, whence he never rose again. His heart was broken, and he had done with life. Francis was no sooner apprised that the brave old Marechal was dying, than a feeling of remorse for the harshness which he had displayed, awoke him to a sense of his own cruelty; and he despatched one of the gentlemen of his chamber to express his regret that he should have exhibited so much rigour to one who had so nobly served the French nation.

“I feel the kindness of the king,” said the expiring veteran; “but I have felt his harshness still more deeply. It is now too late.”

In another hour he had breathed his last sigh; and nothing remained of the noble victim of a licentious woman, and an envious and unworthy rival, save the affecting epitaph which by his own direction was engraven upon his tomb: *J. J. Trivultius, Antonii JUIus, qui nunquam quievit, quiescit; tace!*

Whatever might have been the feelings of Francis when he learnt that the brave old soldier had ceased to exist, they were unable to resist the blandishments of the favourite; for, to the indignation of many who had fought beside Trivulzio, the *bâton* of Marechal which he had so long wielded with honour to himself and to the sovereign whom he served, was bestowed upon Lescun, her second brother.

Truly vice was at a premium in France in the sixteenth century!

CHAPTER XII

[1518.]

THE increasing power and popularity of Charles of Spain beginning about this period to awaken the apprehensions of the French king, he became anxious to secure the closer alliance of Henry VIII, whose defection from his interests would effectually have destroyed the balance of Europe, and involved the political ruin of France. Moreover, Henry was at best a doubtful ally under existing circumstances, for his jealousy of Francis was no secret, and his thirst for conquest rendered him a dangerous neighbour, possessed as he was of the strongly-fortified town of Tournay, which at all times afforded him easy ingress to the French territories.

Desirous at once to ransom the city, and to secure a more complete and satisfactory understanding with his brother monarch, Francis accordingly despatched to England the friend of his childhood, Bonnivet, on whose good faith and zeal he implicitly relied; and upon whose insinuating manners and courtly tact he calculated to effect a purpose which might never have been accomplished through the ordinary medium of state diplomacy. Conscious, moreover, of the vain and avaricious character of Wolsey, who had at this period become all-powerful with his royal master, Francis instructed his envoy to be profuse to the minister both in presents and promises before he ventured to open the negotiation on the subject of Tournay; and meanwhile to represent to Henry, as the object of his mission, his own desire to associate him with himself in the honourable privilege of forming a league for the preservation of Christendom from the Turks; who had in fact assumed an attitude which rendered such a precaution highly necessary. This effected, he was further authorized to propose a matrimonial alliance between the Dauphin, then an infant of only a few months old, and the princess Mary, the daughter of Henry, and above all to suffer no opportunity to escape of conciliating the haughty cardinal, without whose assistance Francis was fully aware that nothing satisfactory could be achieved; and whose personal pique against him was, as he also knew, sufficient of itself to bring about a war between the two nations.

The city of Tournay had remained in possession of the English since the Battle of the Spurs; but they could place little reliance upon its aid in the event of a frontier war, being highly unpopular with the inhabitants, and surrounded on all sides by both the French and the Flemish, who were equally interested in compelling them to vacate a fortress of that importance. Moreover, from its isolated position it was rendered useless, either for attack or defence; but, despite all these drawbacks, Wolsey had, nevertheless, caused himself to be appointed to its bishopric, and displaced for that purpose Louis Gaillart, the prelate elected by the chapter of Tournay, who, on his demission, had retired to the court of France; greatly to the displeasure of the English cardinal, who considered himself aggrieved by the protection extended by Francis to an individual whom he had deposed.

The first clause of the mission was, as may be readily understood, a mere pretext for the introduction of the more important objects which the French king was eager to attain; for the pope, from the ridicule and disgust which he had brought upon religion by the indiscriminate and venal sale of indulgences before cited, had rendered the success of a European league for such a purpose as a crusade almost impossible; and in selecting Francis as the sovereign by whom it was to be organized, he had been only actuated by a desire to arouse the romance of his nature, and to induce him to absent himself for a time from his own dominions.

Bonnivet, so soon as he was fully apprised of the wishes of his royal master, did not lose an

instant in endeavouring to conciliate the English cardinal; whom he assured, in the letter by which he announced to him his intended visit to the court of Henry, that the regret felt by the French king at the recent misapprehensions on the subject of the Duke d'Aubigny and the ex-Bishop of Tournay, by which he had lost the confidence of so distinguished a person as His Eminence, exceeded all bounds; adding, that he trusted, when he should have the honour of a conference, that all would be explained to his satisfaction; and that he would restore to the French monarch a friendship which he highly valued.

Wolsey, flattered by these overtures, returned a courteous reply; and immediate preparations were made for the departure of the embassy, which was one of exceeding magnificence.

Not only did it comprise Bonnivet himself, a number of great nobles and members of the council, but also Gouffier de Boisy, and Poncher, Bishop of Paris, all superbly appointed; and attended by so enormous a suite, that on their arrival at Greenwich where the court were then sojourning, on the 30th of September, their appearance created to the full as much astonishment as admiration.

Their reception even exceeded their hopes. The social qualities of Bonnivet, the calm judgment of Boisy, and the meek dignity of the metropolitan bishop, alike produced their effect; and Henry and his minister emulated each other in their efforts to render the sojourn of the embassy in England a period of unalloyed satisfaction. Every amusement which could be devised was put into requisition; banquets, tournaments, balls, hunting-parties, tiltings at the ring, and all the various sports peculiar to the age and nation, alternately occupied the time and gratified the tastes of the courtly guests; and amid all this dissipation Bonnivet was busily and skilfully employed in advancing the interests of his sovereign.

Respectful and earnest with the king himself, he became obsequious and almost affectionate with Wolsey, whom he justly considered as the actual monarch of the country; and accordingly the cardinal, whose vanity was flattered by the distinction, and to whom it immediately became apparent, grew daily more attached to the society of the French ambassador, and more anxious to favour his views. All, consequently, progressed to the entire satisfaction of Bonnivet, who lost no opportunity of vaunting the liberality and accomplishments of his young monarch, and at the same time of impressing upon the cardinal the weight which he attached to the good opinion and admirable counsels of so great a minister. Wolsey listened so greedily to these perpetual plaudits, uttered as they were, some times in the deep bay of a window during the intervals of a dance; sometimes in his barge, as the indefatigable envoy accompanied him to Westminster; and sometimes in the quiet shades of Hampton, where the cardinal was then erecting the famous palace which outvied in its time those of royalty itself, and expatiating to his attentive listener upon the architectural glories which he meditated; that at length Bonnivet ventured to hint how anxiously his sovereign desired the advice and assistance of His Eminence upon a subject in which he was deeply interested.

After a little diplomatic coquetry, Wolsey declared himself ready to aid the French king in any way not inconsistent with his duty to his own monarch; upon which the ambassador entreated him to place himself in direct correspondence with Francis, who would, as a natural consequence, express himself more confidentially to His Eminence through such a medium, than he could condescend to do through any third person, however trustworthy. This was, after a time, also conceded; and forthwith letters were exchanged between the French king and the English cardinal which soon tended to secure the interests of Francis; although all was so skilfully contrived that Wolsey was enabled to communicate each missive as it reached his hands to Henry himself; who, as he read the earnest appeals made by his brother monarch to his own minister for advice and support, laughingly remarked that His Eminence must indeed be an extraordinary person if he could contrive to govern two kingdoms at the same time; but that he personally entertained no doubt of his capability even for such an undertaking, difficult and onerous as it was.

Meanwhile the letters of Francis were accompanied by the most cosily gifts, to which Bonnivet

affected to attach no importance, assuring the gratified cardinal, that, should he continue his good offices to France, its sovereign would know how to recompense them in a far more efficient manner. The united flattery of the young king and his envoy proved irresistible; and at length Wolsey was induced to listen to the proposition with which Bonnivet was charged; and not only agreed to exchange his distant and unproductive bishopric of Tournay for a life-pension of twelve thousand livres, but, in return for this munificence, also to exert all his influence over the mind of Henry to induce him to accede to both this arrangement, and likewise to the alliance proposed by Francis.

These preliminaries having been privately adjusted, Wolsey forthwith began to recant all his former arguments upon the importance of retaining the city of Tournay; and represented to the king, that, upon mature reflection, he had arrived at the conclusion that the immense outlay necessitated by the support of a strong garrison in so isolated a position, more than counterbalanced the contingent advantages to be derived from its possession; its distance from Calais, in the event of a rupture between the two nations, rendering it impossible to defend it, when it must eventually be lost to England, either through force or famine. He therefore strenuously advised Henry to accept the offers of Francis, who had proposed to purchase back from the English crown Tournay, Mortaigne, and Saint Amand, at the enormous sum of six hundred thousand crowns of gold, payable in twelve years; and to deliver into his keeping four gentlemen of his chamber and four of the royal pages as hostages, until the whole amount should be liquidated.

As the king, only half convinced, and somewhat startled by this sudden change in the opinion of his minister, still hesitated, Wolsey reminded him that, should he refuse to lend himself to the wishes of Francis upon this point, the French monarch would in all probability recant his offer of the hand of the dauphin; which was, with the sole exception of that of Charles of Spain, the only alliance worthy of the Princess of England; and that, moreover, Henry might deduct whatever should remain unpaid at the period of the marriage from the dowry of the bride, with whom the sum of three hundred and thirty-three thousand crowns had been demanded. He also expatiated earnestly upon the immense advantages which must accrue to England from a marriage which would strengthen the friendship already existing between the two nations, and enable them to oppose the increasing power of the house of Austria; which being already possessed not only of the Empire, but also of Spain, the Low Countries, and the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily, was rapidly assuming an attitude that threatened the peace of Europe, and the independence of individual nations.

After some slight objections on the part of Henry VIII, which were ultimately overruled by the arguments of the cardinal and the representations of the French ambassador, the treaty was definitively concluded; and Bonnivet bound himself to deliver into the bands of the English monarch the promised pledges, in the persons of Francois de Montmorency, Seigneur de la Rochefort, Charles de Mouy, Seigneur de la Meilleraye, Antoine des Pres, Seigneur de Montpesat, and Charles de Souliers, Seigneur de Morette in Piedmont; as well as the four pages of the presence, one of whom was the elder son of the Seigneur de Hugueville, the younger representative of the family of Mortemart; and of the three remaining two were scions of the noble houses of Melun and Grimault. These important measures had been accomplished in the short period of six weeks; and at the termination of that time, the ceremony of the betrothal was performed on the part of the princess in the cathedral of St. Paul's, where the English and French nobility vied with each other in magnificence, and the most lavish protestations of friendship were exchanged.

The leave-taking followed; and with the same pompous retinue as they had landed, the ambassadors of Francis quitted the shores of England, amid the acclamations of the dazzled multitude.

Shortly afterwards Henry despatched, in his turn, the Earl of Worcester, the Bishop of Ely, Lord St. John, Sir Nicholas Vaux, Sir John Pechy, Sir Thomas Boleyn, and a retinue rivalling that

of Bonnivet, to Paris, as witnesses to the corresponding ceremony on the part of the dauphin, which was celebrated with equal grandeur in the metropolitan church of Notre Dame; and at the same time to receive the hostages, and to deliver up the city of Tournay, according to the stipulations of the treaty. The mission was an ungracious one to the earl, who had been present at the taking of Tournay, and saw with regret so brilliant a trophy once more lost to England: nor would he consent to yield up the city until Gaspard de Coligny, Duke de Châtillon and Marechal of France, who had been despatched with a body of two hundred men-at-arms to take possession, transmitted to him his authority to receive it, together with a written acknowledgment, that he claimed a place not as a right, but as a gift; a demand which excited much indignation among the French officers. Nevertheless, fearful of incurring the displeasure of Francis, they resolved to comply; and, accordingly, the required documents were delivered to the earl on the following morning; and Châtillon no sooner ascertained that they had reached his hands, than he advanced at the head of his troop with drums beating and colours flying, in order to make a triumphant entry into the citadel. To this arrangement, however, the English earl, already sufficiently chafed by the cession of the city, would by no means consent; and he immediately despatched a gentleman-at-arms to the quarters of the Marechal, declaring that, as the city had neither yielded nor been taken, but simply transferred by a marriage treaty, he could not consent to suffer that it should be entered after the fashion of conquerors; and that the banners which had been so prematurely displayed must be furled before he would permit the French troops to pass the gates.

This new affront was ill brooked by M. de Châtillon and his captains; but once more they found themselves compelled to submit; the obnoxious standards were covered, and they marched forward "with drums and minstrelsy" to the walls, where they were met by the Earl of Worcester and his companions; the papers which they had transmitted to him read aloud; and possession of the town, and citadel, together with all the ammunition that it contained, formally delivered over to them; after which the English nobles took their departure for Paris, to be present at the second ceremony of affiancing.

They reached the capital at the commencement of December; and such was the anxiety evinced both by Louise de Savoie and her son to secure the goodwill of Henry VIII that no seduction was spared in order to induce them to prolong their stay. The most beautiful women of the court were their constant companions; and festival succeeded festival with a rapidity which left them little time to devote to public business. The most superb horses and the richest jewels were profusely distributed among the nobles, while their followers were regaled with equal magnificence. At length, however, they were compelled to take their leave; and Francis had once again leisure to turn his attention to more important objects.

His first care was to restore the fortresses of Tournay and Térouanne, which latter had been destroyed by the English in 1513, to their original state of defence; and to increase the strength of the fortifications of Havre; while he was no less anxious to conciliate the pope and the King of Castile than he had been to secure the alliance of Henry VIII. Even Lorenzo de' Medici was not overlooked; and Francis so far committed himself as to promise his assistance, should it be required, in any future attempt which the Florentine might make to augment his territories, notwithstanding that he had already unjustly possessed himself of the duchy of Urbino. The death of this prince in the following year, however, released the monarch from so dishonourable a compact.

The pope conciliated, Maximilian for a time at least powerless, and the alliance of Henry VIII secured by the betrothal of the dauphin to his daughter, neither Francis nor his mother spared any pains to win the friendship and confidence of Charles of Castile, even while they were secretly engaged in frustrating his schemes of ambition. The Princess Louise, to whom he had been betrothed, had died in her third year; thus a link was broken which they were desirous to renew; and in order to effect this, they proposed to him her sister Charlotte, who was still an infant; while, impossible as it was to speculate upon a marriage which could not possibly take place for many years, Francis still persisted, in order to keep up the illusion, in addressing Charles as his son-in-law; and in overwhelming him with professions of regard and affection, which were



intended to blind him to the efforts that he was in reality making to curb his power, and to counteract his projects.

Meanwhile the young king had not forgotten the mission with which he had been intrusted by the pope, and in which he had urged Henry VIII to participate; although there can be little doubt that neither the one nor the other, when they professed themselves willing to undertake the expedition, was prepared to redeem his pledge. It was true that Selim, the reigning sultan, was equipping a prodigious naval force on the coast opposite Otranto; and that should the Moslems, newly flushed as they were with conquest, turn their arms against Italy or Germany, those countries might become an easy prey, and all Christendom in its turn be threatened; but at this precise crisis it was rather the pope himself and Maximilian who were in jeopardy than either Francis or Henry, both of whom were more apprehensive of the European enemy beyond their frontier than of the infidel who might never dream of invading their territories.

Nevertheless, the French king considered it expedient as a measure of policy, to declare himself ready to redeem his word; and accordingly, on the 6th of December, 1518, he convoked an assembly of all the princes of the blood, the marshals of France, the captains of his army, the grand council, and the presidents of Paris, and announced his intention of joining the crusade. He also caused prayers to be offered up in the churches; and despatched information of his design to the emperor, and the kings of England and Castile; but although the whole nation were aware that the project had been pending for a considerable period, and that it was the result of a long negotiation with the sovereign pontiff, this demonstration created little sensation in France, as a general conviction was felt that it would never be carried into execution. A few hot-headed young men, weary of inaction, volunteered to join the crusading army, but their enthusiasm met with no serious response; and the death of Selim, which occurred before any steps had been taken to commence the expedition, at once put an end to the enterprise.

Meanwhile, Charles of Castile was not idle. The health of Maximilian, his grandfather, was failing, and he aspired to succeed him as emperor of Germany. For several years Maximilian, ever needy, had been endeavouring to extort money both from Francis and Henry VIII by an offer to transfer to them what he somewhat questionably denominated his claims on Italy; and which consisted simply in a project that he had mentally formed of uniting all the states of that country and Germany under one sovereign. His demands were of course disregarded; and he was consequently irritated against both monarchs, and readily induced to favour the views of his ambitious grandson. As a preliminary measure, Charles had applied to the pontiff for a grant of the investiture of Naples, of which Leo X claimed to be the feudal sovereign; and not content with this attempt, had also prayed to be recognised as King of the Romans; while Maximilian, who was anxious to secure to him the empire of Germany, in his turn negotiated with the electors, many of whom promised him their votes; but a legal impediment rendered the election one of considerable difficulty, a circumstance of which the pope skilfully availed himself. He had lost no time in apprising Francis of the requirements of Charles, and the jealousy of the French king being immediately aroused, he had urged the pontiff to withhold his compliance; and not, by an ill-placed condescension, to peril the safety of the holy see; reminding him that as Maximilian had never received the imperial crown in Rome, he could claim no higher title than that of King of the Romans; while he should have been crowned emperor, before, according to the Germanic constitution, he could assume a right to call upon the electors to recognise his presumptive heir as successor to the empire. Moreover, as he adduced, the grandson of Maximilian was king of the Two Sicilies, and by the decrees of the church, which had existed in full vigour during two centuries and a half, the crown of the empire and that of Naples could not lawfully be united on the same head.

The pope replied to the application of Charles by representing these impediments, which he declared to be insuperable; but the young King of Spain was as pertinacious as his rival, and urged the emperor to announce to the court of Rome that his election was secured in Germany; and to request from the sovereign pontiff a dispensation which would set aside the constitutions of the church. Francis, however, denied that such was the case, declaring that Charles had not been

elected, and never would be so; and that, moreover, he had been himself urged to advance his own pretensions to the contested dignity; and he therefore in his turn prayed His Holiness to be cautious how he endangered the permanent interests of the church by setting aside her decrees, which had not only been the result of profound wisdom, but had now become doubly sacred from their antiquity. Maximilian then pressed the pope to send the imperial crown to Vienna by a nuncio, authorized by his holiness to perform the ceremonial of his coronation; while Charles was betrayed into the injudicious measure of endeavouring to engage the French king to use his interest with Leo, to induce him to consent to this arrangement; a request which was necessarily evaded by Francis, who counselled the pontiff to decline a measure which tended to lower the dignity of the holy see; and to propose that Maximilian should proceed to Rome to receive the crown of empire from his own sacred hands.

“Let His Holiness,” he added to the legate, “be under no apprehension, for assuredly he will not undertake such a journey without being well guarded; and if he were even able to perform it at the head of an army, which is not probable, still let His Holiness remain passive, and allow the King of France to act; for as Maximilian will be compelled to traverse the territories of Milan or Venice, the king will immediately pass into Italy to protect his possessions, and so well accompanied that he will pledge himself that Maximilian shall not reach Rome, but will be satisfied to retrace his steps.”

Leo X, however, could not overcome his reluctance to venture on so hazardous an experiment; and it would appear from a letter of the Cardinal de Bibbiena, that he had already prepared a bull by which Charles was authorized to unite the imperial crown with that of Sicily, although he concealed the fact carefully from Francis until the result of the election should be declared. Moreover, he laboured assiduously to dissuade the French king from advancing his claim to the empire; declaring that the interests of Europe would be better secured were some petty German prince invested with this high-sounding title than the monarch of so powerful a nation as France; and reminding him that Henry VIII, who had originally expressed his resolution of contesting the dignity, had already abandoned the project.

In the first instance Francis had opposed the King of Spain with an apparent frankness and generosity which were consistent with his reputation for chivalry; declaring that the contest need in no degree affect the regard which subsisted between Charles and himself, but that, on the contrary, they had only to consider themselves in the same position as two young cavaliers, who, enamoured of the same mistress, even while using their best efforts to win her favour, avoided all occasion to quarrel, and continue true and loyal friends. It was impossible, however, that so momentous a struggle could be carried on without bitterness; the very consciousness which existed on both sides, that each was strenuously labouring to undermine the interests of the other, rendered such an attempt incompatible; and while Charles was urging his grandfather to undertake the journey to Rome, and thus to remove one of the most serious objections of the pope to his own succession, Francis despatched Bonnavet, whose successful embassy to England had inspired him with the most perfect confidence in his diplomatic talents, in disguise to Frankfort, with large sums of money, to purchase the votes of such of the electors as had not yet declared in his favour. Bonnavet was subsequently followed by the Marquis de Fleuranges, and the Seigneur Albret d’Orval, who were also commissioned to forward by every means in their power the interests of their sovereign; but neither of these envoys acted with sufficient circumspection; and all their proceedings were immediately known and thwarted by Charles, whose early habits of caution and prescience had rendered him a formidable antagonist to inferior diplomatists. Moreover, the position of Germany was at that moment extremely critical; the attitude of the Turks was still hostile; and the nation was beginning to feel the shock of a mighty religious schism. Thus menaced both externally and internally, she required a prince whose firmness and power might enable her not only to maintain herself, but also to recover from the prostration to which she had been subjected by the wavering and imbecile rule of Maximilian; who, full of great projects, none of which he ever accomplished, had, by his inordinate vanity and thirst for a renown which he was utterly incapable of acquiring, by his uncalculating love of splendour, and his absurd

pretensions, only succeeded in rendering the first monarchy in Christendom both helpless and insignificant.

The two rival sovereigns were, it is true, alike brave and powerful; but Charles had in this contest the advantage of his German extraction, his intimate acquaintance with the principles of the Germanic constitution, and a stability of character which, unlike the volatile nature of Francis, inspired at once respect and confidence.

Thus were matters situated, when the sudden and unexpected death of Maximilian, at Lintz upon the Danube, on the 15th of January, 1519, from fatigue and repletion, at the age of sixty-three years, gave a new impetus to the exertions of the contending potentates. "His death," says Fleuranges, in his memoirs, with a bonhomie which is irresistible, "was a great pity, as he was a good prince, and kept all Christendom awake; for when he could not accomplish anything himself, he showed the way to other people, and therefore, all fighting men ought to grieve at his death." One circumstance connected with his decease is worthy of mention. During the last four years of his existence he had caused a large and heavy chest to be carried with him wherever he went, and despite his improvident habits, there were those about him who fully expected one day to reap a rich harvest from its contents, never doubting that it was freighted with treasure. He had no sooner expired, however, than the illusion was dispelled by the discovery that it was simply his coffin, which he had thus prepared against an emergency that he foresaw must soon occur.

His demise was fated to exert an influence over the destinies of Europe which no action of his life had been able to elicit. Henry VIII had, as we have already stated, withdrawn from the contest for empire, to which he had been originally urged by Maximilian himself, who, forgetting all other interests in the old hatred which he bore to France, had even offered to resign his own claim to the imperial crown, if the English king would possess himself of Milan, and then accompany him to Rome to receive it. It is asserted that Henry subsequently repented the prudence which had led him to decline this offer, from a distrust not only of the sincerity, but also of the stability of Maximilian, whose magnificent beginnings generally ended in failure; and that he would willingly, when it was too late, have recanted his resolution. The delay had, however, been fatal to him; he could neither compete with the policy of Charles, nor with the gold of Francis, who had distributed the enormous sum of four hundred thousand crowns among the electoral princes through the medium of his agents; and Henry accordingly remained neuter.

CHAPTER XIII.

[1519.]

THUS the struggle was entirely between the sovereigns of France and Spain; and, perhaps, two monarchs more dissimilar both in physical and moral attributes could not have placed themselves in competition. Francis, full of ambition, courage, and enthusiasm, gifted by nature with a person of remarkable majesty and beauty, had already won a reputation for valour which had become European. Moreover, he had been eminently successful in all his undertakings, had encouraged literature, had patronised art, and had, by his extraordinary munificence, blinded the multitude to those defects in his character which were a source of uneasiness to the more reflective portion of his subjects.

Charles, on the contrary, was cold and phlegmatic, prudent, and calculating. Born and educated in Flanders, he was almost entirely a stranger to the electors, with whom he had made no effort to ally himself since his accession to the Spanish crown; as a soldier he was utterly unknown; and his diplomacy had as yet been limited to mere self-security. In person he was insignificant and unprepossessing. Of middle height and weak health, he possessed no energy either of voice or gesture, his under lip was heavy and pendant, his eyes cold and colourless, his face long, and melancholy in its expression; and nothing in his appearance tended to reveal the extent of that genius, and strength of character, by which he was subsequently distinguished. Unable, even as king of Spain, to liberate himself from the yoke of his governor, M. de Chièvres, and accustomed to obey implicitly all his directions, he had so thoroughly abnegated his own powers of volition that his subjects already began to look upon him with disdain and distrust; and to murmur among themselves that the malady of his mother (Jeanne la Folle) was hereditary. During the year which succeeded the treaty of Noyon, he had entirely absented himself from Spain; nor had he visited Austria until September, 1517, as he shrank from encountering the Cardinal Ximenes, who first recovered, and then had established order and obedience throughout these kingdoms in the short space of twenty months; and had even, at the instigation of M. de Chièvres, written to him coldly and ungraciously, advising him to retire to his diocese, and repose himself after the labour of his administration.

The aged cardinal, whose health was already broken, died on the very day upon which the letter reached him (the 8th Nov. 1517), although not, as some historians declare, by fair means. This event aroused the indignation of the Spaniards, whose respect and attachment for their primate had been extreme; nor was their irritation lessened by the fact, that his vacant archbishopric of Toledo was bestowed upon a nephew of M. de Chièvres, who was still a youth. Other causes of dissatisfaction had also arisen; and Castile, Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia, alike continued to dispute his claim to the sovereignty; while several of the free towns formed a coalition to resist by force of arms the usurpation of his Flemish advisers; and these were still at Barcelona, engaged in opposing the Cortes of Catalonia, who had at length consented to recognise him as joint-sovereign with his mother, when the imperial electors assembled at Frankfort to decide the question of the Germanic succession.

Nothing, therefore, under such circumstances as these, was likely to induce the Germans to elect as their emperor a youth who had shown so little inclination to conciliate the subjects over whom he already ruled, and who had exhibited such marked contempt for their national rights and prejudices; while, on the other hand, Francis, as sovereign of the kingdom of Arles and the duchy of Milan, was already a member of the empire, popular in his own country, and cited throughout Europe as a model of chivalry and justice.

It is not, consequently, matter of surprise, that the French king looked forward to a signal triumph over his unprepossessing rival; or that he should be sufficiently unguarded to betray the confidence that he felt. Moreover, he trusted, and not without reason, to the effect of the enormous sums which he had caused to be distributed among the electors; and which, from the poverty of some, and the rapacity of others, had been unhesitatingly accepted.

It was not, however, according to Fleuranges, with money only that the French envoys were indiscreet enough to pursue their purpose; for while they were scattering gold on all sides, and backing it by promises which were forgotten as soon as uttered, they also gave magnificent banquets to the German nobility, where the greatest excesses were encouraged; and ultimately, in order to intimidate the electors, they contemplated taking into their pay the army of the confederated cities of Suabia; but in this latter resolution the wary and calculating Charles had already forestalled them.

While the electors were preparing to assemble at the diet which was to decide the future destinies of Europe, neither of the candidates were idle. In reply to an application to the Pope for his support, Francis received from the wily pontiff the warmest protestations of gratitude and attachment; while he skilfully contrived to evade any pledge by which he might be compromised; and occupied himself in undermining the interests of both sovereigns, in the hope that the imperial crown might devolve to some less powerful prince, from whose ambition Italy would have nothing to apprehend. From Henry VIII the French king experienced even greater duplicity; for while he unequivocally promised him his support, he secretly gave it to his adversary. With the King of Poland he had no better success, that sovereign frankly declaring that he should adopt the views of Louis of Hungary, who at once expressed his intention of supporting the claims of Charles of Castile; while the other powers of Europe, who had no personal or political interest in either candidate, forgetting the importance of which such an event must necessarily prove to the future interests of their respective kingdoms, declined to involve themselves in the responsibility of declaring their sentiments. Meanwhile, Charles, with less ostentation, was silently and incessantly occupied in strengthening his party; and quietly profiting by every false move into which his adversary was betrayed. One of these, and that a fatal one, enabled him to advance his interests in an unlooked-for manner.

Germaine de Foix, the Dowager-Queen of Spain, and niece of Louis XII, wearied by the neglect and insignificance to which she was condemned, and apprehensive that, on the return of Charles to his dominions, she should be subjected to still greater annoyance, from the fact that, being childless, her death would revive the claim of France to the kingdom of Naples; had addressed letters to both Madame d'Angoulême and her son, entreating them to afford her their protection in the event of her apprehensions proving well founded. These overtures had been coldly received; Louise de Savoie, whose pride could ill brook the necessity of yielding precedence even to her daughter-in-law, at once opposing the return of Ferdinand's widow to France, which she foresaw would be the result, should any such pledge be given on the part of Francis. Not only, indeed, was her pride involved in the question, but also her vanity; for she had not forgotten that the favourite niece of Louis XII had been one of the handsomest women of the court, and was many years her junior. To Francis himself, the subject was altogether uninteresting: he did not calculate upon the advantage which might accrue to Charles, should he profit by this supineness; and accordingly, by the advice of his mother, very discouraging answers were returned to the dowager-queen, who became at length so impatient of the ceremonious restraints of Spanish etiquette, and the solitude of a court devoid alike of splendour and amusement, that her temper gave way before her disappointment; and even to the French ambassador she permitted herself to speak in the most unmeasured terms of the selfishness and bad feeling of the monarch and his mother, in thus forgetting that she was a princess of France, and their own kinswoman.

In so rigid a court as that of Spain, not a word could be uttered by a person of her rank which was not overheard and registered; and accordingly, Charles was soon informed of the irritation of the offended queen against Francis and his mother, as well as her weariness of the restraints to which she was subjected; when delighted at once to secure her good will, and to further his

personal views, he lost no time either in surrounding her with attention, or in presenting to her such individuals as were at once able to advance his own fortune, and to interest her feelings; and consequently it was not long ere he succeeded in negotiating a marriage between herself and Casimir, Marquis de Brandebourg, the brother of the Elector Joachim) and of the Bishop of Mainz, whose suffrages were thus secured to him in the diet.

In the Low Countries Francis had also suffered his popularity to become diminished by the impolitic measures that he had adopted towards the recovered city of Tournay; which, entirely surrounded by the territories of Charles of Austria, had so long maintained its fidelity to France, simply from the fact, that the preceding sovereigns had never sought to interfere with its form of government, which was that of a free republican city. Their authority recognised by the payment of an annual tribute, they had neither interfered in its internal administration, nor garrisoned the citadel, but had recognised, as their own lieutenants, the municipal officers chosen by the citizens; whereas, Francis had no sooner become master of the city, than he refused to confirm the ancient privileges, which, according to his view of the subject, rendered its inhabitants too independent of his own authority, although they had been respected even by the English, who, as conquerors, might have been excused had they disregarded them. The natural consequence ensued; a considerable number of the citizens emigrated, feeling that their commercial interests must suffer from restraints imposed upon their transactions; while the operative classes, thus deprived of the means of existence formerly secured by their industry, did not submit without murmurs to the new thrall by which they were impoverished; and although the constant and novel presence of an armed force compel them to assume a semblance of submission, they were all ready to cast off the yoke of France upon the first opportunity which might present itself; and, adds a quaint old chronicler: "*Many a tall yoman that lacked livying fel to robying, which would not labor after their return*"

Unfortunately this was not the only piece of bad policy of which Francis was guilty in the same province; for it was not long ere he alienated from his interests the brave Robert de la Mark, the sovereign prince of Bouillon and Sedan, and Duke de Gueldres, who, it may be remembered, did such good service at Novara; and, together with his valiant sons Fleuranges and Jamets, levied and organized the lansquenets who superseded the Swiss mercenaries in the armies of both Louis XII and Francis himself.

Nor was the house of La Mark distinguished only in the field, having given several prelates to the see of Liége; while Evrard, the younger brother of Robert, still held the bishopric of that city, whose spiritual government he had directed since the year 1506. Moreover, the Marquis de Fleuranges, who had been one of the favourite companions of Francis in his youth, was still actively employed in his service, and entirely devoted to his interests; and his brother, the Seigneur de Jamets, filled an important post in the royal army.

While levying the troops above-mentioned, M. de la Mark had formed a close intimacy with Francois de Seckingen, a German adventurer, who had acquired a great reputation and considerable influence throughout the empire; and by whose assistance he was enabled to secure the services of the before-named troops to the French cause. Seckingen was one of those extraordinary men who occasionally appear like landmarks, to point out the path of fame to less gifted and enterprising natures. Of somewhat obscure family, and small fortune, but possessed of indomitable energy and the most seductive manners, he had succeeded in rendering himself popular with many of the petty princes of Germany, some of whom occasionally afforded him very efficient assistance in time of need. Although not a soldier by profession, he was enthusiastically attached to the pursuit of arms; and he had organized a small force, with which he carried on an irregular but harassing war against the emperor, and such of the minor states as had neglected or refused to secure his alliance. The very *beau-ideal* of a knight of romance, he was no sooner seen in one place than he was heard of at another many leagues distant; and while he was believed to be at one extremity of the empire, he made an attack upon some hostile sovereign at the other. The Duke de Lorraine, the citizens of Metz, and the Landgrave of Hesse alike incurred his displeasure, and were each compelled to purchase his forbearance by a heavy tribute; the former, moreover,

not only in ready money, but by a life-pension of five-hundred florins; while so great was the influence of his good fortune, which attracted to his standard many of the bravest youths of Germany, that the Duke de Gueldres had at length advised Francis, if possible, to attach him to his own interests, no individual throughout the empire being enabled to render to France services of equal value.

The proposition had been at once accepted, and the duke was requested to bring him to Amboise with all possible courtesy and honour, and to present him in person to the French king; while Seckingen, whose attachment to Robert de la Mark was as warm as that of a brother, no sooner ascertained that the duke was anxious to effect the alliance, than he hastened to Sedan, accompanied by twelve German gentlemen of his troop, and declared himself ready to espouse the interests of Francis.

Little time was lost in commencing the journey; and as full powers had been given to M. de la Mark to effect it in any manner likely to prove agreeable to his companion, he added his son Fleuranges to the party, and proceeded by Château-Thierry and other fine cities towards the capital, in order impress the adventurer with a becoming wonder and admiration of the great kingdom of which he was about to become the ally.

On his arrival at Amboise, Seckingen was at once introduced into the royal presence, where the king received him with a marked courtesy well calculated to gratify his vanity; nor did Madame d'Angoulême fail, "obscure gentleman" as he was, to overwhelm him with civility. His conversational powers delighted the king, who was never weary of questioning him upon his exploits, or in making merry at their success; and while the terms of their future alliance were under consideration, all the seductions of the most brilliant court in Europe were put forth to captivate his senses, and to amuse his leisure. François, however, even while he bandied compliments with a king of France, and found himself the temporary idol of some of the most beautiful women in the world, never for an instant lost his self-possession, or suffered himself to overlook the real design of all these attentions, or, above all, to forget that amid all his social familiarity Francis had never reposed sufficient confidence in his good faith to entrust to him the real motive which had induced him to desire his friendship. He had simply stated that he desired his assistance in Germany, but he had said nothing of his intention to contend for the empire; and Seckingen, who was as proud as he was daring, resented this idle show of reserve. Meanwhile, however, all was carried on with a great affectation of openness and confidence between them; and Francis agreed to settle upon his new ally a yearly pension of three thousand francs; in return for which grant, Seckingen bound himself to protect and uphold the interests of the French king in Germany and elsewhere, as might be required of him; and this affair concluded, he took leave of the court with great honour, and received at the hands of Francis a gold chain valued at three thousand crowns, besides other presents; while each of the gentlemen of his suite was also presented with a chain of less value, but still worthy of the munificence of the monarch by whom it was bestowed. Nevertheless, the want of frankness which he had detected in the king left in the heart of Seckingen an irritation that he could not conceal; and as he quitted the palace with Fleuranges, who had been present at the leave-taking, he observed, that courteous and liberal as Francis had proved himself, and worthy as he appeared of the eminent station which he filled, he, for his part, would gladly have dispensed with the richest of his gifts, to have felt that his own intentions were better appreciated; and to have been treated with somewhat less courtesy, and more confidence.

"The king mistakes his own interest by this ill-timed caution" he said warmly; "and does not understand the man with whom he has to deal. Why could he not at once acknowledge that he aspired to the empire He would have told me nothing of which I was not already well aware, and I should have felt more desire to further his purpose, Tell him, however, I pray you, from me, that I am ready to serve him according to the pledge which I have given, against all Christendom, save only your own house, and that when I asked of him the men-at-arms which he saw fit to refuse, it was not that they might add to my own consequence, or serve my own purposes, but solely with the intention of gaining over some of the German gentlemen to his interests. I and mine will,

however, loyally redeem our pledge, as he shall hereafter acknowledge; and you may also tell him that the princes in whom he places a faith which he has not condescended to extend to a simple gentleman like myself, will deceive him; while I, whom he has not deigned to trust, shall, with your good help, be enabled to revenge him of their perfidy.”

On his return to Germany, Seckingen resumed the free system of warfare to which he had been so long accustomed; and meanwhile events occurred at the court of France which were destined to shake his alliance with Francis. The king, since his reconciliation with the Swiss cantons, had ceased to feel the same interest in his German auxiliaries; and, no longer relying upon their aid in case of necessity, even relaxed in the regard which he had previously evinced for the Duke de Gueldres himself, who was especially obnoxious to Madame d’Angoulême from the fact that he had, during her exile from the court in the reign of Louis XII, been a firm and zealous adherent of Anne de Bretagne, for whom he was suspected of a regard which exceeded the mere attachment of a subject to his queen.

Believing, therefore, that her son was now independent of his services, Louise de Savoie suffered her pent-up hatred to appear; and urged Francis to disband the company of a hundred men then under the command of the duke, on the pretext of their inefficient state of discipline, and to discontinue the regular payment of his pensions; while she privately committed a still more glaring act of treachery towards his brother the Prince-Bishop of Liège, who was a candidate for a seat in the conclave, and to whom Francis had definitively promised the first vacant cardinalate, which had been left at his disposal by the pope.

The avarice of Louise de Savoie being as insatiable as her enmity, she was easily induced by the offer of a considerable sum of money, to address a private letter to the pontiff; in which she declared that the application about to be made to His Holiness by the French king in favour of the Bishop of Liège was a mere measure of policy enforced upon him by circumstances, while he was in reality anxious to secure the coveted dignity for Boyer, Bishop of Bourges, the brother of Thomas Bahier, Lieutenant-general of Normandy and Treasurer of the Savings-chest, one of her own creatures; nor was she deterred from this unworthy action by the fact that she had been present when Francis placed in the possession of the Marquis de Fleuranges a despatch to his uncle, signed both by himself and his mother, in which they informed M. de Liège of his promotion, and congratulated him on his new dignity; neither did her hand tremble as it was pressed to the lips of the young courtier, on his departure from Amboise, to convey the happy tidings to his venerable relative, although she knew that he must prove the messenger of lasting and bitter disappointment. Leo, never doubting that Francis was cognisant of the contents of his mother’s letter, did not hesitate for an instant; Boyer was created cardinal, and the price of this nefarious transaction duly reached the coffers of the unprincipled duchess.

Aléandro, the Chancellor of Liège, who was then at Rome, where he was exerting himself to secure the election of his master, no sooner learnt that M. de Bourges had obtained the cardinalate which had been promised to his own diocesan by the king, than, apprehending treachery, he strained every nerve to ascertain the truth; and at length, through the instrumentality of the pontifical secretary, he obtained a copy of the letter addressed by Madame d’Angoulême to the pope, which he immediately forwarded to the Duke de Gueldres. The indignation of Robert de la Mark was unbounded when he learnt the deception which had been practised upon his brother; and he reproached the monarch bitterly for so glaring a breach of veracity and good faith; representing that he had already suffered sufficiently in his own person and fortunes from some groundless prejudice, and that it was a gratuitous injustice to involve his relatives in the same ruin.

Deeply moved by an accusation which affected his honour, Francis strenuously and at once denied all knowledge of the intrigue; when the duke laid before him the duplicate letter he had received from Rome, and even hinted at his expectation of redress; whereupon the king became irritated, and high words passed between them, the effects of which M. de la Mark evaded by retiring immediately from the court to his own territories, accompanied by his brother; and their



arrival no sooner became known to Marguerite of Austria, the regent, than she hastened to engage them to embrace the cause of her nephew Charles; assuring to M. de Liège the cardinal's hat through his influence, and urging the duke to return to Francis the collar of St. Michael, and to trust to his new master for the honours, to which, by a career like his, he was so justly entitled. Exasperated by the treatment which they had received at the court of France, the brothers at once consented; and thus Francis not only lost two of his most zealous adherents, but by the same fatal mistake strengthened the hands of his adversary.

The surprise of Louis de Savoie and the king was extreme when they learnt that M. de Liège had actually deserted their cause; as from the fact that he held the bishopric of Chartres, one of the richest in France, they believed themselves secure of his allegiance; never supposing that he would voluntarily resign so important and valuable, a benefice. They had, however, overlooked the extent of the provocation he had received; and discovered, when it was too late, that where he had felt his honour wounded, he scorned to sacrifice his sense of dignity to considerations of interest.

The defection of the princes of Bouillon tended, moreover, greatly to diminish the zeal of Seckingen, who, having been apprised that some German traders had been grievously wronged by certain Milanese merchants, at once adopted their quarrel; and by force of arms seized property belonging to the aggressors, valued at twenty-five thousand francs, on its transit through the German states. The merchants immediately appealed to Francis for redress, complaining that they had been thus pillaged by troops in his own pay; whereupon the king called upon Seckingen to declare upon what authority he had coerced his good subjects of Milan, and impeded their commerce; to which the German leader boldly replied by declaring that he had only acted on this occasion in conformity with the vow which he had made on first taking up arms, that he would redress the wrongs of the oppressed, and revenge them upon their oppressors. That accordingly, as the German citizens had been wronged, and were too weak to defend themselves, he had done justice for them; and trusted that in future the Milanese would know better than to assume to themselves an impunity to which they were in no wise entitled.

Francis was unable to brook the fearlessness of such a reply; and becoming apprehensive that he had rather raised up an antagonist than secured a friend in the person of an individual who thus dared to brave his authority, he discontinued the pension which he had conferred upon Seckingen; who, finding himself freed by this impolitic measure from his engagements to France, lost no time in joining the Duke de Gueldres and his brother, and in transferring his services, as they had previously done, to Charles of Spain; whose cause he materially assisted during the election, by putting himself at the head of the Suabian troops, (whom the envoys of Francis had been improvident enough to overlook until it was too late) and occupying the neighbourhood of Frankfort; pacifically to all appearance, it is true, but in reality in readiness for any adventure which might offer itself to his quixotic spirit in the interest of his new master; a fact which was so evident to the electors themselves that it was believed to have exerted considerable power upon their decision.

An evil influence appeared, indeed, to preside over all the movements of Francis at this period; for alike by supineness and action he equally lost ground; while Charles, who was far too wary to make enemies at such a juncture, held himself prepared to take advantage of every circumstance by which he might augment his popularity. The German princes, ready as they were to profit by the profuse generosity of the French king, were yet revolted by the ostentation with which it was proffered; while the quiet and unobtrusive manner in which Charles, with equal liberality, distributed his treasure, enabled them to avoid the mortification of considering that he had put a price upon their services. Conscious, also, of the ambitious character of Francis, they shrank from the idea of elevating to the imperial dignity a monarch who might hereafter consider them rather as vassals than as sovereigns; while, ignorant of the real nature of Charles, they deluded themselves with the belief that he would never seek to arrogate to himself a greater amount of power than they might be willing to concede to him.

When endeavouring to obtain the suffrage of Henry VIII, Francis had expressed himself

determined to make war upon the Turks; although, as we have already shown, there is every reason to believe that he never for an instant seriously entertained such an idea. Suffice it that he had assured Sir Thomas Boleyn, the English ambassador, that, should he succeed in becoming Emperor of Germany, “three years should not elapse ere he would be in Constantinople, or die by the way; and that he would spend three millions in gold but he would succeed but nevertheless, when some Turkish corsairs who were infesting the Mediterranean, and impeding the commerce of the Italian states, were bold enough to make a demonstration which alarmed not only the population generally, but even the pope himself, he was so tardy in fitting out an expedition to attack them, that, before his vessels were ready for sea, Charles had despatched his galleys under the command of Ugo de Moncada, the Viceroy of Sicily, and dispersed their whole fleet. This delay on the part of the French monarch, and activity on that of Charles, had a powerful effect on the electors; and, beyond all doubt, gave the last blow to his hopes.

CHAPTER XIV.

[1519-20.]

THUS were things situated, when, in the middle of June, the electoral diet was convened in the usual form in the city of Frankfort; but, before its proceedings commenced, Francis had sustained an irreparable loss in the death of M. de Boissy, his ancient governor, who had been busied at Montpellier, in conjunction with M. de Chièvres, the minister of Charles, in endeavouring to reconcile the interests of the rival sovereigns, and thus preserving Europe from the horrors of a universal war. They had already been engaged for two months in this momentous undertaking, and had begun to entertain some hopes of ultimate success, when M. de Boissy, who had long been an invalid, experienced a renewed and more severe attack of his malady, to which he fell a victim.

This event was a serious one to Francis, whose natural impetuosity and recklessness had been frequently checked by the wise and prudent admonitions of the grand-master; and at this particular crisis it was doubly unfortunate, leaving him, as it did, to the mercy of more interested and less judicious counsellors; and, above all, to the influence of his mother, who ere this period had succeeded, with more or less difficulty, in bending to her imperious will all the ministers of the crown with the exception of Boissy himself, whose earnest devotion to the interests of his former pupil rendered him invulnerable alike to threats, bribes, and flattery.

Nor was the death of M. de Boissy the only fatal privation experienced by the young king during the course of the present year, for the veteran Leonardo da Vinci, a month or two subsequently, terminated his earthly career at the ripe age of seventy-five. Francis was affectionately attached to his distinguished *protégé* whom he had loaded with honours; and he no sooner ascertained that his end was approaching, than he hastened to the death-chamber. Da Vinci had just received the last consolations of religion when he discovered the presence of the king; and, despite his exhaustion, he endeavoured to rise in his bed, in order to express his sense of the favour which was thus shown him; but the effort was too great, and before he had uttered more than a few sentences expressive of his regret that he had not used his talents more profitably for religion, he was seized with a paroxysm which rendered him speechless. As he fell back upon his pillow, the king sprang forward and raised his head upon his arm; and thus, upon the bosom of the young monarch, Leonardo da Vinci drew his last breath. The good effects of his sojourn at the French court did not, however, expire with him. Although he had declined, owing to his advanced age, to undertake any new work, he had given public lessons and lectures which had awakened an emulation in art destined to produce the most beneficial results; and the three famous artists, Cousin, Janet, and Limoges, were alike his pupils.

Towards the close of June the diet at length assembled; when the deliberations were opened by the Archbishop of Mainz, who, in a speech of great length, consummate tact, and extraordinary eloquence, pleaded the cause of Charles. He argued that, should the electors invest Francis with the imperial dignity, he would inevitably endeavour to annihilate the liberties of Germany, even as he was now endeavouring to subjugate those of Italy; and that he would also, beyond all doubt, exert his influence to render the crown hereditary, and thus aggrandize his successors by the prostration of the privilege at present enjoyed by the electors. "How little can it be expected," he pursued, "that he will continue either to the princes, or to the free territories, the liberty they have so long enjoyed, when experience has shown us that even in France, where formerly the great nobles dispensed justice, and executed judgment within their own provinces, not one princely personage is now to be found who does not quail before the slightest gesture of the king, or who dares do otherwise than applaud all which it may be his royal pleasure to say or do." He next

warned the electors not to be misled by the promises of the French ambassadors, who had stated that their sovereign, immediately that he should have attained the imperial crown, was prepared to direct the whole strength of his kingdom against the Infidels; reminding them that an opportunity had recently occurred in which he might have proved his good faith and zeal in a cause so important to all Christendom, and in which he had failed; leaving to the King of Castile, who had made no protestations upon the subject, the noble task of sweeping the seas of the first Mahomedan fleet which had dared to menace the shores of Italy. "No!" he concluded energetically, "it is not in order to subjugate the Infidels that the King of France covets the throne of Germany; it is that he may slake the thirst of that ambition by which he is known to be possessed. It is that he may secure alike to himself and to his children the proudest diadem in Europe. It is, in short, that he may be enabled through this accession of strength, to possess himself of the inheritance of Charles in the Low Countries and Spain, and involve all Europe in a ruinous and interminable war, which would be alike costly and degrading to the German empire".

The Archbishop of Treves argued in reply, that the King of Castile was as thoroughly a foreigner as Francis; that he had been both born and educated in the Low Countries, and that, consequently, the German people could have neither sympathies nor prejudices in common with a prince of whose habits, tastes, and tendencies they were wholly ignorant. He laid, moreover, great stress upon the fact that the geographical position of the French king's dominions rendered him the most eligible candidate for the imperial dignity, as France might be conveniently united with both Germany and Italy, and thus form a compact portion of the empire; whereas Spain, separated from Germany by France, would necessarily oppose her national antipathies to the common interest, and either refuse to sutler her monarch to absent himself from her own territories, or encourage his views of domination in Italy, which were no less to be deprecated than those of Francis.

It will be obvious on reviewing the arguments of both orators that they were rather objective than laudatory; each found tangible reasons for opposing his adversary, while neither could advance very valid ones for supporting his own candidate; and it was probably from this cause that the electors, after having patiently listened to the discussion, resolved to maintain their independence by rejecting both, and placing the imperial authority in the hands of one of their own body. In pursuance of this determination, the empire was offered, on the 4th of July, to Frederic, Duke of Saxony; and it is certain that the mental and moral qualifications of that prince reflected honour on their judgment; but Frederic was too wise to indulge his ambition at the expense of his true interests, and he at once felt that he was not strong enough to brave the animosity of two powerful monarchs. He, therefore, firmly withstood the temptation, recommending the electors who had evinced such confidence in himself, to elevate to the imperial throne the grandson of Maximilian, whose interests were identified with those of Germany, and whose prompt courage and judicious zeal had already been displayed in his late expedition against their common enemy, the Infidel. The King of Bohemia, the Marquis of Brandenburg, and the Prelates of Cologne and Mainz, supported the proposition; and ultimately, on the 5th of July, Charles was proclaimed Emperor of Germany in the church of St. Barthelemy, by the universal suffrages of the assembly.

A solemn embassy was despatched to Barcelona, where Charles was then residing, to announce his election, and to invite him to repair with all possible speed to his new dominions; greatly to the displeasure of his Spanish subjects, who had vainly endeavoured to dissuade him from prosecuting his attempts at empire; and who being already irritated by the authority arrogated by the Flemish favourites of the monarch, very naturally anticipated equal mortification from the Germans, so soon as Charles should find it necessary to his interests to invest them with office, or to conciliate them by honours and emoluments wrested from themselves.

The young monarch, however, disregarded their arguments; and, after having given the ambassadors a magnificent reception, accepted the new dignity with which he had been invested by the electoral college, pledging himself religiously to observe the conditions which were annexed to it.

While this ceremony was going forward in Spain, the French ministers hastened to return to their own country, deeply mortified by their defeat, and full of regret for the enormous sums which they had so uselessly lavished. Bonnivet alone was still in possession of some portion of the treasure which had been confided to him, and he lost no time in making his escape in order to place it in security; a precaution which proved to have been well-founded, as it narrowly escaped falling into the hands of Seckingen, who had organized a plan for possessing himself of the state-chest, and diminishing the responsibility of the baffled favourite.

Francis bitterly felt his defeat. It was not alone the loss of the empire which galled him, but the conviction that he had been worsted by an adversary whom he had been ill advised enough to despise, because ignorant of his real character and resources. Now, however, he was at once made aware of his error; the skilful measures and quiet perseverance of Charles had triumphed over his own profusion and previsions; and in their first struggle for pre-eminence he had been signally worsted. Nevertheless, stung as he was, he disdained to betray the excess of his mortification and disappointment; and he even controlled his real feelings so far as to write to the pope at the dose of the election, declaring that he rejoiced to have failed in a chimerical project which had been put into his head by certain of the German princes, particularly as he had ascertained from his uncle, M. de Savoie, that it was most unpalatable to his subjects; who were apprehensive that the obligations which would have been imposed on him had he succeeded, would have interfered with the interests of France.

On the 31st of March in this year (1519), the queen had given birth to a second son, at St. Germain-en-Laye; and Francis had, in anticipation of the event, already instructed Sir Richard Wingfield to solicit Henry VIII, in the event of his hope being realized by the birth of a prince, to stand sponsor for the child, and to give him his own name.

To this proposition Henry at once acceded; and the ceremony was performed on the 4th of June, Sir Thomas Boleyn officiating as proxy for his sovereign, in conjunction with the Duke d'Alençon and the Duchess de Nemours. At the termination of the baptismal service, Francis expressed to the English ambassador his sense of the great honour which had been conferred upon him by the "king's highness," and the gratification which he should feel, when in his turn Henry should become the father of a son, to do the like for him; declaring that, meanwhile, the child who now bore his name should no sooner have attained to an age qualifying him for such a privilege, than he would forthwith send him to the king's grace in England to do him service.

The Lutheran party had profited by the late interregnum to increase their influence, and to propagate their dogmas, which they had been enabled to do with little molestation. It is true that Maximilian had endeavoured near the close of his life to suppress the new sect, from which he began to apprehend danger; but the two vicars of the empire, the Duke of Saxony and the Elector-Palatine, who assumed the imperial authority immediately after his death, had already become converts to the reformed tenets, and protected Luther from all persecution; while Charles, who owed his new dignity to the former, whose German territories were not safe from the incursions of the Turks, and who already detected the germs of revolt in Spain, wilfully closed his eyes to the religious troubles in Saxony, and left the care of suppressing them to the pope. As the immediate interests of the French king were not, however, involved in the controversy, we shall abstain from a recapitulation of circumstances already familiar to all our readers, and which have been repeatedly detailed much more ably than we could hope to relate them; and confine ourselves to matters more strictly within our own province.

Early in this year Louise de Savoie, finding herself inconvenienced by the closeness of the apartments which she occupied in the palace of the Tournelles during her occasional residence in the capital, had induced her son to purchase for her a residence on the banks of the Seine with an extensive garden, and commanding the most varied and delightful views of the surrounding

country; in exchange for which the proprietor, Nicolas de Neuville, Seigneur de Villeray, received the estate of Chanteloup near Montlhéry. Large sums of money were expended on the embellishment of this house, where Francis frequently visited his mother, and where he indulged that passion for magnificence for which he had always been distinguished. Costly hangings of Flanders tapestry, inlaid furniture, panelled mirrors, and vessels of gold and silver, were to be seen on every side; and such was the origin of the palace of the Tuileries, which Catherine de Medici subsequently converted at once into a royal abode and a national monument. The young king was so enchanted by the capabilities of the spot that he forthwith resolved to rebuild the Louvre, a work which he accordingly commenced, but of which he was not destined to do more than lay the foundation.

Meanwhile he found it agreeable to escape from the gloomy apartments of his own palace, or from the rigid circle of his wife, to wander over the smooth lawns and amongst the dense shrubberies of the gardens of the Tuileries, with the bright-eyed and light-headed ladies of the more indulgent duchess; to glide over the calm current of the Seine in a gilded barge, with Madame de Châteaubriand by his side; or to angle under the shade of a silken pavilion, while Marot recited to him his last new poem, or eulogised the somewhat indifferent effusions of the monarch himself; who, believing that he could at will become a poet, as he imagined that he had already become a scholar, was constantly amusing himself by the composition of lyrical and amatory verses, which, as a matter of course, delighted the whole court.

It is probable that the jealousy which existed between the new emperor and the king of France might have slumbered for a time, had not the death of M. de Boissy occurred at so unfortunate a moment; for, conscious how much the nation had already become impoverished by the Milanese expedition and the contest for the imperial crown, that upright and prudent minister had left no measure untried to dissuade Francis from undertaking a new war. The people already murmured at the increased taxation which these speculations had rendered imperative; and while Duprat, anxious at once to enrich himself and Madame d'Angoulême, affected to believe that the nation still possessed many resources which would suffice to meet any new demand upon its revenues, Gouffier de Boissy looked with a steady eye at present discontents, and foresaw the moment when the sovereign would come into a contact with his overburdened people, which might prove fatal to both. The outlay of the court was in itself excessive; but with the prescience of a wary statesman he preferred to encourage an evil to which he felt that he could apply a remedy, rather than weakly to permit a greater which it might be beyond his skill to counteract; and thus, during his life, he had been enabled by the great influence he possessed over the king, to keep his belligerent tastes in check, and to make him comprehend and appreciate the perils upon which he was so eager to rush.

His death, however, opened the floodgates of the king's ambition, or rather removed the dam by which it had been hitherto pent in; and Francis found in the arguments of Bonnivet, who panted for revenge upon Charles, and whose romantic imagination found equivalent food only in conquest and victory; in his mother, who was anxious for the aggrandizement of her son, and who never permitted herself to dream of failure; and in the entreaties of Madame de Châteaubriand, who for the moment coincided in the sentiments of Louise de Savoie, because she trusted in the event of a war to see her third brother Lespare acquire high military rank, more than the incentives which he required to recommence a struggle that must necessarily involve all the highest interests of his kingdom.

He no sooner determined upon hostilities toward his victorious rival than he first turned his thoughts to England. He was united to Henry VIII by close and intimate bonds. The British monarch had not only affianced his daughter to the dauphin, but he had also become sponsor to the younger French prince; and although he had maintained a sullen neutrality during the struggle for empire, Francis either felt or affected to feel, that he had been as much injured as himself by the result of the election, and consequently spared no pains to inspire him with the same sentiments. Moreover, he was urged to this policy by a desire to put his Belgian frontiers into an efficient state of defence; and, above all, to prevent an alliance between Henry and Charles, which

must have destroyed the balance of power in Europe. He was aware that the noble hostages whom he had delivered over to England were unwearied in their endeavours to effect a still closer alliance between himself and his brother monarch, and that they were constantly assuring Henry that he required only a personal knowledge of their sovereign to render them firm allies; and he lost no time in strengthening their arguments by using every means in his power to secure the good-will of Wolsey, whose anxiety to attain to the papacy made him on his side desirous of gaining the friendship of such of the continental princes as were the most likely to forward his design.

To attain this end Francis lavished upon the English minister the most costly gifts and the most magnificent promises; all of which were received in a manner which served to strengthen his hopes, and buoy him up with an anticipation of ultimate success; while the cardinal, who never suffered himself to be misled by present advantages, was calmly weighing in his mind the probable results of the impending struggle, and at length came to the conclusion that the emperor of Germany must ere long command more influence at the court of Rome than the king of France. Henry, however, it is certain, had more personal sympathies with Francis than with his rival; they were of the same age, were addicted to the same pleasures, and swayed by the same impulses; and thus, unsuspecting that the gold and pledges of Charles to his ambitious and avaricious minister had already outweighed those of the French king, he was induced to consent to the celebrated interview between Francis and himself, which the former had suggested to Sir Thomas Boleyn at the christening of his son.

Meanwhile there existed many causes for discontent between the emperor and the king of France. Charles had failed to fulfil his engagement relatively to the kingdom of Navarre, despite the pledge which he had given at Noyon. Both the king and queen, Jean and Catherine were dead; while their son Henry II, at this period only fifteen years of age, was the ward of Alain Albret his uncle, and resided in the French provinces, the only territories he had inherited from his father, who had held the kingdom of Navarre by right of his wife; and who, when he demanded the restoration of the Spanish portion of the country, was opposed by the minister Chièvres, who negatived the claim of Germaine de Foix, declaring that she had made a donation of it to Ferdinand the grandfather of Charles. This arrangement had, for a time, been admitted by France; but on the second marriage of the dowager-queen the parliament of Paris had declared the donation to be no longer valid, and had admitted the right of Henry II to the succession. Not satisfied with denying this claim, the emperor had at the same time revived all the old discontents of his ancestors against the predecessors of the French king; and while he contested the right of Francis to the Milanese, he also insisted on the restoration of the duchy of Burgundy, which he declared to have been unjustly wrested from his grandmother Mary, the daughter of Charles the Bold; while in reply to these demands Francis once more renewed his own to the kingdom of Naples which Ferdinand had usurped from Louis XII; and reclaimed the homage which was due to him from Charles as Count of Flanders.

Nevertheless, bitter as the contention soon became, the young emperor shrank from the responsibility which must be entailed upon him by a new and doubtful war. Every province of Spain was in partial revolt; the Germans were full of discontent; and he had been so long absent from the Low Countries that he began to feel his influence even there on the decline; while Francis, although he had less reason for uneasiness, suffered himself so weakly to be engrossed by pleasure and dissipation that he also lost the favourable moment; and lavished the immense sums which were extorted from the people under the pretence of state emergencies, in the most puerile and senseless outlay.

Thus were things situated when preparations were commenced for the interview between Henry and Francis which had been at length agreed upon; and they were of so costly a description that they were not terminated until the spring of the following year (1520). The French king, who was more anxious to accomplish a lasting alliance with his brother monarch than to enter into a rivalry of magnificence, had, as it would appear from a letter still extant, addressed by Sir Richard Wingfield to Cardinal Wolsey, been desirous on this occasion to dispense with all save the

necessary ceremonial. Aware that his oft-replenished treasury would not do more than suffice for the war which he meditated, he even controlled his natural love of splendour and display so far as to suggest to the English courtier that Henry and himself should meet rather as fast friends than as rival sovereigns; but the suggestion was overruled both by Henry VIII and his minister; the former being anxious to dazzle Francis by his profusion, and the latter to impress him with a sense of his own importance.

Piqued by the indifference displayed on the part of the English monarch to an outlay from which he had himself shrank, Francis accordingly indulged himself in the most lavish expenditure; while in emulation of their sovereign, all the nobles of his court, impoverished as many of them were by the late struggle at Frankfort, vied with each other in an uncalculating profusion which was destined to cripple their resources for many subsequent years. "The great outlay that was made", says Du Bellay; "cannot be estimated; but many carried their mills, their forests, and their meadows, upon their backs."

The details of the ceremony were entirely regulated by Wolsey, such having been the proposition of Francis, who hoped by this display of confidence further to conciliate the haughty minister; and they were arranged with a punctilious minutia which savoured more of suspicion than of that friendship and good-will which each monarch professed for the other. It was decided that the meeting should take place on the boundary of the English possessions in France, in requital of the courtesy, or rather as an equivalent for the condescension of Henry in having crossed the channel to effect it; and ultimately an open plain was selected situate between Guisnes and Ardres. But, before the two sovereigns met, Charles, anxious to weaken any favourable impression which might be produced on the mind of Henry VIII by a personal interview with the French king, resolved, when on his way from Spain to Aix-la-Chapelle where he was to be invested with the imperial crown, to visit England, under the pretext of a desire to present his respects to Katherine of Aragon his aunt, whom he had never seen. Henry was already on his way to Dover when the intelligence of the emperor's arrival reached him, and he immediately despatched the Cardinal-minister with a brilliant retinue to give him welcome. A dead calm which had delayed the arrival of Charles in the port, compelled him to have recourse to his boats, and it was only towards evening that he was enabled to land; when he was met by the reverend envoy, who greeted him in the name of his royal master, and received him with all the honour due to his exalted rank.

The disembarkation was conducted with extreme magnificence. The emperor moved forward under a canopy on which the black eagle was displayed upon a ground of cloth of gold; followed by a train of princes, princesses, and nobles, splendidly attired; and in this state he proceeded to the castle, where a sumptuous banquet was served up, amid the acclamations of the multitude who had collected to witness the landing.

While at Canterbury the king was apprised of the fact that Charles had already reached Dover castle; upon which he again mounted in all haste, travelled by torchlight, and arrived at the castle towards midnight with his train of attendants, creating so much disturbance as to awaken the emperor; who, upon being informed of its cause immediately left his bed, and flinging his mantle about him hastened to meet his royal host, whom he encountered upon the stairs; where, says the old chronicler, "eche embraced other right louingly," and the king conducted the emperor back to his apartment, conversing gaily with him, and welcoming him heartily to England.

On the Whitsunday following, the two sovereigns rode together to Canterbury, where they were received by the queen at the head of her court, composed of all that was fairest and noblest in the realm; and ultimately, on the 31st of May, the imperial visitor, having succeeded in ingratiating himself with Henry, weakened the interest felt by the English monarch for Francis, and arranged a future meeting in which their several interests were to be discussed and united, took leave of the king and queen with the most emphatic and courteous expressions of gratitude and regard; and, profiting by a favourable wind, once more embarked for Flanders.

Charles had, moreover, during this brief sojourn in England, effected more than even Henry



was aware of; for, conscious that the English monarch was ruled by the cardinal in all matters of state policy, he had lost no opportunity of impressing upon him the great admiration which he felt for his talents, and his desire to secure the friendship of one whom he foresaw would ere long fill the most sacred throne in Europe; while these honied words were accompanied by promises so unreserved, and by presents so magnificent, that the vanity and cupidity of the minister soon rendered him as anxious to serve the interests of the emperor as he had previously declared himself desirous to further those of Francis. His insatiable ambition, which ever pointed to the triple crown, blinded him to his bad faith; and while Charles expatiated on his determination to second his views by every means within his power—a promise which he made the more readily from the fact that Leo X being still in the prime of life, it was improbable that he should for many years be called upon to redeem his pledge—Wolsey, as he listened, became a convert to all his views, and readily undertook to negative the attempts of the French king to secure an alliance with his master.

The intelligence of this extraordinary and unlooked-for visit excited the apprehensions of Francis, who had already become aware that Charles made no important movement without a corresponding motive; and he accordingly hastened to complete his preparations, in order to counteract as speedily as possible the evil influence which had been exerted against him.

In preparation for the meeting the French king had caused three buildings to be erected; two of which were of solid materials, and within the walls of the town; the first was appropriated to the queen and the ladies of her suite, and the other to the state banquets which were to be given to Henry and his court; while a third, without the walls, was built in the form of a Roman coliseum, the chambers, saloons, and galleries being of wood on a foundation of stone, and the whole covered in with cloth. Moreover, as the two monarchs had agreed to meet in the plain, Francis also prepared tents and pavilions of the most magnificent description. The more costly of these were hung with cloth of gold, draped within and without in every compartment, and others were of plain cloth of gold, or cloth of gold and silver interwoven. They were all surmounted, moreover, by devices or globes of the same precious materials, save that of the king himself, over which, in order to distinguish it from the rest, was placed a figure of St. Michael of beaten gold; “but,” says Fleuranges, with his accustomed *persiflage*, “it was hollow.”

All this magnificence was, however, even upon the testimony of the French courtier himself, eclipsed by the solitary, and, in so far as externals went, inferior edifice prepared for Henry, and which was erected at the gates of Guisnes, near the castle. It was an immense square building composed simply of wood, canvass, and glass; but the latter was used with such profusion that one portion of the colossal pile resembled a gigantic lantern, a luxury which at that period created great astonishment. The whole structure formed a quadrangle of princely proportions, enclosing a court, in the centre of which, and facing the principal entrance, were two fine fountains each of which had three jets, playing hypocras, water, and wine, into spacious basins. The chapel, which was of imposing size, and richly hung with tapestry, was adorned with the most costly plate and the most valuable relics; while the cellars and butteries were worthy of the building to which they appertained; both kings welcoming all comers, and vying with each other in an hospitality that was boundless.

What most excited the admiration of the French was, however, the fact that this enormous edifice had been constructed entirely in England, and brought over piecemeal; and that, while from the circumstance of its being entirely covered with canvass painted to resemble stone-work, and lined throughout with tapestry, it had an appearance of solidity which would have deceived the eye into a belief that it was intended to endure for centuries, the two kings had no sooner parted than it was once more disjointed, re-embarked, and conveyed back to England, “without any cost,” as Du Bellay expresses it, “save that of the carriage.”

The arrangements made for the two queens and their respective suites were gorgeous in the extreme; pearls and jewels were lavished, not only upon the canopies above their chairs of state, but also upon the very footcloths by which they were approached; while their garments were of

piled velvet, or cloth of gold and silver, embroidered with gems and coloured silks in large masses; or Lyons damasks, studded with silver stars, or traversed by broad bars of gold. Nor were the fair and noble ladies by whom they were attended much less magnificently attired than themselves; although, as a contemporaneous chronicler declares, the “English dames wore the richest and the costliest habits, but the French ones arranged theirs with more taste and elegance, so that their visitors soon began to adopt the mode of the country, by which they lost in modesty what they gained in comeliness”

It is to be supposed that the rigid circle of Claude were not among those against whom this reproach was registered.

At length the important day of meeting was decided on, and the ceremonial savoured at once of the suspicion and arrogance of the cardinal-minister; who, amid the pompous display which he had induced Henry to make, had been even more mindful of his own dignity than that of his master; his train of bishops, priests, deacons, pages, and men-at-arms being rather those of a sovereign prince than of any subject, however elevated his rank.

It was arranged that the king of England should advance half a mile beyond the Castle of Guisnes, towards Ardres, but still within his own territories, where he should halt in the open plain; and that the French monarch should progress precisely the same distance from Ardres towards the same spot, at the same day and hour, which would bring him within the limits of Henry’s domain of Guisnes. “In the whiche”, proceeds Hall, generally so punctiliously correct in his details; there shall not bee set nor dressed any pauillions or tentes, and there the said two kinges beyinge on horsebacke, with their retinue, shall see the one thother, and salute echo other, and speake together familiarly and common in that sort and maner, and so long as shall seme to them good.”

Herein, however, he has committed an error, as both Du Bellay and Fleuranges assert that a pavilion had been expressly erected for the interview, into which the two sovereigns were to adjourn after they had exchanged compliments and congratulations.

Warning guns having been fired from both Ardres and Guisnes, the rival processions set forward at the same instant: Francis, mounted upon a splendid horse, whose housings flashed in the sunlight like living fire, so thickly were they studded with precious stones and gold; and followed by all the chivalry of France. The suspicious jealousy of Wolsey had determined him, however, to regulate the number of attendants by whom the two sovereigns were to be severally accompanied to the tent of audience; and he decided two on either side, while he himself as minister of England, and Robertet as that of France, should await them at the entrance. The nobles selected by Francis to be present at the interview, were the Connétable de Bourbon and the Chancellor Duprat; while Henry conferred the same honour upon the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk.

Francis arrived first upon the field; but in a few instants the English king appeared at about the distance of an arrow’s flight, riding a Spanish charger of great strength and beauty, and magnificently caparisoned. Here the English party suddenly paused; Lord Abergavenny assuring the king that the number of the French exceeded that of his own followers, as he had ascertained from having already been among them; when the Earl of Shrewsbury, angered at so puerile a terror, hastened in his turn to put an end to a delay which if not absolutely suspicious was at least discourteous, by declaring that he also had paid a visit to the rival camp. “And, Sir,” he said firmly, “the Frenchmen are more in fear of your grace and of your subjects than your subjects are of them; wherefore, if I might venture to offer my opinion, I would counsel your highness to proceed.”

“So we intend, my lord,” was the instant reply of Henry; whereupon the officers-at-arms gave the word: “On, afore;” and once more the glittering cavalcade was in motion towards the bank of the Adem, where every noble and gentleman fell into his proper place, and the whole party halted with their faces towards the valley.

The Duke de Bourbon, as Connétable of France, bore his drawn sword in front of his sovereign, which Henry VIII no sooner remarked than he desired the Marquis of Dorset, who carried his own sword of state, to unsheath it in like manner; and this done, the monarchs rode into the valley, where they at length met face to face at the head of two of the most brilliant assemblages of nobility which had ever been seen in Europe. For a brief instant both paused, as they surveyed each other with astonishment and admiration; for they were at that period, beyond all parallel, the two most comely princes in Christendom. Francis was the taller and the more slender of the two; and was attired in a vest of cloth of silver damasked with gold, and edged with a border of embossed work in party-coloured silks. Over this he wore a cloak of brocaded satin, with a scarf of gold and purple crossing over one shoulder, and buttoned to the waist, richly set with pearls and precious stones; while his long hair escaped from beneath a coif of damasked gold set with diamonds, and gave him a noble and graceful appearance which his splendid horsemanship, and handsome, although strongly defined features, his bushy whiskers, and ample moustache, tended to enhance. Henry, on his side, wore a vest of crimson velvet slashed with white satin, and buttoned down the chest with studs composed of large and precious jewels; and his round velvet toque or hat was surmounted by a profuse plume which floated on the wind, save where it was confined by a star of brilliants. His figure, although more bulky than that of his brother monarch, was still well-proportioned; his movements were elastic and unembarrassed; and his face attractive from the frankness of its expression, the singular brightness of his eyes, and the luxuriance of his hair and beard, which he wore in a dense fringe beneath his chin, and which was at that period less red than golden.

The mutual scrutiny of the two young sovereigns lasted only a moment; in the next they were in each other's arms, each straining from the saddle to embrace his brother monarch. The horse of Henry swerved for an instant impatient of the impediment, but the hand of Francis firmly grasped the rein which its rider had suffered to escape him; and after a renewed exchange of courtesies, the attendant equerries were summoned to hold the stirrups of their royal masters as they alighted. On gaining their feet the two kings exchanged another embrace; and then, arm-in-arm, they proceeded to the pavilion of audience, followed each by his selected witnesses. On their entrance the Lord-Cardinal of York was presented to Francis, and M. de Robertet to the English king, during which time the whole of the respective guards and retinues halted at the entrance of the camp, about a stone's throw from the pavilion; comprising, besides the train of nobles on either side, four hundred body guards in state uniforms. Nor had they cause of weariness as they awaited the royal leisure, for as they reined up their horses beside the barrier, the whole magnificence of the camp burst upon them, with its frail but costly tenements gleaming in the sun like some fairy creation; and winning by its gorgeousness the admiration of the spectators, and the enduring appellation of *The Field of Cloth of Gold*.

A splendid banquet had been prepared for the princely guests; and as they pledged each other in the generous wine of the country, Francis, grasping the hand of his royal companion, said courteously and emphatically, "Thus far, with some fatigue, my dear brother and cousin, have I travelled in order to enjoy a personal interview with you; and I think that you will put faith in my sincerity when I say that I believe you esteem me on your side, and feel convinced of my readiness as well as ability to aid you should need be; which my kingdom and my principalities will alike enable me to do"

"Sir," replied Henry, with equal suavity and emphasis; "I regard not either your realm or its dependencies, but rather the steadfast and loyal observance of the treaties into which we have conjointly entered; and should you strictly observe these, then do I not hesitate to affirm that my eyes have never looked upon a prince whom my heart could better love; and glad I am that in order to secure your affection I was induced not only to cross the seas, but also to ride to the furthestmost boundary of my kingdom in order to meet you here."

These courteous speeches exchanged, and the banquet removed, the articles of the proposed treaty were laid before the sovereigns by their respective ministers; upon which the English king drew the papers towards him, and began by reading aloud those containing the propositions of

Francis; and these concluded, he opened his own, and was commencing, "I, Henry, king of..." The document ran, "king of France and England," but he at once felt the futility and impropriety of such an assumption on the present occasion, and suddenly pausing, he looked with a smile towards his royal auditor, and said gaily, "I shall not insert all that I see here, for as you are present, I should lie." After which he resumed his task, saying steadily, "I, Henry, king of England"—and then continued without further interruption to the close of the document.

"And well-drawn up and written were those articles," says Fleuranges; "*had they only been observed*"

This important labour accomplished, the two sovereigns decided upon the spot where the lists and scaffoldings should be erected for a tournament, being alike resolved to spend the time which they should pass together in pleasure and amusement; leaving their respective counsellors to negotiate all public business, and to report to them each evening the progress they had made towards a mutual acceptance of the terms of the treaty. This being, finally agreed, they parted with mutual expressions of affection and regard; and while Francis returned to Ardres, Henry rode back into the town of Guisnes, where he passed the night, reserving the monster building we have described for the exigencies of the day.

At the fall of evening Cardinal Wolsey, accompanied by one of the English members of council, waited upon the French king by desire of his master, to arrange measures by which they might frequently meet without distrust or apprehension on either side; and it was finally settled that the kings should fete the queens, and the queens the kings; and thus when Henry should arrive at Ardres to visit the Queen of France, Francis previously apprised of his intention, should at the same moment set forth from Guisnes to share the hospitality of the Queen of England; by which means each would become hostage for the other.

All that was requisite when this irksome and ungracious matter had been decided on, was to prepare for the tournay, which had been appointed for the following morning. A large space was accordingly enclosed by rails and ditches, beside which platforms were erected for the spectators; and at one end a lofty mound was raised, upon which a hawthorn tree and a raspberry bush, intended to represent the devices of the two kings, were conspicuously displayed. On the right side of the lists a velvet canopy was erected, under which the queens were seated with a numerous train of ladies, all richly attired, and awaiting with impatience the commencement of the sports. At the principal entrance of the enclosure were two lodges, appropriated to the knights who guarded the barrier; and beside these were two spacious cellars, which were amply provided with wine for the refreshment of all comers.

As the sovereigns entered the arena, their respective shields were attached to the symbolic trees upon the mount; and the young monarchs, at the head of their noble followers, then engaged in the warlike pastime, and encountered all combatants who presented themselves; when many a rude combat took place, as was to be expected where the flower of the youth and chivalry of the two first nations in Europe met to sustain the honour of their several countries. These sports continued for twelve or fifteen days, and were diversified by balls, banquets, and other festivities in which the sister queens and their ladies could bear a part; but long before their cessation, Francis, whose open and generous spirit was vexed by the suspicious and unnecessary restraints which had been put upon a free and unconstrained intercourse between the two courts, rose one morning at an unusually early hour, and accompanied only by two gentlemen and a page, mounted an ungroomed horse, and with no other preparation than that of throwing a Spanish cloak across his shoulders, galloped over to the castle of Ardres to pay a visit to the English king.

When he reached the drawbridge, the guards, astonished by such an apparition, were at a loss how to act; and the governor of the citadel who was stationed at the spot with two hundred archers was even more amazed than his men. As the young monarch passed among them he laughingly commanded them to surrender, declaring that he intended to make all the garrison prisoners; after which he desired to be shown to the chamber of Henry, and despite the remonstrance of the

bewildered governor, who ventured to suggest that his royal master still slept, he knocked loudly at the door, awoke his brother potentate, and entered. The English monarch was as much amazed as his men-at-arms by this bold proceeding; but meeting his visitor in the same spirit, he raised himself in his bed, and said joyously, "Brother, you have played me the cleverest trick that one man could do to another, and have shown me the whole extent of the confidence which I ought to place in you; as for myself, I surrender at discretion, and am your prisoner from this moment"

As he spoke he unclasped a collar from his neck valued at fifteen thousand angels, and placed it in the hand of Francis, praying him to accept and wear it for the love of his captive; whereupon Francis, who had already designed to offer a pledge of friendship to his new ally at this their first unconstrained meeting, unclasped from his wrist a bracelet of twice the same amount, and besought him to receive it as a token of the love he bore him. The exchange was frankly made; and while Henry was fastening the costly manacle upon his arm, his visitor adjusted the collar about his neck; after which, amid laughter and jests, the English king sprang from his bed, and was assisted at his toilette by his unbidden but welcome guest, who declared that for that day at least he should have no other attendant; and when with infinite merriment the one had tendered, and the other had accepted, his services, Francis took leave in order to return to Ardres; despite the entreaties of Henry, who would have detained him in order to prepare for the joust of the afternoon.

On his way back to his own camp, Francis encountered a number of his nobles who had come to meet him, alarmed for his safety; and among the foremost was Fleuranges, who reproached him bitterly for the unnecessary peril in which he had placed himself; but the young king only jested at their uneasiness, declaring that henceforward the two nations would be better friends than ever, and themselves enabled to enjoy with a higher zest the pleasures by which they were surrounded; a prediction whose correctness was confirmed on the following morning, when Henry returned the visit of his brother monarch in the same manner in which it had been made; and after a new interchange of presents and professions, rode borne in his turn to Guisnes without guard or weapon.

Meanwhile the two queens profited even more greatly than their royal consorts by this well-conceived confidence; for, although they had felt a mutual esteem from the first moment in which they met, their intercourse, had hitherto been constrained and ceremonious; whereas after this exchange of visits they found themselves at once released from the trammels of etiquette and caution, and were enabled to cultivate each other's society without impediment. The gratification was great on both sides, for each was well able to appreciate the other. It is true that at this period the unfortunate Katherine of Aragon was still happy in the love of her husband, while Claude was already a neglected wife; but the gentle melancholy of the English queen,—a melancholy which almost seemed a foretaste of the future,—harmonized well with the heart-stricken sadness of her new friend. The one was already sated with gaud gad glitter, and the other had never loved them. The happiest hours which they passed together were consequently those when they could converse freely and confidentially. Both were mothers, and both also had lost some of the fair children whom they had borne, in their first infancy; thus they never needed a subject of sympathy and interest, but as they mutually mingled their tears and communicated their sorrows,—those sorrows of the heart which torture alike the lofty head that wears a royal diadem, and the lowly brow that is shaded by a linen coif,—their esteem grew into friendship, and they anticipated with regret the hour of their separation.

Nor did the nobles and ladies of the two courts fail to profit by the cordiality which existed between their respective monarchs. All distrust had vanished; and they mingled freely with each other, frequently even passing the night in the rival city, and careless in what number or in what guise they came and went.

To the tournament succeeded wrestling matches, in which the English proved the victors; and to these again archery, at which noble pastime Henry VIII himself distanced all competitors, and astonished those who witnessed his feats, both by his strength and skill. At the close of the day's

sport the two kings retired to their pavilion, where, after they had pledged each other, Henry, elated by his success, suddenly seized Francis by the collar, exclaiming, "Come, brother, I must have a fall with you", when the King of France, who was an able wrestler, after a short struggle, threw him with great force. On regaining his legs, Henry would fain have renewed the attack, but some of the nobles of both countries, who were more prudent than their masters, dissuaded him from the attempt; and, still with undiminished cordiality, the two monarchs sat down together at the supper-table.

Nothing appears, indeed, more creditable to both parties than the perfect order, courtesy, and good temper exhibited on either side throughout the whole of the exciting sports in which they were engaged. No single misunderstanding marred the harmony of the two courts; while this perfect good feeling extended even to the men-at-arms, who vied with their leaders in acts of reciprocal cordiality and kindness.

During the tournament the King of England gave a grand banquet to Francis and his court, in the temporary palace without the gates of Guisnes, where no magnificence was spared to do honour to his royal and noble guests. The two kings were seated side by side in the centre of the upper table, while their queens occupied the space immediately in front of them; the English cardinal having a stool on the right hand of Francis, and the Connétable de Bourbon a similar place of honour on the left of the English king. On the following day Francis played the host. He had caused to be erected for the occasion, also without the walls of Guisnes, a splendid pavilion fifty feet square, covered and draped with cloth of gold, and lined with blue velvet, studded with fleurs-de-lis embroidered in Cyprus gold, having four smaller pavilions at the angles similarly adorned; the whole supported by ropes of gold Cyprus thread and blue silk. But this costly erection was not fated to answer the purpose for which it had been intended, a sudden storm of wind having arisen which wrenched away the tent-pins, broke the cords, and overthrew the whole fabric. Orders were instantly issued to prepare another banquet hall with all speed in one of the faubourgs of the town; and this was accomplished to the great delight of the citizens, who forthwith christened it the *Faubourg of the Festival*, a name which it still bears.

At the close of these banquets, Wolsey, desirous in his turn to display his magnificence, performed a high and solemn mass in a sumptuous chapel which he had caused to be constructed during the previous night, and which was so richly covered, both within and without, by tapestry, that the material of which it was built could not be distinguished. The altar blazed with light and gems; the choristers of both courts assisted in the ceremony; while the haughty prelate himself stood upon the steps of the shrine, clad in his pontifical robes, and surrounded by a crowd of bishops, priests, and lay attendants. On the right of the altar knelt the two monarchs, having behind them the great nobles of their respective nations, promiscuously grouped together; and on the left their royal consorts, attended by the principal ladies of their several suites. When he had himself communicated, Wolsey, followed by a train of mitred bishops, bore the Eucharist with great solemnity to the prostrate sovereigns; after which he advanced towards the sister queens, who, before they received it, embraced each other with tears. To them it was at once a holy and a parting pledge; and surely there was no irreverence in the intrusion of a feeling so pure and sinless even at such a moment.

At the conclusion of the mass the treaty was confirmed, and peace between England and France proclaimed by the heralds of both nations. The betrothal of the dauphin with the princess Mary, the daughter of Henry, was duly solemnized; several more days were spent in jousts and banquets; and, finally, on the 24th of June, the two kings parted as publicly and formally as they had met; and while the English monarch advanced to Guisnes, in order to proceed to Calais and Gravelines, where he had appointed to meet the Emperor after his interview with Francis, that sovereign returned to France, with the full, but erroneous, conviction that thenceforward Henry of England was his firm ally for life.

CHAPTER XV.

[1520-21.]

No public business of importance had after all been transacted between the two sovereigns at the gorgeous meeting of the Golden Camp, for the preliminaries of the negotiation which was signed at Ardres on the 6th of June in the previous year, had already been arranged between the ministers on either side; and it was consequently only the specious pretext for an outlay which exhausted the treasuries of both nations, and left the nobles impoverished with debt. The betrothal of the dauphin and the princess Mary was, as we have elsewhere stated, solemnized; but this only added another opportunity of display to those by which it had been preceded. The engagement of France to pay to England the sum of a million of crowns, at a hundred thousand francs yearly, until the period of the marriage, was ratified; and the differences between England and Scotland were submitted to the arbitration of Madame d'Angoulême and Wolsey.

Francis had, however, miscalculated the effect which had been produced upon the mind of his brother monarch during the three weeks they had passed together; for he was not aware how craftily Charles, even in the brief visit which he had recently made to England, had worked upon the mind of the Cardinal-legate, alike through his avarice and his ambition. Although considerably the senior of Leo X. in years, Wolsey, accustomed to see all things bend before his will, never appeared to apprehend that he might be outlived by that pontiff; and accordingly, aware that from his position as Emperor of Germany, Charles must necessarily exercise considerable influence over the petty princes throughout the empire, he lent a greedy ear to his assurances that he would do all in his power to secure his accession to the popedom; while, as a guarantee of his sincerity, Charles, in addition to many rich presents, conferred upon the prelate the two bishoprics of Badajoz and Valencia, in Castile; and, this done, informed him of the uneasiness which he experienced at the probable effects of the meeting at Ardres. Wolsey, however, who well knew that Henry, in his love of pleasure and display, would leave all important measures in his own hands, soon succeeded in relieving the mind of the emperor of this apprehension; and, moreover, induced him to arrange a second interview with Henry before the return of the latter to England.

It was, consequently, in accordance with this promise that Charles embarked at Cologne and proceeded to Gravelines, accompanied by the Lady-regent of the Low Countries, Marguerite de Savoie, where he made such hasty preparations for the reception of his royal guest as were practicable; and was joined on the 10th of July by Henry VIII. and a portion of his court, among whom the cardinal was prominent. Neither Madame de Savoie nor himself spared care or flattery in order to gain over both the legate and his royal master. With the first they had, however, little difficulty, for all Wolsey's dreams were now full of the triple crown; while Henry had so long accustomed himself to refer all state questions to his minister, that he was soon induced to violate the pledges which he had given to the unsuspecting Francis, and to ally himself to the interests of the emperor. His vanity was, moreover, flattered by the assurance of Charles that he considered him to be entrusted with the preservation of the peace of Europe; and by his offer to accept him as his arbitrator in all differences which might arise between himself and the French king, as Francis had already done.

After having remained the guest of the emperor and his aunt during several days, the English monarch urged them to return with him to Calais, and to pay a visit to Queen Katherine, who was awaiting them there with her court. The invitation was accepted; and while Marguerite de Savoie

used all her blandishments to secure the same influence over the mind of the English queen which her imperial relative had effected over that of Henry, Charles, even while he appeared to be entirely engrossed by the festivities which were taking place about -him, was cautiously and unobtrusively maturing his plans and strengthening his interests. Before his departure, a grand entertainment took place in his honour and that of Madame de Savoie, at which the whole of the two courts were to be present; and in order to give all possible brilliancy to the festival, the king had caused a spacious amphitheatre to be erected, lined with blue velvet, and studded with stars of silver; while above the thrones destined to the three sovereigns, and the fauteuil of the regent, a sun of burnished gold blazed out in the lustre of hundreds of tapers of pink wax, a moon of frosted silver facing the dais upon which they were placed.

By a curious coincidence, however, the same accident occurred to this building as to the banqueting-pavilion of Francis at Ardres; for, just as the preparations were concluded, and the guests about to assemble, a violent tempest supervened which overthrew the whole fabric, and rendered it of no avail. The revellers consoled themselves as best they might for this disappointment; and after a few days more had been consumed in covert business and open pleasure, the sovereigns once more parted, Henry returning to England, and Charles proceeding through Flanders and Brabant to Aix-la-Chapelle; where his coronation as King of the Romans and Emperor of Germany took place on the 23d of October, with a pomp exceeding any which had before been witnessed upon such an occasion.

Francis, on removing his camp from the Field of Cloth of Gold, had hastened to Amboise to inform Madame d'Angoulême of the supposed success of his expedition, and thence removed with his court to Romorantin to celebrate the remaining winter festivities; when an accident befell him on the evening of Twelfth Night, (1521), which had nearly put an end to his existence. Having ascertained that the king-cake had been cut at the house of the Count de St. Pol, and that the mimic sovereign had been elected, Francis arranged with those about him that they would despatch a formal defiance to the hotel of the count, and declare their intention of doing battle against the usurper. The message was received in the same spirit of mirth that it had been sent; and as the snow lay deep upon the ground, the besieged party lost no time in supplying their garrison with the means of repelling the attack. Immense snowballs, eggs, and apples, were laid in heaps after the fashion of ammunition; and for a time, the assailants being armed with the same missiles, the sport went gaily on; but, unfortunately, before its close, as the king's followers, pursuing a temporary advantage, were about to force the door of the hotel, some individual within was ill-advised enough to throw a burning brand which he had snatched from the hearth through one of the windows, which fell upon the head of Francis, and inflicted a deep and serious wound.

For several days his life was in great danger, and his surgeons found it necessary to remove the whole of his hair, of which, from its extreme beauty and luxuriance, he had been very vain; but despite this mortification he withstood all the remonstrances of his mother, who was anxious to punish the author of this misfortune, and would not permit his identity to be ascertained; declaring with a generosity which did him honour, that the blow, heavy as it was, had not only been inflicted in sport, but that it was the mere effect of accident which rendered him the sufferer; and reminding her that when a sovereign condescended to engage in the pastimes of a child, like that child he must be content to pay the penalty of his folly.

From this period he never again suffered his hair to grow, but wore it clipped close; a fashion which was immediately adopted by the whole of the courtiers.

Despite the increasing jealousy of Francis and the emperor, neither the one nor the other was as yet anxious, to terminate the peace. Charles—in addition to the discontent which he had to encounter in Spain, where his subjects had declared themselves resolved to support their political claims—was, moreover, called to contend against a formidable fermentation in Germany, occasioned by the rapid progress of the Lutheran doctrines. The pope had fulminated a bull of excommunication against the bold and zealous reformer on the 15th of June of the previous year, and a great portion of his writings had been condemned as heretical; a proceeding which Luther



had retorted by publicly burning the papal document; while Charles himself had no sooner assumed the silver crown, than he had, in his turn, convoked a diet of the empire at Worms, in order, as he declared, “ to occupy himself in suppressing the progress of the new and dangerous opinions which disturbed the peace of Germany, and threatened to overthrow the religion of their ancestors.” But, notwithstanding this measure, it is not the less certain that he sent an honourable safe-conduct to Luther, and invited him to Worms, where he met with a cordial reception, not only from the bulk of the people, but also from many of the greatest persons of the empire; a proof that his principles had already planted themselves deeply in the public mind. He was even permitted to declare and defend them before the diet, which he did with a calmness and courage that sufficiently demonstrated the righteousness of his cause; after which he was permitted to return under the protection of the same herald-at-arms by whom he had been conducted to the city; although the diet saw fit after his departure to fulminate against him a condemnation declaring him an outlaw, as being an excommunicated heretic; from the consequences of which severity he was saved by the Elector of Saxony\* who caused him to be carried off by a party of men in masks, and Conducted to the fortress of Wartburg, where he remained in safety for nine months, although his friends were as ignorant of his retreat as his enemies.

Francis was not unaware of the difficulties with which the new emperor had to contend; and satisfied by what he had already seen, that should he be enabled to adjust them, he must inevitably become a dangerous rival, he could not restrain his desire to curtail his power; but he was still unwilling to be the first to declare a hostility which must, as its first and inevitable consequence, separate him for a time from the society of Madame de Châteaubriand, and exhaust the resources which he required to meet the mere personal expenses necessitated by the expensive pleasures in which he loved to indulge; and accordingly, instead of taking high ground, and meeting his adversary in a catholic spirit, he compromised with his pride by subjecting him to petty annoyances which could only ultimately tend to engender a European warfare.

Charles had doubly falsified his royal word; first as regarded Navarre, where he had failed to redeem the pledge almost voluntarily given; and secondly as to Naples, which kingdom he still held, without evincing the slightest disposition to abandon any portion of his tenure; while M. de la Mark, Duke de Gueldres, the old and faithful ally of France, who had been for a season diverted from his allegiance, made loud and bitter complaints of the disloyalty of the emperor in neglecting to fulfil his promises; and at length entreated the support of France in his attempt at self-defence. He considered himself deeply aggrieved, inasmuch as his right to the duchy of Bouillon, which he inherited, from an ancestor, had been disputed; and the Sieur d’Emery had taken one of the cities by force of arms without any remonstrance from Charles, who, moreover, refused to interfere in his behalf further than by promises which he afterwards neglected; even permitting the Chancellor of Brabant who had been bribed to that effect, to declare against his claim; whereupon De la Mark proceeded to Sedan, and demanded an audience, wherein he declared that if justice was not done, he would abandon the cause of a sovereign who had so ill repaid his services during his election.

The emperor, indignant at this threat, heightened the misunderstanding by retorting that the Duke de Gueldres was at perfect liberty to act as he saw fit, his adhesion being of small importance to either party; and Louise de Savoie was no sooner informed of this outbreak than she wrote an autograph letter to the discontented noble, inviting him to return to his allegiance to Francis. The proposal was at once accepted, to the great regret of Marguerite de Savoie, who estimated at its real value the friendship of so brave and zealous a noble, and who spared no exertions to induce him to retract his resolution.

The duke was, however, firm; his pride had been wounded and his dignity compromised; and he accordingly presented himself at Remorantin, where Francis was still confined by his wound; and after expressing his regret for his momentary defalcation, ultimately placed in his hands not only his person but also his possessions; entreating him to afford him help, succour, and assistance to revenge the grievous wrong which he had experienced from the emperor; a step which he had no sooner taken than Charles, who became convinced of his error, endeavoured to regain him by representing that what had been done was effected without his authority, and that

al! might yet be rectified ; but the concession came too late; the duke had suffered more than he was ready to forgive, and was resolved to regain by force what he had lost by fraud.

This was the last drop which caused the vase of the French king's patience to overflow; or, perhaps, it was the first plausible pretext he could seize upon to justify a commencement of those hostilities which he had previously deferred. He consequently accepted the renewed assurances of fealty proffered by the duke; and so soon as the latter had effected the reconciliation, he sent an envoy to the emperor—who was then at Worms attending the diet which he had invoked of all the princes and delegates from the free towns of Germany, to suppress the doctrines of Luther—to defy him before the assembly; a proceeding which, instituted as it was by a subject, was treated with disdain alike by Charles and his nobility.

Nevertheless, the duke lost no time in following up his demonstration; and the Marquis de Fleuranges, his elder son, in opposition to the express commands of Francis, levied in France and the neighbouring nations a force of four or five thousand infantry, and between fourteen and fifteen hundred mounted troops, and besieged Vireton, a small town in Luxembourg, on the confines of Lorraine. He was subsequently, however, induced to raise the siege, and to disband his little army, at the request of Francis, to whom Henry VIII. despatched an envoy, entreating him not to enter into hostilities with the emperor, but to submit to his arbitration any misunderstanding which might have arisen.

The sovereign pontiff was, meanwhile, less pacifically disposed than the sovereigns of Germany, France, and England. He affected to smile at the uneasiness evinced by Charles at the progress of the religious schism, declaring that after all it was a mere monkish quarrel, which might be easily and effectually terminated; and, anxious only for the aggrandizement of the Holy See, he continued to exert his utmost efforts to weaken the power of the rival monarchs by turning them against each other, although himself undecided for the time whose interests he should adopt. His profuse expenditure had compelled him to levy exorbitant subsidies on all sides; and his ultimate ambition was, either to reunite to the States of the Church the provinces of Parma and Piacenza, now held by the French as a portion of the duchy of Milan, or to obtain the cession of some part of the Neapolitan kingdom from the Spaniards.

The crafty pope was for the moment careless in which measure he succeeded, but in order to secure either the one or the other, he commenced a secret negotiation with both monarchs; proposing to Charles to enter into a league with him for driving the French from Italy, on condition that the duchy of Milan should be restored to Francisco Sforza, and Parma, Piacenza and Ferrara ceded to the Holy See; and a treaty to this effect was signed actually between the contracting parties on the 8th of May; while at the same time he suggested to Francis the expediency of their conjointly attacking the Spaniards in the kingdom of Naples, expelling them thence, and then dividing the country by attaching all that portion of Campania Felix, which extended to the Garigliano, to the States of the Church; and securing the remainder of the kingdom to the second son of Francis, subject to the guardianship of an apostolical legate until his majority. In this proposition he was equally successful, and a second treaty was signed between himself and the French king; M. de Lautrec permitting six thousand Swiss troops in the pay of the pope to traverse the territories of the Milanese, on the understanding that they were to be employed in the execution of the said treaty. Although these negotiations had been pursued with the greatest secrecy, Lautrec, who had always been upon bad terms with the court of Rome, nevertheless began ere long to suspect the sincerity of the pope; and induced Francis, to whom he communicated his misgivings, to delay the ratification of the league.

Meanwhile the revolt in Spain spread far and fast; and the emperor accused the French king of secretly encouraging these intestine troubles by sheltering his enemies. He also reiterated his demand for the restitution of the duchy of Burgundy, which he affected to declare had descended to himself through the princess Mary, and had only been usurped by Louis XI claiming a sovereign right over the province, and declaring that Francis held no title there beyond that of his feudatory. While, however, he put forward these pretensions, he was unable to maintain his authority in

Spain; tumult and misrule existed on all sides; the jealousy which subsisted between his Flemish and his Spanish subjects was daily aggravated by new outrages; and he found his influence almost at an end throughout the kingdom.

Under these circumstances Henri d'Albret, king of Navarre, began once more to indulge the hope of recovering his crown. The disaffected party in Spain had applied to Francis to allow the young sovereign to enter Navarre, assuring him that it would prove an easy conquest, the cardinal-governor, Adrian, Bishop of Tortosa, having withdrawn all the troops from that province to the interior of Spain. At the same time the Navarrese themselves invited their legitimate monarch to vindicate his rights, and to relieve them from the tyranny of a usurper; assuring him that if he would only appear among them, "the very stones, mountains, and trees, would take up arms in his cause."

Thus Francis was, without any belligerent demonstration on his own part, suddenly furnished with a plausible pretext for indulging his jealousy of Charles; but still, conscious of the immense responsibility of taking the initiative in a war which might, before its conclusion, convulse all Europe, he desired that the expedition should be undertaken in the name of Henri d'Albret himself, and that he should not be held personally responsible for its results. To these terms the young king, eager to re-possess his territories, gladly assented; and an army, under the command of Madame de Chateaubriand's second brother, the marquis de Lesparre, who as a relative of the deposed sovereign was supposed to act only in his name and by his authority, was speedily organized, in which M. de Guise, the brother of the Duke de Lorraine, took the command of the lansquenets. No time was lost in marching upon Navarre, where the first efforts of the Marquis proved eminently successful; and he proceeded without any important check until he reached Pampeluna, where he was received with transport by the citizens, but repulsed by the garrison of the citadel; which, although the viceroy had considered it impossible to march a sufficient force to its relief to insure its safety, held out during several days, through the extraordinary courage of a young officer, who in this moment of peril assumed the command, and infused new energy into the failing hearts of the soldiery.

Ignatius Loyola, whose name was destined to become so famous as the founder of the Jesuits, was at that period a military hero; and it was only when those over whom he had assumed the command insisted upon a capitulation that he was reluctantly obliged to yield; but even then he could not be brought to consent to a measure against which his high and martial spirit revolted, until he obtained the consent of his companions that he should be present when the terms of the capitulation were adjusted; and he had no sooner found that they were so arbitrary and severe as to involve the honour of his cause, than he abruptly terminated the conference, declaring that he would rather be buried under the ruins of the citadel than lend his countenance to such a compromise.

Hostilities were consequently resumed by the French, against which merely individual valour could not contend; and during an assault which he headed in person, Loyola had one leg broken by a cannon-shot, and the other crushed by a stone from the walls. As he fell, the hopes of his followers fell with him; they attempted no further resistance; and Pampeluna surrendered, involving in its capture the whole kingdom of Navarre.

Had Lesparre been as prudent as he was bold, he might have followed up his advantage, and secured his conquest; but, eager to extend his triumph, he was rash enough to enter Spain, upon which the great nobles of Castile became alarmed, and urging the people to forego for a time their intestine quarrels in order to expel the common enemy, succeeded in organizing a powerful force, with which they marched to Logroño, already in a state of siege through the headlong impetuosity of Lesparre; attacked his army, weakened by the disbanding of a portion of its infantry, which an ill-timed economy had induced him to dispense with, under the impression that he should not encounter greater difficulties in Spain than those which he had just so happily overcome in Navarre; and, moreover, rendered less efficient by a want of discipline engendered by success.

The attack of the Spaniards, however, infuriated by the dread of a new tyrant in the person of the French king, who was even less bound to their national interests than Charles; and the fact that they came fresh into the field against a body of harassed and toilworn men, soon caused the marquis to repent his error. An engagement ensued which terminated in the total rout of the French forces, who were not only compelled to abandon the siege of Pampeluna, but even to meet the enemy a second time in the plain of Squires, where their fate was decided, and Lesparre himself about to be made prisoner, when, resolved not to survive a disgrace he had so little apprehended, he abandoned all further authority over his bewildered army, and spurred his horse into the very thickest of the enemy's ranks, in order to die upon the field. He was not, however, fated to succeed even in this melancholy attempt; for, although covered with wounds, and with his casque beaten into his face by a blow from a mace which deprived him of his sight for ever, he was made captive by his enemies, together with most of his principal officers; and thus again he was condemned to feel that Navarre was lost.

Meanwhile, enraged by the insolence of the Duke de Gueldres, the emperor despatched the Count de Nassau to invade and devastate his territories; a command which was obeyed and executed with a barbarity revolting to every principle of dignity and humanity. Both the emperor and Francis at this juncture appealed to Henry VIII, each declaring the other to be the aggressor, and calling upon him to assist in revenging their wrongs; but the English king, who was not sorry to see them thus mutually undermining their strength without any exertion on his own part, contented himself by entreating both the one and the other not lightly to involve themselves in so serious a war, and to leave everything to his mediation. As the two monarchs could hope for no more efficient assistance, they agreed to this proposition, and accordingly consented to open a conference at Calais on the 4th of August, under the presidency of Wolsey; Francis only demanding that the pontifical legates should be present, who would, as he believed, (unconscious as he was that Leo X had abandoned his interests,) compel justice for him, should any necessity arise for their intervention. The French king, moreover, enjoined the Duke de Gueldres to lay down his arms; a command which was obeyed, not because Robert de la Mark had forgotten the wrong which he had experienced from Charles, but because he believed that all intention of hostility towards him had now been abandoned by the emperor. He, however, fearfully deceived himself; for he had no sooner disbanded a great portion of his army, and rendered himself defenceless, than the Count de Nassau pursued his advantage with merciless ferocity, and he found himself compelled to sue for a truce, which was granted because it served only to involve him in still greater ruin; for so soon as it expired Charles lost no time in seizing the whole of his territories, and in marching a division of his army to the French frontier.

Before this movement was effected, however, Francis had felt the imperative necessity of placing his kingdom in an efficient state of defence; and, after having strengthened the frontier of Burgundy, had turned his attention to those of Champagne and Picardy, which were totally unguarded. He conferred the government of the former upon the Duke d'Alençon, the husband of his sister; and that of the latter upon the Duke de Vendome; and this done, he commanded the Admiral Bonnivet to lead a new force into Navarre, to revenge the insult received by Lesparre; and then he began assiduously to recruit and organize an army to resist the reprisals of the emperor, which he was aware must be the result of such a measure.

Meanwhile the Count de Nassau had been apprised of the approach of the Duke d'Alençon with a force of twenty thousand men; while, having passed the French frontier, (despite all the asseverations of his imperial master, that he had no hostile intentions towards France,) he was laying siege to the city of Mouzon; yet, notwithstanding this practical illustration of his insincerity, Charles, who was then at Brussels, on learning that the French had in their turn intruded on his own territories, had the duplicity to exclaim:

“Thank God that it was not I who commenced this war, and that it is the King of France who seeks to aggrandize me; for in a short time I will be a pauper emperor, or he shall be a pauper monarch.”

M. de Nassau began his invasion under fortunate auspices, for Mouzon possessing neither provisions, ammunition, nor garrison, was totally unable to resist so formidable an enemy; its whole armed force consisting only of a single company of infantry, under the command of the Seigneur de Montmoreau; who, hopeless as was the contest, declared that he would die within the walls rather than surrender; but finding that neither his troops nor the citizens themselves would make an effort to save the town, he was compelled to capitulate; and after having received a solemn pledge that the lives of all should be spared, he suffered the gates to be opened, and delivered up the citadel.

During this time the Chancellor Duprat, the Marechal de Chabannes, and Jean de Selve, had reached Calais, where they were to meet the ambassadors of the emperor, in order, through the mediation of Wolsey, to effect, if possible, a reconciliation between their two sovereigns. The cardinal was, however, aware that Leo X had abandoned the cause of Francis for that of Charles; and not content with furthering his own interests by consulting those of the latter, he even so far laid aside all disguise as to visit him at Bruges during the conference, where he was received with the same state and splendour as though he had been the sovereign of England instead of its minister; while he on his part declared that all he required to ascertain was, which of the parties had been the original aggressor, as Henry VIII. must, in conformity to the treaties into which he had entered, declare against the first who had disregarded them, M. de Chièvres was recently dead, and had in his last moments expressed his regret at the renewal of hostilities; but the imperial ministers, Charles was supported in these arrogant pretensions by a consciousness of the partiality of the mediators, a bias in his favour of which he did not fail to take advantage; and thus once more he was bold enough to require the restitution of the Duchy of Burgundy, which, had it been conceded, would have given him entrance into the heart of France; and to demand to be freed from the homage which his ancestors had done to the French sovereigns for Flanders and Artois ; and which, by the treaty of Noyon, he had personally pledged himself to continue. Nothing overt was consequently accomplished ; but the crafty cardinal availed himself of the opportunity to give a secret pledge to the emperor that Henry should declare in his favour, and assist him during the course of the following year with a force of forty thousand men. He, moreover, betrothed Charles to the Princess Mary, who still being the only child of Henry, began to be considered as the probable heir to the crown ; utterly regardless of the fact that he had in person previously performed the ceremony of affiancing her and the dauphin of France at Ardres. Charles was dazzled by the prospect of a new crown, and eagerly entered into the arrangement; while Wolsey himself saw in it another bond to knit more closely his own interests and those of his imperial ally.

Francis was not deceived by the result of this conference; but at once discovered that he had been duped, and must prepare to defend himself against other enemies than the emperor. Of the bad faith of Henry and his minister he no longer entertained a doubt, while his suspicion of the double-dealing of the pope increased from day to day. Nevertheless, the spirit of the king rose with the difficulties by which he saw himself surrounded.

“All the European sovereigns conspire against me,” he said haughtily; “but I shall find means to answer them. I care little either for the emperor, or for my cousin of England; my frontier of Picardy is fortified, and the Flemish are poor soldiers. As for Italy, I will take charge of that; while I pay the Swiss they will fight for me, and I have sent to summon them here with their pikes.”

Among the most important places which were likely to be first attacked by the enemy was Mézières, which many of the king’s advisers counselled him to burn down, and by destroying the environs to starve out the army of M. de Nassau, whose supplies would thus be cut off. This measure was justified, as they declared, by the impossibility of introducing a sufficient garrison within the walls before it was besieged ; an event which the proximity of the imperial troops rendered every hour probable. Bayard, however, seeing that Francis hesitated to sanction so extreme a measure, seized the fortunate moment, and energetically discountenanced such a proceeding.

“You are told that the place is too weak to resist, Sire,” he said boldly; “no place is weak which

is defended by brave men. Let the old walls stand, and permit me to assist in their defence.”

“To yourself I will confide the city,” replied Francis, struck with the confidence of the good knight; “take with you whom you will, and strike for the honour of France, and the dignity of your monarch.”

Without losing another instant he then instructed the Duke d’Alençon to supply the little army of Bayard with all which he might require, and despatched M. de Lorge to provision and arm the city, while the brave Pierre Terrail summoned about him all his chosen comrades; but as his name ever acted like a spell upon the chivalry of France, he soon found himself moreover surrounded by a host of gallant men who were anxious to acquire glory by fighting at his side. All pride of rank was for the time forgotten by these noble volunteers; and Bayard, with natural self-gratulation, welcomed to his ranks some of the haughtiest blood throughout the kingdom. Among the first who presented themselves were the Seigneur de Montmoreau, and his lieutenant M. de Boncar, each with a thousand lances, and both eager to avenge their defeat at Mouzon. The flower of the nobility of Dauphiny followed; and even Anne de Montmorency, the favourite of Francis, did not disdain to swell the list of his subordinates. The city was no longer defenceless; its walls bristled with spears; and its strength lay not so much in the glittering breast pieces which flashed in the sunlight, as in the bold hearts that beat beneath them.

While the garrison of Mézières was thus assembling, Francis—who had been sojourning at Rheims, where his army was daily reinforced by the arrival both of horse and foot, including several strong parties of Swiss mercenaries—proceeded by Guise into the Cambresis; and on the 22d of October overtook the forces of the Count de Nassau between Cambray and Valenciennes, on their way to the latter city, where the Imperialist general was about to retire for a time to rest and refresh the troops, who were suffering greatly from fatigue. La Trémouille and Chabannes were eager to attack the imperialists, and strongly urged this measure upon the king; reminding him that the enemy had still three leagues to travel over the plain before they could shelter themselves behind the walls of a fortress; but Francis, by some strange perversity, refused to listen to the suggestion until the whole of his army should have crossed the river, and the thick fog which then hung over them be dispersed. It was in vain that they implored him to recant his resolution; he remained firm, and M. de Nassau was consequently enabled to make good his escape with his whole force.

It is certain, according to Du Bellay, that had the king authorised the proposed attack he would easily have defeated the retreating force, and thus materially crippled the resources of the emperor; a fact of which he became subsequently so conscious that he was overwhelmed with grief, and during the night most imprudently departed for Flanders, attended by a hundred horse, thus abandoning the rest of the army. “That day,” says the same chronicler, in a burst of patriotic grief, “God had delivered our enemy into our hands, and we would not accept the offering; a refusal which has since cost us dear.”

Bayard was, meanwhile, less supine. He caused all the inhabitants of Mézières who could not be rendered available in case of siege to retire beyond the walls; after which he demolished the drawbridge, and convoked an assembly of the sheriffs, whom he compelled to make oath that they would never urge a surrender, but defend the town even to the death. “And if our provisions should fail us, gentlemen” he said gaily, “we will devour our horses and our boots.”

The calm confidence of the good knight inspired the citizens with new courage, and they all swore to perish rather than capitulate. He then turned his attention to the walls, and busied himself in repairing the old breaches, which had been suffered to remain in a state of daily increasing dilapidation, not only working himself, but even distributing among the labourers the sum of six thousand crowns from his own purse. He appeared to be ubiquitous, for while one asserted that he saw him at the gate of the town, another declared that he was upon the rampart; while a third affirmed that he had passed him in one of the streets of the city. He felt that the preservation of the place had been entrusted to him; and while he was indulgent to all under his

command, he was inexorable towards himself.

Bayard, in fact, felt a conviction that not a moment must be lost, and his prescience had not deceived him; the city was shortly afterwards invested; and while Seckingen at the head of fifteen thousand men attacked it on one bank of the Meuse, the Count de Nassau with twenty thousand more threatened it from the other.

Ere long, however, a herald-at-arms appeared before the gates and summoned Bayard to surrender, declaring that the place could not hold out against the imperial forces; and that, in consideration of the high and noble chivalry which was contained within its walls, the imperial generals were reluctant to take it by assault, and thus tarnish his personal honour and that of his noble companions; while they moreover feared for the life of one like himself, who, should he perish defeated, would by such a death efface the memory of all his great and heroic deeds; while, on the contrary, they were willing to concede to him such honourable terms as must tend to satisfy his self-respect.

Bayard with some difficulty compelled himself to hear this harangue to an end; after which he declared that he was astounded by the great courtesy of the besieging generals, of whom he himself knew nothing; and then, assuming a more haughty attitude, he added: "Friend Herald, return to your camp, and tell your leaders that the king my sovereign could have sent many more efficient persons than myself to defend his city and his frontier; but that since he has seen fit to honour me with the trust, I hope, by the help of God, to keep it for him for such a length of time that your masters will be more weary of maintaining the siege than I shall be of defending my post. I am no longer a child to be deluded by high-sounding phrases; and therefore say to them, moreover, that if I ever leave the city which has been confided to me, it shall be over a bridge of their own bodies, and those of their followers?"

This fearless answer to his summons exasperated M. de Nassau, who immediately issued an order for the attack. His artillery was pointed against the walls upon two separate sides, but the fire was steadily and unceasingly returned; when suddenly the volunteers who had been brought to Mézières by M. de Montmoreau, being inexperienced in warfare, became panic struck, wavered, and fled. Some of the French soldiery endeavoured to rally them, but Bayard instantly ordered that they should be allowed to escape over the walls without molestation. "Let them go," he said calmly, "we shall be stronger without them; for cravens such as these are not worthy to win glory by the side of braver men."

Meanwhile the good knight became conscious that the division of troops under Seckingen, having secured a more elevated position, harassed his own followers more than those upon the other bank, and he resolved to have recourse to stratagem in order to induce him to change his ground; a measure which he was the more anxious to adopt from the fact that his provisions were rapidly decreasing, and that his garrison was beginning to suffer from sickness.

He had ascertained from one of his emissaries that altercations had arisen in the enemy's camp, where the Count de Nassau and Seckingen were contending against each other for the supreme command of the besieging army; and in order to aggravate this misunderstanding he addressed a letter to the Duke de Gueldres, in which he stated that, aware of his regard for the Sire de Seckingen, he had thought it advisable to inform him that if his friend did not speedily shift his position he and all his camp would be cut to pieces within four-and-twenty hours, as a force of twelve thousand Swiss and eight hundred horsemen would fall upon him at dawn; while he should himself make a sally from the town, by which means he would be enclosed, and could have no hope of escape; adding, moreover, that as the duke had assured him some months back that M. de Seckingen might be induced to join the cause of France, he should be glad to see so desirable a measure accomplished, and to welcome so brave a soldier to the banner of the lilies. This done, he committed the letter to the care of a peasant, to whom he gave a crown, desiring him to carry it forthwith to Messire Robert de la Mark at Sedan, and to tell him that it was sent by Captain Bayard.

As a natural consequence the letter fell into the hands of one of Seckingen's followers, who forthwith conveyed the messenger to the tent of his general; when the partisan, believing that the Count de Nassau meant to sacrifice him, immediately struck his tents, and abandoned the advantageous position which he had hitherto occupied. This movement could not be effected without attracting the attention of the Count, who instantly despatched a messenger to represent to Seckingen the probable effect of such a proceeding, endangering as it did the total failure of their operations; but he received only a haughty answer. "Tell M. de Nassau," was the reply, "that I shall act as I see fit, having no inclination to remain and be butchered for his pleasure; but that I shall take up my quarters beside his own, and we shall see after we have met who will remain master of the field."

The count, who after this message of defiance felt persuaded that his late comrade Seckingen was in fact passing the Meuse with the intention of attacking him, drew out his troops in order of battle; an attitude which was immediately imitated by the irritated Seckingen, and an engagement was about to ensue, when the assembled officers on both sides interfered, and prevented the collision. Nevertheless the two generals continued implacable; they haughtily refused to condescend to any explanation; mutually distrustful, each looked upon the other as a covert enemy; and on the following day they separately raised the siege.

During an entire week the officers of Charles found it impossible to reconcile the two adversaries, but at length they were induced to forego their quarrel; upon which Seckingen entered Picardy, burning and devastating all that he encountered on his way until he reached Guise, where he halted; while M. de Nassau on his side shaped his course northward, carrying terror wherever he encamped, putting to death such of his soldiers as had served under his rival, betraying his suspicion of every one about him, and committing a thousand acts of idle and indiscriminating cruelty. His army resembled a beleaguered city; a secret police was organized, and his spies invaded even the tents and private correspondence of his officers; executions were of daily occurrence, and a spirit of terror and consternation pervaded the whole of the troops. The sword of Damocles hung suspended above the camp, and none knew upon whose head it would next fall.

During this panic Bayard had made a sortie which proved highly successful, as it increased the confusion in the ranks of M. de Nassau, while at the same time it afforded an opportunity for a powerful reinforcement to be introduced into the beleaguered city, and the approach of M. d'Alençon to within three leagues of the gates. Nevertheless the imperial general, reluctant to abandon an enterprise in which he had flattered himself with success, was unwilling to raise the siege until he could by some method convince himself that the garrison were no longer in danger of famine; upon which a veteran captain, an old companion in arms of Bayard, who had spent his whole life in the service of the French in Italy, but who had now been gained over to the cause of the emperor, volunteered to despatch a trumpeter to the fortress to request a bottle of wine from the commandant for the sake of their ancient friendship.

"Tell the good knight," he said to the messenger, as he was preparing to set forth, "that it is for Captain Gros-Jean of Picardy, who will drink health and long life to him in his own wine, whether it be old or new."

To this application Bayard replied by sending two bottles, one of each description named, which he caused the envoy himself to fetch from the cellar, where he showed him huge casks all filled; desiring him to assure his master that he was welcome to repeat the pledge whenever he needed to do so, as the garrison of Mézières had enough and to spare during the time that the siege was likely to hold out.

The envoy returned, and by reporting what he had seen and heard, fully convinced M. de Nassau that the city was as impregnable as ever; little suspecting that the barrels in the fortress cellar were merely water-casks, and that the wine so freely given had been part of the lading of three wagons, which the French had only the previous evening succeeded in introducing within



the gates.

In consequence of this conviction he at once struck his tents, leaving Bayard master of the city after a resistance of three weeks; during which time, although no battle had been fought, the good knight had, nevertheless, evinced so much courage and military science, and had caused so great a loss among the imperial troops, that Francis at once felt he could no longer leave such eminent merit unrecompensed, and forthwith conferred on him the collar of the order of Philip Augustus, and gave him the command of a hundred men-at-arms; a prerogative hitherto monopolized by individuals of princely rank.

When the imperial troops had withdrawn, Bayard, who had no further occupation within the walls whence he had driven his assailants, prepared for his return to the royal camp, amid the shouts and benedictions of the citizens whom he had saved from plunder and outrage; the people crowded about him, the bells of the churches and convents rang out a joyous peal; and thenceforward the whole population of Mézières religiously observed with prayer and festivity the anniversary of their deliverance.

The letter in which Francis announced to his mother the relief of Mézières was even more inconsequent than a former one to which we have already made allusion; while not content with expressing himself in terms wholly inconsistent with his kingly dignity, he even so far forgot his respect for sacred things as to entreat his mother to cause thanksgivings to be offered up to the Almighty, with the reverend addition, “car sans poynt defate, il a montre ce coup qu'yl est bon Francois.” After so blasphemous and presumptuous an expression as this, our wonder ceases that there should have been a blight upon his arms!

The siege of Mézières once happily terminated, the French king proceeded in pursuit of the imperial troops; who, baffled in Champagne, were ravaging Picardy, and spreading terror in every direction. The fortresses which they had destroyed on the frontier of the former province were hastily repaired; and while the Duke d'Alençon retook Mouzon, the Duke de Vendome effected an entrance into both Artois and Hanault; repaying with usury upon the enemy the enormities of which they had been guilty on the French territories.

Having made himself master of Bapaume and Landrecies, to the latter of which the imperialists set fire previous to their retreat, M. d'Alençon found his task accomplished; while on the Spanish frontier, Bonnavet, towards the close of September, possessed himself of several fortresses in Biscay; and, ultimately, of Fontarabia.

During these proceedings the emperor had joined his retreating army near Valenciennes, having with him a strong body of troops; and Francis no sooner ascertained that he was present in person than he became eager to attack him. In furtherance of this design he threw a bridge across the Scheldt, and the Count de Nassau who had advanced to reconnoitre, was only enabled to escape with his followers through the aid of a dense fog, which had rendered his approach invisible. Bourbon, La Palice, and Trémouille, vehemently urged the king to an immediate onslaught, and had their advice been followed, the army of Charles must have been destroyed; but once more the evil star of Francis prevailed, and he suffered himself to be influenced by the counsels of the Marechal de Châtillon, who urged caution, and thus suffered the favourable moment to escape.

Nor was this his only imprudence; for, still strongly prejudiced by his mother against Bourbon, he conferred the command of the vanguard, a distinction claimed by the duke as Constable of France, upon M. d'Alençon. The effect of this affront upon a man of so fiery a temperament as Bourbon, and who was moreover jealous of his honour, was terrible. For a moment he remained stupified by surprise; and then, recovering his self-possession, he refused to believe that the messenger had not mistaken the meaning of the king. “I am Connétable of France” he said haughtily; “and by virtue of that dignity I have a right to lead her army to the field. What will be the opinion of the troops when they learn that my privilege has been invaded, and my authority transferred to a general without experience, and a soldier who has yet even a name to win?”

“The whole army resents the insult which is thus offered to you,” said M. de Pomperant, his ancient governor, “and are convinced to a man that it is not the spontaneous act of the king himself.”

“Who is then my enemy?” he asked fiercely.

“One upon whom you cannot revenge yourself—Madame d’Angouleme.”

“Ah I is it so?” exclaimed the duke. “But no—the thing is impossible. She has always professed herself my friend; why then should she thus assail my honour? Perhaps she covets the sword of connetable for her minion Bonnivet. It would be well bestowed upon an upstart whose ancestors were honoured when they acted as equerries to mine! Let the king beware, however, how he seconds such a project.”

“Duke,” said M. de Pomperant firmly, “no subject has a right to threaten his sovereign.”

“I shall not revenge myself by words,” retorted Bourbon gloomily; “Jet the nerveless husband of Marguerite de France lead the troops of her brother to battle. The future is still before me, and I shall know how to use it.”

Meanwhile, Charles V. had been compelled, as we have shown, to retreat once more to Valenciennes; the hopes of the allied sovereigns had been falsified, and they had gained nothing by the blood spilt and the desolation created by their arms, save a few provinces which they were not destined long to retain.

The flag of France once more waved above her fortresses; and Francis, having conducted his army to Amiens, where he disbanded a great portion of the troops, entered his capital at the head of the remaining force amid a tumult of joyous welcome.

## BOOK II

### CHAPTER I.

[1522.]

UNFORTUNATELY for Francis matters wore a less favourable aspect in Lombardy, where Lautrec, who had returned to France in order to negotiate an advantageous and wealthy marriage with the daughter of the Count Albret d'Orval, at the instigation of Madame de Chateaubriand, had confided to his brother, M. de Lescun, the temporary command of the army; which, from its having been left unpaid throughout the whole of the preceding year, had been compelled to exist by plunder and rapine, and had, accordingly, created a revolt among the peasantry, who were driven to exasperation, not only by the daily and hourly exactions of the invading troops, but also from the fact that a great portion of the native nobility had emigrated in order to save the remnant of their property, and to escape from the tyrannous persecution of the French general; while Prosper Colonna, the general appointed both by the emperor and the pope, had profited by the discontent in the French ranks, to invite to his standard the formidable Spanish bands who arrived from Naples, and to incorporate them with the German men-at-arms sent to his assistance by Charles, and the Grisons and Swiss in the pay of the holy see.

Under these circumstances Lautrec had awaited with impatience the return of Francis to his own dominions, in order to impress upon him the utter impracticability of pursuing the war, and defending the Milanese with any chance of success, unless he could carry back with him the sum of four hundred thousand crowns, with which to settle all arrears among his own troops, and to subsist a force of eight thousand Swiss, whom his brother had hastily recruited.

Francis, angered as he was by this first and heavy check upon his desire to plunge once more into pleasure and dissipation, was, nevertheless, unable to deny the justice of such a claim; but although the war had only recently commenced, the treasury was as usual already exhausted; the return of the king having been the signal for a succession of courtly festivities, hunting parties, and lavish expenditure of every description. The favour of Madame de Chateaubriand had, moreover, become increased by their temporary separation; and it was the pleasure of Francis, who loved magnificence in every shape, to overwhelm her with the most precious jewels he could obtain, and of which the costliness was enhanced by the marvellous fashion of their setting, which had inspired such emulation among the court jewellers, that every ornament became a work of art, rendered even more gratifying to the vanity of the favourite by the fact that the chasing, enamelled with small gems, was formed on each into some gallant device, or intertwining of the two FF, which preceded alike the Christian name of the king and her own; and that these were invented at the desire of the enamoured monarch, by the Duchess d'Alençon his sister; who, rejoiced that her

husband had not, during the late brief campaign, utterly sunk into an insignificance which would have increased the contempt that she already entertained for him, willingly lent herself to the wishes of her brother by evincing both affection and deference towards his fair and frail favourite.

Tastes of so ruinous a description as these had necessarily diminished the resources of the royal coffer; and, indisposed as he was to forego them, Francis nevertheless found himself equally powerless to refute the arguments of Lautrec, and to supply his necessities.

Madame d'Angoulême, however, who was fertile in expedients, did not hesitate to promise that she would devise means to liberate him from this new difficulty; and he gladly left an affair in her hands which distracted his mind from other and more pleasant pursuits.

Thus authorized to act as she saw fit, the duchess at once summoned M. de Semblançay, the finance-minister, to her presence; and after assuring him in her most insinuating manner that she felt convinced so good and zealous a servant of her son would leave no means untried to save him from the affront of being once more driven from the Milanese, she urged him to consider seriously if he could not suggest a method of averting such a calamity. For a time the old statesman only shook his head despondingly, and recapitulated the numerous sources of expense by which he was already surrounded; but Madame d'Angoulême was not to be so silenced.

"We are not met, my good friend," she said with a playful smile, "to enumerate our difficulties, but to discover an expedient which may preserve us from a great danger. We must have money; and surely, in so terrible an emergency as this, you cannot wish your sovereign to suppose that such a realm as France is utterly bankrupt! We must have many resources."

"We had, Madam."

"Look at the wars which were sustained by former kings, when the nation was less flourishing than in the present day; and yet they were nobly and royally sustained."

"But those kings to whom you allude, Madam, did not resemble Francis I"

"No, Sir," replied the duchess with well-acted exultation, and wilfully overlooking the real drift of the minister's remark. "The greater the dishonour to France, therefore, should she suffer such a sovereign to be crippled by want of funds."

"The annual outlay of the court is enormous, Madam," persisted M. de Semblançay, in his turn evading a direct reply; "more, far more in amount than would sustain a war."

"You refuse, then, to serve me, Sir? You, on whose loyalty and attachment I have hitherto relied with such blind confidence."

"By no means, Madam; but I dare not give a pledge which I may find myself unable to redeem. How am I to raise this money?"

"I think that even I could suggest a method," said the pertinacious duchess, as she laid her small hand lightly upon the arm of her companion, and looked up into his face with an expression of almost affectionate trustfulness.

"Madam," said the old man, moved by this condescension, "you know that I have already loyally served three sovereigns. Judge, therefore, if I am likely to fail in my duty to a fourth. Be gracious enough to explain your meaning, and trust to my poor efforts if they can avail."

“I do, M. de Semblançay, I do,” replied the duchess energetically; “we cannot at this moment look for further help from our good city of Paris”

“The citizens already murmur, Madam”.

“And yet the king is so indulgent,” said Madame d’Angoulême half reproachfully; “when had the *bourgeoisie* such easy access to the court? But it is ever so; the people love pleasure, but do not care to pay its price. Let us not, however, waste time, which is now precious, upon their idle discontent We were speaking of our alternative. Well, then, we will ask nothing of Paris; that is agreed. Nay more, we will ask nothing near home. But what say you to the southern provinces, M. de Semblançay? Surely we have a right to look for succour from the south?”

“The measure will be difficult.”

“Perhaps so, but not impossible. I have put the card into your hand. You have now only to play out the game.”

Although only half convinced, the minister was disarmed; and the duchess obtained his promise to levy four hundred thousand crowns upon the provincial chests of the south. This point gained, she hastened to inform her son of her success; who, in his turn, confided it to Lautrec, the anxiety of the Marechal having been greatly increased by a letter from his brother, calling upon him to return with all speed to Milan, and to resume a government which he was himself utterly unable longer to sustain.

The advice of Madame de Châteaubriand, however, determined him against a haste which might tend to frustrate all his plans, for she had no sooner explained to him the extent of the jealousy which her influence had excited in the heart of the duchess-mother, than he became convinced that Louise de Savoie, extreme in all her feelings, would not hesitate to sacrifice, not only the favourite herself, but all who were connected with her, should she secure an opportunity of revenge; and accordingly he respectfully intimated to the king, that, despite the urgency of the letter from Milan, he could not leave the court until the money had been confided to him.

But Madame d’Angoulême, who was anxious to be rid of his importunity for reasons of her own, had resolved otherwise; and she represented to her son at once the impossibility of procuring so large a sum without some delay, and the danger which the obstinate resistance of Lautrec might bring upon his government; offering to pledge both her own word and that of the finance-minister that immediately the money had reached Paris it should be despatched to its destination without loss of time. With this arrangement Lautrec was, therefore, compelled to appear satisfied, supported as it was by the king’s command that he should risk no further delay; and accordingly, having taken a brief leave of the sovereign and his court, he returned to the unfortunate duchy which had suffered so bitterly from his arrogance and cruelty, with the confident expectation of being ere long enabled to silence the murmurings of his army, and to establish his position.

As, however, after his arrival at Milan he received no intelligence of the advent of the funds which were to liberate him from his difficulties, he immediately levied new contributions upon the most wealthy inhabitants of the desolated duchy, and punished those who resisted with the most uncompromising barbarity; the scaffold was his argument, and the confiscation of private property his vengeance. The dungeons had already been peopled by his equally inexorable brother; and one of his first victims was the Signor Cristoforo Pallavicini, whose only crime was the extent of his property, and whom he condemned to lose his head; a sentence which he carried into effect, although the judge before whom his cause was tried, in order if possible to give a semblance of justice to the proceeding, refused to append his signature to so unholy a sacrifice. Pallavicini, the scion of a noble house, was destined to expiate the sin of possessing an income of twenty-five

thousand crowns; and he perished accordingly, in order that the work of war might be carried on, threatened as it was with immediate cessation from the failure of the receipts anticipated by the French marshal.

Day after day passed by, and yet the promised supplies were withheld, but Lautrec had become desperate; he remembered the formidable enemy whom he had left at court; an enemy, moreover, who could at all hours command the ear and influence the resolutions of the monarch. He felt that not only his own interests, but those of his whole family were at stake; and he resolved to persevere. He was deficient neither in talent nor decision, but he was occasionally wanting in energy and presence of mind; and while he possessed the tact of enforcing obedience both from his troops and the people whom he governed, he nevertheless occasionally failed to profit by the most brilliant opportunities of signaling himself; an excess of precaution which irritated those who served under his command. Unpaid and dissatisfied, the Swiss mercenaries whom his brother had recruited deserted by whole companies at a time, and left a void in his ranks which he was unable to supply; while on the contrary, those who had joined the banner of Leo X remained faithful to his cause, although repeatedly recalled by the Helvetic diet

The confederated party threatened to besiege Parma, and the situation of the marshal was critical. The pope had, on the 1st of August, declared war against France, and his troops had even marched upon that city; but a quarrel for precedence which arose between Prosper Colonna, and Ferdinand d'Avalos, Marquis of Pescara, (who, as imperial general, claimed to share the command upon equal terms with the generalissimo of the pope), occasioned so much confusion that Lautrec found himself enabled, during the delay occasioned by this misunderstanding, to adopt such efficient measures for the defence of the threatened fortress as sufficed to check the progress of the enemy; who after having possessed themselves of a portion of the city at the commencement of September, were compelled to relinquish their capture by the arrival of the Marechal in person, accompanied by several officers of rank, and a reinforcement of troops, which although not sufficiently powerful to encounter their opponents at a disadvantage, still contributed to paralyse their movements. An entire month was then lost by the opposing generals, each anticipating succours which might enable him to overcome his antagonist. These, however, failed equally on either side; and at length, although not without discussion and dissension among the confederate leaders, the siege was raised.

Upon this occasion M. de Lautrec was guilty of one of those acts of hyper-caution to which we have already alluded. His troops, flushed by their advantage, would gladly have pursued it; but the Marechal, alarmed by the partial revolt in the Milanese, and the aversion with which he was personally regarded throughout the country, was unwilling to risk such an attempt as a pursuit of the retiring and disheartened besiegers; and he consequently permitted Prosper Colonna to pass the Po unimpeded, and to secure a position which enabled him to command the help of which he might by an effort have been deprived, and thus to carry war into the heart of Cremona. Nevertheless his first error might not have proved fatal, had he not followed it up by refusing, despite the remonstrances of those about him, to attack the imperialist general, who occupied a disadvantageous position at Rebecco, upon the banks of the Aglio, and under the very guns of the Venetian fortress of Pontevico, by which his own demonstration would have been effectively seconded.

This double opportunity wilfully disregarded disgusted his troops, who henceforward lost faith in their leader; and the influence of the Cardinal of Sion operated so powerfully upon the Swiss mercenaries who had hitherto remained faithful to his cause, that they once more deserted in such numbers as to leave barely a force of four thousand in the ranks of France. Those who remained, moreover, murmured loudly, and demanded the recompense which was habitually conceded to them after every engagement; declaring that if they had not been placed in contact with the enemy under circumstances which rendered success inevitable, the fault lay with the

Marechal, who had not afforded them an opportunity of conquest, and not with themselves, who were willing and even eager to be led to battle.

Lautrec was destined most bitterly to expiate his fault. The supplies of money were still withheld: he was distrusted by his troops; detested by the citizens; alike feared and execrated by the people: he had lost the prestige which his former military renown had cast about him; and even those who shared his command murmured loudly at an enforced inaction which perilled their own honour. He had no longer, however, an alternative; his army was enfeebled by desertion, and his position rendered precarious by private animosity. The sun of his glory had set; and, no longer able to threaten, he found himself compelled to act only on the defensive, and even to retreat within the walls of Milan; a shelter which he had scarcely gained ere he was in his turn assailed by the confederated generals, who made so vigorous a night attack, that, aided by the citizens, they took possession of the town; and the discomfited Marechal, who was awakened from his sleep by the tumult, had scarcely time to retreat to Como, leaving a portion of his troops to garrison the citadel.

Even there, however, he was not destined to remain in safety, but being pursued by the Marquis de Pescara, was compelled to enter the Venetian territory; where, at the end of a few days, his mortification reached its climax by the information which was conveyed to him, that not only had Como surrendered to the imperialists, but that the city of Cremona was also in their power, although the citadel still held out. Enraged at the overthrow of all his brilliant anticipations, Lautrec no sooner learnt these ill tidings than he made a last and desperate effort, introduced some troops into the town, and by a vigorous attack upon the walls succeeded in wresting it once more from the enemy, and in establishing his winter quarters in the only portion of his late government which now acknowledged his authority, or afforded a safe asylum for his person.

In this emergency the Marechal despatched his brother Lescun to the French court with despatches, which, being of so disastrous an import, could not have arrived at a more unpropitious moment. A second conference had taken place at Calais between the ministers of Charles and Francis, at which Wolsey presided as the representative of his sovereign, with a state and dignity even hyper-monarchical; presents of the most costly description had once more been lavished upon the avaricious cardinal, and no pains spared to conciliate his favour; but the whole of the proceedings had been carried on with a levity and carelessness, which convinced the French statesmen that no good result could be anticipated upon their parts. The terms proposed by Wolsey were such as their dignity did not permit them to accept; and Francis had now gained a perfect conviction of the perfidy and double-dealing of the English monarch and his minister.

He was consequently ill prepared to receive the tidings from Milan with either patience or temper; and he accordingly overwhelmed the unfortunate messenger with the most bitter reproaches; accusing his brother of being deficient both in skill and courage; of having so misconducted his government as to render the name of his sovereign odious to the Milanese; and of ultimately completing by cowardice what he had commenced by cruelty.

Lescun shrank abashed before a storm of accusation which he was not permitted to palliate. He was aware that one of its brightest jewels had been rent from the crown of Francis; and with consummate judgment he bowed before this tempest of royal wrath, and left it to time and to Madame de Chateaubriand to justify both himself and the absent Marechal.

While these disastrous events were taking place in the Milanese, Leo X. was a prey to the most violent anxiety. The reverses of Charles in the Low Countries he had never anticipated; and his apprehension that the arms of Francis, towards whom he had falsified all his pledges, and whose friendship he could never again hope to regain, would prove equally fortunate in Italy, filled him with constant forebodings. His exultation on learning the capture of Milan and the recovery of

Parma and Piacenza was consequently extravagant; and he immediately declared his intention of commanding public thanksgivings to be offered up in every church in Rome, in gratitude for such unhoped-for success. The surprise had, however, affected his health; and having given the necessary directions he retired to his chamber complaining of slight indisposition. In the first instance this illness excited little uneasiness, being attributed by some to excessive emotion, and by others to the effects of cold or malaria; but it was, nevertheless, fated to be his last; and on Sunday the 1st of December he expired so suddenly as to deprive him of the habitual ceremonies of the Church, after the brief suffering of a week. Suspicions of poison well or ill-founded were rife in Rome; and it is asserted that not only the appearance of the body after death tended to justify them, but that a post mortem examination removed all doubt.



CHAPTER II.

[1522.]

MEANWHILE the Duke de Bourbon, who had become a widower, and who could not forget the affront to which he had been subjected by the king at Valenciennes, instead of joining the court at Amboise had established himself at his hotel in Paris, where he lived in almost complete seclusion, receiving only a few of his most intimate friends and followers, apparently absorbed by some dark and engrossing thought, and occupied in taking measures to protect himself against the pretensions of Madame d'Angoulême; who, on the pretext of being herself a Bourbon, had instituted a claim to inherit from his late wife the large property which he had received as her dowry.

Unaware of the secret motive by which Louise de Savoie was thus urged to an attempt which would, if successful, reduce him from one of the most wealthy to one of the most needy nobles of the court, Bourbon saw only in the obstinate rigour with which she prosecuted her suit the open demonstration of an implacable enmity; and the iron which before had already entered his heart, corroded there.

Thus it was with more surprise than alacrity that he obeyed her summons to Amboise, although it reached him in an autograph letter couched in the most courteous terms; nor was he less astonished when he found himself welcomed with the same warmth and urbanity.

Madame d'Angoulême, although she had now attained her forty-seventh year, was still a superb woman; and her mirror only reflected the flatteries of the courtiers. Her gallantries were as unrestrained and as numerous as ever; and she did not care to remember that time was passing rapidly over her which she could never redeem. We have already hinted at her passion for the connétable; and that passion, although it had been suffered to slumber for a time, had never been suppressed. The very litigation into which she had entered had been undertaken rather as a means than as a result; and satisfied that she had now awakened the fears of the duke, she simply sought to complete her work by awakening alike his ambition and his softer feelings. Nothing had been omitted to strengthen the spell: her attire, on his reception, was both graceful and gorgeous; her manner at once dignified and gentle; her arguments at the same time reproachful and reluctant; but still Bourbon stood his ground, and maintained his rights.

“You are obdurate, duke,” she said at length, with a smile which was half smothered in a sigh. “You do not, or you will not, understand me. At a former period, and under the same circumstances, this very question which we are now discussing was argued between yourself and Madame Anne de France; and finally arranged in a manner which we should perhaps, in our turn, do well to imitate.”

“Would that it were possible, Madam,” replied Bourbon gloomily; “but M. d'Alençon has been feted to thwart me in my path through life. He has lately robbed me of my honour—and—he married Madame Marguerite.”

“True,” said the duchess biting her lip; “the king's sister is beyond your reach—but the king's mother, M. de Bourbon, is a widow.”

“Do I understand you rightly, Madam?” asked the duke as a cloud gathered upon his brow. “Do not jest with me. Recent events have rendered me a poor courtier.”

“I am sincere, Connétable,” said Louise de Savoie energetically. “I am ready to make our separate interests one and indivisible.”

“I thank you, Madam,” was the cold rejoinder; “you have conferred upon me an honour which I could not anticipate, and by which I regret that I cannot profit. I shall never contract a second marriage; and if this be the alternative of your forbearance I must brave the worst. If our lawsuit is to succeed, so be it; I am prepared to uphold my claim”.

“As you will, Monsieur de Bourbon”, said the duchess rising haughtily from her seat; “our interview is at an end, and henceforth we are strangers to each other”.

The connétable attempted no rejoinder; but with a ceremonious salutation he quitted the apartment, and left the haughty Louise de Savoie to her reflections.

It was the first occasion upon which, during a long career of vice, she had been made to feel that she was scorned, and for a time she was half suffocated by conflicting emotions. In so far as her corrupted heart was capable of such a feeling she had loved Bourbon; she, the mother of a king, with one foot upon the steps of the throne,—she had loved a subject, and had been repulsed. But Louise de Savoie could hate as vehemently as she had loved.

Nor was Bourbon less decided in his aversion to Madame d'Angoulême than he had by this interview rendered her towards himself. It was to her interference that he attributed the marriage of her daughter to the Duke d'Alençon, at a period when he could no longer entertain a doubt that had the princess been permitted to follow her own inclination, she would have become his wife; and, subsequently, his disgust was deepened by her undisguised protection of Bonnivet, whose passion for Marguerite was well known; and a disgust which was heightened by the fact that the Admiral was accused during a visit made by the court to his château in Poitou, of having adopted, such measures to possess himself, if not of the affections, at least of the person of the princess, as must have cost him his head, favourite as he was, had not the principal attendant of Madam d'Alençon ventured to remind her imprudent mistress, (who in the first burst of her indignation was about to communicate the whole transaction to the king,) that affairs of so delicate a nature would not bear handling; and that there were evil tongues about the court which would not hesitate to imply that M. de Bonnivet must have received more than ordinary encouragement before he could have dared so much.

Nevertheless, the trustworthiness of the same lady may well be suspected, as a whispered version of the disgraceful tale soon spread among the courtiers, and at length reached the ears of the connectable, whose indignation was unbounded, and who, with the natural haughtiness which was inherent in him, considered himself doubly aggrieved that such an outrage should remain unpunished, when the aggressor was a vassal of his own, who did homage to him for his estates, and moreover a man of comparatively humble birth. So great indeed was his contempt for the sudden rise of Bonnivet, whom he saw daily increasing in arrogance, and affecting a magnificence with which he could not himself compete, that as he was pacing the marble hall of the favourite beside the king, who was warmly expatiating upon the taste and splendour of the whole edifice, he continued resolutely silent, until Francis, struck by the circumstance, turned towards him suddenly with the exclamation, “You amaze me, M. le Connétable! You who delight in all that is rich and great—you have not bestowed even one word of praise upon this splendid pile. And yet,

you cannot deny that it is a noble residence. Be candid ; what think you of it?"

"That the cage is too large for the bird," was the dogged reply, as the duke paused in front of a window overlooking his own château of Châtellerault, which appeared like a mere villa from the spot on which he stood.

The king made no comment upon the abruptness of his companion, nor did he affect to comprehend the movement by which it was accompanied; although he was probably reminded at that instant of the feeling which he had himself experienced, when in the year 1517, he had stood sponsor to the infant son of the duke, who received him and his court at Moulins with a magnificence that was almost regal. On that occasion both the ceremony and the banquet by which it was succeeded, were gorgeous in the extreme; and several days were consumed in tournaments, masquerades, balls, and other pastimes; during the whole of which time the guests were waited on by five hundred gentlemen of good family, attired in rich suits of velvet, and each wearing about his neck a triple chain of gold; a decoration, which at that period was not only esteemed as one of excessive magnificence, but also implied the rank of the entertainer.

Although he saw fit to display so much splendour at the christening of his son, M. de Bourbon had, from the hour of his birth, felt convinced that the infant would not survive; his mother, Suzanne de Bourbon, being not only infirm in health, but also slightly deformed in person; and his foreboding proved correct; for not only did the child die within a few months, but was followed by the mother at the commencement of the following year.

We have already stated, early in the work, that it was to avoid a weary and uncertain lawsuit that the connétable had been induced to accept the hand of his cousin, while his heart was wholly given to the Princess Marguerite; and, accordingly, he had by his marriage with Suzanne, united all the possessions of the several branches of the Bourbon family, which rendered him at once the most wealthy and the most powerful noble in France. The death of his wife was succeeded in the following year by that of her mother, Madame Anne de France; and thus the duke found himself, as he believed, the sole legitimate claimant to enormous possessions; and became anxious for an heir to his proud name and ample fortunes. The Duchess d'Alençon was lost to him ; and after some lingering regrets, he had so far overcome his repugnance to a second marriage with another, as to ask of Francis the hand of the Princess Renée, the sister of Queen Claude.

The king, however, who saw in this proposal only a new proof of the soaring ambition of his already too powerful subject, and Madame d'Angoulême, for still more personal reasons, were alike regardless both of the claims of Bourbon, and of the entreaties of the princess, who, endowed with remarkable intellect and a sound judgment, was well able to appreciate the noble qualities of her suitor.

The interference of the duchess-mother was not, as we have seen, favourable to her own interests; but only served to add another to the long list of injuries which the duke attributed to her influence; and thus, when she so far forgot the dignity of her station and the modesty of her sex, as to offer to him her own hand, he revenged himself not only by rejecting the proposal, but by detailing the whole scene to his chosen friends, accompanying his recital by terms so offensive to the character of the duchess as to exasperate Francis; who, it is even said, upon one occasion, raised his hand to strike him.

Under these circumstances Louise de Savoie vowed his ruin; and unfortunately her authority over the chancellor had long been so unbounded, that she urged forward the threatened lawsuit with an acrimony and perseverance which betrayed her perfect confidence in its result.

While this important cause was pending, the college of cardinals was engrossed by the

necessity of electing a new pope; and meanwhile the confederated sovereigns, who had lost in Leo X a powerful and sure ally, suspended their proceedings, uncertain as to what might be the views and principles of his successor. Among the numerous competitors for that vacant dignity it was, however, universally believed that the choice of the conclave would fall either on the Cardinal de' Medici, the nephew of the deceased pontiff, or Wolsey, the English minister. The one relied upon the efforts made by Leo X to secure his election, and the other upon the often-repeated pledges of the emperor. Both were, nevertheless, fated to disappointment; and great was the astonishment, not only of the two candidates themselves, when, despite all the intrigues of their several parties, they found themselves unsuccessful, but also that of all Christendom, when it was ascertained that a man whose very name had hitherto been almost unheard in Rome, and who had apparently made no effort to attain the triple crown, was called to the chair of St. Peter. The influence of the Medici, and the crooked policy of Wolsey, who had not scruple to sacrifice the honour of his monarch and the interests of his country to his own wild dream of ambition, had succumbed beneath the superior craft of the wily Charles; and on the 9th of January, 1522, Adrian, Cardinal of Tortosa, the former preceptor of the emperor, and his present governor in Spain, was elected by an overwhelming majority.

Francis did not for a moment deceive himself as to the probable results of this new triumph on the part of his enemy; for not only had Charles, by influencing the conclave to elect one of his own de voted servants to the papal see, given him an immediate and powerful interest in Italy, but it had also convinced all who were attached to his cause that he was both able and willing to promote their fortunes. This new mortification rankled deeply with the French king; and it served to arouse him for a time from his trance of pleasure, and to decide him to make another and a strenuous effort to reinstate himself in the Milanese. The power of Charles had become formidable to all Europe. The whole of Germany acknowledged him as its emperor; every European sovereign was either his ally or his dependent; his sway was now colossal; and Francis saw himself called upon to contend single-handed against a hydra-headed enemy. Of the growing hostility of England moreover he had long ceased to entertain a doubt, and he accordingly anticipated from day to day a declaration of war, which had been hitherto delayed rather from policy than from inclination.

Nor were his home prospects more cheering. His frontiers were for the most part unfortified, and his treasury empty; his subjects already overwhelmed with taxation, and the citizens of Paris full of discontent. Even the very courtiers about him, although they were not insensible to pleasure, were still greedy of glory; and many a noble brow darkened as the shadow of coming events loomed over their country. In this emergency, his first measures were to levy a tax of twenty-five thousand livres on the states of Languedoc, for the purpose of repairing the fortifications of Narbonne and the fortresses of the eastern Pyrenees; to renew the sale of judicial offices; and finally, to institute perpetual rents on the Hôtel-de-Ville. These arrangements were not made, however, without considerable opposition. Strong in his sense of the royal prerogative, Francis disdained to explain to his subjects in the more distant provinces the fearful emergency in which he was involved; and thus, what through personal alarm or national pride might have been conceded to him without serious difficulty, was withheld from a resolution to resist the mere dictates of an arbitrary will.

While the French king was engaged in these financial operations, the emperor paid a second visit to England, and remained the guest of Henry VIII during six weeks; where he employed his time so successfully as to induce his royal host to ratify in person the betrothal secretly concluded at Bruges by the cardinal-legate between himself and the Princess Mary, who was to receive a dowry of four hundred thousand crowns; and to obtain his pledge that he would enter France simultaneously with himself before the end of May 1524, accompanied by an army of forty thousand infantry, and ten thousand horse; each declaring the several provinces over which he affected to have a claim, and receiving the promise of the other that he should be permitted to retain them in the event of their subjugation.

The treasury of France was no sooner replenished than Francis lost no time in providing for the restoration of the Milanese; and despatched for that purpose a supply of money to the Marechal de Lautrec by the Bastard of Savoie, M. de Chabannes, and the Count de Montmorenci, to whom he moreover gave authority to levy a force of sixteen thousand Swiss. The effect of this reinforcement was electrical; the flagging spirit of the French troops revived; and Lautrec, eager to revenge his late defeat, displayed an energy which, had it been more seasonably developed, might have saved the duchy. Several of the minor towns were retaken; and, flushed with hope, the Marechal pushed forward to Milan, where he was gallantly opposed by the garrison, but nevertheless commenced an attack upon the city, to whose capture however, the hatred with which he had inspired the inhabitants proved an equally formidable obstacle.

Weary of his iron rule, they defended themselves with an energy that baffled all his efforts; and at length, convinced that his attempt to reduce Milan was hopeless, he was reluctantly compelled to abandon it, and to march upon Novara, which having yielded, enabled him to form a junction with some troops which his brother had brought to his assistance, and among whom was Pietro da Navarro—who had for a time abandoned the cause of France, but whose sword was once more unsheathed in her defence—and the redoubtable Bayard. He then made an attack upon Pavia; but Prosper Colonna had not only succeeded in reaching that city before him, but had also enabled Francisco Sforza to join him with his troops; an event which prevented its capture.

Having relieved Pavia, Colonna took up his quarters at Bicocca, a castle seated in an extensive park, and surrounded by deep ditches, about a league from Milan, where he hastily threw up outworks, and rendered the place so strong as to deter Lautrec from any attempt to dislodge him. The situation of the Marechal was embarrassing; for not only did Colonna bold him at bay in this stronghold, but Anchiso Visconti with a body of Milanese troops blockaded Arona, where a portion of the money which had arrived for the pay of the army was thus rendered unattainable. The French cavalry were already eighteen months in arrear, but they nevertheless bore their privations with patience, although they were both badly equipped and still worse armed; while the Venetians, who in accordance with the recent treaty had joined the French forces for the defence of the Milanese, were supine and cowardly, and resolutely refused either to advance far from their own frontiers, or to risk their safety in any engagement by which they could not individually profit. Finally the Swiss, wearied by a war which afforded them no opportunity of pillage, and of a general who preferred strategy to action, murmured loudly when they found that the attack upon Bicocca was relinquished; and had no sooner ascertained that the long-expected supplies had reached Arona, than they collected tumultuously about the tent of the Marechal, declaring that he should immediately satisfy their demands or give battle to Colonna.

In vain did the French general explain to them the impossibility of procuring the money during the blockade of the town where it was deposited, and the impregnable nature of the papal general's position; they were deaf to his reasonings, and persisted that they would be paid, brought hand to hand with the enemy, or disband themselves.

The alternative was difficult, as the departure of the mercenaries would have been equivalent to a defeat, and Lautrec was painfully convinced that it would be immediately followed by that of the Venetians, already weary of the service in which they were engaged. In this emergency he consulted the feelings of his troops, who were all eager for action, and although against his own judgment and that of M. de Savoie and the Marquis de la Palice, he ultimately left Monza on the 29th of April, (1528,) at daybreak, having committed the charge of the vanguard to Montmorenci, that of the rear to the Duke d'Urbino, and reserved to himself the command of the main body. He had consented that the Swiss should, as they had demanded, attack the enemy in front, while his brother, the Marechal de Foix, should march to the left upon the bridge, and effect an entrance into the enclosure; a third division, whom he caused to substitute the red cross for the national one of white, in the hope that they might be mistaken by Colonna for a body of his own

troops, were ordered to the right; while the Black Bands and the Venetians were to support the Swiss and to act as a reserve.

In order to secure the success of this combined attack, however, it was necessary that the three divisions should arrive on the ground simultaneously; and that the Swiss who were in advance should move slowly, in order to give time to the other bodies to come up with them; a circumstance which was strenuously explained by the anxious general, who was aware that the fortunes of the day hinged mainly upon this manoeuvre. His eloquence, however, availed nothing; arrogant and headstrong, the mercenaries affected to despise the enemy against whom they were about to contend, and complained that too much time had already been lost in futile calculations; and accordingly, Montmorenci had no sooner halted in a defile under cover of the entrenchments, for the purpose of awaiting the arrival of the artillery, than they openly opposed his authority; and asserting that they did not require the assistance of the French guns, rushed tumultuously forward, exposing themselves to the fire of the enemy which swept them off in files as they advanced, without themselves losing a single man, protected as they were by entrenchments so loftily constructed that the Swiss could scarcely attain the summit with their pikes.

It was a butchery rather than a conflict. Three thousand of them fell before they would retreat, and among others their celebrated leader Albert de la Pierre, while Montmorenci was so desperately wounded that he was carried from the field. At the precise moment when they at length gave way, Lautrec had reached the right wing of Colonna's army; but the papal general fearing some stratagem on the part of his adversary, had negatived the ruse of the Marechal by causing his men to add a green bough to the red cross on their uniform, and the imperialist troops consequently fell upon the French, whom they at once recognised, without fear of mistake. As the engagement commenced M. de Lescun passed the bridge, but it was already too late. Colonna, relieved from the attack of the Swiss, who were totally routed, had full leisure to turn his whole strength against the two marshals, and to compel their retreat.

The position attained by the Marechal de Foix, who had succeeded in forcing an entrance to the enemy's entrenchments, had inspired him for a time with the hope that he might be enabled to hold his ground, and to redeem the imprudence of the vanguard; but unfortunately for the French cause, he had also under his command a number of Swiss troops, who instead of supporting the gallant charge made by his cavalry, resolutely refused to act; and thus his whole brigade was cut to pieces, while he himself had a narrow escape, his horse having been killed under him, and a second with difficulty secured to carry him from the field. This circumstance at once became evident to Colonna, who attempted to profit by it on the instant, and for that purpose ordered a sally to be made, by which the supine mercenaries might be taken in flank; but the manoeuvre, rapidly as it was executed, was rendered abortive by M. de Pontdormy, who, suspecting the object of their movement, attacked the advancing party with his cavalry so resolutely, that before they could accomplish their retreat, the greater portion of them were destroyed.

Baffled, but not beaten, the French forces were still formidable; and Lautrec, whose energy continued unabated, determined to renew the attack on the following day, but aware of the great importance of retaining the Swiss troops, he exerted all his eloquence to induce them to remain within sight of Bicocca, and even pledged himself that his own men should sustain the brunt of the battle, if they would promise to support them.

Conscious, however, that they had by their own imprudence trammelled his proceedings, they maintained a sullen silence; refused to communicate their intentions; and assumed the position of persons who considered themselves aggrieved. Had they possessed sufficient temper to be influenced by the arguments of the Marechal, and remained true to their engagements, all might still have been retrieved, and their own sullied glory restored; but the representations of the Cardinal of Sion, who from the opposite camp had never ceased his efforts to estrange them from

the cause of France, combined with their mortification, rendered them invulnerable to persuasion; and on the morrow they not only commenced their retreat, but even effected it in so tumultuous and disorderly a manner, that Lautrec saw himself compelled to detach the whole of his cavalry to cover their rear, in order to preserve them from total annihilation; and thus sheltered, they made their way to Bergama, and thence returned to their mountains.

Nor was this the only serious defalcation with which the French general had to contend; for his prescience as regarded the Venetians had not deceived him. Their inertness and disaffection became so evident after the departure of the mercenaries, that he found himself reduced to the necessity of sending M. de Montmorenci at once to Venice, in order to effect a better understanding with the only Italian state which still remained friendly to France, and to abandon all further idea of attacking Colonna in his stronghold. Once more, therefore, he strengthened the few fortresses which still maintained their allegiance to Francis; and leaving the command of his exhausted and harassed army to his brother, the Marechal de Foix, he started for Paris, to explain in person to the king the causes which had conduced to his defeat, and to secure more efficient aid both in money and troops.

Lautrec had not only lost a great number of men, but many of his bravest officers had fallen; while his whole remaining force was dispirited, and ill able to contend against the formidable enemy to which it was opposed. Colonna profited by his knowledge of these circumstances, and abandoning his position at Bicocca, he at once marched upon Cremona, which he invested, aware that the Marechal de Foix had retired there with the remnant of his army, accompanied by Giovanni de' Medici at the head of about sixteen hundred Italians, to whom one of the gates of the city was confided. This reinforcement had inspired the French general with new courage, and he made immediate preparations for defence, trusting still to redeem the disasters of the late engagement; but once more he was destined to prove the danger and inconvenience attendant upon the command of an army without either political or national sympathies. Could he have secured in lieu of this Florentine force an equal number of his own countrymen, there is no doubt that he might have held the important place which he then occupied; but, with true Italian guile, de' Medici no sooner saw Colonna before the walls than he made an application for the immediate payment of the arrears due to his followers, and even threatened to open the gate of which he had possession, to the imperialist general, if his claim were not cancelled upon the instant. Impoverished as he was, it was with extreme difficulty that M. de Lescun raised the sum demanded, and silenced the clamours of his *soi-disant* allies, with the help of his principal officers; but the ill-timed pertinacity of the Florentine at once convinced him that he must place no reliance upon the sincerity of his assistance; and under this impression he saw no other alternative than that of a capitulation with the enemy, by which he bound himself to deliver up the city at the expiration of three months, unless troops should in the interval arrive from France to reinforce him. Colonna accepted the offered terms, which, by relieving him from the necessity of employing his troops before Cremona, afforded him an opportunity of besieging Genoa.

The Venetian senate, moreover, no sooner ascertained this proof of weakness on the part of the French general, than, although upon the point of acceding to the treaty proposed by Montmorenci, they wavered, hesitated, and finally declined to sign it, under the conviction that no army could reach Italy in time to release the French marshal from his engagements; and thus, reduced to rely upon their own attenuated strength, and unable to make head against an over-powering enemy, the army of Francis successively lost Lodi and Pizzighettona, the first by siege, and the latter by a capitulation; and finally, Lescun saw himself, on the 21st of May, reduced to sign an agreement, by which he was bound to evacuate the whole of Lombardy save the three fortresses of Cremona, Novara, and Milan, if he did not receive succour within forty days; Andrea Gritti, the general of the Venetians, having meanwhile retired with all his troops to the frontier of his own country, and making no effort beyond that of defending the post of which he had possessed himself.

The whole of Italy was once more lost to France with the exception of the solitary province of Genoa, which had not been included in the capitulation of the Marechal de Foix; and even that was soon to follow, the Marquis de Pescara having marched against it at the head of all the Spanish foot, and a division of the Italian army, whose natural rapacity was heightened by his promise that the capture of the city would enable him to satisfy all their demands, and to enrich them with the spoils of the enemy against whom they were leagued. An immediate capture of the place was, however, prevented by the arrival of Pietro da Navarro with a couple of galleys and two hundred French infantry, although his influence was insufficient to prevent a parley between Pescara and the Genoese burgesses, who sent a deputation to the Spanish general to endeavour to effect favourable terms for themselves. During this conference it was clearly understood on both sides that hostilities were to be suspended; and the French soldiers gladly took advantage of the interval to relax for a time in that rigour of discipline which they had hitherto maintained. Fearless of treachery, the guard of the city was diminished, and many of the sentinels were withdrawn from their posts; a fearful and mistaken trust, which was fatally expiated; for some of Pescara's skirmishers having detected a breach in the walls, communicated the discovery which they had been heedlessly permitted to make, and profiting by this circumstance, effected an entrance into the city, whither they were immediately followed by a considerable force, and encountered only by Pietro da Navarro and his little band of followers, who were at once overpowered; when, despite the assistance rendered by the citizens, who treacherously welcomed the besiegers, Genoa the superb was pillaged with a cold-blooded ferocity disgraceful to its captors.

This event sealed the ruin of the French cause. The stipulated period for the release of Cremona had expired; and although reinforcements were sent from France headed by the Duke de Longueville, they only arrived in time to learn that no further hope existed of any successful attempt, and consequently returned to Picardy, where their services might still prove available, accompanied by the cavalry of the unfortunate Lescun.



CHAPTER III.

[1522.]

DESPITE these reverses, involving as they did the honour of the French crown, and in themselves so disastrous as to have claimed the whole attention of Louise de Savoie, she had continued, with the assistance of Duprat, to pursue her suit against the Duke de Bourbon with an acrimony which betrayed the whole extent of the hatred that she bore him. The possessions which had formed the dowry of his wife, and had been secured to her by the assent of her mother Madame Anne de France, proceeded, as we have elsewhere stated, from a twofold source. A portion of them descended in the Bourbon family by inheritance; and Madame d'Angoulême, who was the niece of the two last dukes of the elder branch, became their legitimate heiress in the event of her being enabled to set aside the donation made by the Duchess Suzanne to her husband; while the remainder were appanages which the crown was competent to reclaim at pleasure, and to reincorporate in the royal domains.

It was upon the hereditary inheritance that Louise de Savoie founded her pretensions, assuming that Madame Suzanne de Bourbon had acted illegally in disposing of the family property during her own lifetime and without her sanction; while the advocate-general, anxious still further to second her views, to which he was no stranger, demanded that all the titles by which M. de Bourbon held his estates should be communicated to him in order that he might be enabled to form his opinion upon the legitimacy of his several claims; declaring at the same time that he was strongly inclined to believe that the whole inheritance belonged by right of law to the monarch.

This judgment he speedily followed up by asserting that no valid claim could be advanced to such portions of the domains of the duke as had been secured to the family of Bourbon during the reigns of Charles VII and Louis XI, such concessions having been sanctioned rather by favour than by justice; while those which had been granted by Louis XII were still more questionable from the fact of their having encroached upon the rights of the crown. Thus, and upon these arguments, he reclaimed the county of La Marche, and the confiscated lordships of the Duke de Nemours, settled upon his daughter by Louis XI; he had no sooner procured a decree of the parliament declaring the donation of non-avail, and restoring these possessions to the king, than he proceeded upon other grounds to attack the right of M. de Bourbon to the duchies of Auvergne and Bourbonnais, and the county of Clermont. Here, however, the parliament refused to ratify his decision; alleging that in all transfers of territory made among different members of the reigning family, the law had always been subordinate to the will of the monarch, and that the precedent of setting aside the acts of the four preceding sovereigns would have a tendency so dangerous, that they could not immediately decide a point of such importance. Enough had, however, been done to convince M. de Bourbon that the Duchess d'Angoulême was determined to effect his ruin; a conviction in which he was strengthened by the fact, that all his public revenues were stopped upon the pretence of necessities of state; while the duchies and counties which were still objects of litigation, were placed under sequestration until the final sentence should be pronounced.

The indignation of the connétable accordingly exceeded all bounds; nor did he make an effort to conceal the nature of his feelings, either towards Louise de Savoie herself, or against the king, who was weak enough to submit to the arbitrary will of a woman without dignity or character. This unguarded vehemence of language was quickly conveyed to the ears of Madame d'Angoulême, who revenged herself by urging on the reluctant parliament to a decision; and by overlooking, either wilfully or blindly, the possible consequences of an animosity which she had

carried to persecution.

So important a struggle became, as a natural consequence, known and canvassed at every European court; and the emperor no sooner ascertained the pitch of reckless exasperation at which Bourbon had arrived, than he despatched to France the Count de Beaurain, his lieutenant-general in the Low Countries, and a cousin of M. de Chièvres, his late minister, who arrived in the spring of 1523 at Moulins, where the duke was then residing, and exhibiting an ostentatious display of magnificence better calculated to deepen the dislike of Francis and his mother than to propitiate their favour. The imperial envoy found him in precisely the temper which Charles had anticipated. He had become careless to the interests of France; regardless of her claims upon him as a citizen; disgusted alike with her laws, her policy, and her honours; chafed at the insult which had been put upon him at the head of his troops, and irritated by the injustice which was stripping him of his civil privileges. Adrien de Croi, Sire de Beaurain, was no stranger to Bourbon, having been his prisoner two years previously at Hesdin, where, during the brief captivity of the former, a mutual regard had been engendered; and . thus the duke did not scruple to lay before him the extent of his grievances, or to admit that he should not hesitate to adopt any measure by which he might revenge himself upon his persecutors.

This opportunity now presented itself; and with all the bitterness of desperation, Bourbon listened to the terms proposed by the emperor, who offered, in the event of his abandoning the cause of Francis for his own, to assist him in the recovery of the estates which had been wrested from him, and, moreover, to give him the hand of his sister Eleanora, the widowed Queen of Portugal, with the province of Beaujolais as her dower. The proposals were however insufficient to satisfy the vengeance of the connétable; who declared that, in return for his allegiance to Charles, he demanded, not only what the emperor had shown himself ready to concede, but also that Henry VIII should be admitted to a league whereby France should be dismembered, Languedoc, Burgundy, Champagne, and Picardy, be relinquished to Charles himself; Provence and Dauphiny annexed to his own appanage of the Bourbonnais and Auvergne, and erected into a kingdom; and the remainder of France delivered over to Henry.

The terms of the duke, monstrous as they were, were accepted by M. de Beaurain without hesitation; and it was then concluded that Bourbon, in order to facilitate the success of the project, should endeavour to take possession of the king's person, on his passage through some of the provinces; or, in the event of his failing to accomplish this object, should, so soon as Francis had crossed the Alps to rejoin the army in Italy, raise a force of a thousand nobles with their followers, and six thousand infantry, and uniting his troops with twelve thousand lansquenets whom the emperor would march through Franche-Comté, impede the French king on his return.

From Moulins M. de Beaurain at once proceeded to England to negotiate for his imperial master; and he was immediately followed by the Seigneur de Châteaufort, the chamberlain of the connétable, charged with a letter from the duke to Wolsey, and authorized to proffer upon his part such terms to Henry as were calculated to remove every objection which he might otherwise have felt to embark in so extreme and treacherous an undertaking. The result was such as Bourbon had anticipated. The English monarch, dazzled by the prospect of a second throne, by an act dated May the 17th, 1523, gave full powers to two of his counsellors to treat with the connétable, under the title of "Most Serene Prince", and also authorized his ambassadors in Spain to negotiate with him, upon his swearing homage and fealty to himself as King of France; and a short time subsequently he despatched a disguised envoy to Bourg-en-Bresse, (where the connétable was residing for a time, in order to be in the more immediate neighbourhood of his new allies,) to receive his pledge that he would fulfil the conditions of the compact which he had made, without reservation. This pledge was instantly given by the duke, and preparations were made without further delay by Henry and his minister for the advance of an English army upon Normandy.

While these secret negotiations were thus progressing, Francis, notwithstanding his recent reverses in Italy, the menacing position of the enemy, the helplessness of his frontiers, and the impoverished state of his army, which was still suffering from need of the long-withheld supplies, was wasting alike both time and money in the most reckless extravagance. The expenses of his court amounted to the enormous sum of a hundred and fifty thousand livres monthly. Balls, banquets, tilting matches, and hunting parties, absorbed all his attention; and meanwhile the kingdom was thrown into a state of fearful disorder by the troops, who, having no other means of sustaining life, were existing upon the pillage of the inhabitants; at first confining their outrages to the scattered villages, and contenting themselves with rapine; but ultimately even entering the towns, and committing enormities of every description. Nor was the capital exempt from its own horrors, the plague having declared itself in a form so fearful that hundreds fell victims to its ravages; and continued, month after month, with a virulence which palsied the energies of the faculty. Street tumults were of continual occurrence; and, as upon all similar occasions, the people murmured loudly, attributing their sufferings to human agency; while assassinations became so frequent, that, in order to appease the popular fury, Francis found himself compelled, early in the spring, to take up his abode in the palace of the Tournelles, and endeavour to calm the excited spirit of the mob by showing himself among them. The effort was, however, unavailing; and as he soon wearied of a position as useless as it was dangerous, he threatened to withdraw to Amboise, when the seneschal of the palace caused two gibbets to be erected at the entrance, in order to inspire more respect for the king's person; but even this extreme demonstration failed in its effect, for they were removed during the night by a body of men armed to the teeth; and Francis, indignant at the insult which had been offered to him in his own capital, after having held a bed of justice on the 30th of June, and declared his firm determination to punish the authors of these outrages, left the capital; and, as we have already stated, was soon immersed once more in pleasure and dissipation.

By a fortunate combination of circumstances, the only frontiers on the north of France which it was necessary to defend at this juncture were those of Champagne and Picardy; but even near these, exposed as they were to the double attack of the English and the Flemish, Francis neglected to assemble an army; contenting himself by ordering the Duke de Vendome, who was governor of the latter province, to distribute his forces between the several fortresses, and instructing M. de la Trémouille, who had charge of the former with five hundred lances, to raise ten thousand infantry, which he effected; but as he obtained them from the plough, and other agricultural pursuits, they were ill-fitted to encounter and contend successfully with well-disciplined and experienced troops.

Adrian VI had laboured, from the moment at which he ascended the papal throne, to re-establish the peace of Europe, and had even avoided an interview with the emperor; but he had nevertheless felt aggrieved that the French king should persevere in his pretensions, and consequently make a chilling reply to his advances. His natural prejudices were in favour of Charles; and although he had succeeded in reconciling the Dukes of Urbino and Ferrara with the Holy See, he had nevertheless detached them from the interests of France; and the French troops had no sooner evacuated Italy than he addressed to the Venetian senate a letter in which he urged them to renounce an alliance which could only tend to involve the papal dominions in renewed bloodshed, by encouraging the French in a fresh attempt to effect the conquest of Lombardy.

The appeal was not without its effect; Venice, separated as she was from France, and menaced by all Europe, was in no position to maintain so unequal and precarious a warfare; but, still the senate were anxious to gain time. They were aware that they had already lost much, and gained nothing by their French alliance; while Francis had recently despatched envoys to inform them that in the spring of 1523 he should enter Lombardy with a powerful army; and they were fearful of committing themselves. Their indecision was, however, terminated by a letter from their ambassador at Paris, who assured them that the French king was no longer an enemy to be feared,

for that he had so entirely abandoned himself to sensuality and dissipation, that he expended on his own selfish gratification the principal portion of the national revenue; while his whole thoughts were so absorbed by these pursuits that he seldom, and even then at the most inopportune moments, ever suffered a serious reflection or representation to divert him from his mistresses or his amusements; and that in order to organize an army he must either sell or mortgage the royal domains, or exhaust the kingdom by the most fearful exactions; that all France accused his supineness for the misfortunes which had recently supervened; and that, moreover, there were reasons for suspecting that a powerful prince of his family was about to abandon his allegiance.

This communication at once determined the Venetian senators. Aware that they could place implicit trust in the report of their representative, they announced to the pope their readiness to abandon the cause of a monarch who was thus careless of his own interests; and on the 3d of August, a general European league was signed against France, whereby the several sovereigns bound themselves to mutual support in their respective aggressions or reclaimers.

A new cause of anxiety, moreover, presented itself at this time, in the jeopardy of the island of Rhodes, where the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem had established themselves for the avowed purpose of carrying on a warfare against the Turks; in which they had for some time been eminently successful under the brave and skilful guidance of their grand master Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. Soliman, who had been elected to the sovereignty of Turkey during the preceding year, and who had already evinced his belligerent propensities by the invasion of the Hungarian frontiers, and the capture of Belgrade, had recently turned his attention towards Rhodes; and the grand master, on becoming apprised of his hostile intentions, had hastened to fortify his stronghold, and had collected about him a number of his bravest knights in order to repel the attack. The Turkish force proved, however, to be overwhelming; no less than three hundred vessels, with two hundred thousand troops, being despatched against the Christians, which were shortly followed by the sultan himself, to whom the capture of this stronghold was important alike as a matter of safety and of religion.

The defence of the knights was worthy of their reputation; and for six entire months they held out against the gigantic enemy to whom they were opposed, in the full reliance that the princes of Christendom would not allow the declared champions of their holy faith to be defeated from lack of help. But in this trust they were unfortunately deceived; the jealous animosity which existed between the emperor and the French king rendering them severally averse to act in concert even in a cause which involved one of their dearest interests. In vain did the pope conjure them to lay aside their personal differences for the time, and to unite in protecting the safety of the church. They remained deaf to his appeal; and, ultimately, the total exhaustion both of provisions and ammunition compelled the gallant grand master to capitulate, and to retire with the slender remnant of his noble followers from the island which they had so bravely defended, (and whose ruined citadel and crumbling walls attested the perseverance with which they had been defended,) to Viterbo, where the pope offered them an asylum, until they could again establish themselves in a manner more befitting the dignity of their order; and where they ultimately remained, until, some years subsequently, Charles V, who was anxious to secure their services, made them a grant of the island of Malta.

Thus were things situated when the Marechal de Lautrec arrived at court; and he had been sufficiently long absent to enable his enemies to enhance in the mind of the king every cause, or supposed cause, of complaint which could be adduced against him. The generals who had assisted in the taking of the Milanese, and who now saw all their prowess rendered unavailing, were loud in their censures, and joined the faction of the Duchess d'Angoulême in pouring out upon the head of the unlucky commander, the full vial of their wrath; while the king himself, mortified by a defeat which afforded such just cause of triumph to his enemies, and incensed by this new cause of heart-burning and difficulty, did not attempt to oppose the reasonings of those who counselled

him to refuse all communication with the Marechal, but immediately that his return to France was made known to him, peremptorily declared his determination to deny him all access to his presence.

M. de Lautrec,—he coldly remarked to the few faithful adherents of the unsuccessful general who still ventured to urge the expediency of his not denying an audience to one who had served him long and faithfully before these last reverses,—M. de Lautrec could have nothing to communicate to his sovereign, save that he had basely betrayed the trust which had been reposed in him; and by his supineness or ignorance suffered the glory of France to be tarnished, not only in his own person, but in that of her king. In vain, for the first time, did even Madame de Chateaubriand implore and weep; the love of the monarch for the fair Françoise de Foix was waxing old; and he had begun to discover that the court, and even the city, contained many beauties no less attractive than the frail wife of M. de Chateaubriand. The chain already hung more loosely about him; and he was, moreover, awakened from a dream of pleasure by the apparition of one who came only to recall him to reflections ill-suited to the life of festivity and splendour in which he was indulging at the moment.

The favourite was not, however, to be thus baffled. Lautrec had relied upon her promise to reconcile him with the king; and she no sooner found her personal efforts to effect this reconciliation unavailing, than she turned for aid to the Duke de Bourbon, over whom her influence has been already stated. The moment was an inauspicious one for the connétable to interfere in so delicate a question, but he was aware that the Duchess d'Angoulême was untiring in her efforts to ruin not only the young countess herself, but all her family; and this consciousness sufficed to decide him. Since the commencement of his secret negotiations with the emperor he had considered it expedient to appear more frequently in the circle of the king, where he affected entirely to overlook the coldness with which he was received, and revenged himself by an exhibition of splendour which was gall and wormwood to the spirit of Louise de Savoie; and the more so that his general, popularity had been rather increased than diminished since the commencement of their legal struggle. Bourbon was aware also of the primary cause of the disasters in Milan, and he well knew the anxiety of the duchess-mother to prevent all confidential communications between her son and the Marechal; and thus doubly urged, on the one side by his passion for Françoise de Foix, and on the other by his desire to humble Madame d'Angoulême, he at once promised to make the cause of Lautrec his own, and to obtain for him the desired and important interview.

It was not, however, without considerable difficulty that he succeeded; and that he eventually did so is probably to be ascribed to the conviction of Francis that it would be dangerous to incur the further resentment of so powerful a noble. The audience was therefore granted, but the king's reception of the Marechal was stern and ungracious.

"You come to tell me, Sir, that you are beaten", he commenced, without replying to the profound salutation of M. de Lautrec, who had paused at the very threshold of the apartment; "that through your carelessness and want of zeal you have sacrificed many of my bravest generals, victimized a gallant army, and lost one of her finest provinces to France. You might have spared both me and yourself so dishonourable a recital. Your despatches have told me more than enough already; and my time will be better spent in endeavouring to repair the fault of which you have been guilty, than in listening to your excuses."

"I am at a loss to know by what act of my own I have merited such a reception from your majesty", said the Marechal firmly.

"How, Sir!" exclaimed Francis with increasing vehemence; "do you ask the reason of a displeasure which you might have anticipated? Have you not lost the Milanese? Have you not

tarnished the glory of the French arms? Have you not” he paused for an instant; and before he could resume his reproaches, Lautrec interposed proudly—

“No, Sire; I am guiltless of each and all of these accusations. That the Milanese is in the hands of your majesty’s enemies, is unfortunately too certain; but the loss is to be attributed rather to your majesty than to myself. Your cavalry were eighteen months in arrear of pay; and I had already warned both your majesty and your ministers, that unless I received a supply of money within a given period, it would be impossible for me to enforce obedience, or to prevent desertion. If, therefore, I was thus apprehensive of the effect of this destitution upon the troops of France, fighting under the banners of their own king, and jealous of their own glory, your majesty may believe that I had small faith in the fidelity of the Swiss, who, eager only for gain, were little likely to sacrifice their individual interests to those of a foreign sovereign; nor did I overrate the danger. By those mercenaries, clamorous to replace by rapine the wages which had been withheld from them, I was fated to endure the mortification of being compelled to give battle to the enemy at a disadvantage; and to see my authority disregarded at the moment of danger, only to find myself abandoned by the very troops to whom I owed this jeopardy, and who might have been secured to our cause had I been enabled to satisfy their claims. You will pardon my warmth, Sire; but my only fault—and I admit it to have been a grievous one—was my weakness in according faith to promises which I now find were made only to betray me.”

“And the four hundred thousand crowns, M. le Marechal”, exclaimed the king somewhat less sharply; “surely they might, had they been properly dispensed, have silenced these clamours for a time.”

“They would have done more,” replied Lautrec; “they would have saved the duchy; but no portion of that promised supply ever crossed the Alps.”

“Let M. de Semblançay be instantly summoned,” cried Francis with a kindling eye to the usher on duty. “It may be that we have done you injustice, M. le Marechal; and yet—there must be some mistake: the Baron de Semblançay is an old and tried subject; he has never yet failed either me or my predecessors. None knew better than he the difficulty with which so large a sum was raised, nor the importance of its immediate transmission. Come forward, father, come forward”; he continued, as the old Minister of Finance, whom he was accustomed thus to address, and for whom he affected an attachment exceeding even that of a sovereign towards his most favoured subject, made his appearance at the threshold. “What is this which M. de Lautrec tells us? He asserts that the four hundred thousand crowns raised by my order for the supply of the army of Italy, never reached his camp! Through what channel were they transmitted?”

“M. le Marechal has rightly informed your majesty,” said De Semblançay. “Her highness the duchess claimed the money as I was about to expedite it, by virtue of her authority as regent of the kingdom; and I hold her receipt for the whole sum.”

“My mother!” murmured Francis, as a red spot rose to his brow; “there must be some mistake; but she can doubtlessly explain it. Follow me, M. le Ministre.”

The usher threw back the heavy tapestry which veiled the door of the audience chamber, and the king disappeared behind it with a rapid step, followed by M. de Semblançay.

When they reached the private apartments of Madame d’Angoulême, she rose with a smile to welcome her son, but Francis was too much excited to waste time in empty courtesies: “Do you know what you have done, Madam?” he exclaimed, as he threw himself upon a seat. “You have lost me the Milanese.”

The duchess raised her fine eyes in astonishment. "Your majesty is in error," she said with a slight sneer; "that was a feat reserved for M. de Lautrec—for the brother of Madame de Chateaubriand."

"I repeat, Madam, that you have lost me the Milanese, by withholding the supplies which I had destined for my troops."

"I deny the charge," said the duchess haughtily. "Who dares to accuse me of this?"

"M. de Semblançay is my informant," was the reply of the king, as he glanced alternately at his mother and the venerable minister.

"How, Sir!" exclaimed Louise de Savoie, with a frown which might have paralysed a less firm spirit than that of the old baron; "dare you assert that I have held back the moneys of the state?"

"It is at least certain, Madam," replied M. de Semblançay, "that the sum of four hundred thousand crowns, destined by his majesty for the service in the Milanese, was paid over by me into your hands, at your express command; and that I hold your receipt, which I demanded at the time."

"But that sum, M. le Ministre," said the duchess, fixing her eyes steadily upon those of the old statesman, as if to prompt his answer; "that sum, you are aware, was due to me, and was the amount of the savings of many years, placed in your hands for better security, and of which I chanced at that particular moment to stand in need. You should have explained this matter to the king."

The minister was silent.

"Why did you not inform me of so important a circumstance, M. de Semblançay?" asked Francis impatiently. "We might then have applied some remedy; whereas the evil is now beyond recall. Why did you not at once acquaint me with the whole of the affair?"

"I was not aware, Sir," was the steady reply, "that her highness believed herself to have any claim upon the money in question, or that she had been in the habit of limiting her outlay within her means."

"Do you intend the king to understand that I had not entrusted you with that sum?" asked Louise de Savoie emphatically.

"Assuredly, Madam. It is my first duty to justify myself to my sovereign; and I therefore, with all due respect for your highness, religiously declare that I have never held in my hands moneys which were your private property."

"Have a care, Sir!" exclaimed the duchess, in a tone of menace; but before she could proceed to give utterance to the threat that quivered on her lips, the young king had sprung up.

"Enough, enough!" he said, with an emotion which he was unable to control; "we need not aggravate an evil which is already too great. Let this subject never be renewed; and may we in future better understand how to uphold our common interests."

The upright old minister was not, however, to be thus silenced, and he forthwith insisted that commissioners should be appointed to examine the public accounts, and to report the result

of their labours to the king; thus forcing upon him the conviction of his own honesty and the treachery of his mother; a pertinacity which was never forgiven by the vindictive duchess, who felt that the confidence which had hitherto been placed in her by her son must be seriously shaken by such an exposure.

Nevertheless, she did not hesitate to complain that she had been subjected to an affront which it was the duty of Francis to avenge; and she even urged him to displace M. de Semblançay: but the annoyance to which he had been subjected through her avarice, and her desire to injure the Marechal de Lautrec even at the expense of his own honour, was too galling and too recent to render her expostulations successful, and he firmly refused to commit so flagrant an act of injustice. A vengeance like that of Louise de Savoie could, however, afford to wait. She was aware of the fickle nature of Francis, who, unlike herself, was incapable of nourishing a lasting passion either of love or hate; and she felt that death alone could deprive her of her victim. Nor had the venerable minister a less inveterate enemy in the Chancellor Duprat, who was continually thwarted in his measures by the uncompromising probity of his colleague; and who gladly made common cause with Madame d'Angoulême when he ascertained her enmity against him.

Once more Madame de Châteaubriand triumphed. The king, on his next interview with Lautrec, assured him that he was perfectly exonerated from all blame; and a fresh struggle commenced between the mother and the mistress. The court was thus divided into two separate factions; at the head of one was Louise de Savoie, M. de Savoie her brother, the chancellor, and Bonnavet; who, despite his passion for the fair favourite, could not resist the blandishments of the duchess, but who laboured assiduously to secure her interest in the furtherance of his own views of ambition and aggrandizement, and who was further bound to her through their mutual hatred of Bourbon. It was at her instigation, and with her assistance, that he had built the magnificent château to which we have already alluded as so great a mortification to the connétable; with her sanction that he encouraged the profligacy of the king—the more readily, perhaps, because he was not sorry to detach him from Madame de Châteaubriand, although Francis either had, or affected to have, remained blind to their mutual attachment, even when it had long ceased to be a matter of surmise; and by her influence that he was enabled to pursue a course of reckless and extravagant ostentation, which rendered him the wonder and the envy of all the less fortunate courtiers; while to the party of the duchess-mother were also attached the young and idle nobility, to whom the freedom of her circle, and the beauty of the women whom she collected about her, formed a greater attraction than they could find elsewhere.

The faction of Madame de Châteaubriand was less numerous, but still formidable. Her own brothers, and all the most celebrated generals of the time, were in her train; and while in the licentious court of Madame d'Angoulême nothing was discussed save love and pleasure; honour and renown were the leading topics among the customary guests of Françoise de Foix.

And amid all this rivalry and bitterness of spirit, the patient queen lived on in purity and piety, weeping over the evil which she saw, and thankful for the peace which she was enabled to preserve about her. Attached, even from her childhood, to the Duke de Bourbon, as to a loved and honoured brother, she could not forego the hope of still claiming him by a title which he had long borne in her heart, and consequently continued her efforts to unite him with the princess Renée. Nor was the duke insensible to her regard, or to the pain which she evinced at the persecution to which he was subjected. She was the one bond which yet linked him to his country; the one and only object which aroused a feeling of remorse within him as he reflected upon the enormity of his revenge. But to his other mortifications had been added that of learning that the king's mother had obtained so great an influence over the mind of the princess, as to induce her to declare that she could no longer entertain the idea of an alliance with a noble, who must, should the legal proceedings instituted against him prove fatal to his claims, become one of the poorest princes in Europe. Yet still the good queen trusted to overcome these difficulties; and whenever the duke



appeared at court, he found his warmest welcome ever proceed from her lips.

Fresh demands were at this period made on the attention of the French king, by the reduced and famished state of the garrison, which, under Jacques de Daillon, Seigneur de Lude, had during the space of an entire year kept the Spanish army in check before Fontarabia, but which had now become so utterly exhausted by fatigue and famine that he announced the impossibility of further resistance unless he could be immediately relieved. The fortress was surrounded on all sides by the enemy; and although numerous attempts had already been made to convey supplies to him by sea, all had failed through the vigilance of the Spanish privateers who guarded the coast; and disease and want were making hourly havoc among the already diminished troops.

In this emergency, although once more dreaming the conquest of the Milanese, and anxious to collect a powerful army for that expedition, Francis lost not a moment in despatching M. de Châtillon at the head of a large force to the relief of the besieged garrison; but this reinforcement was delayed by the sudden and serious illness of its commander, which soon terminated fatally, and rendered it necessary to halt the troops upon their march until another general could arrive to take the command; a circumstance which had nearly proved fatal to the success of the enterprise. The Marquis de la Palice, however, by whom M. de Chatillon was replaced, hastened to repair the evil, and at once advanced to Fontarabia, although the arrival of a force which had been despatched by sea to co-operate with him, had been prevented by contrary winds.

As he approached the beleaguered city he found the Spanish army encamped upon the river-bank, and prepared to dispute his passage; but, resolved to effect, if possible, the immediate rescue of the unfortunate garrison, he would not suffer the inequality of numbers to delay his purpose, and accordingly commenced a heavy fire of artillery upon the enemy's lines from the opposite side of the stream. The guns were skilfully worked, and created so much havoc, that the Spaniards gave way, and under cover of the smoke he succeeded in crossing; when being opposed by Count William de Furstemberg at the head of six thousand lansquenets, he made so desperate a charge that they were completely routed, and despite their numerical superiority were compelled to retreat in disorder to the mountains.

The enemy thus driven back, the marquis entered the city in triumph, with his supplies both of provisions and arms; and having restored the garrison to its former strength, replaced the exhausted but gallant Count de Lude in his command by M. Franget, who had been the lieutenant-general of the Count de Chatillon, and in whose arms he had died. The sufferings of the little garrison which had so pertinaciously held out month after month, had been of the most frightful description. After having for some time subsisted upon their horses, the troops were compelled to have recourse to every species of vermin, such as cats, rats, and dogs; and ultimately, when even these failed, to devour the skins of the animals they had slain, and the parchments in the public offices, which they boiled down as the general food of both officers and men. The appearance of the survivors was consequently wretched in the extreme; and M. de Lude hastened, immediately upon the appointment of his successor, to pay his respects to his sovereign,—by whom he was cordially and honourably received,—and thence to his estates, in order to recruit his strength, and to recover from the effects of his long and melancholy privation.

The intelligence of the relief of Fontarabia somewhat tempered the exultation of the emperor, whose recent successes in Italy had led him to anticipate equal good fortune beyond the Pyrenees; and he at once determined to counteract the partial triumph of Francis by urging forward the compact into which, through the medium of the Duke de Bourbon, he had already entered with Henry VIII. He soon, however, discovered from the tone of the correspondence into which he entered for this purpose, palpable evidence of the changed feelings of the English cardinal, who had never forgiven Charles for the falsification of his pledges regarding the papacy, and the substitution of the comparatively obscure Cardinal of Tortosa for himself upon the throne

of St. Peter; a substitution which, as he was well aware, had been effected through his sole agency. Nevertheless Charles did not despair; he had studied the nature of the man with whom he had to deal; and once more he revived the question of the triple crown, assuring the English minister that the age and infirmities of Adrian VI rendered it impossible that he should long enjoy the dignity to which he had attained, while Wolsey himself, still in the prime of life, was his only fitting successor; and pledging himself that should the cardinal exert his influence to induce the English king to accept his proposition of a treaty of alliance against France, he might himself depend on his own support upon the decease of the reigning pope.

This Correspondence, which Was carried on throughout a couple of months, ultimately so changed its character, that Charles, satisfied his point was gained with the minister, resolved once more to visit England in person, and explain in detail his views and projects to the sovereign; a piece of consummate policy which he carried into effect by landing at Dover near the end of May; where he was received by Henry VIII with as much cordiality as heretofore; and soon succeeded in rendering him equally anxious with himself for the invasion of the French territories. Mutual courtesies were exchanged between the two monarchs; Charles conferring upon the Earl of Surrey the commission of admiral in his dominions; and Henry investing his imperial guest with the Order of the Garter. Nor did the politic emperor fail, by every means in his power, to remove the mistrust of the cardinal legate, to whom he affected to explain the imperative reasons which had compelled him to favour the election of Adrian VI; and whose confidence he once more purchased by a life-pension of nine thousand golden crowns.

As a declaration of war against France became inevitable on the part of the English king after this compact with Charles, it was necessary to discover some pretext sufficiently plausible to justify a step which must necessarily involve the interests of all Europe; and eventually neither Henry nor his minister could devise any excuse more rational than a presumed indignity shown to the former as arbitrator between Francis and the emperor, by the refusal of the French sovereign to give up Fontarabia at his suggestion; and the fact that Francis had permitted the Duke d'Aubigny to visit Scotland, where he had, as they alleged, excited an ill-feeling against both Henry VIII and his sister.

The latter argument was, perhaps, less flimsy than the first, inasmuch as it is certain that Francis, who had long suspected the bad faith of Henry, had, with a view of regaining the same influence over the Scotch which had been exercised by his predecessors, instead of leaving the regency of the kingdom during the minority of James V in the hands of his mother Marguerite, the sister of Henry VIII, desired John, Duke d'Aubigny, the nephew of James III, to return at once to Scotland, and to claim his part in the government.

Although born a subject of France, the Scotch parliament at once recognised the right of the duke to share the regency with the queen-mother; and d'Aubigny, whose prejudices were all in favour of his native country, exerted himself to induce the nation to declare war against England; by which means, although he did not succeed in his attempt, he created a considerable commotion on the border. Francis, meanwhile, deemed it expedient to write to the English monarch, asserting that the duke had acted without any authority from himself, and had even left France without his permission; but the reply of Henry VIII, not only denied his belief of the fact, but was, moreover, so studiously offensive in the terms of that denial, that every doubt as to the hostility which he bore him was removed from the mind of the French king.

Sir Thomas Cheyne, the English ambassador in France, received instructions in the month of May, to urge once more upon Francis the cession of Fontarabia, and to remonstrate with him upon his interference in Scotland; and as the king was at that moment absent from Paris, the minister demanded an audience of the Duchess d'Angoulême, to whom he declared the nature of the instructions which had reached him from his court; when Louise de Savoie expressed the

strongest desire to effect a pacification between the two monarchs, reminding the ambassador of the confidence and good feeling which had existed between them so recently; and declaring that her son was anxious for its continuance. She, moreover, undertook to acquaint the king with what had passed during the interview, and to use all her influence to preserve a friendly understanding between the two countries.

In a subsequent audience of Francis himself, Sir Thomas Cheyne reiterated the demands and remonstrances of his sovereign, to which the French king replied as he had previously done by letter; and on an intimation from the ambassador, that, in the event of his declining to comply with the terms proposed by his master, and persisting in hostilities against the emperor, the English monarch would consider himself bound in conscience to declare against him, Francis proudly replied, that so long as Henry acted according to a sense of right and justice, he could ask no more; that the emperor had been the first aggressor, but that he had long seen with how little favour his own interests had been regarded by England during the conferences which had taken place at Calais; and that, unless Henry were determined to award more even-handed justice for the future, he would do well to leave Charles and himself to settle their own differences. The emperor, he moreover declared, had no more right to the Milanese than he himself could advance to the kingdom of Spain; and that he esteemed himself the equal of Charles upon all points; and would have been both glad and able to serve Henry for his love alone, more heartily than his rival would do for both his love and his treasures. All he now asked, therefore, he said, was to be left free to follow out his own measures, and if this were conceded without foreign interference, he did not despair of rendering Charles “one of the poorest princes in Christendom.”

The English ambassador, chagrined by the conviction that his errand was one of injustice, and convinced by the resolute attitude of the French king that he would not willingly make the required concessions, and thus involve himself in a peril of which the consequences might prove fatal to his throne, endeavoured to induce the admiral Bonnivet, who was present at the conference, to prevail upon his sovereign to accept the proposition for a truce which he was authorized to make; but the haughty favourite at once replied that he would rather see his master in his grave than urge him to a measure which involved his honour.

Thus foiled on all hands, Sir Thomas Cheyne next informed the king that the emperor, who was about to depart for Spain, had entrusted the protection of the Low Countries during his absence to the English monarch, a charge which he had agreed to undertake. But even this insidious measure did not bend the spirit of Francis, who replied in a tone of biting sarcasm, that the emperor had resolved wisely, as there could be no doubt that Henry VIII was far more capable of defending the realm than its own sovereign, while the arrangement afforded clear evidence of the political bias of both parties.

“Thus much, however,” he added, “I will still say; that I have in nowise deserved that your king should take part against me with my enemy; from our past friendship I looked for help rather than hindrance at his hands; but if there be no remedy, and that the king’s highness will have it thus, I have no fear but that I shall be able to defend both myself and my realm with God’s help; although, for his sake, I shall never again put faith in any prince living. Moreover, if he loses me now, I vow that henceforth he hath lost me for ever. But”—and for the first time his voice quivered for an instant—“I will not believe that he can play me false; for of myself I may truly declare that the extremity of this war doth not grieve me half so much as to lose a friend whom I esteemed beyond all others.”

At the termination of the interview Francis returned to Lyons; and on the 29th of May, the English herald who had been despatched for that purpose, repaired thither, and in the palace of the archbishop, where the king had taken up his abode, made a formal declaration of war on the part of his royal master, to which Francis replied coldly and proudly; and hostilities forthwith

commenced. The Earl of Surrey, at the head of the combined fleets of England and Spain, commenced his operations by destroying several of the coast towns of Normandy and Brittany; and then, abandoning his ships, took the command of the troops on land, and proceeded to operate upon the French frontier; when he was joined by the Count de Buren, the lieutenant-general of the emperor in the Low Countries, their joint army amounting to eighteen thousand men.

Nevertheless, Francis evinced no uneasiness. He trusted that the strength of his frontier of Picardy, whose fortresses were efficiently armed and garrisoned, would suffice to arrest the progress of both the English and Flemish troops, while the Pyrenees defended him from the attacks of the Spaniards; and he still proceeded with the organization of the army with which he once more anticipated the conquest of the Milanese. The care of the seat of war was meanwhile confided to the Duke de Vendôme; and Francis availed himself of the threatened invasion to remove a silver screen erected by Louis XI round the tomb of St. Martin, and to coin it into money for the payment of the troops.

While he was thus engaged he received intelligence that his generals had drawn the Duke d'Aerschott, and a strong party of the imperial troops into a snare, from which they were not likely to escape, through the means of a soldier of the garrison of Guise, who was instructed by the Seigneur de Longueval, the governor, to volunteer to effect the entrance of the Flemish commander through a gate of the city which he was appointed to guard. Aerschott, having closely questioned the man, who professed great discontent with his position, and weariness of the service in which he was engaged, fell into the trap that had been laid for him; and arrangements were made, immediately after Easter, for profiting by the supposed treason. The duke was to approach the city with a force of picked men on whom he could depend; while the Marquis de Fiennes, the governor of Flanders, was to make a demonstration against Térouanne, with a strong body of troops, in order to distract the attention of the French; and meanwhile, precautions had been taken that when Aerschott advanced upon the city, the Duke de Vendôme, the Marquis de Fleuranges, and Richard de la Pole, should cut off his retreat, and compel him to lay down his arms.

Had Vendôme executed this manoeuvre without informing the king of his design, there is every reason to suppose that it would have proved successful; but Francis had no sooner learnt his purpose, and been convinced of its feasibility, than he determined to assist in person at the capture of the duke, and despatched orders that no steps should be taken in the business under any pretext until he could arrive upon the spot; an object which he effected by travelling post, on the very evening before the enterprise was to take place. The mere fact, however, of his sudden appearance with the army, when he was known to have been at Blois only two days previously, sufficed to arouse the suspicions of the imperialists; and, although Aerschott had already commenced his march, he immediately halted, and abandoned the undertaking, convinced that some ambush had been prepared for him; and thus, through his own puerile vanity, Francis lost, an opportunity of seriously weakening the strength of his adversaries.

Mortified by a failure which he had himself induced, the king then directed M. de Vendôme to advance with his forces, and relieve Térouanne, before which Fiennes had sat down, little anticipating so formidable an enemy; the militia of Ghent, moreover, who formed a portion of his force, and who now saw themselves threatened by a peril upon which they had not calculated, immediately abandoned his camp, and retreated beyond the Lys; thus creating a disorder of which the Duke de Vendôme was about to take advantage, when M. de Brion, galloping up to the lines, once more commanded him to retard the attack until the arrival of the king, who was preparing to join in the battle. Mortified as he was, the duke was compelled to obey; and before Francis reached the field, M. de Fiennes had time to extricate himself, and to secure a safe position.

Notwithstanding these failures, the French king had as yet experienced no positive check; and Surrey, disheartened by the slow and unsatisfactory progress of the war, in which he had reaped neither honour nor success, while he had sustained severe loss, proceeded to lay siege to the town of Hesdin, of which he thought himself secure, as the fortifications were imperfect, and the garrison comprised only thirty gendarmes, and about seventeen hundred foot soldiers. Herein, however, he deceived himself, as the Sire du Bier, by whom it was commanded, made so gallant a resistance with his slender garrison, that after he had spent a fortnight before the walls he was compelled to raise the siege; the incessant rains having seriously affected his troops, while they had gained no evident advantage over the enemy; and thus foiled in an enterprise which he had originally regarded as insignificant, he abandoned the attempt, and marched homeward with his army, disgracing both himself and his cause by the wanton and needless cruelties that were committed on their route.

Under these circumstances Francis considered himself once more at liberty to pursue his measures against Milan, and to detach from the army of M. de Vendôme the Duke of Suffolk, known in France as the White Rose, the pretender to the throne of England, whose claims he now openly espoused, with his lansquenets and two or three thousand Picards, and to despatch them to Lyons, where the army, destined to invade Italy, were to assemble in the month of August. Bonnavet, with six thousand French troops, was at the same time to cross Mount Cenis, and to establish himself at Suza; while Montmorency was to join him there with twelve thousand infantry, which he was commissioned to raise in Switzerland. Francis himself was to join the army near Turin; and meanwhile Prosper Colonna, who had been appointed general of the Italian league, was busied in fortifying the passes of Tesino, in order to defend the entrance of the Milanese.

The French king had not, however, reached Lyons when he was met by Louis de Brézé, the Seneschal of Normandy, who apprised him that his person was in danger from a plot which had been formed against him, and which involved the safety of his kingdom.

Startled, but not convinced, Francis desired to be more fully informed of its nature and extent; upon which De Brézé confided to him that he had gained intelligence from two Norman gentlemen who had been tampered with by a powerful prince of his own family, who had endeavoured to induce them to facilitate the entrance of the English troops into their province; a fact which the king had no sooner ascertained than he determined to delay his departure from France until he had fathomed the whole conspiracy.

Before he again reached Amboise the Duchess d'Angoulême had summoned the two informers to her presence, when, throwing off their previous reserve, they openly accused the Duke de Bourbon of treason, and revealed all they knew. The consternation of Francis was unbounded. He saw too late the error which he had committed, when he drove so proud a spirit to exasperation; but, nevertheless, he as yet possessed no proof of the truth of the accusation, and he resolved to judge for himself of its plausibility.

The opportunity soon presented itself. The Duke was, as we have already stated, the frequent guest of Queen Claude; and a day or two after his own return to Amboise, Francis was apprised that he was at table with her; upon which he entered the apartment abruptly, and when Bourbon would have risen, desired him to resume his seat, saying sarcastically, "So, our cousin of Bourbon is about to take a second wife. Is it not so?"

The duke calmly replied in the negative.

"Nay, deny it not", persisted the king sharply; "we know all your plans, sir, even those which you have concocted with the emperor; nor are we likely to overlook them".

Upon this the connétable once more rose, exclaiming, “You threaten me, sir, when I have done nothing to deserve it. Suffer me to withdraw”; and as he spoke he made a low obeisance, and left the apartment. In another moment he mounted and rode from the palace attended by all the noblemen of the court, and on the following day he retired to one of his palaces.

Convinced that he was suspected, he lost no more time in rallying about him those friends and adherents upon whom he felt that he could depend. He knew that his life was no longer safe, and that he was indebted even for the present reprieve to an indiscretion on the part of Francis of which he had not calculated the consequences. It was in vain that many of those who were attached to his interests, especially the Count de St. Vallier, father-in-law of M. de Brézé, (who in his old age had married his daughter, the young and beautiful Diana of Poitiers) represented to him that by bearing arms against his sovereign he was not only about to sacrifice all that was dearest to him—country, kindred, and friends; but also, in the event of failure, to subject himself to an ignominious death; to make common cause with an enemy who had hitherto trembled at his name; and to tarnish the glory which it had been the labour of his whole life to secure. They admitted the persecution to which he had been subjected, but reminded him that it was the result of a hatred induced by the passion which he had inspired in the breast of a vindictive woman; that the king himself was well disposed towards him, and had only been rendered harsh by circumstances; and that when the kingdom was threatened with invasion, it had a right to look to him as one of its strongest bulwarks.

In reply to these expostulations Bourbon bitterly expatiated upon the wrong and indignity of which he had been made the victim; and bade them remember that he had been despoiled of his estates, thwarted in his projects, injured even in his affections, and that no alternative was left to him. He declared that he no longer placed confidence in the king, who had no will save that of his mother; and no hope for himself while she retained her influence in France. “Better, far better,” he exclaimed vehemently, “to trust to a prince who is his own ruler, to live a man among men, than to be subjected to the wayward fancies of a licentious woman, who knows no law but her own vices. You weep, De Vallier; you, my friend and my kinsman; but I can weep no longer. I have not shaped my own destiny—it has been hewn out for me, and I have only to follow it to the end. I know that none of you will betray me; I believe that many of you will be willing to share my fortunes; and I say to all, that let them lead to which point they may, be it throne or a scaffold, I shall never cease to remember with gratitude and affection those who not only felt my wrongs, but helped me to avenge them.”

The tone of his address was so impassioned, the grievances of which he complained so notorious, and his person so popular, that it is scarcely wonderful that all who heard him should at once make common cause in his behalf; and this effected, he proceeded for the moment to his estate at Moulins, feigning severe illness, in order that he should not be summoned to attend the king to Italy; a command which he would have been unable to evade.

CHAPTER IV.

[1523.]

BOURBON had not miscalculated the intentions of the king, whose suspicions of his loyalty becoming hourly stronger, had resolved to possess himself of his person; but, as Francis could effect nothing against him in a province where the will of the duke was the only law, and as he was himself about to travel with an escort too weak to undertake his capture, he resolved to await the arrival of the troops, which, under the command of De la Pole, were on their way to Lyons. In the meantime remembering, perhaps, the provocation which the duke had received, and anxious to ascertain if it were yet possible to regain him, he determined to deviate from his direct route, and to visit him at Moulins, where he might be enabled to judge for himself of the probability of such an event.

On his arrival he was received with every demonstration of respect and deference, and introduced into the chamber of his host by M. de Pompérant, where he found him in bed, complaining of severe and painful indisposition. The king condoled with him upon his sufferings, and asked various questions as to the nature of the attack, which were calmly and readily answered by the duke; after which, seating himself beside his pillow, he said gently and kindly: "I am informed, cousin of Bourbon, that you have been harassed and annoyed by recent circumstances; but you are wrong to let them weigh upon your mind, for whatever may be the result of the suit, and the decision of the parliament, so long as you serve me loyally, you shall not be despoiled. I have heard, moreover, that you have been in treaty with the emperor, forgetting your allegiance as a French subject, and the duty which you owe to your sovereign; but in this rumour I place no faith. Your rank as a prince of the blood, and, still more, the great deeds which you have already accomplished, render such treachery impossible; and I no more credit the report, than you, on your side, should believe that I could see you deprived of your possessions."

Bourbon was not, however, to be duped with words. He had instantly comprehended the purpose of the king in thus visiting him; and he accordingly replied with equally dissimulation;—admitting that he had indeed received offers from the emperor through one of his agents, of which he had resolved to inform his majesty when he could do so personally; but that, situated as he had lately been, he had not chosen to entrust a secret of that importance to a third person, and had, consequently, awaited the arrival of the king himself in order to communicate it. He followed up this assurance by disclosing so much of what had passed as proved the anxiety of Charles to attach him to his interests, but was careful to avoid everything which might tend to compromise either himself or his friends; and, finally, he bewailed his misfortune in thus being overtaken by sickness at a moment when he should have been by the side of his sovereign; concluding, however, by assuring Francis that his physicians, notwithstanding the severity of the attack, had decided that it would not prove of long duration; and that, in the course of a week or ten days, he would be able to travel as far as Lyons, by easy stages in a litter.

The suspicions of the king were in a great degree dissipated. The manner of the connétable was so calm and self-possessed, and his account of the transaction between himself and the emperor so simple and unembarrassed, that, as he rose to take his leave, he urged him to be cautious of his health, and told him that he should await with impatience his arrival at Lyons.

Having, however, decided to return to Amboise to have a parting interview with his mother, whom he had again appointed regent of the kingdom during his absence, Francis took the precaution to send a confidential person, M. Perrot de la Bretonnière, Seigneur de Wartz, to Moulins, ostensibly for the purpose of ascertaining the progress of the duke towards convalescence, but with strict orders not to lose sight of him after he was able to leave his bed, and to bring him to Lyons with all speed. This new attention on the part of the king was perfectly appreciated by Bourbon, who was aware that De Wartz was merely sent as a spy, of whom he must rid himself at the first convenient opportunity; and he consequently affected to suffer under constant relapses of his malady, although he expressed his earnest hope that he should ere long be enabled to join the army; and evinced the greatest interest in its movements. He constantly complained bitterly of the restraint of a sick-room; and, on one occasion, even ventured to leave the house leaning upon the arm of his unwelcome guest, expressing his belief that the effect of the fresh air would restore his strength. On the following day he, however, complained of increased illness, and when left for a moment alone with M. de Wartz, told him gloomily that he began to perceive that his physicians had concealed the truth, and that his disease was likely to prove fatal.

The royal emissary was thoroughly deceived; and believing that his attendance upon a deathbed could in no way serve the king, he took his leave, and returned to Lyons, whence he forwarded a despatch, informing Francis that the duke was in extremity. Fresh and convincing proofs had, however, by this time reached the ears of the monarch of the intended treason of the connétable, and his reply to the communication was a stringent order to his agent to return immediately to his post; but when the latter reached Lyons, although it was obeyed upon the instant, M. de Wartz was already too late, for he found, upon his arrival at Moulins, that the duke had retired to his castle of Chantelle, a strong fortress, in which he was perfectly secure. To add to his mortification, he was moreover informed by a peasant whom he encountered on his way, that Bourbon had passed Varenne on horseback, apparently in good health; and he thus found that his mission had signally failed.

Meanwhile such of the nobles as were implicated in the conspiracy had remained at court, in order to avert suspicion; and Francis had no sooner reached Amboise, where the queen, the regent, and the Duchess d'Alençon were then residing, than he determined before his return to Lyons to give a hunting-party in the forest of Bussy; it being a marked feature in his character never to suffer public affairs, whatever their importance, to interfere with his private pleasures. The royal circle, consequently, removed to Chambord; but even in this, his favourite residence, it was apparent to those about him, that the king was ill at ease. There was a cloud upon his brow; and occasionally he glanced round him with a searching expression, as though he sought to read the hearts of the gay and glittering courtiers who crowded the saloons.

The morning which had been fixed for the hunt was brilliant, and a numerous bevy of fair dames, all attired for the sport, were flitting through the great hall, or surrounding the chair of the queen, who sat in the centre of her ladies, engaged upon some tapestry work; for the birth of her third son, the Prince Charles, was yet too recent to admit of her taking part in the fatiguing pleasures of the day, even had her tranquil tastes led her to desire it. The young nobles, eager for the sport, were glancing impatiently from time to time into the courtyard, to watch the progress of the preparations; and, meanwhile, Francis himself stood in the deep recess of a bay window, conversing with the Countess de Châteaubriand, who, in her ample riding-dress and richly plumed hat, looked even more lovely than was her wont. But still it was evident that the flattery which she would have prized the most deeply did not meet her ear upon this occasion. The whole air and attitude of the king were cold and repelling; and although none were indiscreet enough to approach the recess, still the name of Lautrec, frequently and bitterly repeated by the king, and the tears which stood in the eyes of the countess, sufficed to convince those who overheard a passing word, or looked for an instant towards their retreat, that the vexation of spirit by which the young monarch was oppressed had induced him to utter some allusion to the disastrous war in Italy,



which he was about to make an effort to redeem.

Françoise de Foix was still the perfection of loveliness, but she had already become aware that she was rapidly losing her power over the volatile monarch, whom her charms had hitherto enslaved; and as she stood beside him on that sunny morning, and saw that her smile had no longer power to dispel the shadow which had gathered upon his countenance, she felt her spirit sicken, although her courage did not fail.

“Nay, Sire”, she said gently, raising her large blue eyes appealingly to his, as the king paused after an outbreak of indignant anger; “surely you are too harsh. Consider the difficulties with which he had to contend, the privations which he was called upon to sutler. You know his zeal, his loyalty, and his devotion; do not, I beseech you, attribute to him the reverses which would with more justice be visited elsewhere”.

“You talk glibly, Madam,” was the stern reply; “and I have, perhaps, given you license to do so, by countenancing the madness of a man to whom at your entreaty, I gave the government of the Milanese; a weakness which has cost me the friendship of the Duke de Bourbon, the most powerful of my subjects—a man who has requited me by the loss of the duchy which was entrusted to him”.

“But who would have saved it, Sire, and even augmented its importance”, said the countess, with that bold eloquence which women can always command in defence of those who are dear to them, “if the promised supplies had not been intercepted?”

“Enough, Madam, enough”, said the king, as he turned away, “the real criminal is yet to be detected; neither you nor I can decide where the blame may lie. Let it suffice that it is not too late to punish the guilty”.

Madame de Châteaubriand had presumed too much upon her favour. A single year back, and she might have hazarded such an allusion; but now she saw her error. Only when blinded by passion can the great brook or forgive any insinuation against their peers; and Francis had passed this point with the fair accuser of his mother. Conscious, also, that he could not maintain his position, he was irritated by a pertinacity which compelled him to stand on the defensive; and being unaccustomed to conceal his feelings, his contracted brow and dashing eye betrayed to the fair favourite the whole extent of her imprudence.

Trembling and terrified, the countess in her turn averted her face, and endeavoured to conceal the tears which were rolling over her blanched cheeks; while Francis, either unconscious or careless, of the emotion he had excited, leaned listlessly over the balcony, and affected to gaze out upon the chase beyond.

The entrance of Madame d’Alençon aroused the king from his reverie, and when she had paid her respects to the queen, he beckoned her to his side. “You have arrived at a fortunate moment, Marguerite”, he said, making an effort to throw off the gloom by which he was oppressed. “I am weary of waiting, and have been amusing myself by a project which will, I think, delight you”.

“And yet neither yourself nor Madame de Châteaubriand appeared to me to be particularly joyous when I glanced towards you”, said the duchess playfully; “but what is this charming project?”

“I will, should my life be spared, pull down this gloomy fortress, which is a blot upon so fair a landscape, and erect a palace better suited to the loves and graces than a mass of old gray towers

and battlemented walls. We want gardens, too, and we will have them of regal dimensions; while, instead of the insignificant stream which now disfigures the domain, we will turn the waters of the Loire, and compel them to lend their aid in its embellishment.”

“The design is indeed magnificent!” exclaimed Marguerite, “and it will be glorious to celebrate in the new palace the recovery of the Milanese.”

“Which is the more probable, *mignonne*, as I shall, on this occasion, undertake it myself”, said Francis; “and I trust that for the future I may be able to hold what I have gained.”

The duchess, struck by the remark, glanced towards the favourite, and at once became convinced that she was not unconnected with the evident irritation of the king. The nature of her education had rendered her very indulgent to the errors of her sex; and, conscious that the disgrace of Françoise de Foix would only involve a new and perhaps a more dangerous liaison, she hastened to avert the impending storm, by sundry flattering comments upon the costume and beauty of the countess.

“Madame de Châteaubriand has today excelled herself,” she said admiringly, as she swept aside the clustering feathers of her riding-hat, and passed her fingers caressingly through one of the long fair ringlets which they overshadowed. “She will be the very Dian of the woods!”

“Madame de Chateaubriand is always charming” said the king, still gazing through the open window; “but we shall do well to pay our parting compliments to the queen at once, in order that no further time may be lost when the hunt is ready”; and as he spoke, he offered his hand to his sister, and led her to the upper end of the hall.

Françoise de Foix followed them with a glance which betrayed all the agony of her spirit; and then, feeling that she could no longer conceal her agitation, rapidly withdrew through a side-door.

She had scarcely left the recess when the Count de St. Vallier approached the window, and folding his arms upon the balcony, leaned out, apparently buried in deep and painful thought: he was not, however, long suffered to indulge his reverie; for ere many moments had elapsed, a noble, not attired in the fanciful costume of the hunt, but in a close travelling dress, placed himself at his side, and whispered anxiously: “My time grows short—on what have you determined?”

“I will share his fortunes, be they what they may”, said the captain of the king’s archers.

“I expected no less. No friend of the duke would desert him at such a moment; far less one whom he loves as he does M. de St. Vallier.”

“Are you about to return at once?”

“Instantly: you have pledged your word, and my mission is accomplished.”

“M. de Pompérant,” said the king, as he crossed the hall, “you have adopted a strange costume for the forest. Do you not hunt the stag with us this morning?”

“Your majesty does me honour,” replied the companion of St. Vallier, bowing respectfully; “but I trust that I may be excused, having last night received a letter from M. de Bourbon, in which he urges me to return to him without delay.”

A frown gathered upon the brow of Francis. “I am aware, sir,” he said coldly, “hat you

belong to the household of the connétable, and that you owe him all fitting obedience; yet if I, alike his sovereign and yours, condescend to invite you to remain at Chambord, how then?"

"Then, Sire", replied the noble, bowing still more profoundly, "I shall be compelled to delay my departure for Chantelle."

"How, sir!" exclaimed Francis sharply, "do I understand you? Has M. de Bourbon left Moulins to shut himself up in a fortress?"

Sire, Chantelle is also a seigneurial residence."

"So I have heard," pursued the king with a withering frown; "and doubtlessly as magnificent as it is secure. M. de Bourbon is an able tactician."

"The duke is sick both in body and mind, Sire".

"He travels promptly for an invalid", was the sarcastic reply. "Only a few days back he declared himself to be upon his deathbed, and now I learn that he has performed a journey. He may recover his mental sufferings as readily as his bodily ailments, Sir, if such be his will; for I myself condescended to be the physician of his mind, and to pledge my royal word that, by virtue of my sovereign authority, and on the honour of a gentleman, his sequestered estates should be restored to him. Consequently he can need no better cure. But we are summoned to the chase; and now, Sir, I leave it to your own discretion to choose between us. You may join our sport, or retire, as you think best."

As he ceased speaking, Francis bowed to the queen, who rose as he withdrew; and strode from the hall attended by the courtly crowd which was to accompany him to the forest. M. de Pompéran shortly followed; but availing himself of the equivocal permission he had received, he mounted his horse in the inner court; and as the glittering party made their way towards Bussy, hastened in the direction of Chantelle with all the speed of his good steed.

This little outbreak of temper had apparently restored Francis to equanimity, for he not only reined up his horse beside that of Madame de Châteaubriand, but even exerted himself to dispel the effects of his late coldness; an attempt which was ere long successful; while the Duchess d'Alençon, who was passionately attached to the chase, galloped hither and thither over the greensward, until she contrived without observation to detach herself from the group immediately about the king.

"Ride on, ladies, ride on," she said gaily, to some of her suite who were endeavouring to follow her erratic course; "the soul of the green wood is freedom from constraint", and then, as she saw them successively obey, she beckoned to her side the venerable Count de St. Vallier, whom she affected to address in a loud voice.

"M. de Poitiers," she said, "you are strangely churlish for a courtier. You know how long we have all been anxious to welcome your fair daughter, Madame la grande Sénéschale, to Amboise, and yet you do not summon her from her retreat in Normandy. How is this?"

"Diana is young and beautiful, Madame, while M. de Brézé is very old, very ugly, and but newly married."

"An admirable reason," laughed the duchess as she shook back her streaming hair, and reined in her impatient palfrey, "while his sovereign is very young, very handsome, and—am I right, M. le Comte?"

St. Vallier bowed in silence.

“A truce, however, to this idle discourse,” said Madame d’Alençon suddenly, after a rapid glance about her. “You are ill at ease, M. de Poitiers.”

“I, Madame!” exclaimed the count anxiously; “why should I be so? How could I be so in your presence?”

“Disentangle the bridle of my horse,” said Marguerite de Valois, and as St. Vallier bent forward to obey, she murmured in his ear: “You are the old and tried friend of M. de Bourbon.”

“He has few older, Madame, and none more sincere.”

“You are also in his confidence—”

“Such an admission at such a moment might be perilous, Madame.”

“Not when made to me,” persisted the duchess; “you are aware that I also have a great regard for the connétable; and I confess to you that I am anxious on his account. And yet, even angered as he may be by recent events, I will not believe that the suspicion which now attaches to him can be justified. Bourbon is so great even in his failings, that although he may be quick to resent an injury, I am convinced that he would nevertheless be slow to revenge it.”

“The duke is as just as he is generous, Madame,” stammered St. Vallier, at a loss how to reply.

“Oh, yes; he is incapable of treason; I know it, I feel it,” exclaimed Marguerite enthusiastically. “But whom have we here?”

The person who had attracted the attention of the princess was a courier, who was scouring across the plain at the utmost speed of his horse, and approaching the royal party. As he halted he delivered into the hands of Bonnivet a sealed packet which was immediately given to the king. The first emotion of Francis was one of impatience at this new intrusion upon his pleasures; but as he read the contents of the paper, a frown gathered on his brow, and his lip blanched. He bent forward at its conclusion, and said a few words in a low tone to Bonnivet, who immediately wheeled his horse to the side of St. Vallier, and said audibly, “Sir, deliver up your sword; I claim it in the name of the king.”

For a moment Jean de Poitiers hesitated, but instantly recovering himself, he withdrew his hat with one hand, and with the other presented the weapon, without uttering a syllable.

“Brother, I beseech you, what means this?” asked the duchess, who had suddenly become pale as death.

“Treason, Madame,” said Francis coldly, as he again moved forward, while Bonnivet, with an escort of armed men, in the midst of whom he placed his prisoner, retraced his steps to Chambord.

Before the return of the hunting party the captain of the king’s archers had been conveyed to the dungeons of Loches.

The despatch thus inopportunistically received had been forwarded by the Marechal de Lautrec, who had obtained proofs of the intended treachery of Bourbon, and the complicity of St. Vallier,

and who had hastened to apprise the king of the circumstance. The indignation of Francis was extreme; and as he pursued his way, he expatiated bitterly to M. de Savoie, the Marquis de Chabannes, the Duke de Guise, and M. de Montmorenci, who rode beside him, upon the deception which had been practised on him by the duke. "My frankness and plain dealing," he said, angrily, "should have produced more effect; but since he has seen fit to turn traitor, he must abide his fate."

An expedition was immediately despatched against the attainted duke, under the command of M. de Savoie and Chabannes; but he had, meanwhile, entrusted to the Bishop d'Autun a letter to the king, in which he offered to return to his allegiance, on condition that all his forfeited estates should be restored to him, and that none of his friends should suffer for their adherence to his interests. This appeal was, in fact, an open avowal of his contemplated rebellion; and the king's troops, having encountered the prelate near Lyons, at once seized his person, and forwarded all his papers to Francis; whose utmost indignation was excited no less by the contents than by the tone of the letter, in which Bourbon proposed terms to him rather with the authority of an equal than the deference of a subject.

Information was, however, conveyed to Chantelle by one of Bourbon's agents, of the approach of the royal troops; when the duke saw that he had not a moment to lose unless he would incur the risk of being besieged in his fortress, a hazard of which the result was scarcely doubtful; and he, consequently, took instant measures to effect his retreat. Assuming the livery of M. de Pomperant, and acting as his valet, he left Chantelle without any other attendant, while Montagnac Tazannes, another of his devoted adherents, put on his own dress, and, mounting his favourite hackney, pursued a contrary route, with three or four followers, in order to deceive the emissaries of the king. Having thus ridden throughout the night without a suspicion on the part of those by whom he was accompanied, that they were not actually escorting their master, Tazannes found himself compelled, when the day dawned, to dismiss them, after having explained his purpose, and thanked them for the sympathy which they expressed for the misfortunes of their chief; and while silently and sorrowfully they retraced their steps, he pursued his way alone, and proceeded by by-roads to the Bourbonnais, where he concealed himself, shaved off his hair and his beard, and, disguising himself as a priest, once more set forth to join the fugitive connétable.

The determination of the duke and his companion was, if possible, to gain Franche Comte; and as it was necessary to adopt every available method of baffling their pursuers, they caused the shoes of their horses to be reversed, and made their way directly towards the frontier. After innumerable dangers, and more than one narrow escape from detection, they reached Auvergne, and thence proceeded by Le Forez and Dauphiny to Savoy, intending to take the post at Chambery for Italy. This plan proved, however, impracticable, the troops under the Count de St. Pol having crossed the Alps, and occupying the passes; and they were consequently compelled to retrace their steps, and to take refuge at St. Claude, where they were joined by about sixty gentlemen devoted to the interests of the connétable, who had, like himself, succeeded in making their escape. With their assistance he was enabled to raise a small body of horsemen; and thus accompanied, he effected his retreat two months subsequently through Germany to Mantua, where he took up his abode with the marquis, who was his kinsman.

Many of his adherents had been less fortunate. Jean de Poitiers was still a prisoner at Loches, and the Bishop of Autun at Lyons, and Aymard de Prie, François Descars, Seigneur de la Vauguyon, who had married Isabelle de Bourbon-Carency, a relative of the duke; Bertrand Brion, Pierre de Popillon, chancellor of the Bourbonnais; the Count de St. Bonnet, Gilbert de Baudemanche, and the Bishop of Puy, were arrested, and put upon their trials as traitors.

This formidable conspiracy created a consternation throughout the whole kingdom, which was heightened by an invasion on the frontiers of Picardy and Champagne, and the advance of the

English and Flemish armies to within eleven leagues of Paris. The Duke de Vendôme, who, despite his relationship with the connétable, had nevertheless continued faithful to the king, and the Marquis de la Trémouille with whom he acted in concert, succeeded, however, in beating back the imperialists; but Francis, finding himself surrounded by peril at home, was reluctantly compelled to abandon for a time his intention of passing into Italy, and was induced to confide the command of that army to Bonnivet.

The next measure of the king was the confiscation of the whole of the estates of the attainted duke, whose adherents were brought to trial before commissioners, specially delegated for that purpose; but as their disclosures involved many other individuals, and the affair became every day more complicated, it was ultimately referred to the parliament of Paris. It soon became apparent that the judges placed no faith in the reality of the plot as it had been originally represented to them, but regarded Bourbon as the victim of the duchess mother, and were inclined to screen the criminals from this conviction; in which they were strengthened by the idle exaggerations of Brian Chabot, who had been sent to the capital by the king immediately after the flight of the connétable, with intelligence of the conspiracy; and who, not satisfied with detailing plain facts, declared that proof had been obtained that its object had been to deliver up Francis to the King of England, to “make mince-meat” of the children of France, to imprison the Duchess d’Angoulême, and to exterminate every branch of the reigning family. The common sense of the parliament revolted at so improbable a tale; they were aware that Bourbon had many wrongs to avenge, but they remembered that he was a brave man, and not an assassin; and thus the ill-judged eloquence of the favourite made them suspicious, and it was with a decided bias in favour of the accused that they proceeded to the trial.

The Bishop of Puy was unhesitatingly acquitted; for it was shown that although he, as well as the Bishop of Autun, was attached to the household of the duke, they were inveterate enemies who never could have been induced to act in common, and that their jealousies and quarrels had occasionally called for the interference of Bourbon himself. Gilbert de Baudemanche, who was accused of having raised troops in the name of the connétable, brought witnesses to prove that the said troops had been levied for the service of the king. St. Bonnet was also released after a brief examination, during which nothing tended to implicate him; to others were awarded an imprisonment of longer or shorter duration; nineteen, who had effected their escape, were condemned to death by contumacy; and the only rigorous sentences pronounced against any of the accused, were those upon the Count de St. Vallier, and M. de Vauguyon; the first of whom was found guilty of *lèse-majesté*, and condemned to degradation, torture, and ultimately death upon the scaffold; and the latter to the application of “the question”; upon the presumption that being allied to the duke, he must be better informed upon the subject and extent of the conspiracy than his associates. His vehement entreaty, however, that he might lose his head at once, and be spared the agony of undergoing sufferings which, from his utter ignorance of the whole affair, could lead to no result, induced his judges to grant such a delay as enabled his family to intercede in his behalf; and he was ultimately banished to Orleans for two years, and then obtained a free pardon. The Bishop of Autun was also imprisoned for a time, and after the death of Bourbon reinstated not only in the king’s grace, but also in his possessions; and thus the venerable Jean de Poitiers, who, of all his friends, had laboured the most assiduously to dissuade the duke from his rebellion, was the only one of his adherents who was left for execution.

It is asserted that Francis either was, or affected to be, highly displeased at the leniency of the judges toward a crime which not only involved the safety of the country, but even the liberty of the sovereign; declaring that every one of the conspirators richly deserved death, and that he was at a loss to imagine upon what pretext their impunity could be justified. He moreover appointed new commissioners, and once more the whole of the suspected persons were put upon their trial. It would appear, however, that this extraordinary pertinacity upon his part merely served to strengthen the original impression that the hatred of Madame d’Angoulême against the

connétable was the real motive of such severity; and, accordingly, the verdict of the second court only tended to ratify that of its predecessor; an obstinacy on the part of the parliament which drew forth a threatening letter from the king; in which he asserted that since they were determined to persist in their error, and to prefer their own pleasure to the duty which they owed alike to himself and to the nation, he would take such steps as should render them an example to others.

In all probability, however, he became convinced that by this display of temper he had been led into a great and dangerous error; it is at least certain that the letter had no results.

We have already stated that the daughter of St. Vallier had, in her thirteenth year, been given in marriage to Louis de Brézé, Comte de Maulevrier, Grand Seneschal of Normandy. The marriage took place in the year 1514, when the bridegroom had already attained the age of fifty-five, and bore about him many honourable scars, which, however they might tend to enhance his glory as a soldier, were by no means calculated to increase his personal attractions in the eyes of a young and beautiful woman. Unfortunately, moreover, Louis de Brézé was perfectly aware of the discrepancies which existed between himself and his bride; but, enslaved by her extraordinary attractions, he had wilfully closed his eyes against the excess of his imprudence, until the fearful jealousy of which he became the victim so soon as he had made Diana his wife, exposed to him the whole extent of his error.

Nor was the home to which he conveyed the new-made countess more consistent with her age and habits than its master. The gloomy castle of Anet, (pompously designated the palace of the kings of Navarre, because the domain had originally formed a portion of the territories appertaining to those sovereigns) admirably as it was situated in a fertile valley, watered by the rival rivers of the Eure and the Vesgre, and backed by the magnificent forest of Dreux, was in itself dark, melancholy, and isolated. It consisted of a heavy square mass of masonry, pierced on each of its sides by two rows of lancet windows, deeply sunk in the stone-work; and was flanked at either corner by strong and lofty towers; the whole of the edifice being surrounded by a battlemented wall, and encircled by a moat; and the only mode of access being through the medium of a draw-bridge, which communicated with a single entrance gate, opening upon the court within. The interior of Anet was consistent with its outward appearance; dark oaken panellings, grim time-touched portraits of departed worthies, long and chill galleries where the lightest footfall awoke mysterious echoes,—these were the unattractive features of the bridal-house of the mere girl whom the grand seneschal had won from her smiling birthplace in Dauphiny.

Diana, who was destined hereafter to play so prominent a part during two successive reigns, was, as we have said, the daughter of the Count de St. Vallier, the representative of one of the most ancient families of Dauphiny, and of Jeanne de Batarnay; and was born on the 3d of September, 1499; while her husband, Louis de Brézé, was the grandson on the mother's side of Charles VII and Agnes Sorel; a circumstance which at that period was considered greatly to enhance his personal dignity, whatever prejudice might be attached to it in our own times. At the period of her father's condemnation Diana had consequently passed her twenty-third year, but she had spent her early life in an unbroken calm which still invested her with all the charms of youth and ingenuousness. Looking upon the Count de Maulevrier rather with the respect of a child than the fondness of a wife, she had soon accustomed herself to the gloomy etiquette by which she was surrounded; and knowing nothing of a world of which she was one day to become the idol, she passed her time among her maids, her flowers, and her birds, without one repining thought.

Diana possessed all the graces that attract, and all the charms which enslave. Nature had endowed her alike with beauty and with intellect; and as she moved through the sombre saloons of Anet like a spirit of light, the gloomy seneschal blessed the day upon which he had secured such a vision of loveliness to gladden his monotonous existence.

It may therefore be supposed with what bitter and self-upbraiding reflections he discovered that his betrayal to the king of the treachery of the Duke de Bourbon had involved the life of his father-in-law. Fain would he have concealed such a secret from Diana, but her filial affection rendered the attempt impossible; and little aware of the firm nature of the woman who had hitherto made his will her law, he was astonished to find that, when her first passionate burst of grief had subsided, so far from abandoning herself to a vain and idle sorrow, she wiped away her tears, and declared that his unfortunate revelation must be immediately repaired, and the life of her father saved. In vain did De Brézé represent to her that he had been condemned by the parliament, and that all hope was consequently over. Diana was not to be convinced.

“Tell me not,” she said vehemently, “that there is no remedy. Do you remember, sir, that should no intercession be made, not only will my father suffer a painful death, but that disgrace will evermore attach itself to the name of our family. He must be saved.”

Louis de Brézé shook his head mournfully.

“You would dissuade me in vain,” she persisted; “he must, and he shall be saved.”

“But how?”

“I will save him.”

“You, Madam! You are not even known at court.”

“What care I for that? My misfortunes will at once enable me to take my fitting place. I will throw myself at the feet of the king. He cannot refuse to listen to a child pleading for the life of her father.”

“And meanwhile, Diana,” cried the seneschal in a voice of agony, “what will become of me?”

“You must pray, sir: pray that the miserable effects of your mistaken loyalty may be counteracted; pray that the efforts of your wretched wife may be crowned with success. I will not delay a day—not an hour. A head may fall in an instant.”

Louis de Brézé was overcome by the energy which she displayed. Hitherto she had been gentle and compliant, but he suddenly found himself overawed by the power of her will, as by something new and strange; and although gloomy forebodings, to which he dared not lend a definite form, arose before him, he suffered her to hasten the preparations for her departure without one effort to impede her purpose.

When the moment came, however, in which she was to leave Anet, the young wife found to her astonishment that she was to set forth alone upon her melancholy mission. “I cannot meet your father,” was the only reason which the count would assign for this singular supineness. “Be speedy in your return, Diana, for you know that the better part of my existence goes with you.”

No time was lost upon the road; yet when Madame de Brézé reached the city, the scaffold was already erected upon which her father was to suffer. Unaware, however, of this ghastly fact, she at once sought an audience of the king, who was informed, while surrounded by a bevy of his nobles, among whom he was endeavouring to forget the impending tragedy, that a lady solicited permission to enter his presence.

“Who is she?” he inquired with some curiosity of the usher on duty; “whence does she come?”



“It is the Grande Sénéschale of Normandy, Sire; and she has come post from Anet.”

“Ah, on the faith of a gentleman!” exclaimed Francis; “she has chosen an unhappy moment to present herself at court. This is the far-famed beauty, Diane de Poitiers, my lords, of whom we have all heard so much, and whom none of us have seen, as I believe, since her childhood. She has come on a woeful errand truly, for it is easy to guess the purport of her visit. Admit her instantly.”

“The lady is anxious to be permitted to see your majesty alone,” said the usher respectfully.

The monarch glanced rapidly about him with a slight inclination of the head, and in a moment the apartment was cleared; while as the retreating steps of the courtiers were heard in the gallery, a lateral door fell back, and, closely veiled, and enveloped in a heavy mantle, Diana rushed into the saloon, and threw herself at the feet of the king, screaming breathlessly, “Mercy! Mercy!”

“Rise, madame,” said Francis, as the suppliant would have clasped his knees: “remember that you are the wife of a loyal subject, and that your father is very guilty.”

“He is old, Sire; he has grown old in the service of bis sovereigns”; and as she spoke she raised her drooping head, from which the hood foil back, thus revealing all the beauty of her pale and agonized countenance. “You will not, you cannot allow the memory of a long life of fidelity to be obliterated by one fault. Oh! if you knew how strenuously he exhorted M. de Bourbon not to persist in his error; if you could have seen the brave old man, tortured by premature remorse for his off-falling from his king, and yet shrinking from the accusation that he could abandon his nearest and dearest friend at the moment of peril, you, Sire, you, who know so well how to appreciate all that is great and noble, you would have held him absolved.”

“You are an eloquent advocate, madame.”

“I am not only pleading for my father, Sire, but for myself; for my own honour, and for the peace of mind of my husband; for surely you cannot have forgotten that the grand seneschal, by revealing the designs of the connétable, involved the safety of him for whom I sue, and that, should he perish, M. De Brézé will have been his murderer”

“I pity you, madame, from my very heart,” said Francis, as he lifted her from the ground, and placed her upon a seat.

“Do more, Sire,” exclaimed Diana, rising and standing erect, her beautiful figure relieved by the sombre drapery which she had flung aside in the effort. “You are a great and powerful sovereign. Do more. Forget that Jean de Poitiers was the friend of Charles de Bourbon, and remember only that he was the zealous and loyal subject of Francis I. The most noble, the most holy of all royal prerogatives, is mercy.”

“Madame                   ”

“Ah, you relent! My father is saved!” exclaimed the grande sénéshale; “ I knew it—I felt it—you could not see those venerable gray hairs soiled by the hands of the executioner.”

What more passed during this memorable interview is not even matter of history. The writers of the time put different interpretations upon the clemency of the king. Suffice it that the Count de St. Vallier was reprieved upon the very scaffold; and that Madame de Brézé remained at court, where she became the inspiring spirit of the muse of Clement Marot, who has succeeded by the various poems which he wrote in her honour, and of which the sense is far from equivocal, in creating a suspicion that she was not long ere she became reconciled not only to the manners, but

also to the vices of the licentious court, in which thereafter she made herself so unfortunately conspicuous. Some historians acquit her of having paid by the forfeiture of her innocence for the life of her father, from the fact that in the patent by which his sentence was remitted, no mention is made of her personal intercession, and that his pardon was attributed to that of the grand seneschal himself, and others of his relatives and friends; but it appears scarcely probable that Francis would, under any circumstances, have been guilty of the indelicacy of involving her name in public disgrace, aware, as he necessarily must have been, of the suspicion which was attached to every young and beautiful woman to whom he accorded any marked favour or protection.

Had her after life, moreover, been pure and exemplary, and had she, after obtaining the pardon of her father, withdrawn once more into retirement, posterity would have been at no loss to form a correct and worthy judgment of her conduct; but the vain and willing idol of a depraved poet, and the voluntary seductress of a prince who had scarcely reached half her own age, must be content to leave her memory at least clouded by doubt and darkened by suspicion.

Diane de Poitiers, pleading at the feet of the king for the life of a parent, succeeding in her sublime mission, and subsequently dedicating her youth to the solace of that parent's sufferings, would have ranked among the noblest examples of female virtue and heroism; but Diane de Poitiers, the frivolous votary of courtly pleasures, and the mature mistress of a boy-prince, excites only disgust, distrust, and contempt; and as we trace her downward course, step by step, we scarcely care to ascertain by whom she was first led into the path of evil.

CHAPTER V.

[1523-24.]

WHILE the friends of Bourbon were thus suffering the penalties of their adherence to his cause, the duke himself was scarcely more fortunate. He had already experienced with bitterness of feeling, that he was no longer the powerful noble before whom all save royalty bowed down; the idol of the devoted soldiery, and the object of universal popularity. Nothing was left to him but his great name, and the weapon which he had never yet wielded, save in the cause of his country, but which was now to be unsheathed against her; and it is probable that the very excess of his despair rendered him desperate; for Francis, urged, as it is asserted, by his mother, who discovered too late the fatal mistake of which she had been the author, was induced at this period to make a last effort to restore him to his allegiance; and for this purpose commissioned a gentleman of his household to offer to him a free pardon, and the restitution of all his estates and pensions, if he would forthwith acknowledge his error, and return to France.

When he received the royal envoy, Bourbon was surrounded by such of his adherents as had succeeded in effecting their escape; and as he glanced about him, and remembered that for his sake they had been proscribed and condemned, all his original indignation was aroused.

“It is too late, sir,” he said haughtily; “the king your master had probably forgotten that others have been involved in my misfortune. Do you bring me an assurance of equal impunity for all my gallant friends?”

“I am authorized simply to treat with yourself, my lord duke,” was the reply.

“In that case our interview need not be prolonged,” said Bourbon; “neither do they nor I ask for any favour at the hands of Francis of France. I will not detain you from more urgent duties.”

“You are resolved, Monseigneur?”

“You have my answer, sir.”

“I am then compelled to complete my mission, M. de Bourbon, by demanding, in the name of my sovereign, the sword which you bore as Connétable of France, and the collar of St. Michael with which you were invested.”

The duke smiled bitterly. “That sword,” he said; “I cannot deliver to you. It was taken from me at the passage of the Scheldt, and transferred to the brother-in-law of the king; at his hands therefore you must seek it. The collar of St. Michael must be already in the possession of the sovereign, since I learn that Chantelle has been garrisoned by his troops, and the property found there confiscated to his use. I left it suspended at the head of my bed, and doubtlessly it was found there.”

“And this, Monseigneur, is your final answer?”

The connétable bowed in silence, and the royal envoy withdrew.

The total sequestration of Bourbon's estates to the crown followed swiftly upon this ill-omened interview; he was declared guilty of *lèse-majesté*, and degraded from all his offices and dignities; thus becoming a proscribed and penniless outlaw; while he was made conscious, by the coldness of his new master, of the change which had been effected by this reverse of fortune upon the selfish monarch through whose insidious counsel he had been betrayed.

Charles had believed that by securing Bourbon he should induce a great portion of France to rise against its sovereign, but no such result ensued; and mortified by the disappointment, he forgot the value of the individual in his annoyance at the failure of his hopes. Instead of reiterating the promise which he had made of conferring the hand of his sister upon the duke, and of assisting him to regain his sequestered estates, he even suffered a considerable time to elapse before he replied to his applications for employment; and when he at length found it expedient to do so, he contented himself by leaving it at his discretion either to return to Spain, or to assume the command of the imperial army in Italy as lieutenant-general; while situated as he was at the moment, Bourbon was fain to accept the latter alternative.

The defection of the connétable had meanwhile paralysed the strength of the French army. Suspicions arose among the soldiery that the evil would not end where it had begun. A rallying point was lost; and there was no longer that unity among the troops which had tended to render them so formidable to their enemies. Nevertheless, by a singular coincidence, the same absence of a settled, or rather simultaneous purpose, proved the salvation of France; for had the several attacks which the king was called upon to repel, been directed at one and the same moment against him, there can be little doubt that he must have sunk under so unequal a conflict. Such, however, was far from being the case; the jealousy that existed between the rival generals, and especially that which Pescara bore to Bourbon, rendered all sincere co-operation impossible; and thus Spain, Germany, and England acted independently, and by this defective policy afforded breathing time to Francis. The Germans were repulsed from Franche-Comté by the Duke de Guise; Lautrec defended Bayonne against the Spaniards during four days, and compelled them to raise the siege, when they fell back upon Fontarabia, which, as we have elsewhere stated, was delivered to them by Captain Franget; a success which did not, however, encourage them to pursue their advantage.

The progress of the English army we have already recorded; and the alarm excited by the approach to the capital was so great that it overcame the mistrust of Francis towards the Duke de Vendôme, whom, as a kinsman of the connétable, he had hitherto feared to invest with an authority which might enable him to assist the fugitive in his supposed designs against Paris. The Duke of Norfolk at the head of fifteen thousand men, had been joined at Calais by the Count de Beaufort; and their combined strength amounted to between six and seven thousand horse, a strong body of artillery, and nearly thirty thousand foot; while La Trémouille, who was called upon to oppose them, could scarcely muster a sufficient force to garrison his fortresses. The month of September had, however, commenced; and he calculated upon the rainy season which was rapidly approaching, the difficulty which the invading armies must necessarily experience in victualling their troops, and above all on the well-tryed valour of his superior officers. Nevertheless, his force was so insufficient for such an emergency, that, according to Du Bellay, he was compelled whenever the enemy withdrew from before a fortified place to remove the garrison into another which was liable to attack. Under these circumstances Francis recalled the Duke de Vendôme from his government of Champagne to the defence of Paris, at the head of four hundred men-at-arms; and at the same time despatched Brion Chabot to assure the citizens that assistance was at hand. The embassy was precisely one which flattered the vanity of the young count, who, strong in his consciousness of the royal favour, although naturally brave, was arrogant, thoughtless, and self-sufficient; and he had no sooner called a meeting than omitting altogether to mention the

immediate arrival of Vendôme with his troops, he made a flowery harangue, in which he bade the inhabitants of the metropolis divest themselves of all uneasiness, as the king had taken every precaution to insure the safety of the city, and had sent him to defend it.

Baillet, a shrewd and practical man, who was second president of the parliament, when the young courtier, flushed with his own eloquence paused for a reply, calmly rose, and glancing about him with a look of grave irony, answered by assuring the royal envoy that he was welcome to the capital as the messenger of their sovereign lord the king, and that there could be little doubt that, should need be, he would demean himself in a manner worthy of his mission; but that, nevertheless, none of his co-citizens could have forgotten that when Louis XI was anxious to convince his good city of Paris that the invasion of Charles of Burgundy should not affect their safety, he had not sent a solitary courtier by post, but a French marshal with four hundred armed men; a better security than himself, whatever might be his personal qualities, or his court favour, for the preservation of a metropolis; and that, consequently, he felt it incumbent on him to congratulate his fellow-townsmen upon the fact that M. de Vendôme, with a body of troops, was already on the road to reinforce M. de Brion Chabot.

This intelligence soon reached the enemy's camp also; and the English duke, apprehensive that he might be enclosed between the armies of Trémouille and Vendôme, determined on retiring to Calais, the Germans and Flemings having already insisted upon a retreat. He accordingly withdrew by Nesle, Ham, and Bohain, and ultimately sailed for England in the month of December, with a mere skeleton of the fine army which he had led into France, having effected nothing.

We have already stated that the conspiracy of Bourbon had induced Francis to forego his intention of heading his troops in the Milanese, and that he had temporarily confided the command to Bonnivet; who, rash, inconsiderate, and comparatively inexperienced, had only his reckless courage to recommend him. This ill-fated selection had been made at the suggestion of Madame d'Angoulême, and was intended as the last indignity which she could show to Bourbon; who, considering the favourite as his vassal, would necessarily feel himself outraged by such an arrangement, when France could have opposed him by a Vendôme, a Chabannes, or a Montmorenci.

Its effect was, however, to the full as unfavourable upon the nation at large; the French people, and above all, the French army, had no confidence in the light-hearted and libertine favourite of the duchess-mother; and public opinion seldom errs. His agency had been traced throughout the disgrace of the connétable, not only the first noble, but also the first soldier of France, and while a hope was entertained that the duke, after the bitter paroxysm of his indignation had passed over, might still become reconciled to his sovereign, the more wary of those who watched the progress of events felt a melancholy conviction that should it be otherwise, and Bourbon be indeed induced to bear arms against his country, the contest would be fearfully unequal. Bonnivet had merely the uncalculating courage of a soldier, while Bourbon possessed the tried prudence of a commander; the spoiled favourite was presumptuous, disdainful all advice from those about him, whatever might be the amount of their experience; while the attainted Duke sought, on the contrary, for counsel, calculated every chance, was an adept in the whole science of warfare, and was ever ready to profit by any oversight on the part of his adversary. But Bourbon, proscribed and despoiled, now possessed only his proud name and his good sword; while Bonnivet, at the very moment when his sovereign contented himself by sending a prince of the blood at rite head of four hundred men to protect the capital of his kingdom, found himself invested with the command of sixteen hundred lances, the flower of the French cavalry, six thousand Swiss, two thousand troops from the Valais, as many from the Grisons, six thousand lansquenets, three thousand Italians, and twelve thousand French volunteers.

The moment of the invasion was, however, an unpropitious one for France. The solitary fortress which she still possessed, that of Cremona, was garrisoned only by eight brave men, the remnant of a garrison of forty, to whom, under the command of M. d'Herbouville, it had been entrusted eighteen months previously; and who, although they continued to hold the place, had long despaired of help, and been cut off from all communication with their countrymen; while the pope had joined the confederation, believing that he should thus insure the peace of Italy, and had confided the command of his troops to the Duke of Mantua, who was as anxious as himself to avoid a collision with the enemy.

The sudden death of the pontiff, moreover, which took place on the 14th of September, the very day upon which the campaign commenced, rendered the papal general still more averse to an encounter with the French forces upon his own responsibility; the confederated army was still scattered; while Prosper Colonna, the general-in-chief, who was entrusted with the defence of the Milanese, was a confirmed invalid, and was, moreover, trammelled for want of means to pay his troops. Charles de Launoy, Viceroy of Naples, who in the event of his demise was to succeed to his command, had halted in the south of Italy, in order not to arouse any suspicion of his purpose; and Pescara, whose jealous animosity towards him no personal success of his own had been able to appease, had left the army for Valladolid, where the emperor was then residing, in order to pour out all his complaints against his rival. Nevertheless, despite extreme old age, bodily suffering, and mental anxiety, Colonna was still true to his reputation; and contrived to harass the enemy, and to impede their progress by all practicable means. As they advanced, although unable to mount his horse, he caused himself to be conveyed in a litter to the bank of the Ticino, opposite Vigevano, in order to dispute their passage; but on his arrival there he found that the extreme drought which had prevailed throughout the summer had so decreased the volume of water that the river could be forded from every point; and he was consequently compelled to make a rapid retreat to Milan.

Had Bonnivet pursued his advantage on the instant, there can be little doubt that he might have become master of the city; for thirty years of intermittent warfare had impoverished the citizens, and the walls of the town were still in ruins; while, as we have already stated, the confederated army was dispersed over a large extent of territory. By the forced march of one day the French general might have reached the city; but anxious to convince those who had hitherto accused him of rashness, that he could exert a prudence equal to their own, he lingered for three days on the shores of the Ticino; and thus gave the imperialist general time to repair his fortifications, and to strengthen his garrison.

Bonnivet was accordingly compelled to have recourse to a blockade; and to attempt, by turning the water-courses, and breaking up the roads which led to the city, to reduce the fortress by famine; a stratagem which he followed up by taking Monza, Lodi, and Cremona, the latter town having been in the possession of the Duke d'Urbino while the French held the citadel; thus cutting off the supplies, and exposing the beleaguered city to all the horrors of want. By diverting the canals from their course, and destroying the watermills in the neighbourhood, the French general had taken the most efficient steps to starve out the garrison; but for a time the want of the former was supplied by the springs within the walls, and that of the latter by windmills which Colonna speedily caused to be constructed; and meanwhile the French troops suffered little less in their own camp, the overflowing of the canals, which broke over their dams and flooded the low grounds about them, and the scarcity of forage for the horses and cattle, rendering it necessary that they should be perpetually on the alert; a circumstance of which Colonna took advantage, by means of skirmishing parties, to harass and fatigue the troops day and night.

So unremitting, indeed, were his attacks—for he had succeeded in collecting within the walls of Milan no less a force than sixteen hundred horse and fourteen thousand foot—that Bonnivet became apprehensive lest he should, in conjunction with Antonio du Leyva, who held Pavia, take possession of a bridge which he had caused to be constructed at Vigevano, for the convenience of

conveying provisions into his camp, and thus starve him in his turn; and he accordingly desired Bayard and the Sire de Renée, who were then holding Monza, to take up their quarters in the village of Vigevano, in order to defend the bridge; a fatal error, of which he was soon destined to appreciate the extent, as Colonna by recapturing the city of Monza was at once enabled to secure an abundance of all the necessaries of life, and to recruit the failing strength of his garrison.

Under these circumstances Bonnivet soon wearied of a warfare which, perilous and fatiguing as it was, conduced to no result; and which was rendered tenfold more trying to his troops from the extreme rigour of the weather, and the perpetual and severe snow storms which for the last four months had almost choked up his camp. He consequently proposed a truce, which however was declined by Colonna; and thus he found himself obliged, on the 27th of November, to strike his tents under the very eyes of the enemy. He nevertheless succeeded in effecting his retreat in good order; and in condensing his troops on an island between the Ticinello and the Ticino, near Biagrasso and Rosat, where he took up his winter quarters, and disbanded a portion of his infantry, which he proposed to replace in the spring by a new levy in Switzerland.

On the 30th of December the brave Colonna breathed his last in Milan, full of years and honour. Although he had already reached the advanced age of eighty, and had long been the victim of a painful and hopeless disease, he had never suffered his spirit to be quenched by the sufferings of his body; and although both Lannoy and Pescara entered the capital of Lombardy on the very day of his decease, it is questionable whether either, or both combined, could have replaced him.

But, unfortunately for France, private animosity and party feeling had raised up against her a still more formidable enemy; and the ashes of the brave Colonna were scarcely cold in their sepulchre, ere Charles de Bourbon, at the head of six thousand lansquenets whom he had raised in Germany, appeared in the arena. It is true that the coldness of the emperor no longer permitted him to present himself as a prince about to combat for his own interests, and to lend his aid in dismembering the nation, and possessing himself of a separate and independent kingdom; but still his name was a watchword of strength, and his influence over the troops so unbounded, that the pride of Pescara revolted at a rivalry which he had believed must have terminated with the death of Colonna; and nothing short of their common desire to revenge their real or imagined wrongs against France could have induced the two generals to fight under the same banner.

The contest before Milan had not, meanwhile, been the only one which engaged the attention of Europe; the death of Pope Adrian the Sixth having necessitated a new election which convulsed the Vatican with cabals and intrigue. The English ambassadors in Rome had been busy in forwarding the interests of Wolsey, who had also applied to the emperor for his support, and looked with confidence to the result. But Charles, even while he pledged himself to the cardinal to uphold his pretensions, had private reasons for desiring his failure; and exerted himself so strenuously to secure it, that his name was no sooner mentioned in the conclave than it was unanimously rejected; and after six weeks of agitation and intrigue between the powerful factions of the cardinals of Medicis and Colonna, the election of the former was secured, and he assumed the popedom under the title of Clement VII. Like his predecessor, the new pontiff secretly favoured the league, and was desirous for the expulsion of the French from Italy; and thus Francis reaped no benefit from the change which had taken place.

Bonnivet, when once he had secured his winter quarters, so far from feeling his confidence diminished by the check which he had experienced under the walls of Milan, cradled himself in the belief that the arrival of adequate reinforcements from France, and the pecuniary pressure to which the enemy were exposed, must tend to his ultimate success so soon as the rigorous season should be terminated;—but he deceived himself.

Francis, once more satisfied of the immediate safety of his kingdom, had no time to spare

from his pleasures, and totally overlooked the precarious circumstances of the absent general; while the appearance of Bourbon with the confederated army tended to condense their measures, and to increase their activity. Moreover, it was essential to Bonnivet that he should maintain a communication with Switzerland and La Valais by means of Lago Maggiore; and for this purpose he found himself compelled to detach Renzo de Ceri, one of the Orsini family, who was a general of the Italian army, with a strong force to besiege Arona, a powerful fortress which defended the passage between Milan and the Simplon on the western side of the lake. His command consisted of seven thousand of his countrymen, but they were for the most part worn-out veterans, who had wasted their strength in the intestine wars of Italian independence, and who were now brought together under the same banner without a sympathy in common, save that which grew out of the memory that they had each in their turn been indebted for help to the arms of France. These disjointed troops, nevertheless, held out gallantly during the space of thirty days, and harassed the garrison of the place by their indomitable resolution; but at the termination of that period they were driven from their post with considerable loss by Anchiso Visconti, who held the citadel, and compelled them to raise the siege.

The great anxiety of Bonnivet, when foiled upon this point, was to prevent the introduction of provisions into Milan; where he was aware that from the great strength of the garrison, and the multitude of peasantry who had taken refuge within the walls, the consumption must be immense; and having ascertained that supplies not only of food, but also of money, were on their way to the city, he resolved to despatch Bayard to a small village called Rebec for the purpose of intercepting them on their passage. The good knight was never backward where hard blows were to be exchanged, but even he hesitated to undertake so hazardous an enterprise; for Rebec was an open hamlet without walls or defences of any description, and was situated within rifle-shot of the enemy's camp.

"It is to you, my lord of Bayard, that I offer this command," said Bonnivet courteously; "because it cannot be in better hands than yours. Take with you two hundred horse, and the infantry of Lorges; and we shall be enabled by these means not only to cut off the supplies of the city, but also to obtain unerring intelligence of the movements of the imperialists."

"Both the one measure and the other are desirable no doubt," was the calm reply of the good knight, "but to effect either I should require the aid of at least a moiety of your whole force. Rebec stands in the midst of the open fields, we have a vigilant enemy to deal with, and our standard will require to be well guarded. Are you prepared to give me the troops I require?"

"Your prudence is ill-timed," said the arrogant favourite. Had I not been assured of the perfect safety of the expedition, I should not have devised it. Even now, not a mouse can stir in Milan but I am instantly apprised of its movements. If you decline, however, there are others—"

"Had my personal honour alone been involved in our failure, Monseigneur," broke in Bayard haughtily, "I should have spared both you and myself so many words; but I fight for France, and her glory is dearer to me than my own. I will, however, since such is your good pleasure, march to Rebec at dawn."

"Do so," replied Bonnivet, "and within eight-and-forty hours I will provide you with such a reinforcement as shall form a living citadel in your new government."

"I shall look for it, my lord," said Bayard coldly, "and will instantly make my preparations."

Accordingly, just as the day broke, the good knight, with a cheerful countenance but a foreboding heart, left Biagrasso at the head of two hundred horsemen and two thousand foot soldiers; but so certainly did he foresee the result of such an improvident enterprise, that he took



with him only a second charger, leaving his mules and his baggage at Novara. His first care on arriving in his new quarters was to defend the village in so far as it was susceptible of defence; but when he had ridden through the straggling and unprotected streets and lanes of which it was composed, he found that he could effect nothing beyond erecting barricades at the entrance of the several thoroughfares; and perceiving that in the event of an attack it would be utterly impossible for him to hold out longer than a few hours, he despatched an urgent letter to Bonnavet, describing the extreme peril of his situation, and entreating him not to lose a moment in forwarding the promised reinforcements. But when messenger had succeeded messenger to the main camp, and no answer was returned, Bayard became convinced that he must rely entirely upon his own little band; and a bitter conviction grew upon him that the jeopardy in which he was thus placed had been premeditated. He had long been aware of the jealousy borne towards him by the favourite, by whom the renown of every military leader in the French armies had invariably been considered as a personal injustice ; although in the frankness of his nature he had never suffered himself to suspect that he would be guilty of leading one of his sovereign's officers into an ambush so hopeless as that in which he now found himself entrapped; and he made a solemn vow that should his life be spared he would demand satisfaction at the sword's point.

Days and nights passed on during which the good knight never put off his armour, and even deprived himself of sleep until fatigue had so seriously undermined his health that he could not rise from his bed; and thus found himself constrained to delegate his authority to some of his superior officers. These, however, having since their arrival seen no cause for alarm, proved less stringent than himself, and having satisfied themselves upon their midnight round that all was silent in the enemy's camp, they retired to their quarters, after enjoining the sentinels to vigilance.

The Marquis de Pescara had, meanwhile, ascertained with how small a force Bayard had occupied the hamlet, and resolved to surprise him; while, in order to prevent any mistake during the darkness, his men were instructed to wear their shirts over their armour; and thus, guided by a couple of peasants who were familiar with all the outlets of the village, the Spaniards, to the number of six thousand foot and five hundred horse, moved noiselessly towards Rebec, where all was so silent that for a time they suspected the French troops had retired.

At length, however, they reached the advanced sentinels, who immediately commenced a rapid retreat, raising an alarm as they fell back upon the barricades; while, as the first cry echoed through the streets, the good knight sprang from his sick-bed, and seizing his lance, rushed towards the barrier, followed by De Lorges and half a dozen men-at-arms, when he encountered a body of the emperor's troops, who were clamorously demanding to be led to his quarters, and offering a reward to whomsoever would enable them to take him. With his own hand, enfeebled as he was by sickness, he overthrew the foremost; upon which his gallant little band, reassured by his sudden apparition among them, seconded him bravely; but he had no sooner ascertained the number of the enemy than he became convinced that all opposition was fruitless; and beckoning De Lorges to his side he bode him instantly retreat with his infantry to Biagrasso.

"Go," he said rapidly, "save all the lives you can before the whole body of the imperialists pass the barrier. All else must be abandoned; do not lose a moment. I will cover your retreat with my gendarmes; and follow you, should it be God's will."

This order was promptly executed; and while the Italian troops withdrew by an opposite avenue, the good knight and his cavalry so resolutely repulsed the advancing enemy, that they had ultimately time to wheel their horses in their turn towards the main camp, having lost only nine men throughout this gallant defence.

On reaching Biagrasso, Bayard at once proceeded to the quarters of Bonnavet, whom he upbraided vehemently for his treachery and bad faith; and the quarrel proceeded to such a length

that a personal combat must have been inevitable, had not the menacing aspect of public affairs induced both leaders to defer for a time the settlement of their private differences.

The imperial army had received a reinforcement of six thousand lansquenets levied by the Venetian states; and Bourbon, who had hitherto been passive, now occupied Milan, and began to act on the offensive. Perpetual skirmishes weakened the ranks of Bonnivet without acquiring for him the slightest advantage; sickness had declared itself among his troops; while the Swiss refused to remain longer partakers of these perpetual and unprofitable disasters, and, according to their usual custom, marched out of the city, and returned home. In this extremity, determined to achieve at least some glory before he abandoned the enterprise upon which he had entered without a single misgiving, Bonnivet made use of every stratagem he could devise for provoking the Duke de Bourbon to an engagement; the haughty connétable, however, disdained to encounter one of whom he still affected to speak as his vassal; and while he pertinaciously harassed his troops by continual sallies, he gave him no opportunity of meeting his own army in the open field.

At length intelligence reached the French camp that six thousand Swiss were marching to their aid by Sessia, and a like number by Bergamo, upon which Bonnivet determined to fall back upon Novara; and he had no sooner accomplished this movement than Bourbon, in order to prevent the junction which it was intended to facilitate, marched his main body to a convenient spot between Sessia and Novara to oppose the passage of the first, while Giovanni de' Medici crossed the Ticino, and by this movement impeded the progress of the other. In addition to this disaster the French general had no sooner evacuated Biagrasso, the only strong fortress which still remained in his power, than it was besieged and taken by Sforza; nor did the evil end there, for it was discovered that the plague which was raging in the city had extended to his troops, who were daily dying in great numbers, while the scarcity of provisions, from which they had been suffering for several weeks, tended to give added virulence to the disease.

Thus enclosed between two divisions of the hostile army, and disappointed of the anticipated reinforcements, Bonnivet called a council of war, at which it was decided that, as effectual resistance had now become impossible, a retreat should be attempted. In accordance with this arrangement, the French troops left Novara at midnight, and marched upon Romagnano, a hamlet situated upon the left bank of the Sessia; and before daylight they succeeded in passing the river, ere they were overtaken by the enemy. Here they joined their Swiss allies, and then proceeded towards Ivrea, with the intention of entering France by Lower Valais. They had now only ten leagues to march ere they reached a place of safety, and already the flagging spirits of the harassed soldiery began to revive. Bonnivet had, moreover, taken the precaution to erect a field-battery upon the river-bank to impede the passage of the enemy, and great confidence was felt in the sagacity of this arrangement. It proved, however, ineffectual, as the imperialists discovered a ford lower down the stream upon which the guns could not be brought to bear, and they consequently continued their pursuit without impediment, keeping up a brisk attack upon the rear of the retreating column. Bonnivet, who commanded the rear-guard, returned their fire with considerable effect, and steadily continued his march; while Bayard at the head of his gendarmes maintained a skirmishing warfare, which protected the main body. At length, a musket-ball broke the sword-arm of the French general, and compelled him to retire from the hazardous position he had hitherto resolutely held; upon which he summoned to his side the good knight and the Count de Vandenesse, the brother of La Palice.

“I pray and conjure you”, he said to Bayard, “for the sake of your own honour, and the glory of the French name, to defend, as you so well know how to do, the standards which I am now compelled to entrust to your tried valour and fidelity. M. de Vandenesse will command the artillery, but I leave the troops in your charge.”

“I thank you, my lord, for the confidence which you express in my loyalty,” replied the good

knight; “had you always done me the same honour heretofore, both my country and my sovereign might have profited by my exertions, and my own safety have been better secured. In any case, however, I shall do my duty; and so long as I have life, our standards shall never fall into the hands of the enemy.”

He then assumed the command of the retreating forces; and he had scarcely placed himself at the head of the gendarmes, when a stone from a hacquebouse struck the Count de Vandenesse, and inflicted a mortal wound, of which he died three days afterwards.

As he fell, Bayard turned upon the enemy, and made so vigorous a charge that he compelled them for a time to retreat upon their main body; but as he was about to rejoin his own force, he was in his turn smitten by a similar missile, which struck him across the loins, and fractured his spine. As he felt the blow, he reeled in his saddle, exclaiming, “Jesus, my God, I am killed!” He then, with some difficulty, raised to his lips the hilt of his sword which was in the form of a cross, kissed it, recommended his soul to God, and fainted. In an instant a dozen hands were outstretched to support him; and while he was led into a place of safety, he rallied, and besought those about him to set him with his back against a tree to which he pointed, and to place him with his face towards the imperialists.

“I feel,” he gasped out, “that I have but a few moments to live, and I will not, for the first time, turn my back upon the enemy. Comrades, to the charge I the Spaniards are advancing. Let me once more see the gleaming of our lances.”

The sobs of his maitre-d’hôtel, who was supporting his head, again recalled him to himself. “Jacques, my friend,” he murmured affectionately, “be comforted. It is the will of God that I should now leave this world, in which he has blessed me far beyond my deserts. His will be done”

As no priest was on the field to receive his confession, he sent to summon the Seigneur d’Alegre, the Provost of Paris, whom he entreated to act as his chaplain, and to whom he humbly declared his sins; after which, he besought him to bear his last vows of fidelity to the king his master, and to assure him that the most bitter pang which he experienced in dying existed in the consciousness that he could never again wield a lance in his service.

“And now,” he said, glancing round upon the soldiers who were thronging about him, regardless of the peril by which they were momentarily threatened; “and now, my friends and comrades, leave me, I entreat you; and do not let me suffer the misery of seeing you fall into the hands of your enemies; your care can avail me nothing, go, and pray for my soul.”

For the first time, however, he was disobeyed. Still the imperialists advanced, and still the weeping soldiers stood motionless, gazing upon their expiring idol. Not another blow was struck by the French; and as the enemy came up they heard only one long wail of grief, coupled with the name of Bayard.

Pescara was in the van of the army, and at once apprehending the truth, he made his way to the spot where the good knight was still struggling with the death agony. As his eye fell upon him, the Spanish general dropped his sword; and bending down, he raised the hand of his erewhile enemy respectfully to his lips.

“Would to God, my good lord of Bayard,” he said, “that at the cost of a quart of my own blood, so death had not ensued, I might have met you in good health, and as my prisoner, that so I might have proved how much I honour the exalted prowess that is in you; knowing as I do that the emperor my master has never had a braver or bolder enemy; and, may God be my help! I would rather have given half of all that I am worth, than that this should have chanced”

As Pescara turned away, the Duke de Bourbon advanced in his turn, and withdrawing his helmet, bent bare-headed over his old companion in arms. "Alas, Bayard I" he said, in an accent of deep emotion; "how do I grieve to see you, whom I have always loved and honoured, expiring before my eyes!"

"Monseigneur," replied the good knight, making an effort to subdue the agony under which he writhed; "I thank you for your sympathy, but I desire no pity at your hands; I die like a true man, in the service of my king and my country. Rather save your pity for yourself, who are bearing arms against your faith, your sovereign, and your nation."

Bourbon turned away in silence: the iron had entered into his heart.

During this brief interview Pescara had caused a magnificent marquee to be pitched upon the field, and the wounded man was conveyed upon the crossed lances of some of his own followers to a camp-bed beneath it, beside which he found a priest, to whom he once more confessed himself. The imperialist general then took up his station beside him, and remained at his post, until slightly raising himself upon his pillow, the dying man once more pressed his sword to his lips, and faintly murmuring his war cry of "God and my country I sank back", and expired.

A guard of honour was immediately stationed at the entrance of the tent, and the body embalmed; after which all the gentlemen and equerries of his household, who had surrendered on the sole condition that they should be permitted to see him once more before his interment, were indiscriminately admitted, although the same privilege was refused to individuals of higher rank in the opposite army; and as they retired they were severally informed that they were free, as the generals of the emperor had no desire that they should expiate by captivity the performance of a high and sacred duty.

The body of Bayard was then borne to the church by a party of his own gendarmes; and solemn services performed during two days; after which it was delivered over to the principal officers of his household to be conveyed to the family vault in Dauphiny according to his request. As the funeral procession traversed Savoy, the duke caused similar honours to be shown to the manes of the departed hero as he would have rendered to those of a kinsman; Piedmont paid him the same respect; and in Dauphiny every house was closed, and the belfry of every church rang a burial-peal. But the greatest triumph of the deceased warrior was the mournful cry of the bereaved army; the sob of the scarred veteran in his tent, and the sigh of the ardent young adventurer by the fire of his bivouac. Even the mournful exclamation of Francis, when the fatal news of the death of his famous knight was communicated to him, was less touching; for he thought of himself rather than of his faithful, warrior as he exclaimed: "Alas! I have lost a great captain. He carries with him into the grave many of the brightest jewels which might have been added to my crown."

And the hardy soldiers, seated in groups about their camp-fires, forgot their own prowess—forgot their own renown—and only murmured among themselves when peril was approaching, or honour was to be gained: "Bayard should have been here I—but Bayard is in his grave!"

CHAPTER VI.

[1524.]

THE deaths of Bayard and Vandenesse were the greatest loss sustained by the French during the retreat, if we except that of the duchy itself, which was once more in the hands of the confederated sovereigns. As regarded the troops, few had fallen, although all had suffered greatly alike from fatigue and privation; yet when Bonnivet again crossed the French frontier, it was with the humiliating consciousness that his defeat had been more fatal to the interests of Francis than any by which it had been preceded in the Milanese. The retreat was also effected in such confusion that Bourbon and Pescara resolved to pursue the fugitives; but the jealousy of the Spanish general would not permit him to follow the advice of the duke, who suggested the expediency of pushing forward at once to the interior, declaring his conviction that, so soon as he should reach Bourbonnais, Beaujolais, and Auvergne, all which countries had formerly been his own, the inhabitants would instantly join his standard. To this scheme Pescara, however, could not be induced to listen; and, accordingly, after much expostulation on the part of Bourbon, it was decided that their joint armies should proceed to the frontiers of Provence, where the pledge of the ex-connétable was to a certain degree redeemed; for not only did the lesser towns through which they passed receive him with little more than a mere show of resistance, and, at his suggestion, swear fidelity to the emperor; but even Aix, the capital of Provence, admitted him within its walls on the 9th of August; and ten days subsequently the confederated generals, with an army composed of seven thousand lansquenets, six thousand Spanish infantry, two thousand Italians, and six hundred light-horse, sat down before Marseilles.

Nor was even this formidable force the only one by which the besieged citizens were threatened, as M. de Lannoy, the Viceroy of Naples, engaged shortly to follow with a body of six thousand cavalry; while Ugo de Moncada was to keep the whole army supplied with provisions and ammunition, which were to be conveyed by a fleet of sixteen galleys to the coast.

On ascertaining the strait to which the Marseillaise were reduced, Francis lost no time in despatching Brion Chabot (as he had previously done to the Parisians) to assure the citizens of effective aid; but, before he arrived, Lorenzo de Ceri had already thrown himself into the town with the remnant of his battalion of Italian patriots, now reduced, however, to four thousand men, and even those so worn by fatigue and wounds that few of them survived this new demand upon their energies.

On the departure of Bonnivet for Italy Francis had returned to Blois, where he, for the first time, exerted himself to regain the affections of the people who were indignant at the defection of Bourbon, which they justly attributed to his persecution by the court; and it was no sooner made known that he would be accessible to all petitions, than he was inundated with complaints against the soldiery and the fiscal agents. To the representations of the peasantry he replied by authorizing them to resist, even by violent measures, the rapine of the troops, to take possession of their own property wherever they might find it, and to deliver over the marauders to the provost-marshal when they chanced to fall into their hands. He next regulated and equalized the taxes; and, finally, he commanded that all funds raised in the provinces should be at once conveyed to Blois to meet the national exigencies; while he at the same time in some degree curtailed his personal expenses; ordaining that all presents which he might hereafter make in specie, should be paid only at the end

of the year, after all the public accounts were settled; “excepting always” said the ordonnance in conclusion, “the current outlay necessary to our own privy necessities and pleasures.”

The jeopardy of Marseilles, however, sufficed to arouse the king for a time from the selfish indulgences to which he was so painfully addicted. He had vainly endeavoured to doubt the advent of Bourbon into his very kingdom at the head of an army, but when at length he was compelled to admit the fact, he hastily raised a corps of observation, instructed to harass the confederates by every means short of an engagement, which was to be carefully avoided. He moreover levied fourteen thousand foot and six thousand lansquenets in Switzerland, and divided them between François Duke de Lorraine and Richard de la Pole, together with fourteen or fifteen hundred cavalry. He also despatched ad interim the Marechal de Chabannes, with orders to possess himself of the city of Avignon before it fell into the hands of the enemy; an enterprise in which he succeeded.

Meanwhile the position of Bourbon was onerous in the extreme. The citizens rose as one man to oppose him; and the burgher-guard alone soon amounted to nine thousand men. Nor was it solely against male valour that he was called upon to contend; all ranks of women throughout the city vying with each other in their efforts to second the noble exertions of their fathers and brothers, and succeeding so efficiently in defending one of the trenches, whence the troops had been withdrawn to meet an attack upon another point, that it has ever since been known as “The Ladies’ Trench.” Those who were too weak to hurl missiles, or to supply ammunition to the combatants, bore away the wounded and administered to their wants; while so resolute were the inhabitants never to surrender their city, that the siege lasted forty days, and the sacrifice of life on both sides was immense.

An evil star appeared to plane over Bourbon. The supplies of which he had wrung a promise from England did not arrive; and the Italian troops, satisfied by the expulsion of the French from their territories, refused to co-operate across the frontier, loudly insisting that a representation should be made to the emperor, to secure the mediation of the pope, by which peace might be restored throughout Europe. The imperial flotilla was, moreover, encountered by the galleys of Andrea Doria, and the French vessels under La Fayette the viceadmiral; several of the ships were destroyed, and others taken, together with all on board, among whom was Philibert de Chalon, Prince of Orange; and meanwhile Bourbon was as ill seconded within the camp as without.

At the commencement of the siege he had treated the matter lightly; for, deceived by the facility with which he had rendered himself master of the other towns of Provence, he did not calculate upon any protracted resistance on the part of the Marseillaise, and was unguarded enough to declare that half-a-dozen discharges of artillery would bring the terrified citizens to the feet of the confederated generals with the keys of the fortress in their hands, and ropes about their necks; and so great was the influence which he possessed over the troops, that they would have placed implicit confidence in the assurance, had not Pescara, who had already writhed beneath a conviction of the duke’s paramount importance in his own country, led him to imbue the soldiery with feelings of suspicion and distrust towards his person which soon induced fatal results. The arrival of Lannoy was also painfully delayed; and although the invading army had reached Provence at the beginning of July, it was not until the 7th of September that the besiegers were enabled to mount their battery with the heavy ordnance which they had brought for the purpose from Toulon and Bregançon, while their musketry produced no impression whatever upon the walls of the city; and this was the more mortifying to the confederated generals from the fact that the artillery of the enemy was in excellent condition and admirably served, producing an amount of damage in their camp for which they had been totally unprepared.

The Italian patriots under Lorenzo de Ceri, also succeeded by their constant sallies in impeding the mining and other labours of the imperialists; while so constant and well-directed a

fire was sustained against them, that on one occasion during the performance of mass in the tent of the Marquis de Pescara, the officiating priest and two of the attendants were killed by a cannon-ball. Attracted by the confusion consequent on the event, Bourbon hastened to the scene of action, anxiously inquiring what had occurred; when the Spanish General, who had remained calm and self-possessed during the uproar, sarcastically requested him to dismiss all uneasiness, as it was only the timid burghers of Marseilles, who, according to his pledge, were on their way with the city keys, and their necks in the noose, to deliver themselves and their fortress into his hands.

A day or two subsequently a breach was effected by means of the heavy ordnance, and an attempt was made to take the city by storm; but Lorenzo de Ceri so effectually protected the opening by means of a strong rampart and a deep ditch, that it was found impracticable; and Pescara no sooner ascertained the fact than he proceeded to the tent of Bourbon, in which a council of war was then sitting, and, without affecting to remark thee duke himself, exclaimed vehemently; "Gentlemen, you who will it may go to heaven; there are means at hand, if you only remain, and persevere in this siege; but as I can wait, I shall return to Italy before I lose alike my life and my renown."

As he ceased speaking he left the tent, and was followed by every individual of the council save Bourbon himself, who had no alternative save to issue orders for a retreat, which he now saw would be effected equally without his sanction. At that moment he became bitterly aware that he had lost at once substance and shadow. The independent kingdom, and the royal wife, both of which his sword and his name were to have secured him, had alike eluded his grasp; he was no longer the powerful master of a dozen provinces upon whom victory had waited; he was an outlawed, exiled, worsted general; an alien alike in his own land and in that which he had adopted.

On the 28th of September the retreat accordingly commenced, deliberately and in good order; but it was not effected without molestation, the Marechal de Chabannes, at the head of six hundred horse, falling upon the rear of the column, and not only destroying a great number of the enemy, but also securing an enormous quantity of booty; while Montmorenci with a strong force pursued them as far as Toulon, and did considerable damage, although he did not succeed in arresting their march.

On the 28th of June, Francis had written from Amboise to assure the citizens of Provence that he would immediately march in person to their assistance; and for this purpose he had collected an army consisting of fourteen hundred Swiss, six thousand lansquenets, ten thousand French and Italian infantry, and fifteen hundred horse. The retreat of the confederated generals, however, rendered this reinforcement unnecessary; and dazzled by such un hoped-for success, Francis, who once more saw himself master of a considerable army, resolved to make a new attempt to regain the Milanese.

The most experienced of his generals attempted to dissuade him from so quixotic a project, representing that the autumn was now nearly at an end, and that his army must be inevitably weakened and exhausted by the mere casualties of so formidable a march, even before they met the enemy; but to this objection he replied by haughtily remarking, that such as were afraid of the cold might remain in Provence. He had been assured by Bonnivet that his presence alone was required to ensure the subjugation of the duchy, and his vanity was flattered by the prospect of succeeding where older and more tried soldiers had failed. Equally in vain were the expostulations of Louise de Savoie, who having been informed of his altered intentions, despatched a courier to entreat him to await her arrival, as she had secrets of great importance to communicate; while at the same time she informed him of the death of the queen, whose long-failing health had at length given way under her perpetual mortifications.

Neither consideration, however, could change or retard his resolution; and contenting himself by simply expressing his regret at the demise of his wife, and confirming the authority of his mother as regent of France during his absence, the king immediately hastened to cross the Alps, and to pursue his march to Milan.

But if Francis in his selfish enthusiasm failed to mourn over the fate of his victim, his subjects at least avenged her. Gentle and unobtrusive as her life had been, the Good Queen Claude, as the burghers and people were accustomed to designate her, had left a thousand memories of long-enduring sweetness and inexhaustible charity as a monument in their hearts. Her whole existence had been one of suffering. Reared in strict seclusion, she had given her first and only affection to her young husband; nor had neglect, harshness, or inconstancy tended to weaken it. Aware of his excesses, she pardoned, without seeking to avenge them; and when some passing remorse brought him for a time to her side, she forgot the tears which he had cost her and welcomed him with a smile. But the daughter of Louis XII was less strong in body than in mind; and her perpetual sufferings terminated her life on the 26th of October, at the palace of Blois, at the early age of twenty-five. She was interred as modestly as she had lived; the king was absent; and no pompous ceremonial desecrated the remains of her gentle spirit.

In one thing, at least, Francis was sincere, for he did not even affect a semblance of grief at her death. She had left him three sons, and the succession was assured; he was about to effect the conquest of the Milanese, and he had no leisure for domestic regrets; a loving heart was cold, but his own was capacious, and he was now free. So little, indeed, was he touched by her loss, that only a few weeks subsequently, when during his progress through Provence, the citizens of Manosque caused the keys of their city to be presented to him by the most beautiful girl of the place, the looks and gestures of the king so terrified the young and timid Mademoiselle de Voland, that discovering no other method of escaping from insult, she applied sulphuric acid to her face on her return home, and thus heroically, and effectually, put an end to the licentious advances of her royal admirer.

Having failed in dissuading her son from his new enterprise, Louise de Savoie, now regent of France, began to feel that she was in a position to revenge upon the minister of finance the affront to which she had been subjected through his uncompromising probity; and she accordingly hastened to suggest to Francis the expediency of borrowing a large sum from de Semblançay, to enable him to support the expenses of his Italian expedition without harassing his subjects. The king, who eagerly welcomed any measure by which he could be relieved from his momentary difficulties, did not hesitate to avail himself of the hint; but the old minister, who had already advanced three hundred thousand crowns from his own private fortune to uphold the dignity of the sovereign, and who saw no prospect of their ever being repaid, respectfully but firmly declined to make any further advance.

“I have claims upon me, madame” he said, when the regent laid before him the letter of the king; “which compel me to withhold any further loan to the crown.”

“You refuse then, Sir?”

“I have no alternative, madame, I am now an old man, and cannot look forward to redeem my losses; nor must your highness deem it an act of disrespect or disloyalty, if, while reluctantly obliged to disappoint the expectations of my sovereign, I also crave the repayment I of my previous loan.”

“Sir;” said the duchess, as she rose haughtily from her chair, and fixed her large eyes coldly and sternly upon his; “Do you wish to destroy yourself?”



“ I am at a loss to understand you, madame.”

“I shall ere long make my meaning clearer. I will not detain you longer. Go, and reflect”.

With a low obeisance which was, nevertheless, as haughty as her own, the venerable minister retired; and for a few days Louise de Savoie waited to ascertain the result of her threat; but as M. de Semblançay evinced no disposition to relent, she despatched a messenger to the army, who returned with an order for the dismissal of the finance-minister, signed by the king himself; when she arrogantly informed him that he was at liberty to retire at once from the court; a permission of which he immediately and gladly availed himself, and withdrew to an estate which he possessed near Tours.

The capture of Milan was soon effected, M. de Lannoy by whom it was held, being unable to make an effective resistance against so strong a force as that by which he was now assailed. But Milan was no longer what it had formerly been; impoverished, not only by the pillage of its enemies, but also by the exactions of those who had professed to be its friends; its battered houses filling its deserted streets with unsightly ruins; and its diminished population still trembling at the recollection of the fearful plague to which hundreds of their fellow-townsmen had fallen victims; nothing could be more uninviting to the eyes of a conqueror than the aspect of the once proud city which had so long been the centre of conflicting ambitions.

Had the French king pursued the retreating army, it is probable that he would have driven them out of Italy; as the people, wearied and outraged by the iron rule of Spain and Germany, were anxious for their expulsion; while his unexpected success had so alarmed the new pope, Clement VII, that he entered into a treaty by which he bound himself to furnish him with supplies for carrying on the war; while the monarch, on his side, pledged himself to protect the interests of the Ecclesiastical States, and the members of the Medici family. But, intoxicated by the brilliant commencement of his campaign, and surrounded by a bevy of hot-headed favourites, who by flattering his weakness ensured their own interests, Francis, who was personally brave, and who panted to distinguish himself in the eyes of the emperor, yielded to that passion for knight-errantry which had been his bane as a general from his very youth, and disdainful to turn aside from his one great purpose, suffered the confederalists to condense their forces, and to mature their plans; while by the insidious advice of his chosen friends he pursued his march to Pavia, taking possession as he went of every fortress upon the way.

At the passage of the Ticino he experienced considerable resistance from the garrison of a fort, which, however, ultimately fell into his hands; and he was so exasperated by the delay which their pertinacity had induced, that they no sooner surrendered than he caused every individual to be hanged who still survived within the walls; declaring that “they had richly earned their fate by daring to attempt the defence of such a hen-roost against the army of the King of France.”

The park of Mirabello affording an admirable position, the French army encamped there for the purpose of investing Pavia, which was defended by da Leyva, who had exerted all his energies to strengthen the fortifications, and who was so ably and zealously seconded by the inhabitants that he was enabled effectually to carry out his object. So great, indeed, was the enthusiasm of the citizens that, as at Marseilles, even the women worked in the trenches; and ere long it became evident that the city could not be taken by assault.

The attempt made by the French troops to effect this object proved indeed most disastrous; for, misled by the fact that the outer walls were not guarded by a ditch, and that their artillery was consequently enabled to approach so near, as to open a wide breach, they began to anticipate an easy conquest; they soon, however, discovered that the ditch which was wanting without the walls had been formed within, while every private house had been converted into a fortress, and filled

with troops. Foiled in this attempt, the French engineers endeavoured to turn one of the courses of the Ticino, which bathes the walls of Pavia, and to compel it into another channel, but the rainy season having set in, they found it impossible to effect their purpose. There remained, consequently, no alternative save that of sitting down before the city, occupying the several thoroughfares which led to its gates, and by thus cutting off all supplies, to await the result of famine.

The pope, alarmed by hostilities which threatened to destroy the peace of Italy for an interminable period, and seeing the whole country rapidly becoming the prey of two hostile sovereigns who were alike strangers, but each of whom was endeavouring to undermine its liberty and independence, declared that he would not espouse the interest of either party, but as the head of Catholic Europe, was ready at any moment to mediate between them. He accordingly despatched to Francis his apostolical datary, Juan Matteo Ghiberti, proposing a general truce for five years, while a second messenger was accredited to De Lannoy with the same suggestion. It was, however, coldly rejected on both sides, with the assurance of the French king in reply, that ere long he should be master of Pavia, and sovereign of the Milanese; while Lannoy, acting for the Emperor, bade the papal envoy inform His Holiness, that he would never affix his name to any treaty or truce which could tend to leave one foot of ground in the contested duchy under the dominion of Francis.

His interference having proved unavailing upon this point, the pontiff next demanded to maintain his own neutrality, and that of the other Italian states; but, although this was listlessly conceded by both parties, the privilege became merely nominal, from the fact that Clement VII was at once too undecided and too avaricious to take the necessary steps to uphold the dignity of his high station. Fearful of favouring the party which might ultimately fail, he waited to observe the progress of events; and too fond of money to maintain an army such as might have enabled him rather to dictate terms to the two invading princes than to ask impunity for his own supineness, he remained powerless and unprotected, an easy prey to the victor.

The assured attitude assumed by Francis induced him, however, to enter into a secret treaty with that sovereign, by which he pledged himself that neither he himself individually, the city of Florence, nor the Venetian senate, should furnish the emperor with any supplies, either of men or money; while the French king agreed, in consideration of this promise, to take the Florentine republic under his immediate protection; but although this treaty was probably made in all sincerity on both sides, it availed little to Francis, as the Venetians allowed the Duke de Bourbon to traverse their territories unmolested in the month of January following at the head of a large force.

Meanwhile Francis appeared to have greatly the advantage over his enemies, surrounded as he was by a numerous and well-organized army, all eager to encounter the imperialists, and to win renown under the eyes of their sovereign. His treasury was, moreover, well supplied, and provisions were poured into his camp from every side. New levies had been raised in Switzerland, and constant reinforcements increased the bulk of his already gigantic force. The imperial generals were, on the contrary, at the head of a body of men exhausted by the previous campaign, disheartened by this new and formidable opposition, weakened by an epidemic which had broken out among the troops, and utterly without pecuniary resources. The weather was, however, greatly in their favour; as although the French continued to keep up a heavy fire upon the walls, and endeavoured to undermine them, the quantity of rain which fell impeded all their measures.

Nevertheless, Francis calculated so firmly upon the effects of famine and privation within the city, where he had been already informed by his spies that symptoms of mutiny had appeared among the garrison, that he resolved to detach a portion of his army, which was rapidly becoming weary of inaction, to the assistance of the Angevin party, who had declared their desire to take up

arms against the Spaniards on the Neapolitan territories. Every circumstance tended to render the moment a propitious one for such an enterprise; Lannoy, in order to strengthen his army in the Milanese, had left Naples almost defenceless; the secret treaty entered into with the pope, relieved Francis from all apprehension of his hostility; Pescara had absolutely refused to hazard an engagement with the French, by which alone the design against Naples might have been frustrated; and the imperialist soldiers were sullenly murmuring, not only at the daily privations which they were compelled to undergo, but also at the long arrears of pay which disabled them from procuring any alleviation of their sufferings. From the emperor there was, moreover, little to fear at that particular juncture, as he was confined to a sick-bed in Spain, and at the head of an army alike weak and discontented, while perpetual feuds had rendered his generals distrustful of each other. All considerations consequently appeared to favour a revolution in Naples; and Francis accordingly confided the command of a body of nine thousand men to the Duke d'Aubigny, the ex-regent of Scotland, with instructions to act against the Spaniards.

For a time da Leyva was enabled to silence the murmurs of the garrison of Pavia by assurances that ample funds for the payment of their arrears were in the hands of\* the viceroy Lannoy; to whom he wrote, earnestly representing the impossibility of sustaining the siege unless he received immediate supplies. Lannoy Was aware that his position was critical; but the investment of the city by the French troops rendering it impossible to convey relief to the besieged save by stratagem, he was compelled to have recourse to a bold and hazardous experiment of which he was careful to apprise da Leyva; and a short time subsequently two Spanish troopers in the garb of peasants, mounted upon sturdy and ill-groomed hackneys, and each leading a second horse charged with a couple of wine-barrels, presented themselves before the French camp, and asked permission to enter in order to vend their merchandise. They were gladly welcomed, that necessary luxury to Frenchmen having become rare; and they accordingly rode forward until they were close under the city walls, where they unloaded their animals, and affected to be preparing to stave in the tubs. This was the moment for which the Spanish general had been anxiously watching, and the precious barrels laden with treasure were no sooner lifted to the ground, than he made a sudden and desperate sally, and succeeded in possessing himself of the prize.

Ere long, however, the clamours of the troops were renewed; their claims were still unpaid in part, while their numerous necessities had been far from satisfied; and in this new emergency—which was rendered doubly dangerous from the fact that even the lansquenets, who had hitherto remained passive, began to exhibit symptoms of mutiny in their turn—da Leyva found himself compelled to resort to the same expedient as the Emperor Dionysius, who tore the golden robe from the shoulders of Apollo; and to strip all the shrines of Padua of their precious metals. Like a good Catholic, however, he accompanied this act of sacrilege by a solemn vow to restore to each of the despoiled altars gifts of still greater value, if he should succeed in defending the city; and with the spoil thus secured he caused a coarse coinage to be struck with which he paid his army, and escaped from the threatened peril.

The priests, at the termination of the siege, ventured humbly to remind him of the sacred pledge that he had given; but da Leyva politely referred them to the emperor, of whom he told them that he was but the subject and servant, and to whom, as he asserted, they must consequently look for the remuneration which they sought. Charles V, however, whose days of saintship had not yet commenced, and who found it expedient to sink the sovereign in the soldier, declined, when they transmitted their application, to render himself answerable for debts contracted without his sanction; and thus the goodly ornaments of the temples of Pavia were lost to them for ever.

Meanwhile Bourbon had, as we have stated, joined the imperial camp with his new levies; and supported by so powerful a command he was enabled to act independently of Pescara and Lannoy, whose jealousy and distrust had hitherto paralysed all his efforts. Unfortunately for the

French cause, the arrival of the duke occurred almost simultaneously with the departure of D'Aubigny for Naples; while the fatal effects of the inclement weather to which they were exposed, were moreover becoming painfully apparent in the relaxed discipline and rapidly thinning ranks of the royal army. Desertions constantly occurred, which were carefully concealed from the king, as well as the mortality that was taking place among the troops; and he continued to make the necessary disbursements for an efficient army, when many of the regiments were reduced to half their original numbers. The rapacity of the officers to whom these large sums were entrusted became only more inordinate as they found the impunity with which their measures were attended; upon which Bourbon,, when apprised by his emissaries of the fatal error of the king, who soon began to experience considerable inconvenience in meeting so enormous and perpetual an outlay, resolved to take advantage of the circumstance, and suggested an immediate attack upon the enemy. Neither Lannoy nor Pescara, however, were prepared to follow his suggestion; while the troops openly declared that until they received the full payment of their arrears they would not take the field. As further delay would but deepen this difficulty, it was consequently resolved that the three generals should distribute among their several followers whatever private property they possessed, and at once march upon the French camp; and ultimately, on the 25th January, 1525, the imperialists struck their tents, and left Lodi, on their route towards Pavia.

Once again, the partiality of Francis for the Swiss mercenaries was fated to be cruelly shaken; six thousand Grisons who had voluntarily joined his army being at this period induced to desert his cause by Gian Giacomo de' Medici, who having surprised and taken the castle of Chiavenna, an important fortress on the Lake of Como, so alarmed the inhabitants of the country that they issued orders for the instant return of all their troops then in the pay of France, nor could all the persuasions of the king succeed in detaining them; a mortification rendered still greater by the fact that they withdrew only five days previous to the battle; while sundry other serious casualties had occurred by which his strength was shaken and his movements crippled. Four thousand Italian troops, raised in Savona by the Marquis de Saluzzo for the service of France, were surprised while crossing the Alessandrino, and were nearly cut to pieces; Palavicino with a still stronger reinforcement, was compelled to give battle to the enemy at Casal-Maggiore, where his troops were defeated, and himself taken prisoner; Juan de' Medici, who commanded the Black Bands, was wounded in the thigh on the 20th of February, and compelled to withdraw from the camp; and, finally, the pope, still anxious if possible to put an end to hostilities, once more endeavoured to mediate between the conflicting parties, and urged the expediency of restoring the Genoese to liberty; while Spain, after so long a delay, forwarded the sum of a hundred and fifty thousand ducats for the support of her troops, at a period when Francis was beginning to discover the inadequacy of his own resources.

The defection of the Grisons raised the hopes of da Leyva; who, aware that the imperialist generals were preparing to relieve him, abandoned the purely defensive system which he had hitherto pursued, and by constant and vigorous sallies harassed the French troops, and deprived them of all repose. Their position was, moreover, by no means secure, encamped as they were between a strongly fortified and well-garrisoned city, and an advancing army which greatly exceeded them in numbers. On the 1st of February the imperialists had advanced within a mile of the French outposts, where they endeavoured until near the end of the month, by perpetual skirmishes, to induce Francis to pass his entrenchments and to give them battle. At length, wearied of inaction, Pescara determined to effect his entrance into the park of Mirabello, for the purpose of relieving the garrison of Pavia; or failing in that attempt, forcing the enemy from within their lines to the open-ground, The French were, however, prepared for this movement; and the Spanish general accordingly found them drawn, up in order of battle, and covered by a formidable force of artillery under the command of Jacques Galliot de Genouilhac, Seneschal d'Armagnac.

The vanguard of the imperialists suffered severely as they began to traverse the level plain, but they still persisted in their advance; while the main body under the command of Pescara, and

the rearguard under that of Lannoy and Bourbon, were each in their turn exposed to the same galling fire, until they were enabled to take refuge in a small valley which afforded them partial shelter. Alphonso d'Avalos, Marquis del Guasto who commanded the vanguard, then instructed his men to scatter themselves, and to make their way as rapidly as they could individually to the walls of the city, in order that they might not present so sure a mark for the enemy's guns, a manoeuvre which completely misled Francis; who, surrounded by a brilliant staff, was watching the movements of his adversaries, and no sooner witnessed this apparent confusion than he gave an order to charge, which was eagerly re-echoed by the hot-headed young nobles about him.

The words had scarcely died away upon his lips when the whole body of his cavalry galloped to the front, thus suspending the operations of the artillery; while the troops of del Guasto, profiting by so unexpected a pause, once more formed into line with their face towards the French camp. The imperialist horse, among whom were a body of Spanish harquebussiers, answered the charge of the royal lances with a steady and well-directed fire; and many a noble cavalier bit the dust before the course of the maddened horses could be arrested.

On learning the approach of the confederated army, Francis had lost no time in recalling La Trémouille and Lescun from Milan; but even at that period he remained so prepossessed by the idea that he must inevitably prove successful, that he did not attempt to interfere with any of the measures adopted by Bonnivet; even allowing him on many occasions to preside over the war-councils, and not only upon his own person, but upon the very saddle on which he rode. After his disgraceful flight from Cerizola, he redeemed himself by new and valiant exploits, and died only a short time before the French king, whose courtesy he had repaid by treachery and ingratitude supporting his views in opposition to those of his veteran generals, while he amused himself in his society and in that of Anne de Montmorenci, Brion, and other enthusiasts, who succeeded in persuading him that his very presence must ensure victory, by arranging gigantic and gorgeous plans consequent upon his conquest, and never destined to be realized.

Somewhat startled, however, by the actual advance of the enemy, Francis assembled about him all his oldest and bravest officers, among whom were La Palice, La Trémouille, René de Savoie, the Duke of Suffolk, Galeaz de Saint Severino, and Lescun, who severally urged upon him the expediency of raising his camp, and taking up a position which might prevent the imperialists from reaching Pavia; representing that the garrison must inevitably disband itself from want of money and provisions, if, by persisting in his refusal to come to a general engagement, he abandoned it to its own resources. The younger nobles, however, listened scornfully to these suggestions, and were in vain reminded by their more experienced coadjutors that by so prudent a line of policy, not only Pavia itself, but the whole of the duchy must ultimately fall into the hands of the king; declaring the suggestion to be unworthy the consideration of the conqueror of Marignano. La Trémouille then suggested that should Francis indeed decide upon coming to a general engagement, he would act wisely in quitting his camp, and meeting the imperialists in the open plain; a proposition to which it is probable that the king would readily have acceded, had not Bonnivet, whose rash arrogance could tolerate no opposition, eagerly and vehemently exclaimed—

“Are you aware, gentlemen, of the extent of the ignominy which you propose to our brave king whose valour and courage are well known, when you suggest to him to raise the siege, and to avoid the battle which is now offered to us, and which we have so long desired? We Frenchmen have never yet refused to meet an enemy, and have not been accustomed to fight according to the rules of petty subterfuges and military artifices, but gallantly and openly; and still less should we close now, when we have at our head a bold and valiant sovereign who should give courage to cowards. Kings habitually carry good fortune with them, and not only good fortune, but assured success; witness our young king Charles VIII at Taro, Louis XII at Aignadel, and still more recently our present gracious monarch at Marignano; so efficient is their very presence upon the field. And doubt not, but that on seeing him at the head of his army, (for the king, gentlemen, will himself be

our leader) all the brave troops by whom he is surrounded will follow his example, and cut down the puny enemy against whom we are called upon to contend. Thus, Sire, let us give battle to the forces of Charles; and that speedily.”

This insidious advice was followed; and as we have shown, the two hostile armies met; but the imprudent movement of Francis had already seriously affected his interests. The cessation of the firing enabled the imperialists to rally; and the Marquis del Guasto had already reached the castle, and detached a strong party to the gate of the city, which they were about to enter, when they were driven back by Brion. Other divisions of the imperial army followed on the same track, but they were successively routed by the renewed fire of the French guns, which were turned upon the point where they hoped to have effected their entrance. Francis, however, having detached the flanks of his Swiss and lansquenets whom he had ordered to advance, had so exposed his main body that Pescara instantly profited by the error, and threw a body of eight hundred Spanish riflemen upon the enemy's cavalry, while del Guasto attacked the right wing under Montmorenci. The Swiss, unprepared for the charge, faltered and gave way, and on seeing their leader fall, fled from the field, abandoning Montmorenci and Fleuranges, who were made prisoners by the enemy. The French troops, nevertheless, stood their ground bravely, and the want of prudence in their leaders was nobly compensated by their steady and resolute valour. But the first error could not be retrieved. Bourbon with his body of Germans, and Pescara at the head of his Spaniards, marched resolutely against the enemy, and were followed by Lannoy on the other flank of the French army; while Antonio de Leyva made an impetuous sally with his cavalry, which greatly assisted their charge.

The Marechal de la Palice, aware of the advantage obtained by the imperialists, hastened to bring the vanguard into action ere it should be too late; and the Duke d'Alençon, although with less alacrity, also moved forward on the opposite wing; while Francis, who had taken up his position in front of the main body, was surrounded by his gendarmes. No exertion, however, could redeem the fortunes of the day. The king saw himself assailed in three opposite directions, and his bravest officers falling about him on all sides. The gallant and unfortunate De la Pole, or as he was commonly called by the French, Rose Blanche, fell at the head of the Black Bands, and thus terminated a career of persecution by an honourable death. The force which he commanded being under the ban of the empire for persisting in their fidelity to the French cause, and detested by the Swiss who regarded them as dangerous rivals, were, moreover, particularly obnoxious to their own countrymen by whom they were looked upon as rebels; and thus, aware that they could expect no quarter in the event of defeat, they had fought with such desperate resolution that they had not yielded a foot of ground, and had fallen where they stood; maintaining their position even in death with such resolute pertinacity as to extract the exclamation from Francis, at the termination of the battle, that had all his subjects that day done their duty like the brave men who lay at his feet, Pavia would have changed masters, and the Spanish generals been in bonds instead of himself.

On every side, however, the slaughter was fearful; and much of the best blood of France flowed on that fatal field. The fate of the veteran La Palice was melancholy. He had twice succeeded in beating back the imperialists, when a new reinforcement convinced him that he could no longer cope with so unequal an enemy. His lieutenant Clermont d'Amboise, to whom he was affectionately attached, was killed under his eyes; but still strong in his indomitable courage, he made a last effort to rally his exhausted forces, when a ball from an harquebuss struck his horse, which fell dead under him. He, however, succeeded in disengaging himself from the saddle, and had already commenced his retreat towards the infantry when he was taken prisoner. His age and his known valour had inspired his captor with respect, and no indignity was offered to him, until he was encountered by a Spanish captain, who, struck by the splendour of his armour and the dignity of his deportment, immediately perceived that he was no common prize, and declared his determination of sharing in so rich a spoil. To this his original companion demurred, and the quarrel became ere long so violent that the intruder, carried away by the violence of his passion,

discharged his weapon at the defenceless prisoner, and stretched him at his feet, with an asseveration that if he were not to profit by his capture, no other individual should do so.

And thus the veteran hero, whose military career commenced at Fornova in 1495, and terminated at Pavia in 1525, with scarcely a stain to mar its lustre, fell in cold blood, the victim of a narrow-hearted and sordid wretch, to whom gold was of more value than the life of a fellow-creature.

Had Francis possessed as much military knowledge and sound judgment as he evinced courage and energy on this fateful occasion, the day of Pavia must have been a glorious one for France; but here, as on every other occasion, he had been deluded by his vanity and betrayed by his want of prudence. Encouraged by the flatterers who surrounded him, to believe himself invulnerable to human reverses, he had sacrificed his army in a weak attempt at self-aggrandizement, and by masking his artillery in order to make a personal assault upon the gates of Pavia, turned the whole tide of the battle. Nor did his imprudence end there; for, by the splendour of his dress, he had rendered himself so conspicuous that his escape in the event of failure became impossible. Already sufficiently distinguished by his tall and commanding person, he wore over his armour a surcoat of cloth of silver, while his helmet was surmounted by a white plume which served as a beacon to the enemy. His exploits on the field, however, did no dishonour to the royalty of his appearance, for the humblest and most obscure man-at-arms under his command could not have fought more valiantly than himself; and for a time Bonnivet equalled him in courage and resolution; but the moment came at length in which the arrogant favourite felt that all was lost. After having in vain endeavoured to rally the remnant of the Swiss troops and a few gendarmes, he raised the visor of his helmet, and exclaiming; “No; I cannot survive this disgraceful defeat—I must die in the thickest of the fight”, he set spurs to his horse, and in a few moments fell pierced by twenty wounds.

Still the king maintained his ground, and at one time with a slight prospect of success; but the Spanish infantry under Pescara, and a body of fifteen hundred Basque crossbow-men whom they protected, receiving them into their ranks after each separate discharge, soon decided the fate of the field. The operations of these skirmishers were so rapid and so erratic that it was impossible either to foresee or to retort their attacks, while by their extraordinary celerity and quickness of sight they were enabled to approach and pick off the most conspicuous of the enemy. Thus they succeeded in destroying among others the gallant La Trémouille, who fell pierced at once through his head and his heart, and the count Galeaz de Saint Severino, the great-equerry of France, whose duty it was to protect the person of the king; a duty which he had so courageously and devotedly performed that he was riddled with wounds, and when his horse was at length shot under him, was almost smothered in his own blood. As a friend who saw him fall hastened to his assistance, and would have conveyed him from the field, true to his oath, he still summoned strength to gasp out; “Leave me; I am beyond your care. Look to the king, and leave me to die.”

It was this critical moment, when nothing save a charge from the infantry upon the Basques could avert the total ruin of the French army, and when the instant arrival of the Duke d’Alençon was confidently anticipated, that the weak and terrified prince selected to command a retreat. He had hitherto taken no part in the engagement, save the solitary demonstration to which we have already alluded, but he nevertheless shrank before the danger which presented itself, and resolved to effect his escape. A strong body of Swiss troops, who had relied on his support, on remarking the retrograde movement of his division, were struck with panic and retired in disorder, believing that their destruction, should they continue to advance, was inevitable; and thus the remnant of the French army was alone left to rally round their king. In quick succession Longman d’Augsbourg the captain of the lansquenets, François de Lambesc, the brother of the Duke de Lorraine, Wittemberg de Lauffen, Theodoric de Schomberg, and all the principal leaders of the lansquenets, had fallen upon one fatal spot, and now another bevy of brave men were collected

with scarcely a hope of brighter fortune. And great indeed was the second sacrifice. La Palice and La Trémouille had already fallen, as well as Saint Severino and d'Aubigny; but Lescun, the Count de Tonnerre, and many others of the first nobility of France, were killed at the side of Francis. The white plume of the sovereign was the rallying point for all the chivalry of the nation; and even Bussy d'Amboise, who had been instructed to impede the egress of the garrison of Pavia, no sooner discovered the peril of his king than he abandoned his post and hastened to his assistance. Unfortunately, however, he had scarcely reached the royal standard ere he was killed in his turn, while the Spaniards under da Leyva finding themselves by these means enabled to leave the city, rushed tumultuously through the gates, and in the first impulse of vengeance for past constraint massacred the prisoners taken by their comrades.

Yet still the group around the French king defended themselves with unabated energy; the Basques began in their turn to fall before the enemy whom they had so long and so successfully assailed; and Pescara, who was at their head, was severely wounded in the face, unhorsed, and narrowly escaped capture. Had the gendarmes of Francis been efficiently supported at this juncture much might still have been achieved; but compelled to act alone against a mixed and superior force, they were reduced to the alternative of retiring closer and closer about the person of the king; while the advance of Bourbon with his lansquenets, and the impetuous charge to which they were subjected on his approach, created a disorder in their ranks which they were utterly unable to retrieve.

The battle had scarcely lasted throughout an hour, and already it was decided. A few feet of that field which he had confidently hoped would ensure to him the undying glory of a conqueror, were all that remained to Francis; but even for these few feet he still contended gallantly. With his own hand he had cut down the Marquis de St. Angelo, the last descendant of Scanderbeg, and unhorsed the Chevalier d'Andelot, besides dealing vigorous blows upon others of less note during the earlier period of the battle and now, when he fought rather against hope than from any anticipation of success, his aim continued as true and his hand as steady as though an empire still hung on the result of his prowess.

He was already bleeding profusely from three wounds, one of which had traversed his forehead, and caused him acute pain, when his horse was shot under him, and he fell to the ground beside six of his assailants, all of whom had been struck down by his own sword on the same spot. Enfeebled as he was, he succeeded in disengaging himself from his dead charger; and once more leaping into the saddle of a led horse, which had been prepared in the event of such an emergency, he turned one long and regretful glance upon the chivalrous little group who had so lately formed his best bulwark, but who were now scattered over the plain in a desperate attempt to evade the troops of Bourbon; and striking his spurs into the flanks of the animal, he galloped off in the direction of the bridge across the Ticino, ignorant that former fugitives had destroyed it after they had effected their own passage. At the moment in which he made this unfortunate discovery, he was encountered by four Spanish riflemen, who at once sprang to his bridle, and prevented all further attempts at escape. Providentially, they had expended their ammunition; but one of the number, fearful that a prisoner whose high rank was apparent from the richness of his costume, should elude their grasp, struck the panting horse of the king over the head with the stock of his rifle, and thus precipitated both the animal and his rider into a ditch by the way-side.

This cowardly act was scarcely accomplished, when two Spanish light-horsemen, Diego d'Abila and Juan d'Urbietta, arrived upon the spot, and being struck by the extreme richness of the king's apparel, and the order of St. Michael with which he was decorated, they at once agreed that the captive was no common prize, and insisted upon their proportion of the ransom-money. The situation of Francis was perilous in the extreme, for we have already stated that the gallant and veteran Marechal de la Palice had been wantonly murdered under precisely the same circumstances ; but, as " There's a divinity doth hedge a king," so did that special Providence



preserve the defeated monarch in this fearful crisis of his fate. Horsemen were heard approaching rapidly; the rattling of armour and the clang of weapons announced a numerous party; and in the next instant, M. de Pompérant, the friend and confidant of Bourbon, and M. de la Motte des Moyers, a gentleman of his household, at the head of a troop of men-at-arms, checked their horses beside the group. One glance sufficed to assure them both that the wounded and exhausted man, from whose brow the blood was still streaming over his glittering surcoat, was the French monarch; and putting aside the wrangling soldiers, M. de Pompérant sprang from his horse, and threw himself at the feet of the king, beseeching him not further to endanger his existence by a resistance which was alike hopeless and desperate.

Faint and subdued alike by fatigue, suffering, and bitter feeling, Francis leant for an instant upon his sword as if in deliberation. "Rise, Sir;" he said at length; "It is mockery to kneel to a captive king. I am ready to share the fate of the brave men who have fallen with me. To whom can I resign my sword?"

"The Duke de Bourbon is on the field", murmured Pompérant with averted eyes.

"Not so, Sir replied the monarch haughtily", as he once more stood proudly erect. "This sword is that of Francis of France: it cannot be entrusted to a traitor. Rather would I die a thousand deaths than that my honour should be so sullied."

"The Viceroy of Naples, Sire—" was the next timid suggestion.

"So let it be;" said the monarch coldly; "he has, at least, not disgraced his own. To M. de Lannoy I may deliver it without shame."

This concession made, La Motte galloped back to the field to announce the surrender of the French king, and to summon the Neapolitan viceroy; not omitting at the same time to spread the welcome intelligence as he went, and to inquire for the Duke de Bourbon. Thus, only a brief time elapsed ere large bodies of men were on their way to the spot where Francis, still attended by Pompérant, and guarded by the six troopers, remained calmly awaiting their arrival. The first general who reached it was the Marquis del Guasto, who approached the monarch with an air of respectful deference, to which Francis replied with a courtesy as dignified as it was frank; immediately addressing him by name, and expressing a hope that he had escaped unhurt. The immediate care of the marquis was to disperse the crowd of soldiers who were rapidly collecting about the person of the king; after which he resumed his position a little in the rear on his right hand, and, after the hesitation of a moment, Francis, with a faint smile and a steady voice, again spoke.

"I have one favour to claim at your hands, M. del Guastohe said. "Fortune has favoured your master, and I must submit; but I would fain pray you not to conduct me to Pavia. I could ill-brook to be made a spectacle to the citizens who have suffered so much at my hands. Allow me to become, for a time at least, your own guest."

"I am at the orders of your Majesty, and deeply sensible of the honour that is conferred upon me", replied the favourite of Charles. A fresh horse was then led forward, the stirrup was held by Del Guasto bareheaded, and Francis once more mounted, and escorted by the troop of the Spanish general, traversed the camp, in order to reach the quarters of his new host.

Medical aid was instantly procured, his wounds were dressed, and it was discovered that, in addition to the hurts which he had received, his cuirass was indented in several, places by balls, one of which had been so well aimed, and had entered so deeply into the metal, that his life had only been preserved by a relic which he wore suspended from a gold chain about his neck, and

against which the force of the ball had expended itself.

The operations of the surgeons were scarcely completed ere the Marquis de Pescara entered the tent, who saluted the king coldly, but respectfully; and he was shortly followed by Lannoy, to whom Francis, with the mien rather of a conqueror than a captive, at once tendered his sword. The viceroy bent his knee as he received it, and having deferentially kissed the hand by which it was tendered, immediately presented the king with another weapon. The next general who appeared was Bourbon, still in complete armour with his visor closed, and carrying his reeking sword unsheathed in his hand. As he approached, the king inquired his name, to which Pescara replied that it was Charles of Bourbon; upon which Francis stepped a pace backward, as if to avoid his contact; and Pescara, advancing at the same moment, demanded the duke's sword. Bourbon at once delivered it up; and then raising his visor, cast himself upon his knees before Francis, and humbly craved permission to kiss the royal hand. The indignant monarch coldly and proudly refused to receive this act of homage; and his scorn so deeply wounded the ex-connétable, that he exclaimed bitterly and almost reproachfully; "Ah, Sir, had you but followed my advice, you had never been here and thus; nor so much of the best blood of France reeking upon the plains of Italy!"

For a moment Francis fixed his eyes sternly upon the prostrate figure before him, and then raising them to heaven, he said impatiently; "Patience—only grant me patience, since fortune has deserted me"

This trying interview was terminated by Pescara, who intimated to the king that he must within an hour hold himself in readiness to mount, as he should have the honour of escorting him to Pavia before nightfall. The lip of the monarch quivered for a second, and his cheek blanched, but he was too proud to reiterate a request which had been disregarded; and the imperialist generals had no sooner withdrawn than he occupied himself in writing to his mother the celebrated letter which has been so often declared to have consisted only of the brief and emphatic sentence, "Madame, tout est perdu fors l'honneur" but which Sismondi affirms, on the authority of a MS. chronicle of Nicaise Ladam, king-at-arms of Charles V, and the parliamentary registers of the 10th of November, to have been as wordy and diffuse as his ordinary epistles; and to have merely contained a version of the phrase of which modern historians have represented it entirely to consist.

Lescun, who was mortally wounded, but still survived, exhausted his slender remains of strength in seeking to encounter Bonnivet, to whose evil influence he justly attributed the disasters of his country; and Bourbon, smarting under a new and bitter mortification which he was anxious to avenge upon its original author, was similarly occupied for a considerable time. The search of Lescun was terminated by utter exhaustion, and he was lifted from his horse covered with blood, and conveyed to Pavia to die. Bourbon was more successful, although his intention was frustrated, for he at length discovered the favourite stretched upon the field stark and stiff, and completely riddled with wounds. The handsomest and vainest noble of France lay a mangled corpse before him; and as, after a lengthened gaze, he turned aside, he murmured less in anger than in pity; "Miserable man! It is to you that both France and myself owe our ruin."

Well might he utter those fearful words; for the battle of Pavia had not only cost the liberty of the French monarch, but had overwhelmed his kingdom with grief and mourning. Among those who fell were the Marechal de Chabannes, M. de la Trémouille, Bonnivet himself, the Bastard of Savoie, who, although he survived the engagement for a few days, ultimately died of his wounds; Galeaz de Saint Severino, the Duke de Lorraine, the Duke of Suffolk, the Count de Tonnerre, the Seigneur de Chaumont, Bussy d'Amboise, and many others of high rank; while the prisoners taken by the imperialists were still more numerous, and of equal reputation. Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre, was the captive of Pescara himself, who, aware of the importance of his prisoner to the

emperor, who coveted his kingdom, refused every offer of ransom; a pertinacity which determined the young monarch to attempt his escape, an endeavour in which he was fortunately successful. The Count de St. Pol was equally happy. Having fainted from loss of blood upon the field, he was believed to have expired, but was restored to consciousness by the agony occasioned by the violence of a soldier, who, in passing, was attracted by the glitter of a valuable jewel that he wore upon his hand, and being unable to withdraw it, proceeded to cut off the finger which it encircled. Startled by the effect of his barbarity, the man at length yielded to the entreaties and promises of the Count, and conveyed him in safety to Pavia, whence, on his restoration to health, he accompanied him to France; but more than a score of the highest nobility of the-country remained prisoners to the enemy.

From the moment in which it was ascertained that the king was taken, the French troops offered no further resistance, but many were slaughtered during the succeeding two hours; and numbers of fugitives, dreading a similar fate, attempted to escape by swimming across the Ticino, where they all perished miserably. The disproportion in the aggregate loss of the several armies appears nevertheless incredible; for it is asserted that while that of the French amounted to eight thousand men, the imperialists did not lose more than seven hundred; while they were so anxious to secure their prisoners, and to possess themselves of the enormous booty which had fallen into their hands, that they remained a sufficient time upon the field to secure the flight of the Count de Clermont, and to enable him to destroy the bridges over which he passed on his way through Piedmont; to permit Teodoro Trivulzio to evacuate Milan, and make good his retreat by Lago Maggiore; and to render it practicable for the French to evacuate Lombardy altogether.

The capture of Francis caused a powerful sensation in the imperialist camp. The enthusiasm of the soldiery knew no bounds; and their admiration of the royal prisoner became at length so demonstrative, that, under the pretence of their presence and acclamations harassing the king, Lannoy forbade them to approach his tent. They had overlooked his defeat at Pavia, and remembered only his victory at Marignano. From the camp Francis was transferred to the citadel of Pizzighitona, and he had scarcely arrived there when Bourbon solicited an interview. Too proud to shrink from the encounter, painful as it was, the king offered no objection; but the duke had no sooner appeared upon the threshold of his apartment than he exclaimed reproachfully; "Are you then so proud of a victory which has ruined those who are nearest and dearest to you, M. de Bourbon?"

"Sire", replied the ex-connétable respectfully but firmly; "I beseech your Majesty not to reproach me with a defection of which I should never have been guilty, had not the animosity of others compelled me to it."

The king made an impatient gesture, but a shade passed over his brow; and as he was about to seat himself at table, where he had insisted upon the companionship of the Marquis de Pescara, Bourbon approached him deferentially, and tendered to him the finger-napkin as he had formerly done at Amboise. The king looked him earnestly in the face for a moment, and then, slightly bending his head, deceived it without comment. Monarch as he was, he felt their relative position, and was too proud to contend against his conqueror. With a frankness and courage which did him honour, he discussed with Pescara all the details of the late battle; declaring that he did not regret the effort which he had made to secure his claims, and that had all his own army fought at Pavia like the marquis and his Basques, he should inevitably have gained the day. He spoke bitterly, however, of the defalcation of the Swiss and Italians; asserting that the military reputation of the former was irretrievably lost; while the latter were simply soldiers of parade, unequal to anything beyond the mere pageantry of war. Of himself he said nothing; he had been worsted, and he felt that all comments upon the past were idle; but during the whole of the repast he discussed the subject as calmly, and with as much apparent indifference, as though his own interests had not been involved in its result.

When he rose from table, he addressed Pompérant, who had come in the train of M. de Bourbon, with unaffected warmth. "To you, Sir", he said, "I owe, if not my life, at least my escape from insult and outrage. You have, I feel, acted upon principle, however it may have misled you, and henceforth the past shall be forgotten."

Before Pescara withdrew he assured the king that the emperor his master would take no ungenerous advantage of his success, and pledged himself to exert all the interest of which he was personally possessed, to ensure his speedy liberation upon terms consistent with his high dignity; and meanwhile he was consigned to the custody of M. d'Alarcon, who had succeeded Prosper Colonna in the command of the Spanish infantry.

By a fortunate chance it happened that one of the Spanish soldiers appointed to the night-guard of the king on the evening of his arrival at Pizzighittona, had captured a French gendarme, and being fearful of the escape of his prisoner should he entrust him to the custody of a comrade, he had introduced him to the guardroom, where he could keep an eye upon his movements. This gentleman, aware that the valets and other attendants of the monarch had, in their anxiety to secure their own safety, abandoned their duty, entreated his captor to permit him to offer his services to his royal master; representing the impossibility of his making an undue use of the privilege, and pledging himself to return when he had fulfilled his duty. To this proposition, after some demur, the Spaniard at length acceded; and with considerable diffidence the young volunteer presented himself before the august and embarrassed monarch, and tendered his assistance in his arrangements for the night. Francis instantly perceived that the intruder was a Frenchman; and as he paused upon the threshold of the chamber, exclaimed hastily—

"Before you enter, who are you, Sir?"

"I am one of the subjects of your Majesty;" was the reply; "Antoine des Prez, Seigneur de Montpezat, gentilhomme de Quercy, a man-at-arms in the company of the Marechal de Foix; and am the prisoner of one of your guards."

"I thank you, Sir;" said the king; "but before I avail myself of your well-timed services, summon your captor to my presence."

When the Spaniard made his appearance, Francis inquired the amount of ransom he required for his prisoner, which, from the fact of Montpezat being a simple soldier, was necessarily trifling, the worthy Iberian little suspecting that he was, at that moment, founding the fortunes of a future marshal of France.

"It is well;" said the monarch; "give him his liberty; I will be answerable, not only for the sum you name, but for an increase of a hundred crowns, the whole of which you shall receive ere long."

The man bowed and retired, overwhelmed with delight at his good fortune; while M. de Montpezat, still more bewildered by this sudden change in his destiny, remained in close attendance upon his sovereign, and soon won his regard and confidence.

Ere long, weary of a confinement so repugnant to his pride, Francis solicited permission to transmit a letter to the emperor, in which he entreated him to decide upon his future destiny, and threw himself upon his generosity in a style of supplication certainly not accordant with his kingly rank; and which, there can be little doubt, from the nature of Charles's disposition, and the bitter enmity he bore towards his worsted enemy, afforded him a triumph second only to his capture.

He nevertheless affected to receive the intelligence of his unhoped-for success with the most

pious humility; and after having read the despatches in the midst of his Court, retired to his oratory, where he remained a considerable time in prayer; finally forbidding all public demonstrations of rejoicing, and declaring that his only feeling of exultation arose from the conviction that he should now have leisure and opportunity to undertake a crusade against the Infidels, by whom the holy faith of Christendom was endangered.

Charles was too refined a hypocrite to betray his real feelings to the world.

CHAPTER VII.

[1525.]

THE position of the French kingdom, when the disastrous intelligence of the defeat at Pavia reached its shores, was perilous in the extreme. Louise de Savoie, who, from the first, foreboded an evil issue to the hazardous enterprise of her son, had removed to Lyons in order to be early apprised of the operations in Italy; but, self-possessed as she was, she no sooner learnt the captivity of Francis, than throwing down the despatches she wrung her hands in agony, exclaiming—“Alas! he would not listen to my advice. He would not regard my warning. And yet I entreated him so earnestly not to commit this rashness”.

“Madame”, said Marguerite de Valois, who stood beside her; “the king is merely unfortunate, and must yet redeem himself. M. d’Alençon is dishonoured, and has now only to die.”

But Madame d’Angoulême could find little consolation in such a conviction. Able as she was in the science of government, she had, nevertheless, suffered her passions to control her judgment; and she knew that the hearts of the French people were estranged from her. She had profited by the departure of her son to carry out many schemes of individual vengeance and favouritism; she had commenced a process against M. de Semblançay for an imaginary debt to herself, which he had resisted, and had consigned him to the Bastille, where he was then lingering out his days; she had permitted Duprat to pursue his system of extortion and tyranny; and now she beheld herself almost powerless, and beset by difficulty on every side. Not only was the king a captive, but the voice of mourning was universal. The highest and noblest of the land had fallen; and where she might otherwise have looked for sympathy, it was swallowed up in private sorrow. Even her high-souled daughter found the tears which she shed for her brother quenched by the burning blush of shame elicited by the cowardice of her husband—that husband who had been forced upon her by her now suffering mother. She might have gloried in the greatness of her brother even in his fall; but she shrank from the disgrace which had been drawn down upon herself.

The noblest army that France had ever sent forth was annihilated; the nobility upon which she prided herself were decimated; her hopes were gone; her strength was paralysed. The treasury was exhausted, the population impoverished by taxation, and the destruction of the kingdom apparently inevitable. The moment was a critical one to Louise de Savoie; for already murmurs arose among the people, who, weary of her rule, and despairing of the liberation of the monarch, began to discuss the claims of the several princes of the blood, and to demand another and a more efficient ruler. Many shouted the name of Bourbon, and accused the regent of his defalcation; and had Henry VIII at that crisis listened to the overtures of the rebel duke, and acceded to his demand of supplies and assistance, no doubt can exist that the crowns of France-and England would have been united on his head. Henry, however, as we have already shown, distrusted the ambition of Bourbon, and his representations were consequently disregarded.

The next in rank was the Duke d’Alençon; but his claims were soon silenced. As a fugitive, dishonoured and disowned, he entered France; and when he reached Lyons was confronted with

his indignant wife, whose reproaches heaped coals of fire upon his head. He would have explained, remonstrated, and entreated; but Marguerite de Valois disdained to listen.

“You have saved your life, Sir” she said with cutting irony; “your life!—which must hereafter be a reproach, as it has long been useless both to yourself and others. You left your king to die; or, more bitter still, to remain the captive of an enemy—and you wore a sword. Shame on you, Sir! Shame on you, that you were afraid to use it! Had I been in your place, I would have saved you this disgrace; but all that I can now do is to refuse to share it. Do not mistake my tears; they do not fall for you, but for myself. I am compelled to bear your name, while my heart loathes it; but that is all the union which from this hour can exist between us. Even as you forsook my gallant brother in his hour of need, do I forsake you in my turn. Henceforth we are strangers to each other.”

In another month the Duke d’Alençon was in his grave.

The third prince of the blood was M. de Vendôme, then governor of Picardy, who; although he had remained true to the royal cause, was nevertheless suspected of maintaining a correspondence with his cousin the Duke de Bourbon; but still the majority of the people, exasperated by the supremacy of Duprat, and the evil use which he had made of his influence over the regent, looked to Vendôme as their deliverer from utter ruin; and declared that the kingdom would be safer in his hands than in those of a foreign woman. Even sundry members of the parliament espoused his cause against Louise de Savoie, and pledged themselves to support his pretensions while the regent herself, aware of her utter incapacity to allay the popular discontent, was no sooner apprised of his arrival in France, after having entrusted his command in Picardy to M. de Brienne, than she appointed him president of the council. At this juncture she evinced, moreover, a judgment and decision which almost redeemed her previous errors. She convoked meetings of the princes of the blood, the governors of provinces, and other influential functionaries, with whom she discussed the necessary measures for the restoration of the monarch and the security of the kingdom; she also took active measures to regulate and protect the public finances; and, finally, she treated the parliament with a respect and deference to which they had long been unaccustomed.

The excitement in Paris was, nevertheless, fearful. On the first news of the king’s captivity, the parliament summoned the Archbishop of Aix, the governor of the capital, and the principal municipal officers, to devise measures for the safety of the city; when it was determined that only five of the gates should remain open, and that a constant guard should be maintained, in which the counsellors were to act in concert with the citizens. Chains were stretched across the river, while others were prepared to close the streets; and the veteran warrior Montmorenci, whose two sons had fought at Pavia, (where the elder still remained a prisoner,) was summoned to Paris to take the command. The panic spread throughout the kingdom; all the principal towns followed the example given by the metropolis; public prayers were offered up for deliverance from an enemy whom each believed to be approaching; and the national terror was at its height. These pious orisons were, however, intermingled in the churches of the capital, with the denunciations which many of the preachers fulminated against the regent from their pulpits; while anonymous writings were scattered about the different thoroughfares, in which she, in conjunction with the chancellor, were accused as the authors of the present misery, and the people were earnestly called upon to resist her authority.

The remnant of that splendid army with which Francis had so proudly taken the field, was all the military force which now remained to France; and constant desertions had, even since the defeat at Pavia, considerably reduced its already inconsequent numbers. The troops were, however, recalled without delay; but as they were unable to traverse Italy, owing to its occupation by the imperialists, galleys were despatched from Marseilles to Civita Vecchia, under the command of Andrea Doria and La Payette, to facilitate their return. The first measure of the regent upon the

arrival of the exhausted army was to pay off all their arrears, which at once secured their fidelity; and she wisely followed up this act of justice by ransoming such of the prisoners still remaining in the hands of the enemy as were unable to liberate themselves.

Meanwhile an insurrection which threatened to involve important consequences had broken out upon the German frontier, where a fanatical and disorderly body of fifteen thousand men had taken up arms and marched upon the provinces of Burgundy and Champagne. Under the pretext of protecting and enforcing the rights of the reformed religion, which in reality impressed upon them the necessity of "peace and goodwill towards men", they committed the most fearful outrages; insisting that the precepts of the church should govern the national policy, and meanwhile disgracing the cause which they affected to uphold by every description of violence and excess. Their career was, however, speedily terminated by the energy of the Count de Guise; who having raised a force of six thousand men, gave them battle, and so entirely routed their army, most of whom perished in the engagement, that they were unable to rally or to effect a second demonstration.

The result of this gallant enterprise tended greatly to allay the national panic, and many who had before utterly despaired, began to form brighter hopes of the future; but the promptitude, and even the success, of M. de Guise excited the indignation of the regent, who reproached him bitterly for having withdrawn from the capital the troops by which it was protected. By the parliament, however, the signal service which he had rendered to his country was fully estimated; nor did they hesitate (when Louise de Savoie despatched two of her counsellors to declare to them that the king had expressed his pleasure that she should take up her abode in the capital with his children), to declare that all the misfortunes which had recently occurred had been brought upon the kingdom by the indulgence that had been shown to the Lutherans, whose utter extermination they required at her hands; they also subjoined other demands, such as the abolition of financial abuses, impossible to be accorded at a moment when the exigences of the kingdom were necessarily augmented by its unhappy position. Madame d'Angoulême consequently temporized with the parliament by pledging herself to persecute the unfortunate reformers; and as an earnest of her sincerity, caused a learned man named Jacques Pavaues, who had been invited from his own province of Bourbonnais to Meaux by the Bishop of that place in consequence of his great attainments, to be arrested; and having put him upon his trial as a Lutheran convert, she suffered him to be burned alive in the Place de Grève. A second execution shortly followed, of which the victim was a reformer known as the Hermit of Livry, who underwent the same appalling sentence in front of the cathedral of Notre Dame, the great bell tolling throughout the whole period of the tragedy in order to assemble the people to the hideous spectacle. The firmness and piety with which the holy martyr endured his dying agonies were, however, so remarkable, that it is probable the effect produced upon the witnesses was very different from that which had been desired.

The anguish of mind endured during these frightful enormities by the Duchess d'Alençon was unbounded. Even her anxiety for her absent brother, and her mortification at the pusillanimity of her husband, were for a time forgotten. From the year 1523, when the persecution of the Lutherans commenced, she had openly declared herself, if not their convert, at least their advocate. Her efforts in their favour had been unceasing; and on several occasions she had incurred the displeasure of the king by her persevering remonstrances. So determined, indeed, was she to protect, in so far as she was able, those who were suffering for their adherence to the new faith, that she resented as a personal insult the arrest of her valet-de-chambre, Clement Marot the poet, who having been convicted of eating meat during Lent, had been committed to prison; and in defiance of the Sorbonne and the inquisitor himself, she insisted upon, and obtained his release. It may therefore be imagined with what bitter sorrow she was compelled to witness the frightful acts of cruelty, which, instigated as they were by mere considerations of state policy, were nevertheless attributed to religious zeal. By her secret, but efficient aid, the celebrated Guillaume Farel was enabled to escape to Geneva, where he became a powerful preacher; and Jacques Fabri,



one of the most learned doctors of the Sorbonne who had also embraced the reformed faith, was preserved from the flames, and ultimately pardoned.

While, however, she exulted in the partial success which crowned her righteous efforts, she had still only too much cause for grief. A great and undisguised coldness had grown up between herself and her mother, who resented her interference; and she had no longer about her person those friends and counsellors in whom she might have found consolation. Bourbon, the only man whom she had ever loved, was an attainted rebel in arms against his country. De Semblançay, to whom, like Francis himself, she had borne a strong affection, was a prisoner in the Bastille; and one of the regent's first acts of power had been to banish from the court her two chosen companions, Madame de Châteaubriand and Diana de Poitiers. To the first of these ladies, Marguerite de Valois, who was, as we have already stated, singularly indulgent to the frailties of her sex, particularly where the weakness ministered to the pleasures of her licentious but idolized brother, was tenderly attached; and aware as she was of the violent character of the injured husband to whose guardianship the countess had been consigned by Madame d'Angoulême on her dismissal from the court, her mind was filled with the most gloomy forebodings.

These, as the result proved, were by no means unreasonable; for while the aged and solitary Louis de Brézé received back his young and lovely wife of whose fidelity he had rather feared than doubted, with a warm welcome which might have tended to arrest her in a career of profligacy, M. de Châteaubriand, on the contrary, greeted his guilty consort with the most bitter reproaches. Regardless alike of her tears and her attempts at explanation, he overwhelmed her with insult, reminding her that if he afforded the shelter of his roof to the mistress of the king, he merely accorded refuge to a criminal, and not a home to a wife. This change of position was so sudden and so violent, that whatever had been the misgivings of the countess during her enforced journey, the reality so far outran her anticipations that, guilty as she was, she writhed beneath the intemperate passion of her offended husband, and the extremity of her terror lent her strength.

"You are mad, Sir"; she said indignantly; "I am but what you yourself have made me. Young and ignorant of the world, you summoned me to a court where I was beset by temptations, and where you abandoned me to my fate. Your own cruelty and injustice forced me to dishonour; and now you seek to visit upon me the consequences of your imprudence. In obedience to your command. I left my home, and in accordance with those of the king I remained at court. The result you must have foreseen."

"Madame"; retorted the count indignantly; "you know the falsehood of your assertion. Learn also that you are infamous, not only in my eyes, but ill those of the whole nation."

"Enough, Sir, enough" exclaimed the trembling woman, as she buried her face in her hands; "you follow up one cowardice by another; and have courage to avenge what you designate your wounded honour only when you know that I am defenceless."

"It is a lesson taught me by yourself"; was the bitter retort; "the protection of a monarch rendered you indifferent to the wrongs of a husband; but Providence is just, and you have no longer that monarch at your side to dispute my claims. We will not, however, waste more words upon a subject too hateful for discussion. Your apartments are prepared, and you must allow me to act as your usher."

As he ceased speaking he extended his hand; and the countess, still more anxious than himself to terminate so painful an interview, placed her own within it, and suffered him to lead her from the room. At the end of a long gallery he paused, and throwing back the door of a sequestered chamber, desired her to enter. On the threshold she paused with a cry of terror, and would have retreated, but it was already too late. The count forcibly drew her forward; and she found herself in

a spacious apartment hung with black serge, in which the whole furniture consisted of a curtainless bed, a wooden chair, and a small statue of the Magdalen affixed to the wall; while, as if to deepen the gloom of this repelling prison, all the windows had been carefully closed, and the only light by which it was illumined was dimly admitted, through a sky-light constructed in the roof. Such was the new abode of the royal favourite—of the proud mistress who had dared a rivalry of power with the mother of her sovereign—of the minion of fortune who had long taught herself to forget the disgraceful price at which she had purchased her supremacy, and who had been accustomed to see the proudest nobles of a brilliant court at her feet. She was alone—alone with her brightest and her most bitter memories. She had no resource save the agonizing one of thought for the companionship of the child whom she had wilfully abandoned she did not dare to ask; the attendance which was accorded to her was limited, and rendered in silence; her only nourishment, the felon's meal of bread and water; and, meanwhile, she knew that he who had once idolized her was beneath the same roof; that there was life and movement about her while she was shut out alike from all sight and sound of her fellow-beings, save for a few brief instants daily; and that he who might, and, as she fondly believed, would have avenged her, was a captive in a distant land, as powerless, if not as wretched, as herself.

The persecution of the Lutherans, active as it was, did not suffice to occupy the whole attention of the regent, who made the most energetic efforts to propitiate all the European potentates, whose influence might conduce to the liberation of her son; nor did she omit a strenuous attempt to conciliate the emperor himself, whose apparent moderation and unostentatious humility deceived even her sagacity; while she laboured at the same time to produce a misunderstanding between such of the powers as were avowedly the enemies of France. Circumstances had combined to aid her policy upon this point; for, even before the battle of Pavia, a coldness had arisen between Henry VIII and Charles, to which the kingdom of Francis in all probability owed its integral preservation. It is at least certain that had the English monarch maintained his alliance with the emperor, and attacked the French forces in Picardy during their reverses beyond the Alps, the exhausted and helpless position of the country must have rendered its conquest an easy one; but Wolsey had at length lost all faith in the specious and hollow promises of Charles, and considered himself personally aggrieved; while Henry resented the insult offered to his daughter, to whom the emperor, as we have already stated, had betrothed himself, by the fact that that potentate had recently demanded the hand of Isabella of Portugal, wilfully overlooking the fact that he had, on his side, endeavoured to effect an alliance between the affianced Princess Mary and the King of Scotland. Both sovereigns had moreover failed to observe the treaty by which they were pledged to a simultaneous invasion of the French territories; and each, forgetful or careless of his own failure, was loud in condemning that of his ally.

Under these circumstances the English king replied to the communication of the emperor which conveyed to him the intelligence of the victory of Pavia, by advancing claims which were well calculated to produce a rupture between the two countries. He insisted that Charles should not enter into any treaty with Francis which did not favour his own pretensions to the French crown; that he should immediately march his army into the French territories; and that the person of the captive monarch should be delivered into his own custody, in accordance with a clause in the treaty into which they had severally entered, and by which each sovereign bound himself to deliver over to his ally any prince taken in rebellion against the opposite party.

To demands of so arrogant a nature as these he had, of course, never anticipated that the victorious emperor would accede; but Charles was nevertheless too wary to express his sense of their presumption. His reply was guarded and evasive; and Henry, impatient of a policy whose results could never be anticipated, at length invited Madame d'Angoulême to despatch ambassadors to his court with whom he might negotiate. Accordingly, two plenipotentiaries were appointed, entrusted with full powers to effect a defensive alliance between France and England; and instructed, if possible, to detach Henry at any price from the interests of Charles. Predisposed

to a change of policy, the English king readily listened to their arguments; alienated himself from the cause of the emperor; and finally, on the 30th of August, (1525) signed a new treaty of alliance with Francis, wherein the latter acknowledged himself the debtor of the English king in the sum of two millions of golden crowns, which he engaged to pay within twenty years, at the rate of a hundred thousand crowns yearly; and the arrears of income due to the dowager-queen, the widow of Louis XII, were at the same time regulated.

While these measures were in operation, the Italian states were overrun by the victorious army of Charles, and were suffering all the horrors of foreign domination. Intoxicated by success, demoralized by relaxed discipline, destitute of pecuniary resources, and rendered arrogant by impunity, the imperialist troops had become the scourge of the whole country. They had exacted heavy sums from the Duke of Ferrara and the republic of Lucca, and even demanded fresh supplies from the pope and the Venetians; while their principal officers did not hesitate openly to declare the resolution of the emperor to possess himself of the whole of Italy. In this emergency the Venetians despatched an ambassador to England, who was instructed to impress upon Henry VIII the necessity of preserving the equilibrium of Europe; and the pope, anxious to protect himself against the threatened aggression, caused his apostolical datary to write to his nuncio in London, instructing him to join in the league.

This circumstance decided the measures of Charles, who ultimately replied to the envoys of Louise de Savoie by conceding a truce of six months, which were to be devoted to the negotiations for the liberation of Francis; of which the terms were forthwith debated in the imperial councils. With a moderation and generosity which did credit to his sacred profession, the Bishop of Osma suggested that the captive monarch should be at once restored to liberty on the sole condition of his marrying the widowed queen Eleonora, whose hand had been promised to Bourbon; a step by which the emperor would secure a firm ally, and win the admiration of all Europe; but this advice suited neither the vindictiveness of Charles, nor the jealousy of his friends, and was at once overruled. The imperial chancellor then voted for the perpetual imprisonment of the unfortunate young king; a measure by which the emperor would definitively rid himself of a dangerous enemy, and be enabled to undertake his crusade against the Turks without a rival to his glory. This suggestion, however, flattering as was the prospect so skilfully held out, by no means satisfied such of the council as were anxious for the degradation of France; and finally the advice of the Duke of Alba was adopted, which was to demand an enormous sum as the personal ransom of Francis; and, moreover, to exact conditions of a nature so rigorous as to cripple his power, impoverish his resources, and recruit the exhausted finances of the empire.

While these deliberations were proceeding Louise de Savoie was not idle, but endeavoured to ingratiate herself with the emperor by betraying the allies whom she had seduced by her promises. She was anxious to inspire him with apprehensions for the safety of Italy, trusting that by this treacherous policy she might compel more favourable terms for the ransom of her son. Once more, however, she was deluded by her hopes; for Charles was even better informed than herself of the events which were in progress; and so well aware of the importance of the advantage he had gained, that although he did not scruple to avail himself of her bad faith, and even courteously to acknowledge his sense of the obligation, he never wavered for an instant in his intentions.

His generals in Italy were, however, less confident than himself. The old jealousies had been revived; their three chiefs no longer acted in unison; the soldiers mutinied for their arrears of pay; the Italians were ripe for revolt against their oppressors, and there was reason to apprehend that they would attempt to effect the liberation of the still unransomed prisoners. A double guard, commanded by Pescara and Bourbon, was consequently placed about the person of the French king, and every precaution taken to prevent a surprise; but Francis had near his person a more insidious enemy than either the rebel duke or the Spanish general. Lannoy, the favourite of Charles, who

however inferior to both in military talent far exceeded them in subtlety, aware that the royal captive could never be wholly in the power of his conqueror until within the Spanish frontier, had resolved to effect his removal without the knowledge of his unsuspecting colleagues; and he constantly laboured to impress upon Francis the great advantage which must accrue from his evincing a perfect confidence in the emperor, and soliciting a removal to Madrid, where they might personally confer together.

Weary of his dreary prison at Pizzighittona, and thirsting for some relief to the monotony of his existence, the young king listened readily to the specious representations and arguments of his false adviser; and he was yet wavering, when the arrival of M. de Beaurain, Seigneur de Roeux, was announced to him, with despatches from the emperor. The envoy was at once admitted, and with a hasty gesture Francis tore open the packet; but the hot blood rushed to his cheek as he examined its contents, and he had no sooner ceased reading than he drew his dagger from its sheath, and vehemently exclaimed that he would sooner meet death from his own hand than submit to conditions which involved the degradation and ruin of his kingdom.

M. d'Alarçon, who was present at the interview, alarmed by the passionate attitude of his prisoner, and apprehensive that in the first burst of his indignation he might carry his threat into execution, seized his arm and besought him to calm himself; but it was long ere the unfortunate monarch could be appeased; and as he hurriedly paced the apartment he repeated bitterly and incessantly the terms proposed by the emperor. They were, indeed, crushing alike to his hopes as an individual, and to his dignity as a sovereign; and such as Charles could never anticipate would be accepted. He required of Francis to cede his claims upon both Naples and Milan; to relinquish the duchy of Burgundy, and his sovereignty over Flanders and Artois; to effect a reconciliation with the Duke de Bourbon, and to detach in his favour from the crown of France the whole of Provence and the other territories formerly possessed by the ex-connétable, which were to form a separate kingdom under that prince; and, finally, to make full compensation for all the claims of the King of England upon the emperor.

Deluded as he had been by the apparent moderation of Charles into the belief that his liberation would have involved no ruin upon his country, the disappointment and mortification of Francis amounted to despair; and it was only after having vented the agony of his spirit that he could command sufficient self-possession to make the reply for which the envoy still waited; but at length he paused, and said coldly and proudly—

“I will not detain you longer, Sir. Return to the emperor your master, and tell him that never, so long as I have life, will I submit to the degradation of complying with such conditions as those of which you have been the bearer. Here is my final and irrevocable answer. I will accept the hand of the queen his sister; and I will bestow upon the Duke de Bourbon that of the Duchess d'Alençon, restoring to him upon his marriage all his former possessions. I will, moreover, discharge the engagements of the emperor with the King of England, pay a heavy personal ransom, and furnish troops when he shall proceed to Rome for his coronation. More than this I will not concede, though I remain a prisoner till the day of doom.”

At his next interview with M. de Lannoy, Francis inveighed bitterly against the insult which had been offered to him by Charles; and the viceroy seized so favourable an opportunity to urge the acceptance of the proposition which he had already submitted to the royal prisoner, that he should at once proceed to Spain, and treat personally with the emperor; assuring him that when all extraneous influence was removed, a treaty satisfactory to both parties would soon be accomplished.

At once sanguine and confiding, Francis readily fell into the snare; but Lannoy had still many difficulties to overcome. In order to reach Spain it was necessary to cross a sea upon which

the fleet of Andrea Doria and the galleys of La Fayette were greatly superior both in strength and numbers to the navy of the emperor; while De Lannoy was equally reluctant to trust his prisoner within the walls of Marseilles lest he should be liberated by the people. He had, therefore, no alternative but to extract a pledge from Francis that he would not avail himself of any such attempt, but proceed in his custody, to Spain, whatever demonstrations might be made by his subjects. The pledge was given, bitter as it must have been to the high-hearted young monarch; and the wily viceroy had subsequently little difficulty in persuading him to despatch Montmorenci (who still remained a prisoner) to the regent, with instructions to forward six of his galleys as hostages to Genoa, and to disarm the remainder. The Marechal departed on his ill-omened errand; and the next step taken by De Lannoy was to induce his two colleagues to remove the king from Pizzighittona to Genoa, under the guard of M. d'Alarçon, as to a place of greater safety.

Unsuspecting of his purpose, and anxious to ensure the safe keeping of their prisoner, both Bourbon and Pescara were easily persuaded to adopt this apparently politic measure; and, accordingly, towards the end of May, the king left the fortress under an escort of three hundred lances and four thousand infantry. He had not long reached Genoa, however, ere De Lannoy suddenly effected his embarkation, announcing his intention of conveying him to Naples; in which direction he steered until he encountered the six French galleys which he was to detain as hostages, under the guard of Spanish soldiers; but having seen these troops on board the several French vessels, he once more set sail on the 7th of June, for Spain, where, at the termination of the voyage, he deposited his prisoner in the fortress of Xativa, in Valencia.

Only a few days subsequent to their landing, a tumult broke out in the royal guard, who clamoured for their arrears of pay, and uttered such threats against De Lannoy, that in order to secure his personal safety he was compelled to make his escape over the roofs of the adjacent houses; while the troops, exasperated by his apparent disregard of their claims, discharged their firearms at the windows, and narrowly escaped wounding the king, several of the balls having entered the apartment which he occupied. Undismayed by the danger, Francis at once approached a window, and with firm and dignified affability expostulated with the mutineers, scattering some money among them, and representing the dangerous result of such a demonstration to themselves. Had he, observes Brantôme, taken advantage of their enthusiasm at that moment, he might in all probability have induced them to make sail with him to France; but tempting as the opportunity undoubtedly was, Francis had pledged his royal word to De Lannoy that he would make no attempt at evasion: and this consideration alone must have caused him to reject the project had it even occurred to him.

Nothing could exceed the exultation of Charles when he ascertained that his defeated rival was safely lodged in a Spanish fortress, and entirely in his power; for, although he affected the greatest sympathy in his misfortunes, and strictly forbade any public rejoicings at his own success, the honours and rewards which he lavished upon De Lannoy were sufficient evidence of his real feelings. He immediately despatched an order to the viceroy to proceed to Madrid with his prisoner; but instead of receiving him in person, as had been anticipated by Francis, he remained at Toledo, as if unconscious of his arrival in his dominions. Nor was this mortification lessened by the fact that instead of the honourable treatment which he had been led to expect, he found himself a close prisoner, constantly attended by M. d'Alarçon, and only permitted to leave the castle occasionally for exercise, mounted upon a sluggish mule, and surrounded by an armed guard. The treachery of De Lannoy could no longer be doubted, and while the arrogant viceroy was reaping the rich reward of his double-dealing, the unhappy monarch found himself the dupe of his own overweening confidence.

Exhausted by disappointment, self-upbraiding, and regret; wounded in his pride, outraged in his dignity, and deceived on every side, the spirit of Francis at length gave way, and he became seriously indisposed. Seven months of weariness and restraint had already passed, and he had

never once had an interview with the emperor; while so closely was he watched that he could not utter a word or receive a communication which was not overheard and registered. The strength of the old castle in which he was confined might have appeared a sufficient guarantee for his safety, but it was evident that every precaution and constraint which could add to his annoyance was industriously superadded. None had access to him save by the sanction of the emperor himself, and every pretext was seized for withholding it. Everyone who approached him was a spy, and his requests were met by a cold indifference which compelled him to keep silence.

The agony of mind endured by the Duchess d'Alençon during this period was intense. She had actively urged forward the negotiations for his release, and more than once flattered herself that the termination of his captivity was at hand; but Charles V never failed to find some excuse for delay, and as communication between the two countries had been rendered extremely difficult by the jealous policy of the emperor, it was at last almost by accident that the intelligence of the king's illness was made known in France.

The first rumour which reached the court was that of his death, and for several days the most fearful uncertainty prevailed; but eventually the truth was ascertained, and Marguerite de Valois was no sooner assured that he still lived than she applied for a safeconduct, and permission to reside in Spain during two months. In vain was she reminded of the bad faith of Charles, and of the probability of his being unable to resist the temptation of securing another prisoner of such importance, and thus increasing his already extortionate demands of ransom; no argument could withhold her. Since the disgrace of her husband, she had lived only in her brother—the life of that idolized brother was in peril—and with the heroism of a true woman's heart, she did not suffer one thought of self to militate against her purpose. Thus the guarantee which she had asked was no sooner reluctantly conceded, than she made instant preparations for commencing her journey. Before she could reach Madrid, however, the low fever which was consuming the king had increased to so alarming a degree, that the physicians who were in attendance upon him ventured to announce to the emperor that, unless some means were adopted to arouse him from the lethargy into which he was rapidly sinking, it would be impossible to save his life.

This report greatly alarmed the selfish Charles, who, however little interest he had shown in his captive, was keenly alive to the enormous loss which he should sustain by his death; and he accordingly resolved to visit him, and to inspire hopes which might give a new impulse to his mind. On learning his intention, the chancellor Mercurio Gattinara endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose, alleging that, should he persist in such a resolution, his own honour and dignity would compel him to release Francis at once and unconditionally; but Charles was unable or unwilling to recognise this necessity, and he accordingly proceeded to the Alcazar without loss of time, and approached the bed of the dying monarch with a smile of courtesy and kindness upon his lips.

Francis had no sooner recognised his visitor, than, although in a state of great exhaustion, he made an effort to raise himself to a sitting posture, murmuring faintly : “Your Majesty is then come at last to see your prisoner expire.”

“Do not say my prisoner”; was the bland reply; “but rather my brother and my friend. Have faith in me, for I have exerted all my energies to accomplish your liberation, which will speedily be effected.”

The royal invalid, deluded by his own hopes, listened with avidity; a long and apparently friendly conversation ensued; and when the imperial hypocrite at length prepared to depart, he uttered the most earnest entreaties that Francis would be careful of his health, and not aggravate his disease by anxieties which were groundless. The effect of this assurance was electrical; the recovery of the king was accelerated by his brightened prospects; and he began to look forward

with confidence to an early return to France.

The exasperation of the two baffled generals whom the wily diplomatist had outwitted, was beyond all bounds. Bourbon at once proceeded to Madrid, for the double purpose of urging his claims and preventing any treaty with Francis in which he was not included, and of exposing the base deceit of De Lannoy, whom he accused in the imperial presence of perfidy and cowardice; while Pescara in his turn addressed an intemperate letter to the emperor, in which he complained that the viceroy had hurried to Spain to receive the applause of a victory, and to exhibit the French king as his prisoner, when he had neither contributed to the one, nor taken the other; but had, on the contrary, endeavoured to evade the battle, in which he had, moreover, shown such cowardice that he had trembled with terror, and constantly exclaimed that all was lost. In conclusion he declared him to be a poltroon and a traitor; and asserted that he was ready to prove it upon his body.

These representations, however, produced no effect upon Charles; while the distrust felt by the haughty Castilian nobility towards Bourbon induced them rather to exult in the craft of De Lannoy than to condemn it. So great, indeed, was the contempt which they professed for him, that when the Marquis de Villana was applied to by the emperor to lend his palace to the ex-connétable, who had been unable to secure a commodious residence, he replied coldly : “I can refuse nothing to your imperial Majesty; M. de Bourbon may inhabit my palace if it be your pleasure that he shall do so; but I pledge my word as a Castilian, that when he sees fit to vacate it, I will burn it to the ground rather than again take shelter under a roof which has been polluted by the presence of a traitor.”

The position of the rebel duke was bitter in the extreme. His claims met with no attention; his services were disregarded; and he found himself an object of suspicion and dislike to all around him. The emperor treated him with the most chilling indifference; and the French king, when he was occasionally admitted to his presence, with an exaggerated courtesy which betrayed his want of confidence. Charles felt that he had no longer any thing to fear from the once powerful duke, and Francis had lost faith in his honour.

Meanwhile Pescara, who had now the sole command of the army in Italy, did not affect to conceal his discontent. He had served the emperor with zeal and fidelity, and the injustice by which he was now rewarded aroused within him the recollection that he was an Italian, and that he was even at that moment labouring to destroy the liberties of his country. Unlike Bourbon, he found many to sympathise with him; and his exasperation became at length so violent that Jeromio Morone, the chancellor of Francisco Sforza, and one of the boldest and most able diplomatists of the age, who had for some time been planning a secret league against the emperor which was to embrace France, England, Florence, and Venice, confided his project to Pescara; and informed him that, on condition of his disbanding the imperial army which alone could prevent its success, these powers were ready to confer upon him the crown of Naples.

The temptation was great; all the plans of Morone were matured; and the regent of France had pledged herself to march an army into Lombardy to support the independence of Italy. Pescara listened, and for a time wavered; but it is probable that his hesitation was brief, as Charles was ere long warned of his danger by the marquis himself, who revealed to him that a conspiracy had been formed against his authority, of which he would furnish all the details when he had ascertained the identity of its authors.

Nor was Pescara the only individual who volunteered this revelation; Clement VII, although involved in the plot, having written to inspire him with misgivings of the fidelity of his principal officers, from what motive does not appear; while Louise de Savoie availed herself of the safe-conduct conceded to her daughter to forward letters to the emperor, in which she represented

that, if he did not desire to see the whole of Europe in arms against him, he must modify, if not entirely withdraw, his claims on France.

To this last communication Charles returned, as was his wont, a cold and evasive reply; fully maintaining his right to the *sobriquet* which the French wits, who never fail to create a mot even from their misfortunes, had bestowed on him of *Charles qui triche*; a somewhat lame play upon his familiar appellation of *Charles d'Autriche*. To Pescara, however, he vouchsafed a different answer; assuring him, that, although doubts had been suggested of his loyalty, he had never personally entertained them; and instructing him to maintain a perfect understanding with the conspirators, betraying neither coldness nor suspicion, but affecting an inclination to avail himself of the overtures made to him by Francisco Sforza, while he suffered no means to escape by which the discovery of the real culprits might be accomplished. Acting upon this suggestion, Pescara invited Morone to visit him at Novarra, and upon his arrival concealed da Leyva behind the tapestried hangings of the apartment in which the interview was to take place.

This perfidious arrangement effected, he overwhelmed the chancellor with questions; declaring that he could not commit himself to any measure of which he did not thoroughly comprehend both the motives and the identity of the authors; assuming, meanwhile, so determined an attitude, that Morone, who feared that he might abandon the cause of the league, at length entered into the most minute details, among which was the meditated assassination of da Leyva, his unsuspected auditor. At the conclusion of the conference, the marquis parted from his visitor with calm courtesy; but as he was about to leave the house he was encountered by da Leyva, who at once arrested him in the name of the emperor.

The capture of Morone, and the important disclosures by which it had been preceded, necessarily put an immediate stop to the conspiracy; the imperialists took possession of the fortresses in the Milanese; and Sforza made instant preparations for a desperate, although almost hopeless defence notwithstanding that he was at that moment suffering from fever of so virulent a nature that his death was anticipated. Nothing, therefore, appeared to oppose the entire conquest of the duchy; and Charles already anticipated this result, when news of the sudden demise of Pescara reached Spain. Popular rumour ascribed his death to poison, and it is certain that the act of treachery of which he had been guilty had excited against him the hatred of all the Italian princes, who had vowed vengeance upon his perfidious dealing. Be this as it might, however, the brave Pescara, whose career had hitherto been untarnished, but who had now sullied his name with a stain which could never be effaced, expired at the early age of six-and-thirty; not on the field of honour, and surrounded by sympathy and admiration, but supinely in his bed, the object of execration and reproach. During his last moments he confided the care of his wife Victoria Colonna, and his Spanish troops, to the Marquis del Guasto his cousin, who inherited his estates; and on the 30th of November, 1525, terminated his brief, and, with one exception, glorious career.

Meanwhile the Duchess d'Alençon, having embarked at Aigues-Mortes, landed at Barcelona, and proceeded at once to Madrid, where she was met on entering the gates by the emperor, who proposed to escort her in person to the residence of her brother; a courtesy which she was compelled to accept, although well aware that it was dictated rather by policy than kindness. She accordingly mounted a fresh palfrey which had been prepared for her, and without waiting to throw off her travelling dress, rode through the streets of the city at the right hand of Charles, who was attended by a brilliant suite. At this interview the tenderness of the woman so completely masked the vigour of the diplomatist, that even the wily emperor formed a false estimate of her character. He had, during their ride to the Alcazar, given her the most cheering assurances of the recovery of Francis; but Marguerite no sooner entered his apartment, threw herself into his arms, and listened to the faltering tones of his voice, than she became aware how easily she had suffered herself to be beguiled.



“Can it indeed be you, ma mignonne?” murmured the king as he returned her caresses, heedless of the presence of his imperial visitor; “Oh, Marguerite, how dear, how inexpressibly welcome is this meeting; destined, perhaps, to be our last.”

“And wherefore?” asked the duchess energetically; “yours is, believe me, a generous enemy, who will not even seek to resist my tears. He knows that you have already suffered deeply both in body and mind. Thus you see that I am the earnest of good fortune.”

“I have already striven against my despair;” said Francis gloomily; “I had even, for a time, dared to hope; but I have learnt much, very much, Marguerite, since we parted, and there are wounds of the heart which will not close.”

The interview was a brief one, both Francis and his sister confining themselves to generalities until they could converse without restraint; and Charles having once more bade his “good brother,” as he called the royal prisoner, be of better cheer, and trust to his sincerity, conducted the duchess to the residence which had been prepared for her; with the assurance that he was ready, since she had been entrusted with the negotiation by the regent, to accede to such terms as could not fail to be acceptable to so welcome an ambassadress.

Marguerite was, however, so well aware of the bad faith of the fair-seeming emperor, that she did not suffer herself to be deluded by such a promise; and when he had withdrawn, she hastened to take counsel of Philippe de Villiers, the grand-master of the knights of Malta, the Archbishop of Embrun, M. de Selva, the first president of Paris, and the Seigneurs de Montmorenci and de Brion, by whom she had been accompanied to Spain; and who urged her if possible to conciliate Bourbon, and to form an acquaintance with the widowed Queen Elea-nora, whom Francis had offered to espouse. Charles V, however, anticipating that she would take the latter step, had induced his sister to make a pilgrimage to Guadaloupe, whence she did not return until the duchess had left Spain.

The delight of Marguerite on finding herself once more near her idolized brother may be appreciated, when it is stated that, on first receiving the intelligence of his illness, she had exclaimed in the agony of her despair; “Whosoever shall announce to me the recovery of the king, that messenger, though he be heated, jaded, and sullied by the filth of the roads over which he may have travelled, I will embrace and welcome as I would the proudest prince or nobleman of France; and should he have no bed to rest upon, I will give him mine, and sleep upon the boards, to recompense him for the precious tidings which he brings me.”.

On the 4th of October, Marguerite de Valois had her first official audience of the emperor; and her extreme beauty, her uncommon intellect, her startling eloquence, and, above all, the bold and uncompromising fearlessness of her spirit, were well calculated to produce a strong impression upon his mind. It is, moreover, probable that the knowledge of her royal brother's convalescence inspired her with additional energy; for she was unconscious that this very circumstance militated against her hopes; Charles, having ceased to tremble for the life of his prisoner, being less than ever inclined to permit his prey to escape him. Even his avarice was silenced by his desire of vengeance; he now saw himself without a rival in Europe, and gloried in the conviction; while he was conscious that Francis, once more at liberty, might yet establish a balance fatal to his ambition.

In this temper, therefore, the emperor felt little inclination to be contravened by a woman; albeit that woman was one of the loveliest and most intellectual of the age. In order to defer the conference, he had removed suddenly to Toledo; but Madame d'Alençon had no sooner satisfied herself that the health of her royal brother was amended by her care and sympathy, and received from him full powers to act in his name and on his behalf, than she determined to follow him to

that city, attended by M. de Villiers.

Previously to quitting the capital, however, she had invited the Duke de Bourbon to visit her, and her summons was instantly obeyed. Old associations and memories to which neither ventured to allude, but which exerted a powerful influence over both parties, rendered mutual confidence easy; and before the ex-connétable took his leave he revealed to Marguerite the real designs of the emperor, in so far as they had been entrusted to him; assuring her that she had nothing to hope from either the generosity or the justice of Charles, but must act throughout upon the defensive. Strong in this conviction, therefore, she proceeded to Toledo, where she was received with a cold courtesy, which might have damped a less energetic spirit; but which, as we have shown, produced no such effect upon that of Marguerite de Valois. The evident constraint of the emperor aroused her pride, and she opened the subject in a manner at once firm and dignified, by demanding to know the decision at which he had arrived. Charles briefly replied that he had already submitted his conditions to the king himself.

“By whom”, said Marguerite; “your imperial Majesty has long been aware that they were definitely declined. I have therefore now only to learn your determination as to those which the king my brother offered to concede.”

“They are inadmissible, Madame; the hand of the Queen of Portugal is pledged to the Duke de Bourbon, who alone can release it.”

“But I am prepared, Sir, to assure your Majesty that M. de Bourbon will not persist in his claim, now that he is aware of the views of his sovereign. This difficulty is consequently at an end, and we have only to discuss the remaining clauses of the treaty.”

“I have referred the whole matter to my ministers said Charles stolidly; “and in their hands I am resolved to leave it.”

“And is this, Sir, indeed to be the result of the fair promises with which you have beguiled both my brother and myself?” asked the duchess with a gesture of indignation which she did not even seek to disguise. “Are you in truth prepared to persevere in a course which must draw down upon you the contempt and abhorrence of all the princes of Christendom? Have you forgotten that Francis of France is your sovereign lord, and that you owe him homage for your Flemish provinces? Is a consciousness of your own temporary power to blind you to the fact that, by your present want of honour and good faith, you are alienating for ever the heart of the noblest sovereign in Europe, and converting one who might prove a powerful friend into an implacable enemy? Surely, Sir, you cannot have duly considered these things—will not the world attribute to fear a measure so unprecedented as that of retaining a brother monarch in captivity? Nor, even should your prisoner, like the caged eagle, droop and die behind the bars which you have forged about him, will you be safe from the vengeance of his successors; for he has sons, Sir, whose first and holiest duty it will become to avenge their father’s wrongs.” . . .

“I have on my side much to complain of at his hands, Madame”, said the emperor.

“Name your wrongs, Sir”, replied Marguerite; “and they shall be redressed. Has he attempted to usurp your territories? Has he rewarded the rebellion of your most powerful noble by present favour and brilliant promises? Has he offered to him a crown, and the hand of a widowed queen? or has he met your open hostility with crafty policy, and covert wrong?”

“Should M. de Bourbon resign the hand of my royal sister as you allege, Madame, I am willing to forego my purpose of making him an independent sovereign. Further than this I will not concede.”

“I am ready, Sir”; persisted the duchess; “to double the sum which has been already offered to your Majesty for the ransom of the king, as well as to ratify the other conditions made by himself. That is my boundary also; and one which I cannot overpass.”

“Then, Madame” said Charles, as he rose from his seat; “our conference is ended. The remainder of this unhappy business must be arranged by my ministers, and in their hands, as I before remarked, I leave it.”

“Pardon me if I yet delay your Majesty a moment”, said the duchess, as she drew from her bosom a small packet, which she unfolded. “Here, Sir, is an act of abdication drawn up by the king my brother, to be put in force in the event of an obduracy, which, nevertheless, he had not been led to anticipate at your hands. By this document he has transferred the sovereignty of France to his elder son, M. le Dauphin; confirmed the regency of Madame d’Angoulême; and, in case of her demise, entrusted it to myself; reserving meanwhile the right of resuming the crown whenever and however he may recover his liberty.”

A cold and doubtful smile passed over the lips of Charles. He too well understood the character of his rival to credit for a moment that he possessed the extent of moral courage requisite for such a sacrifice; and strong in this conviction, he remained silent; only replying to the energetic princess by a second bow, more imperious and significative than the first.

Thus tacitly dismissed, Madame d’Alençon had no alternative but to withdraw, which she did, as firmly and as haughtily as she had entered; and leaving the counsellors who had accompanied her from France to discuss the question of a compromise with those of the emperor, she returned to Madrid to take leave of her brother; the period to which her safe-conduct extended having nearly expired.

Painfully convinced that there was indeed nothing to be hoped from the good feeling or chivalry of Charles, the duchess no sooner found herself again in the Spanish capital than she resolved, if possible, to effect the escape of the royal prisoner; and, after conceiving, and dismissing as impracticable, a variety of schemes, she at length decided upon one, of which both the ingenuity and courage did credit to her high and indomitable spirit.

Among the scanty attendance conceded to Francis was a negro, whose duty it was to supply the apartments with fuel. This man, who in height and figure greatly resembled the captive, Madame d’Alençon attempted to conciliate, an endeavour in which she easily succeeded; and, in a short time, by present kindness, and promises for the future, he became so entirely devoted to her wishes, that he declared himself ready to undertake any thing which she desired, however great might be the danger attending it.

This point gained, no time was lost, and it was arranged that so soon as proper preparations were made, the princess should take leave of her brother; and that, at dusk on the same day, the negro should carry in his accustomed load of wood for the consumption of the night; Francis in the meantime having stained his hands and face with a black dye. The king was then to exchange clothes with his deliverer, who was to retire to bed, as if overcome by the grief and fatigue of parting from his sister, while the captive himself was to leave the castle, and as rapidly as possible rejoin Madame d’Alençon and her friends, by whom the most cautious arrangements had been made to secure his safety from detection.

Up to the last week nothing occurred which could create the slightest fear of failure; but it unfortunately happened that two of the king’s personal attendants, both of whom were Frenchmen, and consequently aware of the intended evasion, chanced to have an altercation, in the course of which, M. Clerment Champion, a gentleman of the bed-chamber, received a blow, of

which he complained loudly to his royal master. Francis, however, who was absorbed in his prospect of escape, and unwilling to remonstrate severely with those upon whose fidelity and assistance he now relied, affected to treat the matter lightly, and refused to interfere in what he considered merely as a temporary misunderstanding. Unhappily, Champion conceived his honour to be involved, and became so indignant when he discovered that the king refused to resent the insult which had been offered to him, that, in the first rush of passion, he left the castle and proceeded to Toledo, where, having obtained an audience of the emperor, he disclosed all the particulars of the proposed flight.

The conduct of Charles upon this occasion was perfectly consistent with his character. He expressed his surprise and regret that the monarch of France should have degraded himself by so unworthy and contemptible a design, and merely desired that the negro should be dismissed; but while affecting this moderation, and even indifference, he nevertheless caused the statements of Champion to be reduced to writing, and properly attested; after which he caused them to be forwarded to the captain of the guard, with such orders as soon made it evident to the king that his project had been discovered. The vigilance of those about him increased to inconvenience; and the presence of d'Alarçon, who had lately relaxed somewhat in his obtrusiveness, became perpetual, while he was deprived of the services of his most devoted attendants.

Madame d'Alençon no sooner ascertained the failure of her hopes, than she again demanded an audience of the emperor, at which she expostulated warmly and bitterly upon the increase of severity experienced by her brother; attributing the whole plan of the evasion to herself, and reminding him that his own injustice had driven Francis to accede to her request. Charles listened courteously; and not daring to doubt that she must ultimately succeed in restoring the king at least to his former comparative liberty and comfort, she suffered day by day to elapse while she awaited the anticipated concession. No sign of relenting, however, escaped the emperor; and at length she was warned by Bourbon, that since the discovery had taken place an addition had been made to her safe-conduct of the words "provided she has attempted nothing prejudicial to the emperor or the nation"; adding that he had ascertained it to be the intention of Charles to arrest her, should she remain within the Spanish territories an hour beyond the appointed time; and to retain her a prisoner until the king should consent to accept the proposed conditions for their mutual release. The high-spirited Marguerite, who had never for an instant suspected that the emperor could meditate so unmanly an act of treachery, now found that she had not an instant to lose; and, consequently, ordering her escort, she at once set forth upon her homeward journey notwithstanding the severity of the weather; despatching a messenger to the Count Clermont de Lodeve, the governor of Narbonne, to request him to meet her at Salces with a body of armed men. In eight days she accomplished the distance usually performed in twice the time; and at nightfall of the very day on which her safe-conduct expired she reached Roussillon, where the imperial troops by whom she had been followed saw her surrounded by a force with which they were unable to compete, and consequently retired.

CHAPTER VIII.

[1626.]

IMMEDIATELY after the departure of his sister, Francis fell back into the same state of discouragement in which she had found him. Charles continued inflexible; and he began to dread that, should he persevere in resisting his demands, he was destined to perpetual imprisonment. Such a prospect was agony to his impatient and restless spirit; and the more he reflected upon abdicating his throne, the more repulsive the idea became. He had, immediately upon drawing up the document entrusted to the princess, desired Messieurs de Montmorenci and de Brion to proceed at once to France, as the attendants of the dauphin; but upon ascertaining that the conferences then pending at Toledo produced no results, and that the emperor resolutely refused to renounce one iota of his claims, he wrote to desire them to return, and to bring with them the edict which subsequent consideration had determined him to cancel.

Had he persisted in his first high-minded and generous purpose, he would have escaped the censure with which he has been justly visited by posterity; have upheld his own honour; and preserved his country from sacrifices fatal to its greatness. But the besetting sin of Francis had ever been his vanity. He could not brook the concession of his sovereignty even for a season; and in compliance with the dictates of this unmanly weakness, he was induced to exhibit a selfishness baneful alike to his own reputation and to the welfare of his kingdom. On the 19th of December, only a few weeks after he had parted from Madame d'Alençon, he delivered to his plenipotentiaries an order to draw up a treaty in conformity with the will of Charles; and on the 14th of January, when he was hourly expecting to be called upon to sign the treaty, and take the oath to observe its conditions, he summoned them to his presence, together with the lords de Montmorenci, de Boissy, and de Brion, and the several secretaries and notaries who had been employed during the recent conferences; and, after having bound them by an oath to secrecy, he explained at length all his causes of complaint against the emperor; declared the document which he was about to sign to be null and void, it having been forced upon him while under restraint; and called upon them to witness that he never meant to fulfil the conditions to which it pledged him.

After having made this dishonourable and degrading compromise with his conscience, Francis unhesitatingly plighted his royal word, and affixed his royal signature to the iniquitous demands of the emperor; an act by which, had they been observed, he reduced the great kingdom over which he had been called to reign, to an insignificance which would have rendered it a mere third-rate European power; for by these he bound himself to cede to Charles the duchy of Burgundy, the county of Charolais, the lordships of Château-Chinon and Noyers, the viscounty of Auxonne, and the jurisdiction of Saint-Laurent; to renounce the sovereignty of Flanders and Artois; and to withdraw his alliance and protection from the young King of Navarre, the Dukes de Gueldres and Wurtemberg, and Robert de la Mark; thus dismembering his nation, stripping it of some of its finest provinces, and of many of its available resources, and sacrificing several of his most tried and devoted friends.

Nor was even this the full extent of the humiliation to which he was pledged; for it was also stipulated that he should furnish Charles with troops, vessels, and funds to prosecute his design of subjugating Italy; that he should give his sister in marriage to the Duke de Bourbon, who, together with his adherents, was to be fully pardoned, and restored to the possession of all their former

territories and property of whatever description within the realm of France; and that he should reinstate, in like manner, the Prince of Orange, whose estates had been confiscated for his adherence to the cause of the emperor; and pay a ransom of two millions of crowns for his own release, as well as the debt due by Charles to England, which amounted to five hundred thousand additional. He was, moreover, to espouse the widowed queen Eleonora of Portugal, and to affiance the dauphin to the infanta her daughter, to whom she was to be united so soon as he had attained a proper age; while, in compensation of this undue and monstrous condescension, which disgraced him equally as a monarch and a man, it was agreed that on the 10th of March next ensuing he was to be escorted to the frontier of his own territories, where he was to deliver up, in lieu of his own person, his two elder sons as hostages; or, should he prefer it, the dauphin and twelve of the first nobles of France selected by himself, the whole of whom were to remain in the custody of Charles until the pledges he had given were fulfilled. These exacted that Burgundy was to be ceded within six weeks, and the ratifications of the treaty exchanged within four months; or that Francis should return to Spain, to be again imprisoned wheresoever the emperor should see fit; and to accompany him in person on his crusade against the infidels. .

In leaving the French king at liberty to retain, and to replace his second son by twelve of his subjects, there is little doubt that Charles calculated upon the womanly weakness of Louise de Savoie, to whom Francis deferred the decision; but he had mistaken the nature of the regent, who, before she would make a definitive reply, demanded to know the names of the nobles who were to act as substitutes for the young prince; when the emperor unblushingly mentioned those of the Duke de Vendôme, the Duke d'Aubigny, the Count de Saint Pol, the Count de Guise, the Marechal de Lautrec, the Count de Laval, the Marquis de Saluzzo, the Seigneurs de Rieux and de Brézé, the Marechal de Montmorenci, the Admiral de Brion, and the Marechal d'Aubigny.

Louise de Savoie did not hesitate for a moment. She saw that by accepting this insidious offer she should deprive the French army of its most able generals; and she accordingly lost no time in setting forth for Bayonne, accompanied by her two grandsons, and attended by a brilliant court.

Meanwhile Charles in his turn proceeded to Madrid, where he had a long conference with Francis; after which, both occupying the same litter, they paid a visit to Queen Eleonora, and the ceremony of betrothal was performed; but, nevertheless, the French king was detained a prisoner in the Alcazar until the 21st of February, when he at length commenced his journey towards his own frontier, under the joint guard of De Lannoy and Alarcon, and escorted by fifty horsemen.

On the 18th of March he reached Fontarabia, and once more saw before him the blue and rapid waves of the Bidassoa, which marked the boundaries of the two kingdoms. In the centre of the river a large barge had been moored, and on the opposite bank he distinguished the Marechal de Lautrec, with his two sons, also attended by a mounted escort. Boats were in readiness on either shore; and the several parties, each accompanied by eight soldiers, put off at the same moment, and in a few seconds boarded the barge. The greeting of Francis to his children was brief; his gaze was fixed upon the soil of France, and the same embrace combined at once his welcome and his leave-taking to the bewildered princes. In another instant he had sprung into the boat which now awaited himself; and he no sooner touched the shore, than, seizing the bridle-rein of a noble Arab which had been prepared for him, he vaulted into the saddle, and, waving his hand energetically, exclaimed, "Once more I am a king!". In another second he had dashed his spurs into the flanks of his gallant steed, and before a word had been exchanged between himself and Lautrec, he galloped furiously from the spot; nor did he slacken his speed until he reached St. Jean de Luz, where he made a temporary halt which enabled his escort to join him; and then, with scarcely less rapidity, he pursued his way to Bayonne, where his mother and sister were impatiently expecting him.

To Louise de Savoie the meeting was one of unalloyed delight; but to Marguerite de Valois it was damped by the expatriation of her young and helpless nephews; by the reflection that one of her brother's truest and most tried subjects, the veteran minister de Semblançay, was still wearing away the evening of his life within the gloomy dungeons of the Bastille, without a hope of release save by death, the virulence of the regent having caused the process which she had instituted against him to assume the most threatening aspect; and by the enfeebled state of the king himself; who, even amid the delight and exultation of finding himself once more within the boundaries of his own kingdom, and surrounded by his noblest and most faithful friends, nevertheless unconsciously betrayed the fearful inroads which captivity and suffering had made upon his health.

But there was one individual who, even more than Madame d'Angoulême herself, suffered every memory and every consideration to be swallowed up in the absorbing joy of this new meeting; and that one was the Countess de Châteaubriand, who, having succeeded during her imprisonment under the roof of her husband in gaining over the solitary attendant who had access to her apartment, had been apprised of the release and expected arrival of the king; and had lost no time, through the connivance of this new ally, in making her escape from Brittany; and thus the court had scarcely reached Bayonne, when, to the great and undisguised displeasure of the regent, it was joined by the only woman whose influence rivalled her own over the mind of her son.

In Marguerite de Valois, however; the fugitive countess found a willing and powerful protector. She was aware how essential the affection of the countess had become to the happiness of her brother; and when she witnessed the delight which beamed in his eyes as he advanced to greet her, she became convinced that without the presence of Madame de Chateaubriand his self-gratulation would have been incomplete.

The shattered state of his health, and the extreme languor by which he was oppressed, induced the physicians of the king to advise him to remain for a time in the southern provinces; a counsel which he willingly followed, the enthusiasm of his subjects, and the public rejoicings consequent upon his return, leaving him no leisure for weariness or desire of change. The envoys of the emperor, who had accompanied him to Bayonne, and who urged upon him the ratification of the treaty which he had signed at Madrid, were briefly and coldly dismissed, with the reply that he could take no further steps until he had obtained the sanction of the States of Burgundy to separate that duchy from the kingdom of France, for which purpose he was about to convoke them; and they had no other alternative than to remain at Bayonne until the assembly should have met.

Francis then hastened to write with his own hand to Henry VIII, to express the gratitude he felt for his refusal to invade his territories; and to confirm the treaty made between that monarch and the regent, which had been signed at Bordeaux on the 15th of April. He also received with affectionate courtesy the confidential ambassadors of the pope and the Venetian senate, who were sent to congratulate him upon his return to France; and did not hesitate to complain with great bitterness of the harsh and ungenerous treatment he had experienced from the emperor; and to declare to them, when they pressed him to uphold the independence of Italy, and the equilibrium of Europe, that he considered the treaty which he had been compelled to sign at Madrid of none effect, wrung from him as it had been by violence; and that he was not only ready to assist in the restoration of the liberty of the Italian states, but also to make an effort to overthrow the arrogant pretensions of Charles himself. His next step was to replace the brave generals and companions in arms who had fallen at Pavia, and to reward those who still survived; and these arrangements made, he abandoned himself to his favourite pursuits and pleasures with a zest little calculated to restore him to the health he so much needed.

From Bayonne he proceeded with all his court to Bordeaux, and thence to Cognac, where he sustained a fall while hunting by which his life was endangered, and a season of compelled

inaction was induced, which enabled him once more to find leisure for more serious and important considerations.

By alleging the necessity of appealing to the States on the subject of Burgundy, Francis had merely sought to gain time, for his disposition was too arbitrary to suffer him to submit to dictation from his subjects; but in order to silence the emperor by some measure which might bear the semblance of a deference to the national authority, he convoked a meeting of the princes, great nobles, and prelates who were then at court, to whom he introduced de Lannoy, stating the object for which he had followed him from Spain, and calling upon them to decide between himself and the emperor. As he had been aware would be the case, the whole assembly at once disowned his right to dismember the kingdom; and asserted that an oath exacted by a foreign sovereign could not exempt him from the observance and fulfilment of that which he had taken at his coronation. The deputies of the States of Burgundy, who had also been summoned declared, moreover, that they would never consent to yield allegiance to any monarch save that of France, nor to permit their duchy to become a portion of the emperor's territory; and that, even should the king urge them to such a concession, they would resist while they had life.

De Lannoy was too skilful a diplomatist to be duped by so transparent a comedy as this. He felt that his imperial master was foiled with his own weapons; nor was his mortification decreased, even amid the splendid entertainments which Francis affected to give in honour of the emperor's envoys, by the fact that, during his sojourn at Cognac, the French king signed a treaty of alliance with the Pope, Francisco Sforza, the King of England, and the Venetians, which assumed the name of the Holy League. By this treaty the contracting parties bound themselves to effect the liberation of the French princes, paying a ransom of two million golden crowns for their release; to restore to Francisco Sforza the sovereignty of Milan; and to put the other Italian states into possession of all the rights and immunities which they possessed before the war.

By consenting to enter into this league, Francis, who was at length desirous of peace, deliberately deceived those who had offered to become his allies. The subtle spirit of Louise de Savoie had suggested, and her son had voluntarily adopted, this treacherous policy, in order to intimidate the emperor by the prospect of a war with Italy and England, and thus to induce him to withdraw his opposition to a compromise by which Burgundy would remain an uncontested province of France, and the liberty of the young princes be secured.

So open and avowed a disregard of the claims of his imperial master induced de Lannoy to expostulate warmly with Francis; but as he could obtain no other reply to his reproachful arguments than an assurance that the king was ready to make any pecuniary compensation which the emperor might demand for the non-fulfilment of this condition of the treaty—a compromise which the envoys were not authorized to accept—they had no alternative but at once to withdraw from the city, and return to Spain.

On receiving the intelligence of this false dealing on the part of Francis, Charles exclaimed vehemently : “He need not accuse his subjects of this want of good faith. To prove his own sincerity, he has only to fulfil his pledge, and once more to constitute himself my prisoner. Let him do that, and I will acquit him.”

He then removed the dauphin and the Duke d'Orleans from Valladolid, where they had hitherto resided, to Old Castile; refused to accept the compromise offered by the French king and formally summoned him to perform his promise, and to surrender himself once more a prisoner.

Francis was not, however, likely to reply to such an appeal while surrounded by homage and pleasure; and so completely did he ere long become immersed in his favourite pursuits, that he even neglected to fulfil the pledges which he had given to his new allies; and, instead of furnishing



an army for the contemplated campaign, he suffered all considerations of policy to be obliterated by the amusement of the moment.

In this supineness he was not imitated by the emperor, who was no sooner apprised of the death of Pescara, than he despatched the Duke de Bourbon once more to Italy, with a promise that he should succeed to the sovereignty of the Milanese; giving him as his coadjutors the Marquis del Guasto, (who had at the request of his cousin inherited his command), Ugo da Moncada, and Antonio da Leyva, three brave and able generals who were well worthy of such an association. He did not, however, provide any means of subsistence for the army over which they presided; but with cold-blooded atrocity, authorized the troops to extort all that they required from the unfortunate Italians. The natural consequence ensued; the population, driven to desperation, formed constant conspiracies against the imperial generals, who revenged themselves by increased severity and augmented confiscations; and meanwhile Francisco Sforza began to suffer from famine at Milan, which still continued in a state of siege; awaiting in vain the succours which had been promised to him by the French king; who, instead of relieving the necessities of his friends, had recommenced his negotiations with the emperor to induce him to receive an equivalent in specie for the Burgundian duchy; and upon various and puerile pretexts delayed to ratify the treaty of Cognac.

The progress of Francis through his southern provinces was one perpetual triumph; not even as the victor of Marignano had he been so enthusiastically received; and he had not moral courage to tear himself from these new-found delights even to take the steps necessary to ensure their continuance. Absorbed in dissipation and self-indulgence, he left all public affairs in the hands and under the control of his mother, her unprincipled adviser Duprat, and the creatures to whom he had sold the government offices, and who were entirely at his disposal. Even amid the multitudinous cares which thus devolved upon her, however, Louise de Savoie found leisure and opportunity to watch all the movements of the king, and her exasperation was extreme when she became convinced that absence had only served to rivet the chains by which he was bound to Madame de Châteaubriand. She could not forgive the defiance to her will exhibited by the countess, whom she had herself exiled from the court, in thus presenting herself once more before her at the very moment of the king's return, as if in marked contempt of her authority; and her indignation and jealousy were heightened by the reflection that nothing save a conviction of impunity could have led the countess to attempt so dangerous an experiment.

Vainly had she endeavoured to excite the coldness and distrust of Francis towards the beautiful favourite: he only smiled at her inferences, and escaped from her remonstrances; and at length, in despair of effecting her purpose by argument or persuasion, Louise de Savoie, who was unrestrained by any moral consideration, and who had internally vowed the ruin of her victim, resolved to effect it by introducing her son to some new beauty, whose very novelty would give her an advantage over the more matured and familiar charms of Madame de Châteaubriand. In order to find a fitting object for this unworthy purpose, the duchess-mother was not compelled to look beyond her own lovely and licentious circle; and she smiled triumphantly, as she remembered that of all her train the most beautiful girl had not yet, owing to a slight indisposition, been presented to the king.

Madame d'Angoulême had, in the previous year, received into her household as one of her maids of honour, Anne de Pisseleu, the daughter of Guillaume de Pisseleu, Seigneur de Heilly, who had at that period just attained her seventeenth year, and whose extraordinary loveliness was the topic of the whole court. Highly educated, and endowed by nature with a sparkling wit which enhanced her acquired attainments, she had at once become a favourite with her royal mistress, to whose will she affected the most devoted obedience. In Mademoiselle de Heilly, therefore, Louise de Savoie believed that she had all to hope, and nothing to apprehend, for she was already so well acquainted with the coquetry and dissipation of her character, that she did not for an instant fear

any opposition on the part of the young lady herself to a project which held out such brilliant promises of future greatness. She therefore instructed her maid of honour to remain secluded in her apartment until she should herself decide the moment of her presentation to the king; and when the spoiled favourite ventured to inquire the reason of this enforced solitude, Louise de Savoie only answered by a significant smile, and an injunction to be careful of her good looks; and then, in order to escape further interrogation, she left the room.

As she withdrew, Mademoiselle de Heilly remained for a moment lost in thought; after which she approached a large Venetian mirror that stood upon her toilette, and looked into it long and anxiously. A cold proud smile rose to her lips as she turned away. She had already fathomed the meaning of the regent.

When the court reached Mont-de-Marsan, Louise de Savoie once more paid a visit to the fair recluse; when she announced her intention of holding a circle on the following evening, and presented to her protégée a parure of costly pearls.

“I believe you to be attached to me, Mademoiselle she said, as she passed her fingers caressingly through the long ebon tresses of Anne de Pisseleu, who knelt at her feet to kiss the hand which tendered the costly gift; “nor do I fear that you will ever forget all that you owe to my favour. I look upon you as one who will be devoted to my will through every change of fortune, and governed by my wishes in every emergency, and under all circumstances. Tomorrow you will be presented to the king. Be equally obedient and loyal towards my son”

Eagerly was that morrow anticipated by the fair maid of honour, who had already been too long an inmate of the dissolute court of the regent to be either surprised or startled by the new intrigue in which she was destined to play so prominent a part. She had already seen the rival whom she was tacitly called upon to supplant; and as she remembered her pale pure face, shaded by masses of bright auburn hair, her soft grey eyes, and well rounded but somewhat diminutive figure, she contemplated with secret exultation her own large and languishing black eyes, the clouds of rich ebon ringlets that fell about her brow and shoulders, the graceful proportions of her finely developed figure, and the fascination of her smile; until she began to feel that her success was certain, and to weave a web of dazzling and daring fancies which at once blinded her to the infamy by which they were to be purchased, and might have served to arrest the purpose of Madame d'Angoulême, had she been enabled to fathom the mysteries of that heart which she believed to be wholly absorbed by vanity and pleasure.

After a day devoted to hunting, and an hour given to the imperious demands of public business, Francis proceeded to the apartments of his mother, which were brilliantly illuminated, and already crowded with courtiers of both sexes. Louise de Savoie occupied a raised seat beneath a canopy at the upper end of the principal saloon; and on her left hand sat Marguerite de Valois, having immediately behind her the Countess de Châteaubriand, whose soft and childlike loveliness formed a marked contrast to the noble and proud beauty of her royal friend. The resemblance borne by the Duchess d'Alençon to her brother was remarkable. The same piercing and imperious grey eyes, the same abundance of rich dark hair upon which the king had prided himself before the accident which induced him to wear it closely cut, the same finely formed but somewhat too salient nose, the same full firm mouth, and the same lofty figure and bearing were discernible in each; but the general harshness of the king's expression was tempered into softness by the urbane and affectionate nature of the duchess. Behind the coffer, draped with crimson damask, which was occupied by the regent, stood Madame de Brancas, the comptroller of the household, the Duchess d'Usez, and the other ladies in waiting; while on her right was placed, a step higher than her own, a similar seat for the king; upon whose entrance Madame de Brancas advanced to the front of the duchess-mother, in order to introduce such of the guests as were not members of the court, or who had from any cause been absent for a time from the royal circle,

when it should be the pleasure of the regent to receive their salutations.

In the train of Francis were assembled Montmorenci, whom he had just appointed grand-master, Marechal, and governor of Languedoc; de Brion Chabot, newly created admiral and governor of Burgundy; Teodoro Trivulzio, and Fleuranges, who had both obtained the bâton of Marechal; Saint-Pol, the new governor of Dauphiny; and Brézé, upon whom had been conferred the government of Normandy; all of whom were to be formally and for the first time presented to the ex-regent by their present titles. Gay and gorgeous was the group; and it is questionable whether any who looked at that moment upon the individuals of whom it was composed, had either leisure or inclination to reflect that the king had replaced the old and tried generals whom he had lost at Pavia by a bevy of court favourites.

Francis advanced to the dais, where having saluted his mother, he bowed slightly in acknowledgment of the profound curtsy of Madame de Brancas, and then, in order not to impede the presentations, moved forward to the seat of Madame d'Alençon, where he continued in conversation with herself and the Countess de Chateaubriand until all the nobles had passed the duchess; after which, still trailing the white plumes of his hat along the tapestried floor, he returned to the side of his mother, and took possession of the seat which had been provided for him.

The white wand of Madame de Brancas quivered in her hand, as she severally presented the wives of the civic functionaries, whom, in consideration of the loyal reception which had been given to her son, the duchess-mother had admitted to her circle. The dignity of the comptroller of the household suffered under this enforced duty; and although the courtesy of Francis compelled him to welcome each as she approached with that winning condescension which secured the hearts of all to whom it was extended, it was evident that he was weary of the ceremony; when as the last of the provincial ladies retired, proud and happy, to the lower end of the hall, the voice of the stately female official became suddenly sonorous, her wand steady, and her whole attitude dignified and calm.

“La Demoiselle de Heilly, Madame.” And Anne de Pisseleu advanced towards the dais. As she came forward with a slow but firm step, her eye never wandered from the face of her royal mistress. Her robe of crimson damask, richly embroidered with gold, fell about her in folds which might have draped a Grecian statue; her dark hair was braided with pearls, and her neck and arms were adorned with the same costly gems. With dignified yet modest grace she bent her knee; and as Louise de Savoie extended her hand to raise her, she turned one look upon her son.

That look told her that she had triumphed.

“The poor child has' been long ill” said Louise de Savoie, as if to account for her sudden appearance. “Mademoiselle, the king will receive your homage.”

Instinctively Francis rose, not as before slowly and languidly, but with an expression of interest and pleasure so visible as to bring a glow to the cheek of his sister, and tears into the eyes of Madame de Châteaubriand. He even suffered Mademoiselle de Heilly to kneel for an instant before he recovered sufficient self-possession to raise her; and as he at length did so, he said in an unsteady voice—

“Be careful of your health, Mademoiselle; it is too precious to be neglected. The court of Madame can ill afford the absence of its brightest ornament.”

Mademoiselle de Heilly again curtsied profoundly; after which she withdrew behind the seat of the regent, whence she did not move for the remainder of the evening. She could not have

occupied a position better calculated to enhance her extraordinary beauty; for as she occasionally bent down to reply to a few kind words addressed to her by her royal mistress, and her young and blooming countenance came into close contact with the still fine but rapidly fading face of Louise de Savoie, the contrast was striking.

The king, at the termination of the presentations, traversed the apartment, courteously addressing the local functionaries, and arranging with his favourite courtiers the pursuits of the following day; but it was evident to all about him that his thoughts frequently wandered; and he no sooner found himself at liberty to yield to his own inclination without a breach of that court etiquette of which he was so punctiliously observant, than he returned to the immediate circle of his mother; first, however, approaching his sister, with whom, as well as with her friend, he entered into an animated conversation, which once more brought back a bloom to the cheeks of the countess. He nevertheless eagerly obeyed the summons of Madame d'Angoulême, who ere long recalled him to her side; where, although he listened deferentially to some communication which she made to him, his eyes were constantly fixed upon the beautiful maid of honour.

"I am lost" murmured the countess, as she anxiously watched the expression of the king's countenance.

"Take courage" whispered. Marguerite in reply; "this is, believe me, a mere passing fancy; and you are well aware that my royal brother has never been distinguished for his constancy; Anne de Pisseleu is undoubtedly very attractive; but she is still a mere girl, who will feel rather terrified than flattered by such undisguised admiration."

"She displays no fear;" sighed Madame de Châteaubriand.

"True", persisted the princess; "but neither does she exhibit any exultation. She is as calm and as expressionless as a statue. You have claims upon the king which he will not overlook. Maintain your self-command, and rest assured that you are safe."

And, even knowing what she did of the habits and temperament of Francis, Madame d'Alençon had faith in her own words.

CHAPTER IX

[1526-27.]

THE Italian league was paralysed by the supineness of the French king. The Swiss levies which were to have been raised by the pope and the Venetians did not arrive, and the Duke d'Urbino, the general-in-chief, refused to attack the Spanish army without their aid; while the pontiff, who possessed neither energy nor talent sufficient for the emergency in which he found himself, was alternately giving way to his resentments, and yielding to the terror inspired by the consequences of his own imprudence. Distrustful of his new allies, and without confidence even in his troops, he gave contradictory orders, which harassed those under his control without advancing his interests; and at length, anxious to secure himself in peace in his capital, he offered terms to the Colonna family, who were his declared and inveterate enemies, and was even short-sighted enough to enter into a treaty with them, and to disband his forces in Romagna; an error of which the Cardinal Pompeo Colonna instantly took advantage, by arming all his feudatories and dependents, and marching so rapidly and impetuously upon Rome, that the pope was compelled to shut himself up in the castle of St. Angelo; while the cardinal, at the head of eight thousand men passed the gates of the city, pillaged the Vatican and St. Peter's, and besieged the pontiff in the citadel. Thus pressed, Clement VII found himself under the necessity of suing for peace; and through the mediation of Ugo de Moncada, Colonna consented to withdraw his troops from Rome on condition that the pontiff should afford no aid, either directly or indirectly, to the league, for the space of four months.

The prolonged inaction of Francis at length excited the suspicion of the Italian states; and the court of Rome in consequence despatched to France one of their most able diplomatists, who was instructed to exert himself to the utmost to discover if any intrigue hostile to their interests were cloaked beneath this apparent indifference; and with authority, should such prove to be the case, to offer certain concessions, in order to induce the French cabinet at once to make some demonstration in their favour. Guan Baptista Sanga, the envoy in question, soon discovered, however, that little penetration was required to unravel the seeming mystery, for that the nation was almost bankrupt; while the revenues, collected tardily and with difficulty, were forthwith swallowed up by the exigencies of the court. He consequently assured his government that they need fear no aggression from France; for that even were the duchy of Milan freely tendered to the king at that moment, it would be declined, however the secret wishes of Francis might lean to its possession; the duchess-mother, the chancellor, and the council being resolved against it, and the monarch himself so absorbed by pleasure as to be careless of higher interests.

Aware that there was nothing to fear from the ambition of France, Sanga urged upon the ministers the expediency of redeeming the pledge given by their monarch; and at length it was resolved that a fleet, consisting of four galleons and sixteen barks, which was then arming at Marseilles, should proceed to Genoa under the command of Pietro da Navarro, who, having been abandoned by Ferdinand of Aragon when he was made prisoner by the French, had offered his services to Francis, by whom they were at once joyfully received, and justly appreciated.

Navarro consequently sailed without further delay; and, on the 29th of August, joined the combined fleets of the pope and the Venetians; while at the same time a small force was despatched to Milan to the relief of Fernando Sforza, under the Marquis de Saluzzo; but, as we

have already shown, the expedition had been too long delayed. Bourbon had landed in Italy, and with the main body of the imperial army had marched to Milan. When he entered the persecuted city the duke was met on all sides by misery and expostulation. Deputations of the magistrates and of the most respectable citizens waited upon him with complaints of the extortion and persecution to which they were subjected by the emperor's troops, whose rapacity and licentiousness, long unchecked by their superior officers, had reduced the inhabitants of the city to absolute despair; and assured him that their homes were invaded, their hearths polluted, and their very lives in danger.

Bourbon listened courteously and patiently to these representations, admitting that he saw on every side sufficient evidence of the correctness of their statements; but he confessed himself unable to curb the excesses of the troops by any other means than an immediate distribution of their arrears of pay, which he advised the inhabitants to raise, if possible, among themselves; declaring that they should no sooner have done so than he would evacuate the city, and encamp his whole army beyond the walls.

To this proposal, however, the already impoverished citizens demurred. They had no guarantee that after making this new concession the duke would perform his promise; and they had already suffered so severely from the bad faith of the invading generals that experience had rendered them cautious: Their hesitation irritated Bourbon, who at once divined its cause; and as they were about to retire, he said vehemently:—"Consider your own interests, Gentlemen. As matters stand I am unable to secure you from pillage and even from personal violence. By withdrawing the troops I shall effect this easily, and you will do well to trust me. I know that other pledges have been given to you which have been broken; but as for myself, I call God to witness that if I fail in performing my promise, I wish that the first shot that is fired at the next battle in which I am engaged may end my life."

After so solemn a protestation as this the Milanese authorities hesitated no longer. With extreme difficulty they succeeded in raising thirty thousand ducats, which they delivered to the duke; but once more they saw themselves duped by the invading army. The troops still continued to occupy the city; and at length committed such fearful enormities that many of the burghers, driven to desperation, committed suicide in order to terminate their sufferings.

At this period the emperor might with ease have subdued the whole of Italy, had he been in a position to satisfy the demands of his army; the Duke d'Urbino still persisting in his resolution to avoid all contact with the imperialist army until strongly reinforced; but the want of funds to pay his troops rendered Charles unable to profit by the opportunity, while the lax state of discipline to which they were reduced gave him little confidence in their fidelity. Bourbon, however, whose whole prospects were involved in the success of the war, did not suffer himself to be disheartened by such considerations. He was aware that he possessed the affections of the soldiery, and he resolved not to yield an inch of the territory that he had won.

The arrival of Frundsberg, a German adventurer, who had already done good service at Pavia, and who ultimately joined him with a strong body of lansquenets which he had raised at his own expense, in order to share in the profits which must, as he was well aware, accrue to the victors in the struggle, soon determined him, moreover, to resume the offensive; and as he could no longer promise the troops that their arrears would be supplied by the emperor, he at once inflamed their cupidity by proposing to them no less an enterprise than the conquest of Rome, the plunder of which treasure-teeming city would secure to them not only help but affluence. The hatred of Frundsberg and his Germans alike to the person and to the faith of the pontiff secured their hearty co-operation in the project; and accordingly the imperialists, having wrung from the unhappy inhabitants of Milan their few remaining ducats, proceeded to Piacenza, where, however, on the 17th of March, Frundsberg was struck by apoplexy, and Bourbon accordingly assumed the

command of their joint armies. Destitute alike of money and provisions, the host moved forward, plundering churches and villages, and spreading terror upon their path, until on the 5th of May they halted beneath the walls of the Eternal City; and on the following morning Bourbon, whose armour was covered by a surcoat of cloth of silver, himself raised a scaling-ladder, and calling upon his men to follow him, prepared to lead the assault.

Scarcely, however, had he reached the third round of the ladder when the fate which he had himself evoked at Milan overtook him. The ball of a retreating sentinel, who, scared by the unexpected attack, was hurriedly abandoning his post in order to give the alarm, struck him on the breast, and he at once became convinced that the wound was mortal. When he fell he was surrounded by several of his most tried and faithful friends; and by a last effort he conjured them to throw a cloak over his body, and to draw it aside, in order that the troops might not be induced, by the knowledge of his death, to abandon their enterprise. His request was complied with, and as they removed him from the fatal spot, he breathed his last. The command of the imperial army devolved by his demise upon Philibert de Châlons, Prince of Orange, whose proffered services, as we have already stated, had been coldly accepted by Francis, and who had in consequence transferred them to the emperor, in order, if possible, to revenge upon the French king the mortification which he had experienced at his hands.

Under his guidance, therefore, the eager army, unconscious of the loss which they had sustained, pressed on, incited alike by vengeance and cupidity; and, after a brief but bloody struggle, succeeded in rendering themselves masters of the doomed city; and then commenced the frightful sack of Rome, which has furnished one of the darkest pages in the history of the civilized world, during which nothing remained sacred in the eyes of the invaders; while the pope and a body of the cardinals, who had succeeded in effecting their escape to the castle of St. Angelo, were at length compelled, after enduring for an entire month all the horrors of daily increasing starvation, to capitulate with the Prince of Orange; who ultimately took possession, not only of the fortress, but also of the persons of the pontiff himself, and of thirteen of the conclave, whom he retained prisoners until the pleasure of the emperor as to their ultimate disposal should be declared.

The fall of Rome occasioned general consternation throughout Europe, and sufficed to arouse even Francis to a sense of the impolicy and bad faith of his own want of energy, which had in a great degree conduced to this terrible catastrophe. He could not forget that it was by his persuasion the pope had consented to a war with Charles which he had previously been anxious to avoid, and that he had been beguiled into joining the league by promises which had never been fulfilled. Instead of a powerful army, the French king had supplied only an unimportant body of men, who had, moreover, remained totally inactive; and he had asserted that England would co-operate with him, while Henry VIII had in point of fact remained passive. In short, he had falsified every promise; and he now beheld with consternation the success of a rival whom he had hitherto hated rather than feared.

An entire year had been consumed in the southern provinces, where, regardless of all save his own personal gratification, Francis had permitted no public cares to interfere with his career of lavish dissipation; but at the termination of that period the increasing discontent of the nation, weary of the arrogant and oppressive rule of the duchess-mother and her ministers, rendered it imperative that he should visit the capital. The death of the wife of Duprat had induced the rapacious chancellor immediately to enter into holy orders, with a view to high and speedy ecclesiastical preferment; and his prescience had been rapidly rewarded by the archbishopric of Sens; but as by the demise of Etienne Poncher, the late prelate, the rich abbey of Saint Benoit had also become vacant, he determined to be at the same time his successor in that government. Herein, however, he was met by the objection that the abbot must, according to an article of the *concordat*, be elected by the community themselves, and by the declaration that they had already

conferred the dignity upon Francois Poncher, Bishop of Paris.

Enraged by this opposition to his will, Duprat, undeterred by any sense of justice, or any dread of punishment, took forcible possession of the abbey, and imprisoned such of the monks as protested against his usurpation; when the parliament, indignant at so flagrant a disregard of judicial authority, opposed his pretensions. But he found a powerful protector-in Louise de Savoie, who represented their interference to her son as an encroachment on his own privileges; and Francis, always jealously alive to any invasion of his authority, at once resolved to hold a bed of justice, at which all the great officers of the crown, presidents, councillors, and other authorities, were summoned to attend; and where the chancellor informed the parliament that they were at liberty to make such representations to the king as they might deem fitting.

Thus challenged, the first president, in the name of the whole court, complained of the usurpation of the chancellor in the matter of the abbey of Saint Benoit; declaring it to be a violation of the law, and praying for its restitution to the elected abbot; but the eloquent spokesman, unfortunately infected by the atmosphere of the court, concluded his remonstrance by an admission that "it would be a species of sacrilege to question the royal power, as the parliament were aware that the king himself was above the law, and could in all things act as he saw fit; while they were equally convinced that he would be guided only by equity and justice."

This ill-timed and unguarded concession secured the triumph of the chancellor; and in the course of the same day the king published an edict by which he forbade the parliament-thenceforward to interfere in any matters of state, or of ecclesiastical preferment; and declared their decrees upon all subjects save those which were purely judicial to be null and void. He likewise denounced their efforts to limit the power which he had transferred to his mother, as well as that which he had entrusted to the chancellor; and concluded by proclaiming that save himself none had authority above that of the minister, and their opposition to his will was consequently of none effect, being merely that of private individuals, who possessed no right of control over his actions,

Nor was this the only demonstration of injustice by which Francis signalized his return to his capital. Louise de Savoie, the friend and mistress of Mademoiselle de Heilly who was rapidly undermining the influence of the Countess de Châteaubriand, had obtained, through her immoral and degrading encouragement of the licentiousness of her son, so perfect an empire over his mind, that he had altogether ceased to oppose her will; and she therefore seized so favourable a moment, to gratify her still undiminished hatred of the unfortunate De Semblançay. Aided by Duprat, who was ever ready to repay her good offices in kind, she urged upon the king the propriety of terminating the long captivity of the unfortunate finance-minister by a trial, which must either decide his innocence and restore him to liberty, or, in the event of his guilt, terminate an existence sullied by crimes worthy of an ignominious death.

Anxious as he was to conform to her wishes in all things, Francis nevertheless hesitated for a time to comply with this suggestion. He remembered the long and faithful services of the veteran statesman, whom he had been accustomed to call "his father"; he recalled his boyish years, during which the unhappy old man was ever ready alike with assistance and advice; and he even expressed doubts of his delinquency: but Louise de Savoie was not to be so silenced. She represented that if the king, who had been principally injured by the rapacity and peculations of the accused, believed him to be innocent of the charges preferred against him, it was probable that his judges would prove equally lenient, when he would be free to retire, and die in peace upon one of his own estates; whereas he was at present a captive in his old age, and suffering all the penalty of crime; and this argument decided Francis, who, glad of any pretext to escape from a subject which wearied him, at length consented that the victim should be put upon his trial.



Accordingly a court was convened, composed of the creatures of Duprat; De Semblançay was confronted with his accusers; the judicial forms were scrupulously observed; and after the accusations had been read, he was called upon for his defence. Aged, heart-broken, and moreover convinced that his fate was already decided, the prison-worn old man was not even yet utterly subdued; and the energetic indignation with which he repelled the charges that were brought against him, might have carried conviction to the coldest heart. His eloquence, however, availed nothing against the known will of his vindictive enemy; and on the 9th of August the zealous and devoted servant of four successive monarchs, the upright minister, and the honest, uncompromising victim of a base revenge, was hanged at Montfaucon, in his sixty-second year, like a common felon.

Anxious to divert the mind of the king from dwelling upon a catastrophe which he might by an effort of moral courage and good feeling have averted, Louise de Savoie, on the evening of the execution, held a circle in her villa of the Tuilleries, where Francis, in the society of Mademoiselle de Heilly, and the other beauties of his mother's court, soon recovered his gaiety. As he traversed the glittering bevy, he paused to converse with the young and witty Duchess d'Usez; and animated by her sparkling gaiety, he addressed her more than once as "my child", in order not to check, by a more ceremonious appellation, the flow of her vivacity. Nothing, however, could long detain him from the side of the new favourite, and he ere long made his way to the immediate circle of his mother; while the young duchess no sooner saw herself at liberty to change her seat than she retreated to a corner of the saloon, where burying her face in her hands, she appeared to have become a prey to the most violent grief.

For a time this extraordinary display of emotion passed unobserved; but at length it attracted the attention of her companions, who eagerly inquired the cause of her emotion.

"Alas, alas!" she exclaimed, wringing her hands; "well may I weep. The king has just left me; and during our conversation he three distinct times called me his 'child'. I am afraid of sharing the fate of M. de Semblançay, for you may remember that he always called him his 'father'; and as the relationship is equally close, I am dreading that ere long I shall also be hanged at Montfaucon."

This exclamation, and the tragi-comic voice in which it was uttered, elicited a peal of laughter which even the etiquette of a court could not suppress. The curiosity of both the king and his mother was excited, and they demanded to know the cause of this sudden mirth, which, with some hesitation, was declared to them. Francis joined in the general hilarity; but Madame d'Angoulême, whose conscience was less at ease, commanded the adventurous young duchess to retire to her own apartment; and accompanied the order by a reprimand which effectually checked her merriment.

The state of the court and that of the capital presented at this period a contrast alike great and deplorable. Before his departure for Italy, the king had examined and approved the plan laid before him for rebuilding the palace of Chambord, and despite the general poverty of the nation, the duchess-mother had so energetically carried out his views that considerable progress had been made before his return. The celebrated Primaticcio, whose splendid works in stucco for the castle of T. in Mantua, had rendered his name famous throughout the continent, had been summoned to France in order to superintend the construction of the new edifice, as it was the ambition of Francis to render it more rich and splendid than any of the regal residences of Italy, a design in which he was ably seconded by the magnificence of his architect; immense sums were wrung from the necessities of the people, and placed at the disposal of the artist; and eighteen hundred workmen were engaged for the space of twelve years, before the building had attained to the degree of perfection, which it ultimately reached.

Nothing could exceed the gratification of the king as he once more wandered through the woods of his favourite retreat, and contemplated the gorgeous residence which even at this early

period gave splendid promise of its eventual magnificence. The ancient castle of the counts of Blois had totally disappeared; the contracted courts, enclosed by dense and gloomy fortifications bristling with cannon, had been swept away; and the majestic palace now stood in the midst of a park of twelve thousand acres, with a noble chase abounding in deer and wild-boar, and surrounded by a wall nearly eight leagues in extent; while the river Cosson meandered through banks of the richest grass, or flowed through groups of forest timber, until it ultimately laved the foundations of the edifice which was reflected on its pellucid current as on the surface of a glittering mirror. Within, the combined talents of Jean Goujon and Pierre Bontems had enriched its saloons and galleries with the most delicate productions of the sculptor's art; while the gorgeous and graceful frescoes of Leonardo da Vinci and Jean Cousin adorned the vestibules and corridors.

Thus, although still unfinished, the palace of Chambord offered many attractions to the king; who forthwith withdrew from the capital, and commenced a series of fêtes at his favourite residence, by which he soon became so thoroughly absorbed, as to forget for a time alike the captivity of the pope, and the watchful enmity of the emperor. Tourneys, carousals, hunting parties, balls, and banquets, succeeded each other in endless variety; but while Francis still affected to regard Madame de Châteaubriand as the presiding deity, it soon became not only apparent to herself, but also to those by whom she was surrounded, that her star was rapidly paling before the influence of the beautiful and artful Mademoiselle de Heilly.

Few, however, cared to sadden their own enjoyment by regrets for the fallen favourite; the tide of time seemed to all beside herself to flow over golden sands. The wit of Marguerite de Valois—the superb beauty of Diana de Poitiers—who, on the return of the king had hastened to accept a situation in the household of the duchess-mother which necessitated her constant presence at court, and thus enabled her to exchange the grim glories of Anet, and the paternal tenderness of her aged husband, for the gilded pomp of Chambord, and the flatteries of a young and gallant monarch—the growing influence of the fascinating Anne de Pisseleu—all combined to throw the timid and silent sorrows of Madame de Châteaubriand into the shade. None had leisure or inclination to remember how recently they had coveted her smiles. The nature of a courtier resembles that of the heliotrope; while the sun shines brightly it expands, and embalms the space about it; but at the first appearance of a cloud it closes upon itself, and no longer develops either perfume or beauty.

Such, then, was the state of the court; all public business still remained in the hands of Louise de Savoie and her myrmidons, while the voice of passion and of pleasure was alone suffered to intrude upon the ears of her son. But meanwhile the capital of the kingdom had become the very hot-bed of discontent, licentiousness, and misrule.

The prolonged absence of the king, and the capricious, grasping, and tyrannical government of the duchess-mother had rendered the citizens desperate. Well aware that they were impoverished to support the profligacy of a court which was not even held in the capital, they became reckless and violent. The narrow, unpaved, and unlighted streets were nightly the scene of rapine, violence, and even murder. The *guet*, or night-watch, composed of timid and indolent burghers, for the most part unarmed from the dread which they entertained of bearing weapons in whose use they were inexperienced, were constantly beaten from their posts by the rabble of the city, and the bands of disorderly students who prowled through the obscure lanes and alleys in pursuit of mischief, even attacking the royal musqueteers, and committing the most atrocious acts of violence upon the courtiers and their adherents, whenever an opportunity presented itself to indulge in such aggressions.

All, in short, was anarchy throughout Paris; the students of the Pré-aux-Clercs were linked with the vilest ruffians in a close community of evil, which had spread like a leprosy; and these

students were of themselves sufficient to destroy the safety and tranquillity of the city. While the nobility, during their brief sojourn in the metropolis, confined themselves to excursions in the forest of Saint Gervais, or the environs of Romainville, their affected disgust, but actual apprehension, abandoned to the lawless scholars all the vast meadows which then covered the left bank of the Seine from the old street of Saint Jacques to the walls of the convent of Saint Germain; while the vagabonds and outlaws who formed at that period so considerable a portion of the population, had, by an extraordinary caprice for which it appears impossible to account, selected as the scene of their orgies the frightful neighbourhood of Montfaucon, where they danced, feasted, and drank under the shadow of the gallows, which was seldom, free from its ghastly freight; and beneath this fearful evidence of judicial authority and human justice the most licentious and wanton excesses were of nightly recurrence.

Nor was the one great link between these three several grades of society less to be reprehended than the unhallowed use which each made of its especial prerogative; for that universal bond was created by a set of fanatical charlatans and impostors, who assuming to themselves the character of alchymists and astrologers, penetrated alike into the velvet-draped saloons of palaces, and the mudwalled hovels of the squalid children of poverty and vice. In the present day it is scarcely possible to induce a belief of the mysterious and frequently pernicious influence exercised by these impostors; who while outwardly affecting to be absorbed in the occult labours of their calling, were in fact the vendors of poisons and other deleterious drugs, by which human life was constantly perilled, and human caution as perpetually rendered useless.

Even Louise de Savoie herself, whose strength of character and firmness of will might have been supposed to exempt her from all such puerile superstitions, took into her service the celebrated Cornelius Agrippa; who, much as he detested the arrogant and imperious duchess, consented to join her household in the double capacity of physician and astrologer, although he soon betrayed that the motive by which he had been influenced was wholly unconnected with the liberal salary that he received; for when consulted as to the fate of the Duke de Bourbon, on his first admission to her presence, he gratified his secret animosity to his royal mistress by prophesying the success of the duke in all his undertakings, and his signal triumph over his enemies; an indiscretion which so exasperated the regent that he was summarily dismissed, deprived of his pension, and forbidden the court; for which severity he revenged himself by the publication of a bitter satire, wherein he likened his late patroness to Jezebel, and drew so forcible a parallel between the two individuals that he was compelled to save his life by a speedy flight from the French territories. Suffice it that crime, imposture, and wretchedness had reached their acme in the metropolis of France; and that the very seats of learning and science were polluted by the ignorance and superstition of those by whom they were tenanted.

Nor was even the ancient college of the Sorbonne exempted from the general degradation; for at the period of which we write, this dwelling of the most erudite doctors of the University, and the members of the *Chambre Ardente*, whose duties consisted in trying all cases of alleged magic and sorcery, rather resembled a fortress than the abode of men of letters. It was, in fact, a species of vast and sombre stronghold, defended by ditches, ramparts, towers, bridges, and all the accessories of a place of war; while its occupants were more than suspected of illegal and mysterious practices which required all the protection external circumstances could afford. The spies of the Sorbonne invaded, unsuspected, every hearth throughout the capital, and influenced every popular movement; nor did even the government escape their machinations. The celebrated syndic Noel Bedier, a man as unprincipled as he was talented, had attained to such supremacy over the spirits of the people that he had become the actual sovereign of the capital, and by his ability in exciting the passions of the mob, had made himself feared not only by the magistrature, but even by the king himself. Alike unscrupulous and ambitious, he did not suffer himself to be deterred from any object by considerations either of law, loyalty, or justice; but whenever his claims were disallowed, or his demands resisted by the authorities, at once armed the students and

led them to the Palace of the Tournelles, to compel by force the concessions which had been refused to his arguments.

This measure, bold and presumptuous as it was, seldom failed to prove successful; for not even the disciplined troops of Francis could make head against so formidable a band of opponents as that with whom, upon such occasions, the turbulent syndic deluged the streets of the capital. Not only were the sturdy and discontented scholars ever ready to obey his bidding, and prepared to second him in every act of violence, but they had secured as their auxiliaries all that houseless, lawless, and vagabond class of the population recognised under the general name of *maltôtiers*, the very refuse and scum of an ill-organized and licentious capital, and which consisted of thieves, emancipated felons, discharged soldiers, foreign adventurers, and other rabble, whose means of existence depended entirely upon their wits.

With these outcasts the grand master had established a perfect understanding by signals, and watchwords known only to themselves; and the horns of the students no sooner sounded behind the old walls of the Sorbonne than they were answered by a shrill cry from the depths of the Cour des Miracles, the rendezvous of these vagrants, and a general rush was made towards the gloomy pile whose tenants they were thus called upon to assist or to defend. No principal gate gave entrance to the college, but numerous small doors had been constructed on each of its sides, which were constantly watched from within, in order that immediate ingress might be secured by any of the students who when hotly pressed by the archers of the guard found it desirable to effect a retreat; or by some guilty ally of the indulgent university who sought an asylum against justice. Once within the walls, no criminal could be seized, even by order of the king himself, the power and privileges which had been accorded to the institution placing it beyond royal jurisdiction; and in every case the delays created by the syndic ensuring the escape of the culprit.

Such was the condition of Paris; shunned by the proud and the wealthy, groaning under a heavy weight of taxation which crushed its citizens to the earth, and delivered over nightly to the saturnalia of a host of reckless and desperate ruffians, who acknowledged no law save their own will, and no authority save that of their elected chief. And yet Francis I slumbered at his post; he disdained to measure his strength with a rabble who, in the hope of largess, shouted and cried *Noël* as he traversed the city streets; he refused to hearken to the remonstrances of his burghers, whose industry and enterprise could alone have restored the prosperity of the capital; and he resolutely pursued his headlong career of pleasure and profusion with a mine ever ready to spring beneath his feet.

Soon, however, he was compelled by the general indignation felt throughout Europe at the continued captivity of the pope, to arouse himself from, the dream of selfish indulgence to which he had yielded, and to send envoys to Spain, as Henry VIII was also preparing to do, to negotiate for the liberation of the pontiff, and to demand an explanation of the emperor's intentions relative to the sacred person of his prisoner.

The two monarchs had long been engaged in a treaty for the marriage of Francis with the Princess Mary of England, the French king being anxious to evade the alliance of the Dowager-Queen of Portugal; and as the increased and increasing power of Charles gave them augmented cause for alarm, they became more than ever anxious to consolidate their friendship. By the terms of this treaty, which had been signed on the 20th of April, by the Bishop of Tarbes and the Viscount de Turenne, on the part of Francis, it was agreed that the daughter of Henry VIII should become the wife of the French king, should he be enabled to liberate himself from his engagement with the emperor's sister, and remain a widower until the princess should have attained a marriageable age; or in default of the monarch himself, that she should give her hand to the Duke of Orleans, his second son, at the same period; while the English monarch was, on his side, to renounce his claim to the title of King of France, on consideration of receiving the annual

sum of five millions of crowns; to join the league then forming against the emperor; and to furnish in the month of June following a force of nine thousand infantry, to which Francis was to add eighteen thousand foot, and a proportionate body of lances; the whole of which combined army was to march into Spain, to summon the emperor to deliver up the persons of the French princes upon the payment of two millions in gold as their ransom money; and in case of his refusal to accede to this proposition, to declare war against him in form.

The captivity of Clement VII, however, rendered some modification of this first treaty essential to the interests of both kingdoms; and, accordingly, on the 29th of May, it was decided by a second negotiation that the French army should alone undertake the invasion of Italy, while England should furnish the monthly sum of thirty thousand crowns, to defray the expenses of the war; and, finally, in order to obviate all possibility of future disagreement or misapprehension, the English monarch decided to despatch the cardinal-legate once more to France, in order that every article of the treaty should be duly and definitively arranged between Francis and himself.

The mission was one which enabled the haughty minister to indulge without restraint in that inordinate ostentation which formed so striking a feature in his character; and he accordingly set forth with a train rather befitting a sovereign than a subject. Having taken leave of Henry, he travelled on the first day from his palace of Hampton Court to Stone, in Kent, where he passed a night at Stone-place, the seat of Sir Richard Wingfield; and on the morrow at daybreak he resumed his journey, accompanied by the Bishop of London, the Earl of Derby, and Sir Thomas More, and attended by a train of noblemen and gentlemen, who preceded him three abreast, all clad, in velvet and satin, and wearing massive chains of gold about their necks. In the van of these rode a body of the cardinal's yeomen, and upwards of two hundred serving men in his liveries of orange-tawny, with his initials and cardinal's hat embroidered upon the breast of their doublets; while immediately before him were borne two tall crosses of beaten silver, two ponderous staves of the same precious metal, and his hat, and embroidered cloak-bag. Wolsey himself, according to his usual habit, bestrode, in affected humility, a sleek and ambling mule; but the magnificence of his apparel, and a led horse, richly caparisoned, for his occasional use, converted the seeming meekness into a pungent epigram; and thus, "the observed of all observers," he travelled to the coast; and with the same brilliant retinue, and in the same lordly pride, landed in France, where, having reached Amiens, he was received by Francis with all the state and ceremonial which could have been observed towards Henry himself.

The conferences lasted for a fortnight, and during that period nothing was omitted on the part of the French king and his courtiers which could flatter the vanity and arrogance of the English minister; every hour that could be wrested from public business was devoted to the most sumptuous entertainments; and as a mutual anxiety to complete and consolidate an amicable arrangement existed on both sides, four separate treaties were ultimately concluded; Wolsey, in conjunction with four other cardinals, addressing at the same time a letter of respectful sympathy to the pope, in which they entreated him to appoint a vicar-general as the representative of his authority on the northern side of the Alps, in order that the interests of the Church might not suffer during his captivity.

From Amiens the cardinal-minister accompanied the French king to Compiègne, in order, as he affirmed, to pay his respects to the duchess-mother; and once more his reception was magnificent in the extreme. The lovely and brilliant court of Louise de Savoie put forth all its attractions, and balls, banquets, and other amusements filled up the time so fully that there scarcely appeared space for more serious occupation. Nevertheless Wolsey did not suffer himself to be engrossed by these diversions; but after having confided to Francis the conscientious misgivings of the English monarch on the subject of his marriage with Katherine of Aragon, and his determination to have it annulled by a papal bull, he seized a favourable moment to suggest to the French king the policy of effecting an alliance between his own sovereign and Marguerite de

Valois.

The cheek of Francis flushed, and his brow grew dark.

“Your Eminence is, perhaps, not aware” he said evasively, “that the hand of Madame d’Alençon is promised to the Duke de Bourbon.”

“But your Majesty cannot possibly contemplate the completion of such an engagement” persisted Wolsey; “The King of France would assuredly never bestow his sister in marriage upon a traitor.”

“I have, in truth, no such intention” was the cold reply; “but, nevertheless, until the engagement shall have been dissolved, she is no longer free. Where there exists a previous and still unbroken tie, no new bond can be valid.”

The cardinal bit his lip. “The duchess may herself refuse to ratify a pledge given without her sanction” he said at length cautiously.

“Her refusal shall in that case suffice” replied Francis; “for I will never consent to sacrifice her happiness to any consideration of state policy. All I can do therefore, Monseigneur, is to refer you to Madame d’Alençon herself. Let her decide.”

“I can require no more”, said the haughty cardinal, with a profound bow, and an almost imperceptible smile; “The crown of England, and the hand of its young and chivalrous monarch, can scarcely be rejected by one of the proud blood of Valois.”

The primate had, however, miscalculated the nature of the proud blood which he thus insidiously vaunted; for Marguerite de Valois replied to his degrading proposal with the most complete and unmitigated disdain; reminding him of the friendship which had existed between the ill-fated Katherine and her sister-in-law Queen Claude; and declaring that she never would be accessory to an act of tyranny and injustice. In vain did the cardinal represent that the delicacy of his sovereign’s conscience alone induced him to consent to the contemplated divorce; the duchess was immovable; and Francis had begun to congratulate himself upon escaping through her means from a difficulty which threatened to dissolve the friendship between himself and His brother-monarch, when Wolsey, undeterred by the scorn of Madame d’Alençon, after courteously lamenting the failure of a project which promised, as he affirmed, such beneficial results to both kingdoms, affected suddenly to remember that there was still another method by which their respective interests might still be equally assured; and, with unblushing pertinacity, suggested to the French king that, in lieu of that of his sister, he should bestow upon Henry the hand of the Princess Renee, the sister of his late wife.

Herein, however, he was destined to be again baffled; for Francis himself instantly and resolutely refused his sanction to an alliance which would weaken his claim to the duchy of Brittany; and without any appeal to the princess, at once negatived the proposal. Wolsey was accordingly compelled to take leave of the French court without having accomplished the object which was without doubt the principal motive of his mission; and, without further delay, he returned to England with the same state and splendour as he had quitted it, enraged at the disappointment to which he had been subjected, but too politic to betray a symptom of his annoyance.

The sack of Rome, and the death of Bourbon, which occurred shortly after this embassy, only served to aggravate the difficulties of the French king; especially as his own envoys and those of England obtained nothing of the emperor save his renunciation of the duchy of Burgundy, and a

circular addressed to' the several sovereigns of Europe, in which he disclaimed all the responsibility of the siege, and explained the circumstances which had led to that disastrous event. He declared himself to have been injured and deceived; affirmed that he had never instructed the Duke de Bourbon to attack the holy city; and concluded by asserting that, although the troops of the latter marched under the imperial banner, they did not recognise his own authority; and that as the duke himself had been killed at the very commencement of the assault, they had subsequently acted without instructions, and entirely according to the dictates of their own will.

But despite this deprecatory document, Charles was ill at ease. Gratified as he might be by feeling that he held in his own power the person of the pope, he was nevertheless embarrassed by this very consideration. His first impulse had been to remove him into Spain, in order that his custody might be more complete; but he was soon convinced of the impolicy of this project by the remonstrances of his own council, and the determined opposition of his Italian army; and thus he found himself compelled to abandon the design.

As the cold and unsatisfactory reply of the emperor gave them no guarantee for his ultimate acceptance of the proposed terms, neither Henry nor Francis felt himself bound to await further concessions; and they accordingly prepared to put the terms of their treaty in force, by the organization of an army which was to be maintained at their joint charge, under the command of the Marechal de Lautrec, to whom it was confided at the express request of the English king. The troops were soon in motion; but before they had crossed the Alps, Francis effected a second treaty with Sforza and the states of Venice and Florence, who, eager to disembarass Italy of the imperialist soldiery, were readily induced each to furnish their quota of troops in aid of the enterprise; and once more the power of Charles was threatened by a confederated army.

CHAPTER X

[1526-27.]

THE political interests of his kingdom had, however, even while they compelled him to devote a portion of his time to public business, failed to withdraw Francis altogether from his more cherished pursuits. The favour of Mademoiselle d'Heilly increased daily; and became at length so undisguised, that the Countess de Châteaubriand, reluctant as she was to admit the truth even to herself, began to apprehend that her influence over the fickle mind of the monarch was lost for ever. The Duchess d'Angoulême, satisfied by her success in having undermined the power of a favourite who had dared to enter into a rivalry with herself, affected not to perceive the daily increasing passion of her son for the frail maid-of-honour, but flung herself totally into politics, leaving the intrigues of the court to unravel their own consequences; and her resolution of neutrality no sooner became evident, than an incessant struggle commenced between the rival beauties, which produced two several but very unequal factions among the courtiers. The countess, relying on the assurance of Marguerite de Valois, trusted to old associations to win back her royal lover, but she had miscalculated the nature of the profligate monarch; those very memories ensured her failure. In vain did she remind him that for his sake she had abandoned home, and husband, and child; his retort was ready.

“But, Madame, that was years ago. Time must long ere this have plucked the sting from so great a sacrifice.”

“I have loved you, Sire”; persisted the former favourite, while the tears rained down her pale cheeks unchecked, for she remembered the early effect of those tears; “as sovereign was never loved before,—not for your crown—not for your proud name—but wholly for yourself; and I have loved you devotedly and entirely.”

“Not entirely, Madame; you forget the admiral.”

“How, Sire!” exclaimed the countess indignantly; “because it amused me to sport with the harmless vanity of M. de Bonnavet, would you make a crime of my thoughtless gaiety?”

“By no means”; said the king drily; “whatever others may have done. But all this is idle, Madame. Of what do you complain? Have I forbidden you the court? Have I failed in courtesy to one of the fairest ornaments of my circle? Surely you are unreasonable.”

“I am answered, Sire”; said the countess, with a profound salutation and a sinking heart; “I have detained your Majesty too long.”

Francis replied by a bow as ceremonious as her own; and Madame de Châteaubriand, after hesitating for a moment as if to assure herself that all was indeed over between them, slowly withdrew from, his side, and was lost in the crowd with which the saloon was filled; while the king, wearied by a scene in which he could not fail to feel that he had acted an ungenerous part, hastened to the side of Mademoiselle d'Heilly, in order to overcome his annoyance.

Affairs of state having called Francis to Paris, the secret of the new favourite's entire



ascendancy was unblushingly revealed; for at his express desire the duchess-mother, instead of inhabiting her residence at the Tuileries, took up her abode at the palace of the Tournelles, where one of the many towers whence it derived its name was fitted up with lavish splendour for Anne de Pisseleu. On the platform of the tower a pavilion had been erected, which commanded an extensive view, not only of the city itself but of the whole of the surrounding country. Windows of richly-painted glass, executed by the skilful pencil of Jean Cousin, admitted a subdued and gorgeous light, and every luxury which could be compressed within so confined a space, was made subservient to her caprices. This tower, which was connected with that habitually occupied by the king himself, had formerly been appropriated to Queen Claude, and had since her death hitherto remained untenanted; but none who remembered it during the lifetime of that pure and pious lady would have recognised it when prepared for its new mistress. The dark and richly-carved oaken *prie-dieu* was replaced by a marble group from the chisel of Jean Goujon, which awakened no associations of piety; the modest bed, with its heavy hangings of tapestry, was exchanged for a couch draped with blue velvet, and raised several feet from the floor, as if even in sleep the pampered favourite were destined to assert her triumph over the neglected queen; rare and costly toys were scattered on every side; and the shrine was worthy of its idol, for all around was glare, glitter, and empty pomp.

Still Mademoiselle de Heilly was not happy. Unlike the discarded countess, she had fallen without remorse. Both her nature and her education had fitted her to prove an easy victim; and her first step in vice had rather excited than satisfied her ungovernable passions. It is also certain that she never loved in Francis more than his rank, and the opportunity which it afforded for the gratification of an ambition as uncompromising as it was insatiable; and the frail maid-of-honour was not long ere she discovered that her heart was independent of her vanity. She was, moreover, still distrustful of the influence of her rival; and it was consequently with unconcealed displeasure that she heard the king propose her own immediate marriage as a means of securing to her a rank at court which should render their intimacy less remarkable, and assure to her the privileges of which she was now deprived.

“Are you so soon weary of me?” she asked, as her large and searching eyes were riveted upon him.

“On the faith of a gentleman, ma mie” replied Francis; “I never loved you so well as at this moment; but I would fain save you from the lampoons of the poetasters, and the jests of the courtiers.”

“I scorn alike the one and the other”; was the haughty retort; “the friend of Francis of France can care little for the envious sneers of an idle rabble, be they of what rank they may; but Anne de Pieselev may be allowed to hesitate before she submits to the authority of a husband.”

The king laughed. “There shall be no need for such a sacrifice”; he said, as he pressed her fingers to his lips. “Francis of France can as ill brook a rival as Anne de Pisseleu can submit to the thralldom of conjugal supremacy; and well you know that I have sworn to you an eternal fidelity.”

“To me, in my turn” said the bold favourite, averting her head, and affecting, to conceal her tears.

“How now! What mean you, mademoiselle?” asked the monarch almost angrily. “Have I ever forfeited my royal word?”

“I was thinking of Madame de Châteaubriand”; said the maid of honour, with a pretty pout; “and of---”

“Enough, ma mie”; interposed Francis with a frown. “Let the future speak for itself; it is unwise in both of us to look back upon the past. When I give you a husband, I shall give you rank, wealth, and consideration, but nothing more. Can you not trust me?”

Mademoiselle de Heilly had already become aware that she had ventured too much; and accordingly she shook back her long dark ringlets with a playful gesture, and glancing at the still overshadowed countenance of the monarch with a playful smile, she answered the question by another, still more pertinent; “But are you quite sure, even you, the King of France, that so indulgent a husband can be found? And are you-prepared to convince me that this threatened marriage will not separate me from my lord and sovereign?”

“To your first inquiry I reply, Anne”; said the enamoured monarch; “that the meek and careless husband is already found; and to the second, that in securing your advancement, I have not lost sight of my own claims.”

And Francis spoke the truth. The ready tool of a licentious master had been secured in the person of the Count Jean de Brosse, the son of the Count René and of a daughter of Philippe de Commines. René had been a partisan of Bourbon, whose cause he had espoused, and under whose banner he had fallen at the battle of Pavia. His estates had been in consequence confiscated; and the young count, impoverished and disgraced, had, since his father’s rebellion, dragged on an existence of penury and neglect by which his spirit had been broken and his pride prostrated. Of all his inheritance he had preserved only his honour, but this had hitherto remained unsullied; and those who still felt an interest in his fallen fortunes, had been accustomed to regard him with a respect and pity of which, upon the first temptation, he proved himself unworthy; for, dazzled by the prospect of returning to the court ennobled and enriched, he wilfully closed his eyes to the degradation by which these advantages were to be purchased, and readily acceded to the wishes of the king, by consenting to become the husband of the royal favourite upon the terms which were submitted to him.

His complaisance was richly repaid; all his estates were restored, he was appointed governor of Burgundy, received the collar of St. Michael, was created Count, and subsequently Duke d’Etampes, and accepted the hand of Mademoiselle de Heilly towards the end of the year 1526.

Nor had the king miscalculated the amount of his gratitude. The new duchess was exposed to no remonstrances, subjected to no matrimonial interference, but assumed the dignity of her new rank without one reproach or representation calculated to sadden her triumph, or to humble her vanity. The court, it is true, was merry at the expense of the new-made benedict, but Jean de Brosse heroically entered upon his dearly purchased privileges, and found in ostentation and self-indulgence a lethe for his shame.

Madame d’Etampes no sooner became the acknowledged and official mistress of the sovereign than the whole of the court circle were at her feet; and, had she only been known by the puerile and fulsome effusions of Marot and Sainte-Marthe, her name might have descended to posterity as that of the most gifted and virtuous of her sex; but unhappily poetry is not always truth. Gifted, indeed, she was, and beautiful—“Fair ’mid the learned, learned ’mid the fair”, as the latter poet had justly sung; but her gifts were perverted, and her beauty desecrated by vice. Envious, haughty, revengeful, licentious, grasping, ambitious, and mean, she seemed expressly created to pursue the disgraceful but brilliant career upon which she had so unhesitatingly entered.

Aware of her power over the king, the power of a strong mind over a weak one—and in his commerce with women Francis had constantly betrayed his weakness—her arrogance soon

exceeded all bounds. In her respect for the duchess-mother she never failed, for she had tact enough to profit by the example of Madame de Chateaubriand, and to avoid a rivalry which might ultimately terminate in her own disgrace; but there her forbearance ended; for the excessive love and devotion of the king, and the universal adulation by which she was surrounded, so inflated her vanity, that she regarded all other enmity as trivial and unimportant; nor did she deceive herself. In a short time all court favour and court advancement was to be successfully sought only at her hands; and she used her influence without scruple or compunction.

Nevertheless, however, the royal favourite was not even yet altogether free from anxiety. She saw and felt her power, it is true, but she doubted its stability; for she was aware that her defeated rival had still a powerful supporter in the Duchess d'Alençon, who had never ceased to exhibit her annoyance at the coldness which had been latterly evinced by the king towards her friend. Nor was this all; for another and a threatening star had arisen on the court horizon, in the person of the superb Diana de Poitiers, who had, to use the quaint words of a chronicler of the period, "long made a hole in the roof of the chateau of Anet and abandoning her aged husband and his gloomy domain for the brilliant circles of royalty, proved how little the restraints of wedded life were suited to her free and volatile tastes.

It is probable that Louise de Savoie, although she had, as we have already shown, ceased to take an active part in the intrigues by which the time of her son was almost entirely occupied, did not see without a certain satisfaction the undisguised pleasure with which he on all occasions welcomed the presence of La Grande Sénéchale, as it tended to create a diversion calculated to render the Duchess d'Etampes more cautious than she might otherwise have been in exhibiting her influence over the monarch; while the position of Diana herself, as the wife of a powerful noble, who, either out of weakness or cowardice, still continued, despite the levity of her conduct, to afford to her at least the protection of his name, and to close his ears to the rumours which were rife against her fair fame, gave her a marked advantage over the parvenue duchess, who was herself far from unconscious of the fact.

But although Francis betrayed, almost carelessly, his admiration of the magnificent Madame de Brézé, and that there were not wanting many tongues which were ready to assert, that from the period of her father's reprieve, her veteran husband had found it expedient to remain blind to her understanding with the king, it is certain that no public or ostentatious exhibition of his preference escaped her royal admirer, who gave no evidence of seeking the rivalry of the dissolute court poet, or the half score of idle young nobles who sported her colours in the lists, and murmured her name over their wine-cups.

And the secret was an easy one to read. Diana possessed only her beauty, for at this period she was still too unlettered in the lore of a court to assume the semblance of a feeling by which she was not really actuated. Her nature was weak, but not yet entirely vitiated. Naturally greedy of admiration, she valued the homage paid to her attractions for its own sake, caring little for the rank of him by whom the incense was offered up. Marot sang her praises in melodious verse, and she smiled upon the reckless and unprincipled minstrel who ministered to her vanity. He professed to love her alone, and she did not seek to doubt his sincerity. In a word, Diana de Poitiers was still in the infancy of vice; passion had not yet seared her heart; and all that she sought to do was to live on, in the splendour of her beauty and of her triumph, trampling upon the past, and careless of the future.

In this phase of her existence the monarch was to her only another and a distinct admirer. She did not speculate upon the consequences of his preference, nor seek to aggrandise herself by his smiles. Her beauty was, indeed, a barbed arrow; but her total absence of knowledge of the world had plucked away the feather by which its aim is guided. Little, therefore, at this period had Anne de Pisseleu to dread from the pleasure-loving Diana, although there were moments in which

she felt disposed to apprehend the contrary; nor was the rivalry of even Françoise de Foix more dangerous; for the meek and timid countess, although still beautiful and fascinating, had lost the charm of novelty, and was, moreover, ignorant of those more refined and unscrupulous arts of coquetry in which she was herself an adept, and which were so well calculated to enthral the profligate nature of Francis.

A struggle had, indeed, commenced between the past and the present favourite, but it was too unequal to leave any doubt of its ultimate result. The tears of Madame de Châteaubriand were far less captivating than the smiles of the Duchess d'Etampes; and the regrets of the one were tedious after the blandishments of the other. In affairs of the heart the past is powerless, while the present is all in all; and although the betrayed countess did not venture upon reproach, she was soon taught to feel that there was a tacit rebuke in her very presence.

In vain did the Princess Marguerite exhort her to patience, and represent the constitutional inconstancy of her royal brother; Madame de Châteaubriand was not to be convinced; but humiliated by the perpetual mortifications which she was called upon to endure at the hands of her rival, and which her newly-acquired rank enabled her to inflict with added facility; as well as by the neglect of the courtiers who had once been at her feet, and whose bearing was, as she well knew, but a reflex of the feeling of the sovereign, she at length determined to make a final appeal to the affection of Francis by proposing to leave the court.

It was a bitter expedient, for she was aware that it might fail, and then, what would remain to her of all the brilliant visions for which she had sacrificed husband, and child, and home, and that fair fame which once forfeited can never be reclaimed? But her present position was untenable consistently with that dignity which still remained to her as a woman. The court was made merry by daily epigrams, of which she was the subject, and whose authorship she had little difficulty in tracing to the clique of the new favourite. Even those whom she had served in her prosperity had forgotten their obligations, for few things are more inconvenient than such memories when they interfere with present interests; and the enemies to whom she was indebted for her temporary elevation, were overjoyed at her discomfiture, and made no secret of their triumph.

The heart of Françoise de Foix was crushed within her. She was only too well aware of the nature of the reception which she must expect from her outraged husband, even should he consent once more to accord to her the shelter of his roof; and although her pride bade her take the decisive step of self-exile from that court of which she had so lately been the idol, there were a thousand conflicting fears, and terrors, and even hopes, which induced her to delay her purpose. Day after day, therefore, she lingered; but at length, on the return of the royal circle to Chambord, oppressed by insult, and heartsick with disappointment, she resolved to decide her fate.

While in the capital she had already become aware that the king studiously avoided every opportunity of finding himself alone with her, and there it had been easy for him to do so; but his habits in the country were more excursive and independent, and the unhappy woman trusted even yet that in a private interview, should she succeed in obtaining, it, she might awaken in his bosom some of the old and cherished feelings of the past.

The very name of Chambord was a spell in her favour. Had not the king declared that it was for her sake he desired to see his favourite retreat become splendid beyond all the palaces of France? Had he not assured her that the costly mirrors which lined its saloons were intended principally to reflect her beauties, and the magnificent works of art in which it abounded to administer to her luxury? And yet, the walls had scarcely been raised, the skill of the painter and the statuary had been but partially employed, and already another lorded it where she was to have reigned supreme.

Surely this could not last! It must be merely a frightful dream, from which she should once more awaken to light and joy! It could not be at Chambord that her royal lover would coldly sacrifice her to a rival! And then the erring wife dashed away her tears to gaze upon the costly contents of her casket, where, pillowed upon velvet, lay the glittering gems presented to her at different periods by the king, and which were of almost fabulous value. She thought not of their intrinsic worth, however, as she bent over them with dim eyes and a throbbing heart; to her they were, indeed, beyond all price, but that was simply because their enamelled setting was enriched with the device of the salamander, the crest of Francis, their entwined initials, and sundry tender mottoes, invented by Marguerite de Valois at the express request of the king, for their embellishment.

How clearly and acutely did she recall the occasion upon which each had been proffered! He had clasped that bracelet upon her arm, as an earnest of their reconciliation, when after having reproached her with her love for Bonnavet, he had followed up his remonstrances by engraving with a diamond that he wore upon his finger, on one of the panes of the window near which they stood, the often quoted lines,—

“Souvent femme varie,

Mai habil qui s’y fie,”—

and had been rebuked by her silent tears. And it was here, at Chambord, that the bracelet had been clasped on! That carcanet—that ring—each had its memory, and it was for these that she valued them. They threw her back upon the past—the brilliant past—and although she loved a monarch, she was still weak enough to hope even amid her fears.

Thus had she been engaged when, on a brilliant day in summer, she saw the king traversing the parterre in front of the palace, accompanied by Primaticcio; and aware that the Italian would offer no impediment to her project, but would retire as soon as she approached, she impulsively threw on her mantle; and hurrying to the garden, took a by-path that led immediately to the point towards which she at once discovered that they were bent. Her anticipations were correct, for on turning an angle Francis suddenly came upon her ere he had time to evade the meeting. As he recognised her he started, and involuntarily retreated a pace or two; but the countess remained rooted to the spot. Her hands were clasped tightly together, her eyes riveted upon his face, and the words, “Hear me, Sire—” escaped her trembling lips.

Thus addressed, Francis slightly raised his plumed hat, and approached her; while Primaticcio discreetly retraced his steps until he was beyond the reach of their voices.

“Were you seeking me, Madame?” asked the king coldly.

“Alas! yes, Sire; and I have lately done so unavailingly;” replied the countess with effort.

“If it be to reproach me that you are here, countess—”

“Nay, not so” exclaimed Françoise de Foix. “Not so; who shall dare reproach the King of France. I am here only to crave one word, one little word of kindness, ere I leave the court forever.”

“Leave the court, Madame!” echoed Francis with ill-concealed gratification. “Is not your resolution somewhat sudden? Not, however”, he added with a chilling courtesy which fell like an icebolt upon the agitated spirit of his victim; “that we would seek to detain you near us if you have other and more pressing duties. We are already too deeply your debtor for the charm which you

have long, very long, thrown over our circle. Do you purpose returning to Brittany?”

Francoise de Foix pressed her hand heavily upon her heart to still its throbbings, as she answered with an ineffectual attempt at composure; “With the permission of your majesty”.

“It shall not be withheld, Madame, since such is your desire; and it will give us sincere pleasure to hear of your prosperity and happiness in your retirement.” And once more the plumed hat was gracefully raised from the royal brow; a gesture of the hand brought the great artist again to the side of the king, and the dishonoured wife was left standing alone under the bright sky and the waving boughs, as Francis of France and his protégé resumed their walk.

And she stood there long, paralyzed alike in mind and limb. She had, indeed, in her moments of despondency, apprehended that she might be permitted to depart, but never that she should depart thus—without one regret—without one expostulation—without one word of tenderness or explanation. Alas, poor woman! she had not paused to reflect that princes do not condescend to temporise when their interests are not involved. What was she now but a pebble in the path of the king, which, for his greater convenience, had been removed? Sympathy! Where could she look for sympathy? The guilty have no friends. What a tide of thought and memory rolled over her brain in the brief half hour that she stood there—there, where the monarch who had lured her to her ruin, had left her without a sigh! what visions of the giddy height from which she had fallen—the fatal precipice down which she had recklessly plunged—the foul stain which she had affixed to an honourable name, and the inexorable husband by whom her dishonour would be avenged! And then, with a frantic grasp she clutched her mantle about her, and staggered back, drunk with despair, to the mocking splendour of her luxurious apartment.

And one gentle look, one kindly expression, blight have softened the fiercest pang of this unutterable anguish, and left her at least an illusion with which to brighten the fearful future; but the boon, poor as it was, had been denied.

Truly Francis I, the vaunted of history, and the heir of fame, was a chivalrous monarch!

The same evening, in the circle of the duchess-mother, the king announced with a courtesy at once suave and stately, that the Countess de Chateaubriand, whose health had been for some time precarious, had solicited his permission to retire from the court; a request to which, under the circumstances, he had reluctantly acceded. The astonishment elicited by this intelligence was universal. The eyes of Louise de Savoie and the Duchess d’Etampes sought each other, and exchanged a look of triumph; while the Princess Marguerite silently averted her head, and by a powerful effort retained the tears which endeavoured to force their way. The die was, however, cast, for this public announcement from the lips of the king had effectually prevented all change of purpose on the part of the countess; and nothing now remained for her save to depart, and expiate by a future of remorse the errors of the past.

And fearfully were they indeed expiated. Varillas and Sauval both assert that on her return to Brittany—for she offered herself on her retirement from the court a passive victim to the vengeance of her husband—M. de Chateaubriand imprisoned her for a time in a vault beneath the chateau into which the light could not penetrate; and subsequently caused the veins of her arms and feet to be opened, by which she bled to death. This account is, however, not universally credited; although it is certain that she was subjected by her infuriated husband to the most cruel and unrelenting treatment; which, added to the despair that had taken possession of her mind after her last interview with the king, rendered her weary of life, and ill able to contend against another and an unlooked-for mortification, which gave the last blow to her bruised and broken spirit.

Only a few weeks after the retirement of Madame de Chateaubriand from the court, the monarch presented to the Duchess d'Etampes a magnificent parure of brilliants and pearls; but even while the eyes of the favourite glistened with delight at the costly offering, a shade gathered upon her brow which was instantly perceived by Francis, who anxiously inquired its cause.

"I admit the beauty of the jewels" said Anne de Pisseleu, as she threw her white arms about the neck of the enamoured king; "but to me they are mere stones, to be bought with gold, and lost without regret: baubles, which all who are wealthy can command alike. They boast nothing distinctive. They tell nothing either of Francis of France, or of her to whom his smiles are all in all. How different were the gems which I have seen upon the neck and arms of the Countess de Chateaubriand! There every separate ornament breathed of tenderness and devotion. Every trinket was its own history. There was a world of love upon every link and clasp of those enamelled ornaments; and you give me merely gold and stones, and would have me prize them as she valued the heart-record which rendered hers at once a memorial and a marvel."

And Anne de Pisseleu wept; and the king wiped away the tears which dimmed her bright eyes; and at length, in a moment of weakness which betrayed him into forgetfulness of his dignity not only as a monarch but even as a man, he consented to write with his own hand to the abandoned countess, and to reclaim the gifts which had been freely offered.

Madame d'Etampes again triumphed. In her cold and selfish heart there was no place for the sentiment which she affected. She sought only further to humiliate an already vanquished rival; and her eyes once more sparkled as she placed before her infatuated lover the costly writing-stand of pearl and ebony which occupied a recess in her apartment. She would brook no delay in this new caprice, and the unworthy letter was completed in her presence; the restoration of the jewels was demanded; and all that Francis could do to mitigate the enormity of the meanness which he was thus induced to commit, was to assert that a portion of them were the property of the crown, and consequently unalienable.

Who shall venture to say with what melancholy rapture the unhappy countess had hung over those cherished symbols of the irrevocable past in her gloomy captivity, unvisited as it was by one word or look of kindness? Who shall venture to imagine the pang with which she received from the hand of her imperious and disdainful husband this last missive from her royal seducer. The result is, however, matter of history. In a few days the countess delivered to the messenger of the king a casket of sandal-wood curiously inlaid, which she instructed him to convey with all speed to his master; her command was obeyed, and the casket was placed in the hands of Francis, who at once transferred it, unopened, to those of Madame d'Etampes.

The exulting favourite raised the lid with a proud smile and an eager hand; but her triumph was short-lived. The jewel-case was, indeed, full to overflowing; gold and gems were alike there, even to the veriest trifle which Madame de Chateaubriand had owed to the whilom liberality of the sovereign, but not an ornament remained intact. The ruin was complete. The precious stones had been wrenched from their settings, and the richly laboured ore was broken into a thousand fragments. Above them lay a letter addressed to the king. It was the last cry of a broken heart!

"Sire"; ran the missive, whose contents were rendered nearly illegible by the excessive agitation of the writer; "Since it has pleased your majesty to reclaim the gifts which I owed to your generosity, I restore them to you. Not a jewel or a grain of gold will be found wanting. The devices alone are absent; and they are so deeply impressed upon my mind, and so inexpressibly dear to my heart, that I have effaced them, as I could not brook that they should ever minister to the happiness of another."

That Francis, egotist as he was, felt the tacit rebuke conveyed in these temperate and

uncomplaining words is certain, for the casket, with its mutilated contents, was once more restored to its rightful owner.

It is probable that Madame d'Alençon might still have made an effort to restore her friend to court, had she not been at this period too much engrossed by her own sorrows to find leisure for sympathy in those of others. On the 24th of January of the same year, (1527), she had, at the command of her brother, bestowed her hand upon Henri d'Albret II, the elder son of Jean, King of Navarre, and of Catherine de Foix, from whom Ferdinand of Aragon had wrested a portion of their states during the reign of Louis XII. The marriage took place at St. Germain-en-Laye; and in the contract Francis bound himself to summon the emperor to restore the usurped territories, and upon his refusal to do so, even engaged to regain them by force of arms; while he moreover assigned to the bride, as her dowry, the duchies of Alençon and Berri, the counties of Armagnac and Perche, and all the several lordships which she possessed, either in right of her first husband, or as her own personal appanage.

But once more the soul of Marguerite de Valois sickened at the tie by which she was bound; and sighed over the untimely fate of Charles de Bourbon, whose wife she had so lately hoped that she might yet become. The character of the young King of Navarre was ill suited to her own; with considerable personal bravery, and good intentions, he was weak, moody, irritable, and jealous. Like the Duke d'Alençon, he was unable to appreciate the shining qualities and high-heartedness of his bride; while the princess, worn out by mortification and disappointment, was less inclined than formerly either to conceal her feelings, or to put any constraint upon her tastes. Thus perpetual dissensions arose between them, which became subjects of court scandal, and more than once exacted the interference of Francis himself. In one pursuit alone the King and Queen of Navarre exhibited the same interest, and that one was in ameliorating the condition of their subjects; an attempt in which they were so successful that Marguerite soon became the idol of the people.

Two children were the issue of this ill-assorted union. Jean, the elder, died in 1530, at two years of age; and the second, born in 1529, was the illustrious and unhappy Jeanne d'Albret, the mother of Henry IV.

After, having invited to Bearn the most able agriculturists of France, and taught their peasantry the true value of the soil upon which they laboured, the two young sovereigns founded cities, and embellished the royal residences, especially the castle of Pau, which they moreover surrounded with magnificent gardens; and although Henri d'Albret never ultimately attempted to reconquer Navarre, owing to the impossibility of procuring from his royal brother-in-law the promised assistance, he took such wise precautions as enabled him to preserve the remainder of his kingdom from the encroachments of the emperor.

The court was held alternately at Pau and at Nerac, and rivalled that of France in wit and beauty, if not in splendour. The immediate circle of Marguerite herself was composed of the most lovely and the most intellectual women of the age, and of the handsomest and most gifted men. In her saloons were to be seen all the aristocracy of talent, all the nobility of intellect. Scholars, poets, musicians, and painters, were her courtiers; and graciously and royally did she repay their homage. Her valets-de-chambre were Clement Marot, Bonaventure des Periers, Claude Gruget, Antoine du Moulin, and Jean de la Haye; a galaxy in themselves, who won for her saloon the designation of *the real Parnassus*; and well did it deserve its name; for there every muse had its niche, and every altar its votary.

But while both art and literature were fostered and encouraged at the court of Bearn, they were not suffered to absorb all the energies of its inhabitants. The queen, whose inquiring spirit ever sought to penetrate into the new and the unknown, had been, as we have already shown,



strongly attracted by the religion of the Reformers; and among the philosophers whom she had drawn into her circle were many whose minds had been similarly influenced. To the arguments of these deep and earnest thinkers she accordingly lent a greedy ear, and she soon learnt to sympathize alike in their views, and in their hopes; while her enthusiasm was further excited by the pious eloquence of Roussel, Calvin, and Le Fèvre d'Étaples, who, while preaching the new doctrine, were themselves so thoroughly imbued by its truth as to carry conviction to their hearers.

Nor was the queen merely a passive convert to the Reformed faith. She caused the Latin prayers of the church to be translated into French, and even had the courage to place the missal in the hands of Francis himself, and to distribute it among the courtiers, by whom its use was adopted until condemned by the Sorbonne as heretical, and prohibited by a decree of Parliament. She, moreover, composed a mystical poem, entitled "The Mirror of the Sinful Soul"; but this also fell under the ban of the Sorbonne, and was only saved from annihilation by the express command of the king; while the rage of the students was excited to so unmeasured a degree by its appearance, that at the college of Navarre a mystery was enacted, in which the princess was represented under the character of a *Fury of Hell*; an exhibition of audacity which Francis resented by sending his archer-guard to arrest the culprits. Popular excitement had, however, reached its height, and the royal troops were driven back with violence and insult; nor was it until Marguerite herself became their advocate that the originators of the insult obtained their pardon.

So long as she had remained in France the princess had been compelled to act with a certain caution. She was aware that she had rendered herself unpopular by her leaning towards reform; and she feared the effect of her opinions upon the popularity of her brother; but she was no sooner established in her new kingdom, than she ceased to dissemble. She had, however, still much to contend against. Montmorenci had, on one occasion, when Francis was complaining of the disaffection of the Parisians, been bold enough to declare, that if his majesty really desired to restore peace to his capital by the extermination of the heretics, he would do well to commence with his courtiers, and with some who were even more nearly allied to him, particularly the Queen of Navarre his sister; but the indignant reply of the king convinced him that, upon this occasion, he had outrun his discretion; and the effect produced upon the mind of Marguerite herself when the conversation was repeated to her, was destined never to be effaced.

Even in her own little court at Bearn, moreover, she was fated to endure perpetual trial and disappointment. The pious and venerable D'Étaples expired almost in her presence at the age of 101 years, reproaching himself for not having remained in France, where he might have secured the crown of a martyr; while Calvin, Alarot, and other Reformers, who began to apprehend that from the increased feeling of hostility evinced towards their protectress, they were no longer in safety even at Pau, where Henri d'Albret had begun to exhibit symptoms of distaste both to their doctrines and their presence, prepared to pass into Piedmont.

Nor were they premature in their resolution, for Marot, whose vanity was more powerful than his religion, had so undisguisedly boasted of his favour with the queen, that the suspicious nature of Henri was aroused, and he reproached his wife with her levity of conduct in such unmeasured and insulting terms, that she was compelled to appeal to the authority and support of her brother; nor was it until he had so far forgotten his manhood and the dignity of his station as to lift his hand against her, that even Francis himself succeeded in protecting her from his violence.

Unstable as water, Henri of Navarre no sooner found himself powerless than he began to feel, or to affect, an interest in the opinions of his wife; and ere long she induced him to participate in her religious exercises; to read the Gospels, to assist in the Psalms, to listen to the sermons of the Reformed preachers, and even to receive the Sacrament, which was administered in a vault of the castle; but the conversion of the supple king was merely superficial, although it was so far

serviceable to his more earnest helpmate that it enabled her to pursue her spiritual career without impediment; and, accordingly, she multiplied her pious writings; and the same hand which produced the *Heptameron* was employed on hymns, and pious poems, and biblical dramas, which she caused to be represented by the professional actors at her court.

This imprudence, however, drew upon her the animosity of the Cardinals of Armagnac and Grammont, who expostulated warmly with Francis upon the indignity which she had thus offered to the Church of Rome; and their remonstrances were so powerful that the king found himself compelled to summon her to his presence, in order that she might justify her conduct. Marguerite obeyed upon the instant, and, attended by the Governor of Guinne, proceeded to Paris, where she was coldly and even sternly received by her brother; but she was too well aware of her influence to lose her courage, and she replied to his reproaches, say her historians, with such admirable tact and self-possession, that he declared himself convinced of her innocence of all bias towards Lutheranism, and refused to listen to the arguments of her accusers. Warned, nevertheless, by her peril, she from that moment avoided all public demonstration of her secession from the Romish Church, and contented herself by less ostentatious proofs of her conversion. She still maintained an uninterrupted correspondence with Calvin, and assisted Marot in his translation of the Psalms; but she observed the Romish ceremony of confession, attended mass, endowed hospitals, founded an asylum for orphans, and gave largely to the poor, under the auspices of the priests.

The position of Marguerite was a false one, alike in seeming and in spirit.

CHAPTER XI,

[1527-30.]

SHORTLY after the departure of Wolsey from France, Francis in his turn despatched an embassy to Henry VIII, to ratify in his name the treaty which had been concluded between the two powers; and to convey to him the Collar of St. Michael. Anne de Montmorenci, to whom the mission was entrusted, was accompanied by a number of the first nobles of the kingdom, and a body of six hundred horse; and was received at Dover by numerous prelates and men of rank, by whom he was accompanied to the capital. A guard of honour exceeding a thousand men formed his escort, and great crowds followed him to the very gates of the residence which had been prepared for his reception. Two days subsequently life was conducted to the castle of Greenwich where the king was then residing, and welcomed with regal magnificence, both by the monarch and his minister. A succession of brilliant entertainments were given; and the Princess Mary performed in several of the comedies which were enacted for the amusement of the French courtiers.

At the close of these royal festivities, the French envoys were conveyed in the state barges to the palace at Hampton-Court, which was at that period completed, and where they remained for several days, amazed and bewildered by a pomp, which outvied that of the king himself. Gorgeous services of plate, hangings of precious tapestry, mirrors of almost fabulous dimensions, and glorious works of art, crowded the interior of the building; while its immense extent, and graceful architecture, together with the spacious and elaborately designed gardens by which it was surrounded, with their stately terraces, numerous fountains, and the variety of foreign birds which peopled the gilded aviaries, excited their admiration, and increased their wonder. Hence they returned to Greenwich, where, after a farewell banquet, they took their leave of the king and the cardinal, leaving Jean de Bellay, Bishop of Bayonne, as the ambassador of Francis at the court of England.

On the 22d of January, 1528, Guienne, the French king-at-arms, and Clarencieux, who bore the same rank in England, each carrying his heraldic badge upon his left arm in order to assume it while uttering his defiance, presented themselves before the emperor at Burgos, who awaited their appearance in the midst of his barons; and having invoked, the immunities accorded to their office, they proceeded to read aloud their several declarations of war, which were, although firm and definitive, nevertheless couched in temperate and even courteous terms.

The emperor listened throughout in dignified but moody silence, never betraying either by word or gesture the slightest irritation or impatience; but the ceremony was no sooner concluded than he replied with scornful irony, that he could not comprehend how the King of France, who had made war upon him during six or seven years without any formal declaration to that effect, should now see fit to send him a defiance, when, as his prisoner, he was no longer free to do so; and instructed Guienne to remind his sovereign, that if he were, indeed, as tenacious of his honour as he would fain have it appear, he would do well to remember and reply to a message which he had sent to him two years previously through M. de Calvimont, his ambassador. The defiance of Henry VIII. he declared himself ready to accept, although he was aware that it had emanated from

the cardinal-legate, who had never forgiven him for not having, by force of arms, secured his elevation to the popedom, as both he and the king his master, at his instigation, had urged him to do. He then delivered to the two heralds his written replies to their respective sovereigns, That which was addressed to Francis was merely a recapitulation of their mutual misunderstanding, and the several negotiations into which they had entered; but the bitterness of feeling, and the jealous animosity which it betrayed, were well calculated ' to exasperate the proud spirit of the French king.

In reply to the defiance of Henry, and the reasons he advanced for the extreme step which he had taken, Charles reproached him with his intention of divorcing his aunt, Katherine of Aragon, and thus bastardizing his daughter Mary, to whom he was himself betrothed; and declared that little confidence could be placed in the zeal which the English monarch affected for the pope, when he thus disregarded the principles of religion.

The allusion to a message which he had never received, but which had been purposely withheld from him by his ambassador, who had shrunk from the invidious task of repeating to his royal master so gross an implication upon his honour, aroused the haughty nature of Francis; and he forthwith wrote to M. de Calvimont, who was still in Spain, demanding an immediate explanation. Calvimont was, however, too good a com-tier to commit himself; and he, consequently, affected to have forgotten the exact purport of the words addressed to him by the emperor, pleading the length of time which had elapsed since the interview} and wrote a respectful request to Charles himself, that he would repeat them, in order that he might be enabled to submit their purport to his sovereign. - -

The reply of the emperor was speedy and disdainful, lie had, he said, asserted upon that occasion, as he was still prepared to do, that the King of France had basely and wilfully violated the pledge which he had given at Madrid; and that, should he affect to deny that such was the case, he would maintain the truth of his accusation to his teeth, and with his sword. And, moreover, that he had then and there declared, that while Christian Europe was exposed to aggression on all sides, the sovereigns to whom were intrusted the lives and welfare of their subjects, had no right to involve them in merely personal quarrels, which might be better and more fitly terminated by their own individual prowess; an opinion which he still maintained.

On the receipt of this intelligence the exasperation of Francis exceeded all bounds; and in his first paroxysm of passion he caused Perenot de Grandvelle, the imperial ambassador, to be arrested, as Charles had previously done those of France and the other confederated powers; but on ascertaining that they had been again set at liberty, he revoked the order; and on the 28th of March gave him his farewell audience, in the presence of the assembled court.

On requesting a safe-conduct, the ambassador expressed his regret at the renewed misunderstanding that had arisen between the two countries; and while thanking the king for the consideration and courtesy which he had experienced during his sojourn in France, begged his majesty to pardon him, if, in the exercise of his duties, he had ever been unfortunate enough to incur his displeasure.

Francis replied by testifying his regret, that recent circumstances had compelled him to act with severity towards a person whom he so much esteemed, and whom he should always be ready to serve when occasion offered; and then, recurring to public business, he desired him to convey his answer to the challenge of the emperor.

From this dangerous service M. de Grandvelle however excused himself, alleging that his official functions had ceased; whereupon the king commanded Robertet, the secretary of state, to read aloud the cartel which he had caused to be drawn up.

This document was at once unkingly and undignified. Passion had supplanted alike prudence and courtesy in its compilation. It evinced no trace of the chivalrous feeling upon which the French monarch prided himself, but betrayed a coarse and bitter violence that was ill suited to the exalted rank of the writer:—"If you have sought to charge us", ran one passage; "with having acted towards you in any way unbecoming to a man of honour, we say that you have lied in your throat; and that each time you repeat it, you will lie. Being resolved to defend our honour so long as we have life, and having been by you falsely accused, henceforward we shall write to you no more; you have only to name the place, and we will meet you in arms."

Nor was even its coarseness the only reproach which must be visited upon the cartel of Francis, for it is certain that he condescended to a quibble where he elsewhere remarked:—"You have accused us, by declaring that we had pledged our faith, and that in default of that pledge we withdrew from your custody and power". An assertion which he must have been aware could never have been made by the emperor, who had publicly recognised his conditional departure from his dominions.

Charles V was not slow to detect the imprudence of which his adversary had been guilty; for after having in his reply specified the bank of the Bidassoa as the place of meeting, he remarked in allusion to this accusation:—"Such words were never uttered by us; we never pretended to have received your pledge not to leave Spain, but only your promise that you would again return according to our prescribed agreement; and had you done so, you would not have been wanting either to your children or to your honour. The spot which I have named"; he added with cold sarcasm; "must be familiar to you, as it was there I restored you to liberty, and received your children at your hands as pledges for the performance of the treaty which you have so shamefully violated. You can advance no reasonable objection to such a place of meeting, as it is equally the boundary of both kingdoms; a single second on each side shall make the necessary preparations, and select the weapons; and if you indeed value your honour, you can no longer advance any pretext for failing to keep the appointment."

Charged with this missive, a herald-at-arms was at once despatched to France by the emperor; who was so far from apprehending that his adversary would evade the duel which he had himself provoked, that he applied to the celebrated Balthasar Castiglione, the author of *Cortegiano*, to become his second; and, in order to induce his compliance, forwarded to him a copy of the treaty of Madrid, to convince him of the justice of his cause.

The precaution was, however, unnecessary; for, from some cause of which even the panegyrists of Francis can give no explanation, every expedient that could be invented to delay the progress of the imperial herald was resorted to. He was detained at Fontarabia by the nonarrival of his safe-conduct; the governor of Bayonne, after having inquired whether he were the bearer of the emperor's reply to the cartel of the king, and authorized to name the place of meeting, and received an affirmative answer, affected to suspect that his mission had some ulterior object, and refused to furnish him with a passport until he should receive an order to that effect from the sovereign.

Burgundy (the herald) had reached Fontarabia on the 31st of June, and was detained there upon the most frivolous pretexts until the 17th of August, when his safe-conduct was at length delivered to him, accompanied by an autograph letter, in which Francis reprovved the governor for having impeded his entrance into France. Once furnished with this important document, Burgundy lost no time in journeying to Etampes, which he reached on the 7th of September; but on his arrival there he was met by Guienne, who informed him that the king was hunting at Montfort d'Amaury, and that he had received an order to conduct him to Longjumeau, where he would be apprised of the day upon which the monarch would receive his message.

At Longjumeau he was again detained for several days, until, becoming indignant at the contemptuous neglect shown to his imperial master, he insisted upon proceeding forthwith to the capital, whither Francis had removed. He accordingly set forth, still accompanied by the French herald; but on arriving at the gates of the city, Guienne insisted upon his removing the tabard which he wore, and on which were blazoned the arms of the province of Burgundy. The imperial herald, however, peremptorily refused to make any such concession, declaring that it involved the dignity of his sovereign, who claimed the said province as a portion of his territories; upon which Guienne skilfully attempted to excite his fears, by declaring that his personal safety was involved in an exhibition which would be regarded by the populace as a premeditated insult alike to the king and to the nation.

To this representation Burgundy haughtily replied, that he was ready to incur any danger which might ensue; and as the French herald soon became convinced that further opposition would be useless, the imperial envoy was at length permitted to enter the city in his official garb, and at once conducted to the presence of the king, who had assembled about him in the hall of the palace all the princes of the blood, the prelates, and the great officers of state.

A cloud was on the brow of Francis, and a red spot had risen to his cheek which betrayed his irritation; nor did he suffer the herald to complete his obeisance, ere he haughtily demanded if he were come to fix the place of combat.

“Sire”; was the respectful but firm rejoinder; “I entreat your majesty to permit me to perform the duties of my office, and to deliver the message with which I have been entrusted by my imperial master.”

“I will hear nothing, Sir, until you have replied to my question”; exclaimed the king vehemently. “Give me the letter of the emperor, and then you may harangue as long as you see fit to do so.”

“Sire”; said Burgundy, with a composure which only tended to increase the violence of Francis; “my orders were first to read the cartel, and afterwards to deliver it”. And, unfolding the letter as he spoke, he commenced in a loud firm tone—“His Most Sacred Majesty”—but he was not suffered to proceed further: the passion of the king could no longer be controlled, and springing from his seat, he struck his hand violently upon the hilt of his dagger, as he shouted in an imperious tone—“How now, Sir? Does your master seek to prescribe new laws to me in my own kingdom, and to introduce new customs at my court? Is this some fresh trick of his cunning? Give me the cartel, or leave the presence as you came. I will not listen to another sentence until you have declared the place of combat.”

Alarmed by the intemperate bearing of the king, Montmorenci made an effort to calm his anger, but he was instantly silenced; upon which Burgundy respectfully requested that as his majesty declined to afford him an opportunity of fulfilling his mission, he might receive that refusal in writing, and a passport to Spain..

“Let both be furnished to him forthwith” was the immediate retort of Francis, as he turned away; and after a second obeisance, more deliberate and more profound than that which he had made upon his entrance, the imperial herald withdrew.

Two days afterwards he received his safe-conduct, and a document which purported to be a report of the interview; but which on perusal he declined to accept, declaring that it conveyed no impression of the violent conduct of the king, and that his own replies had been garbled. As no attention was, however, paid to his objections, he left Paris on the 16th of September, and returned to Spain to report to Charles V the issue of his mission.

Thus absurdly terminated an affair which had excited the attention and anxiety of all Europe; and in which it will be at once apparent that the King of France had forfeited all claim to his pretensions as the most chivalric monarch of Christendom. That he was constitutionally brave there can be no doubt, but it is nevertheless certain that many a gallant soldier, would make but a sorry duellist; and that in provoking a personal conflict Francis had miscalculated his own strength. A dangerous example had, meanwhile, been afforded to the more hot-headed of the nobility, who thenceforth began to decide all their differences by single combat; a pernicious fashion, which obtained so greatly throughout France, that even the edicts which were during several subsequent reigns fulminated against it, failed to effect its suppression; while it spread by degrees over the whole of Europe, and has not to the present day ceased to be recognised, although the strong arm of ridicule has, in a great degree, robbed it of its prestige.

Charles, on his side, made no efforts to revenge the affront offered to himself in the person of his herald, but quietly suffered the whole proceeding to fall into oblivion; nor did either of the hostile sovereigns, confirmed as their hatred had now become, display any increase of vigour in their warlike operations.

Lautrec, despite the jealousy of the Italian states, had been eminently successful in the Milanese, and had, by his interference, compelled the emperor into a capitulation with the pope, who, after making sundry concessions, again saw himself at liberty, and took up his abode at Orvieto, where he once more offered his services as mediator between the belligerent parties; while the Count de St. Pol after retaking Pavia, was suddenly paralysed in his operations, as all the former generals of Francis had previously been, by the failure of supplies.

A still more important check was, moreover, given to the French arms by the alienation of Andrea Doria, who had so essentially served France throughout the wars, but who at length became indignant at the neglect and injustice by which he had been requited, and transferred, his allegiance to the emperor. His first exploit against his late allies was the maritime defence and revictualling of Naples, which was besieged by Lautrec; in whose camp the plague was at that critical juncture making fearful ravages, thinning his ranks daily, and carrying off many of his ablest officers. As the Genoese galleys appeared in the bay, and he ascertained that they were commanded by his old friend and companion in arms, the Marechal was made painfully aware of the error committed by his sovereign in so wilfully disregarding the value of such an ally; but like a brave man he only redoubled his exertions; and even when himself attacked by the pestilence, persisted in visiting the hospitals, and encouraging the troops with assurances that their monarch would not suffer them to remain long exposed to such a complication of dangers without affording them help.

And Lautrec was sincere when he thus addressed them; for he believed firmly and loyally that Francis would never sacrifice, by a negligence at once heartless and impolitic, the advantages which had been so dearly earned; and strong in this conviction he refused to raise the siege, even when the increased virulence of the disease confined him to his bed. Still the plague decimated his troops, and still the promised reinforcements failed; when, amid the paroxysms of his agony, suspecting that he was wilfully deceived by those about him, who declared that the epidemic had ceased its ravages, he privately questioned two of his pages, whose reluctance to reveal the truth he overcame by a threat that they should be scourged to death if they attempted to misrepresent it; and learned that the camp was one wide scene of terror and despair; that the water-springs had been poisoned, and that the grain was similarly infected which was brought in by the peasants.

Already debilitated by the fearful disease under which he was suffering, and overcome by the terrible tidings of the trembling youths, the Marechal, clasped his hands upon his forehead for a moment, and then, uttering a deep groan, sank back, and instantly expired.

The fact was no sooner ascertained than the siege was raised; and the army, under the command of the Marquis de Saluzzo, retired to Averso; but, during the retreat, Pietro da Navarro was made prisoner, and Saluzzo himself so severely wounded that he was compelled to capitulate. All the fortresses which had been taken by the French in the Neapolitan territories were surrendered, and both Navarro and Saluzzo died of their wounds.

The Count de Saint Pol, in the spring of the following year, (1529,) was equally unfortunate in the Milanese; and after a protracted struggle, during which he narrowly escaped being taken by the enemy, his army was totally routed, and once more Italy was entirely Evacuated by the French.

Europe was at this period weary of warfare. The several nations were exhausted by a struggle in which neither had triumphed. The treasury of the emperor was as empty as that of his rival. Their subjects were alike crushed to the earth by taxation, and sickened by disappointment. Italy could no longer be made the granary whence each drew the necessary provisions for a large body of armed men, for years of extortion and tyranny had made her fertile plains desolate, and her prolific valleys barren; and both potentates were consequently compelled to maintain at least a semblance of peace, which afforded breathing time to their respective kingdoms.

The pope, satisfied that he could no longer anticipate any effectual aid from France, and aware that he was too weak to contend against the emperor without extraneous support, made proposals of peace, which were accepted by Charles V, and the treaty was ratified at Barcelona on the 29th of June; while Francis, whose recent discomfiture in Italy had convinced him that he must fail in an attempt to liberate his sons by force of arms, no sooner ascertained the existence of this treaty than he resolved, if possible, to effect his object by more pacific measures; and, accordingly, entered into negotiations, by which it was subsequently determined that Louise de Savoie on his own part, and Marguerite d'Autriche on that of the emperor, should meet at Cambray, and arrange the conditions upon which the French princes were to obtain their release. The 7th of July was the day appointed for the meeting of the two princesses, who, by the marriage of the Governante of the Low Countries (then a widow) with Philibert II, Duke of Savoy, had become sisters-in-law.

Each of the female diplomatists was fully equal to the task which had thus devolved upon her. The duchess mother had, since the accession of her son, been the actual sovereign of France, and could act without fear of contradiction or dissent, whatever might be the measures which she saw fit to adopt; while Marguerite, who, as it may be remembered, had been educated at the French court, and betrothed to Charles VIII, was not only a woman of extreme tact and intelligence, but was also well acquainted with the prejudices and feelings of the country which had so long been her home; and possessed the entire confidence of the emperor her cousin.

On their arrival at Cambray, the two princesses were lodged in contiguous houses; but not content with this arrangement, and anxious to confer together without interruption, they caused a communication to be opened between their respective dwellings, in order that they might meet at all hours without witnesses, or the irksome ceremonial attendant upon an official conference. The prudence and judgment of this measure soon became manifest, for, thus released from the conflicting arguments of interested individuals, they were enabled to effect a peace, which was, owing to their agency, known as *La Paix des Dames*. Equally anxious to effect their object, they made mutual concessions; and on the 5th of August the articles were drawn up and the treaty signed by both parties : the duchess-mother agreeing on the part of her son, that he should relinquish Artois and Flanders to the emperor; withdraw his claim to Italy; espouse without further delay the Queen Eleonora; and secure to their male issue the contested duchy of Burgundy, he was, moreover, to pay, as ransom-money for the young princes, the sum of two millions of golden crowns, and to discharge the debt of the Emperor to England, as well as to reverse the attainder of the Duke de Bourbon; to authorize the succession of his heirs, and to reinstate in their



possessions all the French subjects who had been involved in his rebellion; while Charles, on his part, was engaged to recognise the claim of Francis to the duchy of Burgundy, with the solitary exception of Charolois, which was to remain the property of Madame Marguerite, and was, after her demise, to become a lifetenure of the emperor, at whose death it was again to revert to the French crown.

The characters of the two contracting parties were strikingly exhibited in this treaty. In renouncing Italy no attempt was made on the part of Louise de Savoie to secure favourable terms for the states of Florence and Venice, which had during so long a period been the faithful allies of France; but on the contrary, she engaged that, within the space of four months, the former should swear allegiance to the emperor, and the latter make restitution of all the territory of which they had possessed themselves within the kingdom of Naples; or, in default of such restitution, be compelled by force of arms to fulfil the obligation. The interests of the Duke de Gueldres were also abandoned, as well as those of Robert de la Mark; and, in fine, the king was pledged to desert all his allies upon his northern frontier, not even excepting Henri of Navarre, the husband of his sister. Thus, the brave men who had shared his dangers, and to whom he owed the success of many a well-fought field, were recklessly left to the mercy of the sovereign against whom they had so often appeared in arms while Marguerite d'Autriche refused to accede to every suggestion which threatened to involve the safety of the emperor's foreign adherents, and made the restitution of Bourbon's honour one of the salient features of the treaty.

Nor was the humiliation to which Francis was thus subjected confined to these ignoble concessions; for, after the publication of the treaty, when Montmorenci was despatched to the Spanish frontier with the money necessary to ransom the young princes, it was discovered that the Chancellor Duprat had further disgraced his royal master, by endeavouring to defraud the emperor both in the weight and value of the specie destined for that purpose. This false dealing was, however, at once detected, and the mortified and indignant Marechal found himself compelled to delay his errand until the deficiency was supplied.

The exchange was then effected precisely as that of Francis himself had previously been. From the Spanish bank of the Bidassoa the Queen of Portugal, accompanied by the dauphin and his brother, and attended by the Constable of Castile and her personal suite, embarked at the same moment that Montmorenci left the shore of Navarre with the sealed cases containing the treasure. The several parties then ascended the barge which was moored in the centre of the stream, where the queen, having taken leave of her escort, entered the boat which was awaiting her, and landed in France with the princes. M. de Montpezat was then despatched to inform the king of her arrival, who was awaiting the intelligence at Bordeaux, and who immediately set forth to meet her. The interview took place in the convent of Verrieres, near Mont-de-Marsan, where Francis, having briefly welcomed his betrothed wife, withdrew with his sons, in order that she might be enabled to prepare herself for their marriage, which was celebrated on the morrow an hour before dawn, with a haste and absence of all attempt at magnificence, strangely at variance with the usual habits of the French court.

At the close of the ceremony the royal bride was conducted to her litter, and the bridal train entered Bordeaux, whence they proceeded by Coignac, Amboise, and Blois, to St. Germain-en-Laye, where they sojourned during the necessary preparations for the coronation of the queen, and her solemn entry into the city of Paris; which events took place, the first on the 5th of March, at St. Denis, and the second on the 15th of the same month, when she at length received the honours due to her distinguished rank.

Once more the palace of the Tournelles and the villa of the Tuileries were loud with festivity. Banquets and tournaments succeeded each other by day, while balls and receptions occupied the night hours. The royal saloons blazed with jewels, and beamed with beauty; illuminated barges

rode on the ripple of the Seine, and invisible musicians made one wide orchestra of the lamp-lit gardens; the citizens, delighted to find themselves once more in security, welcomed their new queen as the visible earnest of their safety ; and the same nobles who had knelt in homage before the meek and sainted Claude were now equally assiduous in striving to obtain the smiles of her successor.

But even amid all the splendour by which she was surrounded, the queen could not conceal her melancholy. She had been deeply wounded by the nature of her reception in France, incompatible as it was with all the rumours which had reached her of the gallantry and magnificence of her enforced bridegroom; but, although stung by the indignity to which she had been subjected, she had felt little surprise; as even during his captivity at Madrid, Francis had exhibited towards her a marked coldness, that appeared intended to prepare her for the neglect to which she would be consigned after her marriage. Nor had her presentiment been unfounded; for although he never violated the respect due to her as Queen of France, his indifference was, even at this early period, so undisguised, and his levity so unrestrained, that she experienced a sense of desolation even when she formed the centre of a crowd. Still her Spanish pride upheld her; and if at times the tears swelled unbidden, she drove them back, and assumed a composure that she was far from feeling. But moments were not wanting in which all her indignation was aroused; and one of these occurred even in the midst of the festivities consequent upon her coronation.

At her first official reception she occupied the centre of the dais, having the duchess-mother on her right hand, and the Queen of Navarre, who had come to France to welcome her, upon her left; while the king, who should have afforded her the support of his presence, was engaged in an animated conversation with Madame d'Etampes; who, stiff with brocade, and sparkling with jewels, was standing negligently near a window, and turning at intervals a curious and almost contemptuous glance towards her new sovereign. At length, however, the name of the favourite was announced by the Mistress of the Household, and she advanced to the step of the dais with the mien and deportment of an empress; but Eleonora had already comprehended her position, and outraged by an audacity for which she had been unprepared, instead of presenting her hand as the proud duchess knelt before her, she suddenly turned her head aside, and entered into conversation with the Queen of Navarre, leaving the arrogant beauty to retire at her leisure. For a moment even Anne de Pisseleu felt embarrassed; but she quickly recovered her self-possession; and as she rose slowly from her knee, she murmured in a tone sufficiently audible to reach the ear of the queen: "Ha! is it so? You disdain to offer me your hand. It is to be a trial of strength between us, and I accept the challenge. Your husband shall revenge me."

And that he did so there can exist no doubt; for his excessive passion for the artful favourite had blinded him to her vices. Already had she taught him that her love was to be retained only by an entire devotion; and even while he suffered her to become the arbiter of his own actions, she betrayed him with a recklessness as bold as it was degrading. Nothing, moreover, could satisfy her rapacity; and while distress, which amounted almost to famine, oppressed the lower classes of the citizens, she greedily seized upon every opportunity of enriching herself and aggrandizing her family.

It is curious to trace the extent to which she succeeded in effecting the latter object, and the digression will accordingly be pardoned. Within a few years her maternal uncle, Antoine Sanguin, became the Abbot of Fleury-sur-Loire, Bishop of Orleans, a cardinal, and Archbishop of Toulouse; Charles, her elder brother, was made Abbot of Bourgueil and Bishop of Condom; Francis, the second, received the Abbey of Saint Corneille de Compiègne, and the bishopric of Amiens; and William, the youngest, was elevated to the see of Pamiers. Nor were her sisters forgotten; two of them became the abbesses of wealthy convents, and the other three were married into the noble families of Barbançon-Cauny, Chabot-Jarnac, and Vertus. Numerous, also, were the cousins and distant connexions for whom she provided no less liberally; and as is ever the case with individuals

suddenly aggrandized, their ramifications were ere long endless; nor did one of them, even although many were as we have shown in holy orders, hesitate for a moment to profit by her disgrace.

One merit must, however, be conceded to Anne de Pisseleu; and as throughout her whole career we have been unable to trace any other good quality which she possessed, it cannot be passed over in silence. Educated highly for the period, she loved study for its own sake, and afforded protection to men of letters; although it must be admitted that, wherever her passions or her vanity were brought into play, she abandoned them and their interests without hesitation or scruple. Nevertheless, it is certain that she co-operated, not only willingly, but even zealously, with the king in attracting to the court of France all the distinguished talent of Europe; and was moreover able to appreciate the excellence of which it soon became the focus. But the ostentation with which she assumed to herself the attitude of a patroness was calculated to arouse the indignation of the queen, who witnessed with suppressed but deep displeasure this usurpation of her privileges.

It was not long, indeed, ere the unhappy Eleonora discovered that she was a mere cypher at her husband's court. It was true that when she was seen in public on the occasion of some gorgeous procession to St. Denis or Notre Dame, attired in velvet and cloth of gold, and sparkling with jewels, the delighted populace lustily shouted Noël for their stately queen; but this empty and boisterous homage was the only tribute offered to her exalted rank. The courtiers had little time beyond that exacted by the strict ceremonial of the court to spare to one so powerless; and as it had been the pleasure of her royal husband that she should dismiss the greater number of her Spanish attendants, her solitude was seldom invaded save by the young princes, the two elder of whom had become sincerely attached to her during their detention at Madrid; an affection which she returned with equal warmth. Of these the dauphin was her peculiar favourite; for, young as he was, his calm, self-possessed, and temperate disposition was almost Spanish in its character, and she never feared from him the wild and ungoverned sallies into which his younger brothers were occasionally betrayed.

Isolated as she was, however, Eleonora scorned to complain; and, although she ill brooked the insults to which she was daily subjected, she uttered no remonstrance. By slow degrees she withdrew herself from the

more public circles of the court, and, as the unhappy Claude, her predecessor, had previously done, she sought in works of piety to stifle the murmurs of her heart. Often as she sat at her open casement she watched with swimming eyes the gorgeous litter of the favourite, with its draperies of pale blue velvet, and its train of pages, as it issued from the palace gates with almost regal pomp; but not even to her mother-in-law, who, from motives of policy, treated her with a courtesy for which she was in a great degree indebted to the fact of her utter powerlessness to thwart her measures, or to undermine her influence, did she venture to complain of the insolence under which she writhed.

CHAPTER VII.

[1530-31.]

THE pacification of Europe once more enabled Francis I to turn his attention to the internal economy of his kingdom, and to revert to his original project of establishing a royal college; for which purpose he invited to his court the most learned men of the age, to whom he offered the several professorships, with each a magnificent stipend. In addition to the eminent scholars to whom we have elsewhere alluded, a number of the Italian literati, who had been proscribed by the emperor for the share which they had taken in the late wars, found a ready and an honourable refuge under his protection. Among these illustrious exiles was Luigi Alamanni, a Florentine poet, who soon became so great a favourite of the king as to be not only admitted to his intimacy, but even employed upon several embassies; Bruto, the Florentine historian; Niccolo dell'Abbate; and Rosso del Rosso, who, in conjunction with Primaticcio, executed the paintings and statues of the palace of Fontainebleau; Tagliacarno, who became the preceptor of his sons, and upon whom he bestowed the bishopric of Grasse; and a number of other celebrated scholars, as well as a crowd of capitalists, merchants, and craftsmen, who established themselves in France, and exercised in their adopted country those talents to which her manufactories have since been indebted for their superiority.

Nor was it only to foreigners that Francis proved himself a munificent patron; for, excited by the encouragement suddenly held out throughout Europe to every species of science and scholarship, and anxious to secure the success of his new foundation by placing it under the supervision of the most learned men of the time, he spared no pains in collecting about him, and in conciliating the friendship of, every individual in France who had by his erudition rendered himself worthy of such a distinction.

Francis was not, however, singular in this laudable ambition, for all Europe, wearied of war, had simultaneously adopted the same taste. In Italy, even the political convulsions to which the country had been subjected, had failed to quench the thirst for knowledge; and thus her scholars, her artists, her sculptors, and her architects were the most celebrated in the world, and were competent to teach where others were only beginning to learn. In Florence especially, every species of art and every branch of literature had attained to marvellous perfection; and now, when diplomacy and warfare had ceased to engross the minds of the European sovereigns, each became desirous to render his court celebrated by the presence of the learned. England, France, and Germany, at length aware of the importance of intellectual cultivation, vied with each other in their efforts to accomplish this desirable end; and thus the painter's easel, the scholar's desk, and the sculptor's studio were soon established within the walls of palaces, hitherto inaccessible to such occupants.

Fortunately for Francis, the Italian refugees with few exceptions turned towards France, of which they had so long been the allies; while even in his own kingdom he possessed many men of eminence, to whom he had shown favour from the very commencement of his reign. Foremost among these were the three noble brothers, Du Bellay, Budé, Guillaume Petit, his confessor, Cope, his physician, Duchatel, Pillicier, Danes, De Selve, and many other men of mark, who soon obtained for him the reputation which he coveted

It was principally to encourage the study of the classics that Francis had conceived the idea of the royal college, of which it may be remembered that he had offered the presidency to Erasmus so early as the year 1517; but, notwithstanding his great anxiety to cultivate this essential branch of knowledge, he had contented himself with selecting the site of the building, which was to be sufficiently capacious to accommodate six hundred students, and then suffered himself to be dissuaded by the remonstrances of the chancellor Duprat, who being a man totally without erudition, and consequently unable to appreciate its value, represented to him the impolicy of diverting the public monies from their legitimate uses in order to foster a love of enlightenment which might tend to interfere with higher objects.

It is probable that this narrow-sighted view of the case was not without its effect upon the mind of the king; for even in 1530, the period upon which we are now engaged, Francis, after having elected the several professors, left them dependent upon the University, without either a hall of study, a corporation, or even any security for the payment of their salary; nor was erection of the edifice even commenced until eight years after his death.

That the insinuation of the crafty Duprat had not failed in its effect is moreover made apparent by the sudden distaste evinced by the king to his darling project, so soon as he discovered that as the study of the ancient languages obtained among the learned, so did the tenets of reform gain ground, and the exasperation of the monks become uncontrollable.

Tor a time, however, he continued to exhibit the same friendship for the studious and the scientific as ever; and refused to abandon their interests at the instigation of the sensual and indolent communities who suddenly beheld all their darling prejudices threatened, and all their ignorance revealed, by the new flood of light which was pouring in upon them; and whose only resource was to raise the cry of heresy, and to fulminate alike against the reformed scholars and their protectors all the thunders of the church.

The truth, nevertheless, made way; and the same opinions which only twelve years before had been promulgated in Germany, spread themselves steadily over France, and became widely diffused among that portion of the people, perhaps of all others the best calculated to insure their ultimate triumph. We allude to the lower classes—not only of the cities, where the mere desire to free themselves from a priestly thralldom of which they had become weary, doubtlessly urged many to espouse the new doctrines—but also of the villages; for the purity, the peace, and the simplicity of the reformed tenets spoke to the hearts and the convictions of those whose reason had been bewildered, and whose faith had been enfeebled, by the mysterious superstitions of their fathers. And while the good work was thus progressing among the humble and the unlearned, it made itself felt also among the more intelligent of the citizens, who could not remain blind to the vices and excesses of a depraved and grasping priesthood, whose habits of life, and whose modes of teaching, were alike repugnant to good sense and good feeling.

No wonder then, that when the learned began to examine and to compare the two systems, a general alarm pervaded the whole body of the Romish church; for although many of them still, remained within the pale of their original religion, yet all, without exception, expressed an equal disgust at the ignorance and imposture of the monks. Among the number of those who still nominally adhered to their ancient faith, while they were, in point of fact, rapidly undermining its foundations, may be mentioned the celebrated Rabelais, who, after having abandoned a monastic life for the profession of medicine, became the physician of the Cardinal du Bellay during his sojourn at Rome as the ambassador of Francis; and published in the year 1533 his novel of “Pantagruel”, and in 1535 that of “Gargantua”, in both of which he attacked with unequalled audacity alike the religion that he professed and the civil authority to which he was subservient. But while he thus overwhelmed, with a pungency of ridicule at once impious and indecent, the abuses to which no one was more keenly Alive than himself, he was nevertheless too worldly-wise

to withdraw from beyond the pale of a church which he was enabled to render subservient to his interests; and despite all his offences against religion and morality, he ultimately died prebendary of Saint Maur-des-Fossés, and curate of Meudon.

In like manner Clement Marot, the poet, although he rejected for a time the Romish tenets, did not hesitate on two distinct occasions to return to them; not, as in the case of Rabelais, from motives of self-interest, but from causes still more degrading; for even while, in his first enthusiasm for the reformed faith, he abandoned the composition of worldly poetry in order to translate the Psalms, he could not, or sought not to control the licentiousness of his nature; and finding the restraints imposed by his adopted creed alike inconvenient and embarrassing, unblushingly recurred to his old professions in order to pursue the libertine habits to which he was addicted. Erasmus, although less reprehensible in his motives, was equally inconsistent in his conduct; for while he pursued the Romish clergy with unsparing sarcasm, he refused to abandon the observances of their church.

Many there were, however, who having conscientiously and sincerely attached themselves to Protestantism, were true even to the death, and scaled their convictions by enduring with unflinching and heroic firmness the agonies of martyrdom.

Among those observances of the Romish church against which the people had first openly revolted was that of image-worship; and so early as the year 1525, a woolcomber, named Jean le Clerc, a native of Meaux, had carried his zeal so far as to destroy several figures of saints; for which sacrilegious offence he was publicly whipped, branded with a hot iron, and subsequently burned at the stake. This event however created little sensation beyond the city in which it occurred; nor was it until in 1528 a discovery was made in the capital that an effigy of the Virgin in the Rue des Rosiers had been torn from its niche, defaced, and dragged through the mud of the street, that Francis abandoned the cause of the Reformers.

But even then it was rather from policy, than from any religious scruple, that he did so. The state of Paris had already been, as we have shown, sufficiently alarming; and this new and open violation of the law threatened an increase of the evil. Jealous of his authority, the king began to regard the Lutherans with a suspicious eye; and while he had tranquilly permitted their attacks upon the church, he at once resented their presumed defiance of himself. Moreover, Francis, although destitute of religion, was as superstitious as the most ignorant of his subjects. Like them he had witnessed rather with satisfaction than annoyance the persecutions to which the clergy had been subjected by their new opponents, but, also like them, he held in reverence the ancient symbols of the faith which he professed; and thus, in order at once to appease the murmurs of the populace, and to tranquillize his own misgivings, he caused a statue of silver of the same dimensions as that which had been destroyed to be erected in the same spot, and himself walked in procession, attended by his whole court, to witness the ceremony of its installation.

The next care was to discover the authors of the outrage; but failing in this attempt, he turned the whole tide of his wrath upon the Lutherans as a body, declaring that the profanation which had been committed must have originated with them; and the first evidence which he gave of his determination to sacrifice every other consideration to that of maintaining his personal authority, was afforded by the re-arrest of Louis de Berguin, who had some time previously been denounced, to the Sorbonne by their syndic, and imprisoned in the dungeons of the college; whence he had been liberated by the express order of the king, and restored to liberty.

Now, however, although no further accusation had been brought against him, the unhappy student was once more consigned to a prison, and put upon his trial before twelve commissaries of the parliament, who, anxious to conciliate at once the church and the sovereign, after a hurried investigation condemned him to witness the public burning of all his writings in the Place de

Grève; to make the amende honorable, to abjure his heretical opinions on the same spot, and afterwards to have his tongue pierced by a hot iron, and to suffer perpetual imprisonment. Without comment upon the remainder of his sentence, Berguin positively refused to utter the abjuration, and forthwith appealed both to the king and the pope; upon which the commissaries, by an abuse of power alike unprecedented and arbitrary, denounced his appeal as a new offence, and revoking their former award, condemned him to be burnt alive ; an iniquitous sentence which was actually carried into effect on the 22d of April, 1529, without any effort on the part of Francis to save the victim from so cruel and unmerited a fate.

The death of Berguin was succeeded by a general persecution of the Reformists. At Toulouse the tribunal of the Inquisition condemned no less than thirty-two Lutherans to punishments of different degrees of severity; including imprisonment for life, confiscation of property, and death at the stake. At Lyons they were treated with equal harshness; while at Bourges they were judged and sentenced with similar severity, and even confounded with sorcerers and magicians in order to excite against them the indignation and hatred of the populace; and at the same time the chancellor convened a council in the capital, which included all the bishops of the diocese of Sens, in which the doctrines of Luther were not only condemned, but all the princes of Christendom were exhorted to assist in the extermination of his disciples.

Neither genius nor scholarship longer availed to save the suspected; and Francis, who had so recently arrogated to himself the proud title of Protector of Letters, looked coldly on while some of the noblest spirits and brightest intellects of his kingdom were quenched in the unholy flames of bigotry and superstition.

In vain had Marguerite of Navarre pleaded for mercy; in vain had she represented the irreparable injury which the king was inflicting, not only upon Europe at large by thus impeding the growth of knowledge, but even upon his own fame, by affording his sanction to enormities so monstrous; her warning whispers were silenced by the sterner voice of Louise de Savoie; who, having by a transition rapid and easy at that period abandoned her former licentious pursuits for a violent and ostentatious display of religious fervour, and resolved to second the selfish designs of her favourite and confidant, Duprat, (who on his side was eager to conciliate the clergy, and to purchase oblivion for the excesses of the past,) urged him on to acts of rigour and injustice as impolitic as they were cruel.

Such was the real patronage afforded by Francis I to men of letters: alternately his idols and his victims, he suffered them to minister to his vanity, to celebrate his greatness, to record his victories, and to throw a halo of refinement and civilization over his court; while they were not only forbidden to worship the Eternal and the True according to the dictates of their own hearts, but were even subjected to the most odious persecution, and to the most painful and ignominious death, for presuming to eschew bigotry and error, and to work out the salvation of their own souls.

In the darker ages king Robert had indeed punished religious schism by the stake, and Saint Louis had followed the fearful example of his predecessor; but since the death of the latter monarch, the law, although still unannulled, had never been put into force, and was forgotten when it was thus revived by Francis I. Even his panegyrist Brantôme is compelled to admit that "it was he who first led the way to the burning of heretics". A melancholy fact to record against a Christian king; and one, moreover, who affected an earnest zeal to promote civilization and general enlightenment.

Meanwhile the tranquillity of Europe was far from being so well assured as it appeared; and although the late lingering and costly wars had exhausted the resources of both Charles V and Francis, there were many reasons which co-operated against a lengthened peace. To say nothing of the mutual jealousy that existed between the two monarchs, each had legitimate causes for

discontent which neither was likely to overlook; nor were there wanting bold and adventurous spirits about the persons of both sovereigns, who sought to fan the smouldering embers of their old hatred into a new and fiercer flame.

To the emperor it was represented that Francis, whose pride he had humbled, and whose vanity he had wounded, would never forgive the humiliations entailed upon him by the treaty of Cambray; but would eagerly seize the first opportunity to recover by violence the territories of which he had been deprived; and that should he succeed in once more rendering himself master of the Milanese, he would not fail to extend his conquests to Naples and Sicily. In order to avert this calamity it was suggested by the counsellors of Charles that he should invest Francisco Sforza with the duchy of Milan, by which measure he would not only secure to himself a large amount of money, but would also conciliate the other Italian states, who would necessarily welcome this restoration as a guarantee against the invasion of a monarch of whom past experience had rendered them suspicious, and even against the authority of the emperor himself, whose power was too formidable and overwhelming to admit of their feeling secure under his rule; while by inducing the other princes of Italy to enter into a league with Sforza, of whom they could entertain no jealousy, he would become possessed of allies all the more valuable that they were thus divorced from the cause of France.

Many other similar arguments were adduced which were not without their influence upon the mind of Charles V, who had already been urged to reinstate Sforza in the sovereignty of the duchy alike by the pope and the Venetian senate. Shortly after the peace he had visited Italy with great pomp, and effected his reconciliation with the pontiff, towards whom he had evinced a respect and regard which were wholly incompatible with his former bearing; and who met him in the same spirit, being anxious to secure the support of so powerful an ally in his meditated vengeance upon the Florentines, by whom the Medici, his relatives, and all their adherents had been driven from their territories.

The re-establishment of his family was accordingly one of the principal articles of the treaty between the two potentates insisted upon by the pope. Alessandro de' Medici was to be reinstated in the government of Florence; Ravenna, Modena, and Reggio were to be restored to the holy see; and the emperor was pledged not only to assist Clement against the Duke of Ferrara, but also to aid him in restoring the power and splendour of the church, which had been greatly weakened and deteriorated by the events of the late war; as well as in checking the progress of the Reformation.

The recompense of these concessions was to be the crown of empire which had been refused to Charles by his predecessor; and the treaty was no sooner concluded than his coronation took place with great splendour (on the 22d of February, 1530) in the church of San Petronio at Bologna. After the ceremony, the emperor proceeded with the same magnificence to Barcelona, where he embarked for Genoa; and in the latter city he received the congratulations of the papal legates, and the representatives of the several Italian princes. He then pursued his way to Piacenza, where he gave audience to Francisco Sforza, and fulfilled his promise to the pontiff by insuring to the duke the restoration of his duchy, on condition that he should pay the sum of nine hundred thousand ducats as compensation money, and leave the fortresses of Milan and Cremona in the hands of the imperial generals until the whole of the debt should be discharged. In order to secure the fidelity of his new vassal, Charles moreover promised him the hand of his own niece, the daughter of the King of Denmark, who had been deprived of his kingdom; and a few months subsequently the marriage was solemnized.

Thus it will be seen that Francis had tangible cause for displeasure. The emperor had entered into two several treaties, both of which seriously affected the interests of France. He had secured the alliance of the pope, the Venetian states, the Italian provinces, and, above all, the Milanese; and he had also, through his agents, tampered with the Swiss and the Guyons, and



weakened their allegiance to the French crown.

But of all these injuries, that which rankled the most deeply in the heart of Francis was the cession of Milan to Francisco Sforza, a man without honour or probity, and of mean extraction; while he was himself the husband of the emperor's sister, the monarch of a powerful nation, and, as Charles was well aware, coveted the possession of that duchy, which he considered as a portion of his own territories. Had the emperor retained the Milanese under his own authority, the French king could only have complained of his injustice in thus withholding from his children their legitimate inheritance; but in thus transferring its sovereignty to a petty Italian prince, he had subjected Francis to the greatest indignity which it was in his power to inflict; and which wounded him the more deeply that he had been totally unprepared for so wanton and gratuitous an insult.

Nor was this the only evidence afforded by Charles of the indifference with which he regarded the claims of the French crown; for he had, in like manner, ceded the countyship of Ast to the Duke of Savoy, although aware that it was the ancient patrimony of the house of Orleans; while in addition to these glaring demonstrations of his contempt for the weakened power of his late prisoner, he had failed to redeem the pledge that he had given for the restoration of several of the attendants of the young princes during their detention at Madrid, whom he had sent to the galleys, and who still remained prisoners.

Yet, despite all these provocations, Francis was anxious to avoid a renewal of hostilities, and once more sought to avert aggression by diplomacy; an attempt in which he was encouraged both by Louise de Savoie, whose health at this period began to fail, and by the queen, who was overwhelmed with terror at the prospect of a war between her husband and her brother. It was consequently arranged that Eleonora should request the presence of Combaron, a gentleman of the emperor's court, in France, ostensibly to conclude a commercial treaty between the French and the Genoese; but actually, through her influence, to induce a meeting between the two sovereigns.

After repeated interviews Courbaron accepted the mission, and the emperor affected to accede to the solicitations of his sister; but it soon became evident that he had no intention of affording to Francis the advantage of a personal interview; a fact of which the French king felt so well assured that he availed himself of the death of his mother, which occurred during the progress of the negotiations, to suggest the postponement of the meeting.

In the spring of the year 1531 the health of Madame d'Angoulême had become extremely precarious, and some cases of plague having occurred during the summer at Fontainebleau, where she was then residing, she determined to proceed to Romorantin; but on her arrival at the village of Gretz in Gratinos, her illness increased so alarmingly that she was compelled to abandon all idea of her projected journey, and to summon her physicians. A short time before her death she was startled by an extraordinary light in her chamber, and reprimanded her attendants for their carelessness in making so large a fire;—when they assured her that what she saw was merely the reflection of the moon through the curtained window. Still unconvinced, she desired that the hangings might be drawn aside, and on raising herself upon her bed to ascertain the truth, she discovered that the glare by which she had been inconvenienced proceeded from a comet which was at that moment traversing the heavens. As she gazed wildly upon the brilliant meteor, she fell back despairingly upon her pillow, declaring that it was the harbinger of her death, and desiring that her confessor might be immediately introduced. In vain did her physicians expostulate, assuring her that the virulence of her disease had abated, and that they had confidence in her recovery; they could not shake her conviction, or overcome the superstition by which she was prostrated. The confessor accordingly approached her bed, and administered to her the last sacraments of the church; a few hours of calm succeeded, and then, towards evening on the 29th of September, she expired, in her fifty-fourth year.

The embalmed body was conveyed to St. Denis, where it was laid in a superb mausoleum which the king had caused to be constructed; the heart and the entrails were carried to Notre Dame, and deposited under a plate of metal; and all that remained of Louise de Savoie, so long the sovereign of France in all save the mere name, were the treasures which she had accumulated during her career of power. But what a fearful tale did they tell of extortion, injustice, and selfishness! The Milanese had been lost for want of supplies the energies of a whole army paralysed; the blood of thousands sacrificed; the dignity of her son insulted; and the nation prostrated by famine; and her private chest was found to contain the enormous sum of fifteen hundred thousand golden crowns! The captivity of Francis had been her work, but she had forgotten while gloating over her ill-gotten hoards that she was a mother. The victims of the sword and the pestilence had alike been the offerings which she had accumulated at the altar of her sordid deity; avarice and hatred had enabled her to do the office of the destroying angel, and she had heaped up curses where she might have garnered blessings.

At the death of his mother Francis found himself more wealthy than he had ever been since his accession to the throne; and one of the first uses to which he applied a portion of his unexpected inheritance, was to liberate the territories of the Low Countries, which had been mortgaged to the emperor in part payment of his ransom.

In the brief period which had elapsed since the conclusion of the treaty of Cambray, Louise de Savoie had already been preceded to the tomb by Marguerite d'Autriche, the Governante of Flanders, who died at Malines on the 1st of December in the previous year, only fifteen months after the completion of that unhappy and ill-omened negotiation.

The daughter of Maximilian left no treasure with which to enrich her heirs, but tears were wept above her bier that gold could not have bought; and her memory was embalmed in the hearts of those to whom she had been alike a firm friend and an indulgent protectress.

CHAPTER VIII.

[1532.]

THE persecution of the Reformists and the negotiation with the Emperor were not, however, the only subjects by which the mind of Francis was absorbed during the year 1532. One of the darting projects both of himself and his mother had for several years past been the annexation of the duchy of Brittany to the throne of France; to which they adhered still more stringently from the fact that Queen Claude had, by her will, devised it to her elder son, the dauphin, with the reservation of its revenues to the king her husband during his life. The legality of this will was nevertheless disputed by the Bretons, who affirmed that she had no right to make such a disposition, inasmuch as a clause in the marriage-contract of Anne de Bretagne distinctly set forth that it was to become the inheritance of the younger, instead of the elder of her children; and, jealous of their privileges, they demanded the maintenance of their independence, refusing to allow the king to govern them in any other capacity than that of their duke, and in conformity with their own constitution; reserving to themselves, moreover, the right, should an opportunity present itself, of separating the duchy from the crown, either by causing it to devolve upon the last-born of the princes, or of maintaining the claims of the female line.

Francis, who foresaw that the attitude thus assumed by the Bretons might hereafter cause the province to become a fruitful subject of contention, was anxious to secure its tranquil possession; and to this end many suggestions had been made, the whole of which were successively abandoned, from a dread of awakening their alarm. But still, even although the advice and influence of Louise de Savoie were now lost to them, neither the king nor his minister was willing to abandon so essential a measure; and at length the wily Duprat succeeded in securing the confidence of Louis des Desserts, the president of the Breton Parliament, who possessed immense influence over the minds of his compatriots; and who, dazzled by the bribes and promises of the chancellor, consented to exert all his energies to induce the result at which he aimed.

Duprat had little difficulty in convincing the king of the absolute necessity of completing the arrangement during the minority of his sons; who, then aged respectively only thirteen and fourteen years, would not venture to interfere with any measures which he might see fit to adopt; while, should the affair remain in abeyance until they reached maturity, it might involve a conflicting interest dangerously antagonistic to his views; and should the younger prince be enabled to induce the Bretons to sustain his pretensions, would, in all probability, originate a civil war, or even foreign interference, after his death,—a consideration to which Francis was no sooner aroused, than he gave the astute minister full powers to act in his name, and upon his authority, as he might deem best suited to insure success. Thus empowered, Duprat at once acquainted his royal master with the influence which he had obtained over Des Desserts; and as no better or more feasible alternative presented itself, it was resolved that his services should be secured at any cost. Nor did the Breton president disappoint the hopes that he had raised; for by his eloquence in representing the extreme peril to which the duchy was exposed by the perpetual wars that were devastating Italy, and the consequences entailed upon their own province, together with heavy bribes, and prospects of court favour to the most influential of the ducal nobles, he succeeded in prevailing upon the States themselves to propose their annexation to the king.

This object was no sooner attained than they were convened at Vannes (in August, 1532);

while in order to receive their overtures more courteously, and to render himself popular in their immediate neighbourhood, Francis proceeded to the castle of the Count de Chateaubriand ; who, having at length become reconciled to his erring wife, gave him such a welcome as was due to a sovereign from his subject; an act of loyalty for which the king royally repaid him, by presenting to his old favourite the valuable estates of Rhuis and Sucinio.

The result of the assembly was the proclamation of the dauphin as Duke of Brittany under the title of Francois III; and a declaration that thenceforward the duchy was irrevocably united to the French throne, without retaining, upon any pretext, the power of future separation; but, in order still to preserve some shadow of the privileges which they had thus voluntarily resigned, letters-patent were previously drawn up, by which Francis bound himself to confirm all the ancient rights of the province, and guaranteed that no levy of specie should be made within its boundaries which had not been formally sanctioned by the States themselves.

The temporary peace enabled the king to pursue all his favourite avocations, among which that of building new palaces and embellishing old ones was conspicuous. Magnificent commencements were manifest at the Louvre; Fontainebleau was daily increasing in splendour; St. Germain was a favourite residence of majesty, and was enriched by many precious productions of art; the little chateau of La Muette, in its silent valley, had invaded one of the sweetest solitudes in nature; the hunting-seat of Chalnau, in the Gatinois, rose amid the stately and overarching trees of the forest; the graceful pavilion of Follebray, in Picardy, was the retreat of pleasure and intrigue; Chambord was truly regal alike in its dimensions and its decorations; Villars-Coteret was erected to indulge a caprice of Madame de Chateaubriand during her period of favour; and even the Bois de Boulogne, at the very gates of the capital, was embellished by an extraordinary edifice, to which Francis gave the name of the Chateau of Madrid.

The purpose of the king in building this eccentric retreat was never clearly defined; although it gave rise to much conflicting conjecture. Some of the old chroniclers affirm that it was constructed upon the model of the castle to which he was transferred after his betrothal to Eleonora, and his removal from the Escorial; and that to this circumstance it owed its designation. The fallacy of this assertion is, however, easily proved, the whole aspect of the chateau discountenancing such an idea. It stood in the centre of an inclosed park, about two leagues in circumference, and was laden with ornaments. Statuary and pictures abounded within ; while the whole of the exterior was incrustated with glazed and painted bricks, the work of the celebrated Bernard Palassis, which produced an effect rather dazzling than regal. The building was in form a solid square mass; but it was so skilfully distributed within, that it presented several distinct sets of apartments, which rendered each of its occupants totally independent of the interference and surveillance of the other inhabitants. This circumstance gave rise to a second assertion, that the king had erected it, and afterwards bestowed upon it a name which could scarcely have been to him altogether devoid of certain distasteful associations, because in the entire privacy which it afforded it bore a striking resemblance to his Spanish prison. Others, again, averred that it was intended as an architectural sarcasm, or, as it might more properly have been called, an undignified and contemptible subterfuge of Francis; who, upon several occasions during his frequent visits to his suburban palace, when expatiating upon the pertinacity of the emperor in urging his return to Madrid in accordance with the pledge that he had given, was wont to say with a bitter smile : “His reproaches are alike unjustifiable and misplaced; for, on the faith of a gentleman, I am at Madrid at this very moment.”

Meanwhile Charles V, feeling the necessity of appointing a successor to Marguerite d’Autriche, as Governante of the Low Countries, decided on conferring the vacant dignity upon his sister Mary, the widowed Queen of Hungary; and he accordingly proceeded to Flanders to effect her installation; but as he sojourned there for a greater length of time than such a ceremony appeared to demand; both Henry VIII and Francis I became alarmed, and on the 23d of June they

concluded a treaty of mutual defence, and arranged the preliminaries for a personal interview towards the close of the same year, in order that they might severally decide upon such measures as should appear, necessary to their own safety.

His mistrust of the intentions of the emperor did not, however, deter the English king from thwarting all the measures of the pope; and although he entered into a personal controversy with Luther, and even produced a work which obtained for him the title of Defender of the Faith, he nevertheless had learnt in the course of his researches to entertain doubts of the papal infallibility; and he no sooner became convinced that Clement VII, at the persuasion of the emperor, had resolved definitively to refuse to sanction his divorce from Katherine of Aragon, than he openly denied it; although he nevertheless continued to persecute the Reformists. The arrest of Wolsey tended effectually to alienate the Romanist party from his interests; while the virulence with which he pursued the Lutherans made them also his enemies; and thus he became more than ever anxious to secure the alliance and friendship of the French king; who, although totally free from religious scruples, felt his dignity also offended by the pretensions of the pontiff to a supremacy which involved the rights of his own crown; and consequently, in order, to widen the breach between Henry VIII and the emperor, he advised him to make Anna Boleyn his wife without any reference to the assumed authority of the church.

Meanwhile Charles V had completed the exasperation of the German Reformists, shortly after his return from Italy, by convening a diet at Spire, which he caused to be presided over by his brother Ferdinand, who had recently through his influence been elected King of the Romans; and at which a decree was passed insisting upon the observance of a former one made at Worms, and stringently enforcing the observance of the mass, and every other ceremonial of the church, until the pope should have held a formal council, and deliberated upon the final measures to be adopted. Upon the promulgation of this decree, the independent princes of Germany had immediately assembled, uttered a solemn protest against his authority, and exchanged a pledge not to assist the emperor in any war, either offensive or defensive, which he might undertake, until the edict was revoked.

The Protestants, as all Reformists were thenceforward indiscriminately designated, next sent deputies to Charles, to explain alike their motives and the decision at which they had arrived; but their remonstrances were treated with contempt; and in 1530, the emperor held a diet at Augsburg, where Melancthon was employed by the Reformists to embody in writing the immortal profession of their faith, known as the Confession of Augsburg, which having received the signatures of the several princes, was delivered to Charles; who, although he still affected to disregard their coalition, had nevertheless taken instant measures to weaken the power and to destroy the authority of its members, by depriving them of all their religious and judicial privileges; moreover threatening those who refused to recur to their original faith with confiscation, exile, and even death.

Ferdinand of Austria had been proclaimed King of the Romans on the 5th of the following January, notwithstanding the opposition of the Protestant electors, who immediately became convinced that they, should thereafter have to contend against another and an equally virulent enemy; and they accordingly assembled in person at Smalkalden, a petty town in Franconia, whither the emperor had already convened their deputies, and entered into a treaty of defensive alliance; entreating by letter both Henry VIII and Francis to assist them in the maintenance of their rights, and the defence of their liberties.

To this request the French king had not only acceded, but had also assured them that he entertained no doubt of the co-operation of his brother of England; and about the same time he had also received with marked courtesy the ambassadors despatched to his court by John Zapolsky, Count of Sépus, whom the Hungarians had elected as their king, and who was anxious to

form an alliance with one of the princesses, of France, as well as to obtain a loan. Their embassy was successful; for Francis, with sundry professions of friendship towards the new sovereign, not only consented to bestow upon him the hand of Madame Isabeau, the sister of the King of Navarre, but also forwarded to him a sum of money, on condition that he should not invade the territories of any of the allies of France, or make war upon them; or in any extremity, or under any provocation, avail himself of the assistance of the Turks, as by countenancing the entrance of the Infidels into Christendom, he would draw down upon himself the vengeance of the French nation.

By this subtle stroke of policy Francis succeeded in rendering the Hungarian monarch powerless, for he was well aware that his only enemy was Ferdinand, King of the Romans, and that the sultan was his fast friend; while it is moreover asserted by Garnier that at the very moment in which he insisted on these terms, to the extreme edification of his subjects, he was already himself in secret correspondence with the Mussulmans.

Towards the end of the summer Guillaume du Bellay, (Seigneur de Langes) and M. de la Pommeraye, the two French ambassadors at the court of London, arranged with Henry VIII the period and place at which the meeting should be held which had already been decided on between himself and their own sovereign. Montmorenci on the one side, and the Duke of Norfolk on the other, were entrusted with the arrangement of the ceremonial; and when all was duly prepared, Henry proceeded to Calais, while Francis took up his temporary residence at Boulogne. On the 20th of October the two kings met on the boundary of their respective territories, where the French monarch presented the dauphin and the Duke d'Orleans to his royal ally. Henry was attended by the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, the Earl of Richmond, and a splendid suite of nobles and gentlemen ; while the Duke de Vendome, and the Counts de Saint-Pol and de Guise, with all the first nobility of France, were in the train of Francis.

So soon as the first greetings were over, the French king conducted his royal guest to Boulogne, where he was received with a salute of artillery; and thence the courtly party proceeded to the abbey, an immense and majestic pile, having two wings connected by a stately hall which served as the refectory of the monks, but which was on this occasion hung with costly draperies of tapestry; and roofed with scarlet silk. One of the wings of the building was appropriated to the English monarch, while the other was occupied by Francis himself. The two kings dined apart; after which they retired to a private cabinet, where they remained closeted together for a considerable time. On the morrow the magnificent hall was prepared for the banquet, with a profuse display of gold vessels, richly inlaid with jewels; and throughout the entertainment both the sovereigns were served by their respective officers on their knees. At the termination of the repast they attended mass in great state; after which Francis presented to his royal guest six superb horses; and the English king transferred to the young princes the three hundred thousand crowns which were due to him by their father. The Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk then received from the hands of their distinguished host the collar of St. Michael; a courtesy which Henry returned by conferring upon the Marechal de Montmorenci, and Philippe de Brion-Chabot, Grand Admiral of Boulogne, the order of the garter.

At the end of several days, divided between business and festivity, the two courts removed to Calais, where Francis became, in his turn, the guest of his brother monarch, and where the same profuse magnificence was exhibited; and, finally, a treaty was concluded, and immediately rendered public, by which they bound themselves to supply an army of eighty thousand men, wherewith to resist the invasion of Christendom by the Turks. The result of their private conferences was, however, more intimately connected with their own interests. Henry, irritated at the attitude assumed by Clement VII, frankly declared his indignation, affirming that his marriage was invalid, as he had the authority of the Gospel for what he had decided, and that the pope had no legitimate claim to the supremacy which he assumed. Well aware, also, of the besetting weakness of his listener, he conjured him never again to condescend to the humiliation of kissing

the toe of a bishop of Rome; and represented how much the dignity of a crowned king suffered from so great a concession. He, moreover, complained bitterly of the pride of Clement VII, who had endeavoured to compel him either to proceed to Rome in person to solicit a papal dispensation for the divorce he sought, or to despatch thither an accredited plenipotentiary, authorized to act in his name; and, finally, he proposed that a general council should be immediately convened, to which the pontiff should be summoned by ambassadors from England and France, and called upon to redress the grievances of which the princes of Christendom had now such serious reasons to complain.

Francis, however, was careful not to commit himself. He had been apprised by the Cardinal de Grammont that the pope was desirous to secure an interview with him either at Nice or Avignon, immediately the emperor should have returned to Spain; while the cardinal, moreover, urgently entreated that he would not take any definitive step until he should have informed himself of the dispositions of the pontiff. Nevertheless, he admitted, in reply to the representations of Henry, that he also had great cause of complaint against Clement VII, and expatiated largely upon the interference of the pontiff with the internal economy of the French Church; his failure in fulfilling his pledges; and the exorbitant outlay to which his government was compelled by the fees which he was required to give to all the ushers, chamberlains, and prothonotaries of Rome, whenever he found it necessary to ask any favour at the hands of the pope. After which, reverting to his more personal injuries, he expressed his indignation that Clement should so readily have credited the report that he was secretly allied until the Turks, while he had, on the contrary, spared no pains to justify His Holiness on every occasion where blame had been attached to him by other princes; and, finally, he expatiated in no measured terms upon the menaces, the intrigues, and the secret cabals by which the court of Rome had endeavoured to detach from his interest the most faithful of his allies.

Charles V, who had been apprised of the reception given to the Hungarian envoys, as well as of the reply which Francis had addressed to the Protestant princes, became, in his turn, suspicious that a conspiracy was forming against himself; a suspicion which the present meeting between the two kings, his declared enemies, tended to strengthen; and as it had become known that Solyman II was about to attempt an invasion of Germany, he resolved to satisfy himself of the truth, by testing, without further delay, the sincerity of the French monarch. With this view he consequently summoned Francis to furnish an army against the Turks; a demonstration to which he was solemnly bound by the treaty of Madrid, which he had repeatedly declared his readiness to make, and to which he had moreover just newly pledged himself in the treaty effected with the King of England; but in reply to the imperial requisition, the French sovereign, after numerous assertions of his zeal for religion, and his eagerness to assist in so noble and pious an enterprise, contented himself by offering to march a force of fifty thousand men to Italy for the protection of that country, while the emperor secured the safety of Germany; the Hungarian frontier being, as he affirmed, too distant from France to render it expedient for him to despatch a body of troops to that point.

His proposal was, as he had foreseen that it would be, instantly and definitively declined; and the emperor, convinced of the utter futility of anticipating any available assistance from France, immediately took the field in person, and succeeded in compelling the retreat of Solyman without even a hostile meeting.

There can be little doubt that the engagement made by Henry and Francis to join the crusade against the Infidels, was merely intended to avert the odium which their supineness was calculated to draw down upon them, and to delude the other Christian princes into a belief that they were ready to sacrifice more intimate interests to the defence of their religion; for it is certain that they never evinced the slightest intention of fulfilling their voluntary compact.

Never, perhaps, was the bad faith of Francis more conspicuous than throughout the whole period of his conferences with the English king; for, even while he promised his support to the Reformists, and induced Henry VIII. to follow his example, he had already entered into a correspondence with the pope, requesting that they might meet in order to confer on the affairs of Christendom; and offering the hand of Henry, Duke d'Orleans, his second son, to Catherine de' Medici, the daughter of Lorenzo II, Duke d'Urbino, the niece of the pontiff.

Startled by the prospect of an alliance so infinitely above his hopes, Clement hesitated how to reply, for he doubted its sincerity, and suspected some covert treachery; and while under the influence of this distrust, he communicated the proposal of Francis to the emperor, who, equally convinced that it was intended only as a lure, advised him to follow up the negotiation, and thus entangle the French king in his own toils. But Charles was unaware of the policy which had dictated the offer. Francis still coveted the possession of Italy; and regarding the pope as the pivot of Italian politics, he looked upon his friendship and alliance as the cornerstone of success. To secure these he consequently considered no sacrifice too great; and hence the proposal which had been received with so much suspicion both by the pontiff and the emperor. As, however, even while pursuing the negotiation, Clement VII had evinced no anxiety to bring it to a conclusion, Francis resolved to maintain his friendly intelligence with the English king; and to secure his assistance in extorting from the fears of the pope what he could not obtain from his favour.

An opportunity soon presented itself of effecting this stroke of policy; for the two monarchs were still at Calais when intelligence reached them, that Charles V, having terminated his campaign against the Infidels, was about to leave Germany, and to repair to Spain through Italy, where he was to be met at Bologna by the pope. Alarmed at the consequences of such a meeting at that particular juncture, it was immediately proposed by Francis, and agreed by Henry, that the cardinals of Tournon and Grammont should be despatched to accompany the sovereign-pontiff, an attendance which he could not refuse from two princes of the church; and that they should be authorised to inform him that the Kings of England and France were prepared to demand a general council, in default of which they would convene distinct assemblies within their own kingdoms; when, in the event of this measure being forced upon them, they should prohibit their subjects from forwarding money to Rome. That, moreover, should the pontiff persist in pursuing with his censure the Most Christian king and his realm, and his majesty find it expedient to repair to Rome in order to obtain his absolution, he would do so with such a train of followers that His Holiness would easily be induced to satisfy his demand; and they were also instructed to remind him of the religious anarchy which existed not only in Germany and the Helvetic states, but throughout the whole of Christian Europe, and to bid him reflect upon the diminished influence of the Romish Church; as well as upon the fact, that, should two of the most powerful sovereigns of Christendom forsake his interests because they had been denied the justice which they demanded, they would infallibly find so many other princes ready to make common cause with them, that the result must be fatal to his authority.

After this combined declaration the two kings took leave of each other on the 30th of October, on the same spot where they had met, and with every demonstration of cordiality and affection; M. de Montpezat, the fortunate adventurer, who, after the battle of Pavia, had officiated as *valet-de-chambre* to Francis in his captivity, and who had been appointed one of his chamberlains, accompanying Henry VIII to England as the ambassador of his sovereign.



CHAPTER IX.

[1533-34.]

THE two French cardinals did not reach Bologna, whither the pope and the emperor had already preceded them, until the 4th of January, 1533; and they soon became aware that all the menaces with which they were charged might be left unuttered, as the pontiff was avowedly anxious to secure the friendship of their royal master, even declaring that he should scarcely consider any sacrifice too great by which he might regain it. And there can be no doubt that he was sincere when he made this assertion; for, infirm as he might be in purpose, and timid in the maintenance of his privileges and power, when he was required to support his pretensions by force, he was by no means deficient in the more subtle science of diplomacy; and readily comprehended that, should Francis in reality hold himself bound to fulfil the contract into which he had entered, he could anticipate no equivalent advantage at the hands of the emperor.

Clement VII, like his kinsman and predecessor in the papal dignity, Leo X, was devoted to the interests of his family, and his ruling passion was the aggrandizement of the house of Medicis. He had seen, with an anguish which he could not always conceal, the apparently rapid extinction of his line; for in that light he regarded only the elder branch, who were the direct descendants of Como; and of whom none remained save Catherine, the Duchess d'Urbino, whose father was the greatgrandson of Como; and who, although she bore the title of his niece, was in point of fact the grand-daughter of his own cousin-germain. The remainder, consisting of himself and his brothers, were illegitimate, and of these the pope was the eldest; Alessandro, upon whom he had conferred the duchy of Florence, the second; and Hyppolito, whom he had created a cardinal, the third. It will, therefore, readily be believed that Clement reflected with exultation upon the alliance of his niece with a prince of the blood royal of France; and the two cardinals were earnest in their assurances of the good faith of their sovereign. It is true that Charles V had previously promised to Alessandro the hand of his daughter Marguerite, but the same stain was affixed to her birth which rested upon his own; whereas the Duke d'Orleans was the legitimate descendant of a line of princes.

The more, therefore, the pontiff reflected upon the proposal of Francis, and the more closely and carefully he compared the advantages which he should secure from his adhesion to either sovereign, the more he became convinced that the period for hesitation was at an end; and having arrived at this conclusion, the French cardinals had no sooner requested his decision with regard to the meeting proposed by their monarch, than he declared his readiness, notwithstanding his advanced age and failing strength, to undertake a journey to Savoy for the purpose of a personal conference. To this place of meeting Francis, however, instantly objected, as, since the death of his mother, he had ceased to maintain any friendly intercourse with her family, who had been enriched and protected by the emperor. Clement then proposed Nice; but from the same motive the French king equally refused to enter that city, unless he were permitted to garrison both the town and the citadel with his own troops. From this concession the Duke de Savoie was dissuaded by Charles V, who was anxious to prevent the meeting; and ultimately the pope, who dreaded the failure of his brilliant hopes, declared his willingness even to proceed to France, and selected Marseilles as the place of rendezvous.

Two events had, however, occurred at Milan and Wurtemberg, which were calculated to retard the good understanding between the sovereign-pontiff and the French king, which each was so anxious to establish. Francis, in utter disregard of the treaty of Cambrai, had never ceased his

intrigues, either in Italy or in Germany, he could not forego his desire to secure once more the possession of Milan; and even while in treaty with the pope to accomplish the invasion of the duchy, he had endeavoured to renew his alliance with the duke himself.

Lorenzo Sforza, who had suffered severely from the enmity of the Spaniards during the war, had for some time past found himself a mere puppet in their hands, he possessed nothing of sovereignty save the name. He was a mere vassal to the emperor, by whose exorbitant demands he was impoverished; and moreover subjected to the surveillance of Antonio da Leyva, between whom and himself there existed an enmity of long standing, and who took a savage delight in exposing him to the most constant and bitter humiliations.

Under these circumstances it will be readily understood that Sforza did not reject the overtures of the French king; for he was too well aware of his inability to protect himself against the exactions of the emperor to lose so favourable an opportunity of seeming the alliance of a powerful monarch; and it was consequently without any hesitation that he consented to permit the return of a Milanese emigrant, who, during the reign of Louis XII had followed the grand equerry Gaéaz San Sévérino to France, where he had accumulated a large fortune; and even allowed him to act as the secret agent of Francis at his court. His immense wealth enabled Maraviglia, the individual in question, to entertain the nobles of Milan with a profuse liberality, by which he soon attained great popularity; and, although many of the courtiers and foreigners who were then sojourning in the duchy were not without suspicion that his favour with Sforza was not altogether unconnected with interests beyond a mere personal regard, the precautions which had been adopted on both sides proved so efficient as to baffle, for a time, the curiosity of those who sought to elucidate the mystery.

Maraviglia had, on his departure from France, been furnished with letters of credence, which were to be kept secret unless circumstances should imperatively demand their recognition on the part of the French king; while a second document, which merely recommended him to Sforza as a person worthy of his favour and protection, was also delivered to him, which he was instructed to present to the duke in the presence of his court.

Francis was, however, equally unfortunate in his selection of an agent and an ally; for the vanity of Maraviglia was so inflated by the fact of his having become the accredited envoy of a crowned head, that it was not long ere he assumed an authority and importance wholly incompatible with his station as a mere Milanese citizen; and, adopting a custom which had been introduced into Italy by the Spaniards, surrounded himself by a set of attendants who recognised no law beyond his pleasure, and were ever ready to seek and even to provoke quarrels in which they affected to uphold the honour of their master, with which Maraviglia soon taught himself to believe that that of the French nation was involved.

The arrogance of the parvenu gentleman ere long aroused the ever watchful distrust of the emperor, who complained to Sforza of the insults to which his subjects were exposed by the countenance he had seen fit to afford to an individual who could advance no claim to such a distinction, unless he were aware that he was supported by a higher power; while it was equally evident that should such a power exist, it could only be derived from the King of France; in which case he, the emperor, as the suzerain of the Duke of Milan, demanded the immediate dismissal of Maraviglia from the court; adding, that should Sforza hesitate to comply with his commands, the projected marriage between himself and the Princess of Denmark was thenceforward at an end.

The faithless ally, upon this threat, proved even a more dangerous confidant than the ostentatious agent; for he did not scruple, while forwarding to the emperor the letter of recommendation which had been given to Maraviglia, to declare that he simply recognised in him a Milanese citizen to whom Francis had requested him to show favour; and that, in acting as he

had done, he had merely sought to give a worthy welcome to a person presented to him by one of the most powerful monarchs of Christendom. Charles V was not, however, to be so deceived; he still urged the removal of the obnoxious and mysterious recipient of the duke's favour; and, ultimately, Sforza assured him that if he would only grant him the respite of a few days, he would convince him of the error of his suspicions.

Precisely at this period one of the lacqueys of Maraviglia, pretending to consider that words had been uttered by the Count Castiglione, a Milanese nobleman, which affected the honour of his master, immediately resented the affront in very unmeasured terms; but the count, probably considering the menial as too low in rank to permit him to reply to his intemperate address, silently shrugged his shoulders and passed on; when a second attendant of Maraviglia, either more courageous or more insolent than his comrade, followed up the defiance by pursuing the retiring noble, and declaring that he could not suffer such assertions to be made against the master whose livery he wore, and whom all the Milanese, whatever might be their station, were bound to respect. Castiglione, who felt that his dignity would be involved by a brawl with the lacquey of an adventurer, bade him put up his sword, which he had already unsheathed, asserting that it was not for him to measure weapons with a hired dependent; and, with a haughtiness and self-possession which only tended to aggravate the passion of his selfconstituted opponent, referred him to a couple of his own followers, to whom he delegated the task of arranging the quarrel.

This richly merited but unpalatable check by no means tended to diminish the rage of the bully by whom he had been defied; while, on the other hand, the individuals of the count's suite were justly indignant at the disrespect evinced towards their lord; and accordingly, the two whom, as he proceeded on his way, he left behind him to discuss the merits of the affair, at once flung themselves upon the offender, and would have sacrificed him on the spot had they not been prevented by the bystanders.

When the circumstances of this outbreak were communicated to the duke, he insisted that no further notice should be taken of an affair which had evidently originated in a mistake, and which could profit neither party; a decision in which Maraviglia instantly acquiesced, declaring that he was unconscious of having a single enemy in Milan, where he had sought to conciliate all with whom he came into contact. But it would appear that Castiglione had received other and more secret instructions; for it is certain that he afterwards adopted a habit of constantly passing and repassing in front of the residence of Maraviglia, attended by a dozen armed attendants, and even attacked some of his people on one occasion without provocation of any sort. The unfortunate agent, becoming alarmed for his personal safety, at once appealed to the magistrature for protection, but the interference of the civic authorities produced no satisfactory result. Castiglione persisted in his system of annoyance and aggression; and ultimately lost his life in an attack which he made upon the retainers of Maraviglia, who no sooner saw him fall than they totally routed his followers. This murder, committed in open daylight, and in a city where such enormities were unknown, excited universal indignation. Maraviglia was arrested on the following morning, as well as the whole of his household he was tried without delay, and three days afterwards he was decapitated.

The indignation of Francis was unbounded when he was made acquainted with the fate of his equerry and agent; and he forthwith wrote to the pope, the emperor, and the Duke of Milan, complaining that he had suffered a crying indignity in the person of his ambassador, the sacred character of whose mission, hitherto respected throughout Europe, had been grossly violated. He also addressed letters of a similar tenor to Ferdinand, King of the Romans, to Henry VIII, and to the Helvetic States, as well as to all the petty European princes, representing the mischievous effect of such a precedent should it be suffered to remain unchastised, and calling upon them to avenge the insult offered to his kingly station and authority.

Sforza, in reply, to this expostulation, at once despatched Francesco Taverna, his chancellor, to France, to offer his apologies for what had occurred; and even carried his audacity so far as to instruct his envoy to declare to the king that he had never regarded Maraviglia in any other light than that of a simple citizen, and that, consequently, he was totally unprepared to expect that his majesty could feel so great an interest in his fate. He also authorized him to state that he was unaware of his holding official employment, which rendered his person sacred, having always been led to believe that Maraviglia had been induced to return to Milan, simply by a desire to expend the money which he had amassed abroad among his own countrymen, although he was cognisant of the fact that his majesty had honoured him with the arrangement of some private business totally unconnected with considerations of policy; but that, had he entertained the most remote idea that the unfortunate gentleman had been officially employed by so great a prince, to whom he himself owed so deep a debt of gratitude and respect, he would have watched over his days with a solicitude which must have averted a catastrophe that he should now never cease to deplore; while, recognising only in the accused gentleman a subject of his own, he had deemed it his duty to avenge upon him the blood of Count Castiglione, who was one of the officers of his household.

Francis indignantly refused to receive so hypocritical an explanation; and in the presence of the members of the privy council at which Taverna had delivered the exculpatory message of the duke, he sternly asserted that he was able to produce letters which would suffice to show that the duke had individually recognised the official character of the man whom he had, in defiance of the law of nations, subjected to an ignominious death. This declaration, for which he was wholly unprepared, startled the Milanese chancellor; and when the king proceeded to inquire how it was, if the duke his master had indeed recognised in Maraviglia only a simple subject, that he had been led to violate in his case the usual forms of law; and, instead of affording him time and opportunity to refute the accusations brought against him, or, in default of his being able to, do this, of causing him publicly to suffer death under the eyes of the assembled citizens of Milan, he had deprived him of all intercourse with the friends by whom he might have been justified, extorted false accusations from his servants under the influence of torture, and finally executed him during the night within the precincts of his prison; the embarrassed envoy, although esteemed one of the most able advocates of his day, replied falteringly, that the arrangement had originated in the deep respect entertained by the duke towards his majesty, whom he was unwilling to expose to the indignity which the public execution of one of his recognised agents would have appeared to sanction.

“Enough” said Francis, with a stern gesture; “Your reply is a sufficient admission that the official character of my murdered ambassador was fully recognised by the Duke of Milan. And now, Sir, bear to your master the plain assurance that if he do not afford to me the satisfaction which I shall not be slow in demanding, I shall know how to render justice to myself.”

As the reward of his unmanly and treacherous condescension, the emperor fulfilled his promise to Sforza; and notwithstanding the weak state of his health, and the premature decrepitude which compelled him to lean upon a staff throughout the whole duration of the nuptial ceremony, he bestowed on him, in April 1534, the hand of his niece Christina. From the period of his marriage, however, Sforza rapidly declined until he became totally infirm, and on the 24th of October in the following year he died. As he was the last representative of the Sforza family, Don Antonio da Leyva took possession of the duchy in the name of the emperor, and the young widow returned to Spain.

Meanwhile Ferdinand, King of the Romans, to whom his brother Charles V had entrusted the government of Germany during his own sojourn in Italy and Spain, had renewed a long-enduring quarrel with the young Christophe, Duke of Wurtemberg; and this prince applied to Francis for his support against the aggressions of the emperor; representing that for more than

seventeen years the duke Ulric, his father, had been dispossessed of his inheritance, and reminding him that by his marriage with the dowager-queen of Portugal, the sister of the emperor and the King of the Romans, who had taken possession of his duchy, he had the honour to be allied to his majesty through the Princess Sabine, his mother, who was the niece of Maximilian.

Francis at first refused to interfere in a misunderstanding which he declared to be more personal than political; but Martin du Bellay, who felt a lively interest in the young and princely applicant, suffering as he was from a spoliation entailed upon him by an ancient feud, with which he had been totally unconnected, conceived an expedient by which he was enabled to assist him without compromising his sovereign; and accordingly agreed to lend him a hundred thousand crowns on the security of the county of Montbelliard, ostensibly as its purchaser, but in reality to enable him to pay his troops, and to raise new levies. With this assistance, and the aid of the protestant princes, whose faith he had openly embraced, the duke was enabled to possess himself of Lauffen; and ultimately, with little delay, to make himself master of the duchy of Wurtemberg, where one of his first acts of sovereignty was to establish the reformed religion.

Nevertheless, the war in Germany, which had been considered as an inevitable result of these events, was still delayed. Ferdinand, instead of resenting a defeat which he must have keenly felt, availed himself of the opportunity to enter into a fresh treaty with the league of Smalkalden; and on the 29th of June, 1534, the peace of Nuremberg was confirmed.

This arrangement was not, however, yet concluded when the pope commenced his journey to Marseilles; and had not his personal ambition been involved in the interview to which he had so readily acceded, the two events here detailed were calculated to render it of a less pacific character than he had originally anticipated. But Clement VII was already an old man, and still more aged by infirmity than by years. His ambition had out-lasted his susceptibility, and in the advancement of his family he forgot all mote politic considerations. He was aware of the support which had been afforded to the protestants of Germany by the monarch with whom he was about to treat; he had been apprised that he had already threatened to invade Lombardy in order to avenge the death of Maraviglia; nor was he ignorant of the close alliance which Francis had formed with Henry VIII, and which threatened the annihilation of the papal supremacy; but he cast off these memories to reflect only upon the brilliant alliance which had been offered to his niece. The evil effects likely to result from the political measures of the French king failed to turn him from his purpose, they regarded rather his successors than himself; whereas the marriage of Catherine was a personal triumph within his very grasp, and almost independent of the future.

Under the influence of this all-absorbing passion Clement VII accordingly persisted in his purpose, and embarked at Pisa for Marseilles on the 4th of October, accompanied by a fleet of French galleys under the command of the Duke d'Aubigny. The duke himself had, however, preceded him by several days, and had already landed with Catherine de' Medici, whom papal etiquette did not permit to travel with her uncle. This delicate and honourable mission had consequently been entrusted to the Duke d'Aubigny, not only as a proof of the personal regard and confidence of the king, but also because that noble had married her maternal aunt, and had thus become her relative.

The arrival of the pontiff in the port was announced by the discharge of three hundred cannon from the batteries, and the salute was returned by the guns of the vessels. The Marechal de Montmorenci received him on his landing, and conducted him in a costly litter, surrounded by pages and men-at-arms, to the splendid residence which had been prepared for him in one of the faubourgs; and on the following morning he made his public entry into the city with great pomp and ceremony. At the gates he was met by all the ecclesiastics of the diocese headed by their prelate; by the abbot of St. Victor and his community; by the judicial authorities; by the great nobles who had been assembled to welcome him; and he was immediately followed by the king

himself, who had arrived at Marseilles only a few hours previously, by the queen, and by all the principal members of the court. The houses in the streets traversed by the two potentates were hung with tapestry and silks of gorgeous colours, and the pavement was thickly strewn with rich autumnal flowers and branches of odoriferous shrubs.

Delighted to co-operate with her royal husband in every measure likely to ensure the peace of Europe, and equally so at the prospect of welcoming to her affection a new friend and daughter, the reception, given by Eleonora to the beautiful girl, who, on descending from her litter at the approach of the royal party, knelt to make her obeisance to her future stepmother, was full of dignified and unaffected kindness; and she had no sooner, on withdrawing her hand from the lips of Catherine, impressed a kiss upon her brow, than she compelled her to enter her own litter, and thus side by side they proceeded to the residence which had been prepared for the reception of the queen, and where a suite of apartments had been reserved for the young duchess and her attendants.

The pope and the king occupied two houses directly opposite to each other, and of the same dimensions, which were connected by a temporary gallery flung across the street, and converted into a magnificent saloon hung with tapestry and cloth of gold, which afforded them private access to each other at all hours.

Nor was the triumph of Clement VII merely a public one; for Francis had no sooner introduced him into the splendid hall in which their conferences were to be held, than, notwithstanding the pledge which he had given to Henry VIII, that, like himself, he would never again recognise in the person of the pope any higher dignity than that of bishop of Rome, he humbly bent the knee before him, and kissed in succession his foot, his hand, and his cheek; after which he presented to him his eldest son, who in like manner knelt and saluted him. The dauphin was replaced in his turn by the two younger princes, who kissed his feet and his hands; and they were followed by the great dignitaries of the court, who kissed his feet only.

At the conclusion of the ceremony the bishop of Paris declared, in the name of his sovereign, "that the very Christian king, as the elder son of the Church, recognised His Holiness in all humility and devotion as the pontiff and true vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ; revering him as the successor of St. Peter, and offering him obedience and fidelity; pledging himself with all his power to uphold the safety of His Holiness and of the holy apostolical see, as all his predecessors had done before him."

It had been originally intended that this address should be delivered by the President Poyer, afterwards chancellor of France; but this dignitary, although recognised as the most eloquent speaker of his time, was comparatively ignorant of the Latin language, and could not undertake the duty until by close study he had rendered himself able to repeat the discourse which had been prepared for him. As it was, however, necessary to ascertain the feeling of the pontiff with regard to the subjects which were to be mooted in this public address, the master of the court ceremonies waited upon him for instructions, when all the preparatory labour of the unhappy president was rendered useless by the declaration of Clement that he was anxious to avoid, on such an occasion, every allusion either to the emperor or any other Christian prince which might be construed into an affront; and that he should prefer not being called upon to listen to any save a purely theological oration.

In this dilemma Jean du Bellay, bishop of Paris, was nominated to replace him; which he did upon the instant with an eloquence and ability worthy of his reputation.

A splendid banquet was then served; after which the pope and the king retired to confer together on the various subjects of importance which they were met to discuss; and during their

interview Francis warmly urged the pontiff to recognise and sanction the divorce of Henry VIII; assuring him that the English monarch was actuated only by motives of conscience in seeking to repudiate a princess whose conduct alike as a wife and a mother had been irreproachable. Clement, however, refused to lend himself to what he stigmatized as an act of tyranny and injustice; for, satisfied as he was that he had secured the friendship of Francis, he was still unwilling to incur the enmity of the emperor; while the royal intercessor, on his side, considered it equally inexpedient to inform his guest that he had pledged himself to the English monarch not to consent to the marriage of his son with Catherine de' Medici until he had wrested from the pope a consent to his own divorce. From this difficulty Francis was, however, extricated in an unexpected manner, for in an audience granted by the pontiff to Bishop Bonner, who had been despatched to France by Henry VIII for that purpose, the prelate boldly announced that his sovereign had appealed from the decision of His Holiness to that of the general council; upon which the French king, rejoiced to be emancipated from the performance of his promise, and to find himself relieved from a responsibility by which his personal views were frustrated, immediately declared that he could not sanction the affront which had been offered to the head of the Church by such a determination; and that, although he should ever regard the English monarch as a brother, he could not uphold him, or any other prince, in a matter which involved the interests of the religion that he professed.

Thus unexpectedly liberated from his engagement, Francis found himself free to negotiate the preliminaries of the marriage of his son Henry Duke d'Orleans with Catherine de' Medici, which, for the misfortune of France, was finally arranged at this period; the prince not having yet attained his fifteenth year, and the niece of the pope being his junior by eighteen months. The apparent dowry of the bride was by no means a splendid one to bring to a royal house; for it consisted only of a hundred thousand crowns, and the French estates which she inherited from her mother, Madelaine de la Tour d'Auvergne, which, were of about equal value. This fact furnished abundant amusement to the French courtiers; who, little foreseeing the frightful effects which were to result from this ill-omened alliance, dwelt only upon the paucity of her portion, and the extraordinary infatuation of the king, who might have commanded for his son the hand of a princess with a duchy for her dowry. Some among them even went so far as to express to sundry of the papal officers their astonishment that the niece of a sovereign pontiff should possess no greater fortune than the heiress of a French finance minister; but they were speedily and agreeably silenced by Philippo Strozzi, the ambassador of Clement, who, in reply to a remark of this nature said with, a quiet smile; "You appear to forget, gentlemen, that she also adds to the crown of France three jewels of inestimable value; Genoa, Milan, and Naples."

The emperor subsequently heard and registered this incautious and ill-judged rejoinder; but even before he was apprised of its having been made he had become alarmed, and wrote to the pontiff entreating him not to consent to a marriage so inimical to the interests of Italy; or, in the event of his persisting in the alliance, urging him to oblige the king to give a pledge not to make any fresh attempts upon that country; to confirm the treaties of Madrid and Cambray; and to consent to the convocation of the council. Furthermore, he exhorted him to interfere in the matter of the English divorce, representing the extent of the injury which was meditated against his own aunt; but Clement, in reply, declined to commit himself by making such a promise, declaring that the French king had done him so much honour by offering the hand of his second son to a member of his own house, that he was not in a position to impose conditions upon him; although he was ready to exert all his influence to secure the peace of Italy.

With this answer the emperor was compelled to rest satisfied; although he would doubtlessly have used more strenuous arguments had he been aware that when the Duke d'Aubigny had been commissioned to negotiate the marriage, the exultation of the pope was so great, that in addition to the dowry in specie to which allusion has already been made, he agreed to include in the marriage portion of his niece the provinces of Reggio, Modena, Rubeira, Pisa,

Livorna, Parma, and Piacenza; to unite his own army with that of Francis to regain for her the duchy of Urbino, which had been wrested from the Medici after the death of Leo X; to assist him in the recovery of the Milanese; and, finally, to unite all these important territories upon the heads of the Duke d'Orleans and his bride. Of this private arrangement Charles was, however, totally ignorant; and feeling that the French king must have had some powerful motive for proposing so disproportionate an alliance, he did not hesitate to attribute the concession to a projected invasion of the Milanese.

Presents of great value having been exchanged, and the necessary preparations completed, the marriage was eventually solemnized by the pope himself, on the 29th of October, with a splendour which formed a strong contrast to the hurried and undignified ceremony that had so recently made the gentle Eleonora, Queen of France.

The extreme personal beauty of the young couple, aged respectively fifteen and thirteen years, the magnificence of their apparel, the sumptuousness of the monarch, his queen, and their united courts, the ecclesiastical pomp, the flashing of jewels under the glare of innumerable tapers, and the presence of the supreme pontiff himself, all tended to render this, destined to be a fatal day to France, one of the greatest brilliancy and gorgeousness.

On the return of the illustrious bridal party to the temporary palace of the king, whither they were followed by the acclamations of the populace, who energetically shouted Noël for their young prince and his fair bride—whom they little suspected was one day fated to become the curse of the nation over which she was called to rule—a presentation was held in the hall of tapestry, at which the king invested four of the papal dignitaries with the order of St. Michael; while Clement, at his express request, created four new French cardinals, among whom was Odet de Châtillon, the nephew of Anne de Montmorenci, who had only just attained his thirteenth year; and who, notwithstanding this extraordinary elevation, subsequently embraced the reformed religion.

The marriage festivities were prolonged until the 12th of November; when the pope and his suite, having taken leave of the French court, departed from Marseilles for Civita Vecchia on board the same vessels by which they had been conveyed thither; but on his arrival in that port, Clement dismissed the Duke d'Aubigny and his fleet with a profusion of both gifts and protestations, and on the 6th of December embarked in the galleys of Andrea Doria, who was still in the service of the emperor; a stroke of policy by which he hoped to disarm the jealousy of Charles.

The departure of the pontiff from the city was followed by that of the king and queen; and in the course of a few days the whole of the royal train were on their way to Amboise, and Marseilles was once more shorn of its temporary splendour.



# BOOK III

## CHAPTER I.

[1534.]

### THE FEMALE COURT OF FRANCIS I.

Two years only had elapsed since Francis had been emancipated by death from the domination of Louise de Savoie, and already in the person of Catherine de' Medicis a new power had arisen, by which he was to be equally thrall'd. Of all the female members of his family, his wives alone had failed to influence either his affections or his actions. Alike gentle and unambitious, they shrank before his coldness, and trembled at his frown; while women of meaner rank, and of less than questionable virtue, braved his displeasure, and moulded him to their will. In the Queen of Navarre he had recognised at once a companion and a friend; he was conscious of her superiority of intellect, and grateful for her tenderness; and had Marguerite exerted the power which she really possessed over his mind, to wean him from those habits of profligacy by which his memory is disgraced, instead of treating the most sacred duties with disregard when by such a concession she felt that she was ministering to his temporary gratification, it is probable that he would have become more estimable both as a monarch and a man. But the daughter of Louise de Savoie had been reared in a school little likely to render her a moral mistress; and the author of the *Heptameron*, or "all the naughty tricks played by women on the poor men", as she describes it in her preface, could scarcely be expected to afford any efficient aid in the reformation of his character. Of the Duchess d'Angoulême, both as a mother and as a guide, we have already said enough. Of the influence of Madame, de Châteaubriand during her period of favour, many baneful effects remained: although, when the opportunities of evil which she had once possessed are taken into consideration, even her career may be deemed comparatively harmless; but at the period of Catherine's advent to France, the full-blown vices of Madame d'Etampes were the marvel and the anathema of the nation.

The queen, conscious that she possessed no power sufficiently great to counteract that of the favourite, had ceased even to strive against it; and thus the only pure-hearted woman who would have loved him for his own sake, and who might eventually have restored him to a more fitting sense of the duties which he owed alike to himself and to society, was reduced to weep over the errors that she was unable to eradicate.

We pass over, for obvious reasons, the minor influences, each perhaps insignificant in itself, but in the aggregate fearfully mischievous, which were exercised by the fair and frail maids of honour; each, or nearly each, being in her turn the "Cynthia of the minute"; and more than one of whom owed her temporary favour to the Duchess d'Etampes herself; whose secret intrigues and undisguised ambition absorbed more of her time than could have been left at her disposal, had she

not provided the inconstant but nevertheless exacting monarch with some new object of interest; and the tact with which she selected these facile beauties was not one of the least of her talents. Never, upon any occasion, did she direct the attention of the king to a woman whose intellect might have secured his conquest after the spell of her beauty had ceased to thrall him: the young and the lovely were her victims, only where their youth and their loveliness were their sole attractions. She was ever ready to supply her royal lover with a new mistress, but never with a friend, a companion, or a counsellor; and thus, as she had rightly foreseen, the French Sardanapalus soon became sated by the mere prettiness of his female satellites, and returned to his allegiance to herself, wearied, and more her slave than ever.

Such was the state of the court in which the Duchess d'Orleans was called to assume her station as a princess of the blood; and, mere girl as she was, she at once appreciated alike the difficulties and advantages of her position. A king whose leading passions were dissipation and magnificence; a queen who shrank from publicity of all kinds, and who had neither inclination to upbraid, nor energy to resist injustice; a dauphin staid and serious beyond his years; a powerful and insolent favourite; a licentious nobility; a morose and careless husband;—such were the elements out of which she had to construct a future for herself; and Catherine de' Medici did not fail to prove herself worthy of the name she bore.

Nature had admirably fitted her for the part which she was about to enact. De Thou describes her as a woman of “immense mind, and superb magnificence;” while Brantôme expatiates with more voluptuousness than delicacy upon her personal attractions, and her feminine accomplishments; to which, however, were superadded the masculine attainments of riding, playing at tennis, shooting with a cross-bow, and boar-hunting.

No less ambitious and intriguing than Louise de Savoie, Catherine, even from the very period of her marriage, possessed a power of dissimulation which enabled her to veil her vices under a mask of fascination that few were able to resist; and thus she became at once not only the idol of the whole court, but also that of Francis himself; and it soon required the most finished art on the part even of Madame d'Etampes to counteract her daily-increasing influence.

Although a girl in years, Catherine was already old in heart; and her unexpected elevation, instead of satisfying, had merely served to excite, the love of power and domination which her after-career so fatally developed. Haughty and imperious in spirit, she possessed sufficient command over not only her words and actions, but even her very looks, to render the real sentiments of her heart subservient to her ambition; and to conceal her most serious designs under a playful carelessness of manner by which those who surrounded her were duped into a belief that she was occupied only by the passing pleasure of the hour.

Thus constituted, the young princess could not but prove a dangerous rival, even to the astute and experienced Madame d'Etampes; but this was not the only peril to which her favour was at that moment exposed. On the decease of Louis de Brézé, Grand Sénéchal of Normandy, his young and lovely widow, Diane de Poitiers, had taken up her residence at the court, where she was warmly welcomed by the king, who treated her upon all occasions with a marked distinction well calculated to arouse the apprehensions of the jealous duchess. The impression produced upon the heart, or perhaps more properly speaking upon the fancy of Francis, by the extraordinary personal attractions of la Grande-Sénéchale on her first appearance before him, had long been matter of notoriety; and, as the twelve years which had since elapsed had only tended to change the lovely and graceful girl into a dignified and dazzling woman, not a few among the courtiers began to indulge themselves in a spirit of prophecy, little calculated to flatter the vanity of the reigning favourite. Meanwhile Catherine de' Medici became ere long the fast friend of the beautiful young widow; and thus the position of Madame d'Etampes was apparently rendered tenfold more precarious.

Such was the circle in which Francis I passed his leisure moments; and they, as we have shown, comprised no small portion of his entire existence; while the manner in which his household was constituted tended rather to increase than to diminish the pernicious effects of such an association. The principal officers of whom the royal household had formerly been composed, were at the same time officers of the crown; great nobles, representing the highest and most ancient families in the kingdom; and who held this dignity as an hereditary and unalienable right. They possessed authority not only over the subordinates in their several departments, but also over all the private citizens who were in the employment of the court; and were, in short, while fulfilling their duties to the sovereign, in the position of feudal barons, their service being more honourable to the throne than agreeable to the monarch; the tenacity with which they insisted upon the observance of their privileges, and the punctilious parade with which they performed the ceremonials of their several offices, rendering them more frequently the opponents than the instruments of their royal master's will. Francis, as it may be readily imagined, could ill brook the partial subserviency to which he was reduced by such a system; and accordingly he confined the grand officers of the crown to the crown itself; and formed a personal household totally distinct from these dignities; selecting for that purpose such of the nobles and courtiers as he considered the most calculated to contribute to the magnificence and brilliancy of his own circle.

This arrangement revolutionized the whole court; neither birth nor extent of territory any longer ensured to its possessor the right of attendance upon the person of the sovereign. Wealth failed where wit triumphed; the uncle of the favourite became Great-Almoner of France; and the minor appointments were made upon the same principle. Younger brothers, who under a different reign would have despaired of figuring in the immediate circles of royalty, saw their elders compelled to yield to their better fortune; and obscure abbés, celebrated for their gallantry, or patronised by a frail beauty, found themselves on a level with mitred bishops and lordly abbots. In a court so constituted, it is not wonderful that every species of amusement, splendour, and profligacy, soon abounded; the haughtiest of the nobility devoured their mortification, and laid aside their morgue, in order to obtain an entrance within the magic circle; while even the church dignitaries did not disdain to follow their example. Ambition as well as inclination led to this result; for it soon became apparent that court favour was the only avenue to personal advancement; and thus prelates of the highest rank soon taught themselves to participate in frivolous and degrading pursuits ill-suited alike to their sacred calling, or to the example which they were bound to offer to the laity.

And in the midst of this vain, and eager, and voluptuous throng of sycophantic courtiers, who acknowledged no law save the will of the monarch, and no religion save his pleasure, were congregated the most noble and the most beautiful women of whom France could boast. The circle of the queen had been formed from that of Louise de Savoie; the court of Marguerite de Navarre, during her frequent visits to her royal brother, was comprised of wit, fascination, and gallantry; Catherine de' Medici had been followed to France by a train of ladies equally attractive and equally facile; and thus it will cease to be subject of surprise, that ere long purity and virtue were not only disregarded, but even made the common theme of sarcasm and contempt.

We dare not comment upon this frightful feature of the reign of Francis I; but as faithful chroniclers we are compelled to record, that while the highest honours of profligacy were unanimously awarded to the king himself, the second were conceded to the Cardinal of Lorraine, one of the first prelates of the kingdom.

Turn we rather to the one fair oasis in this desert of corruption—to the pure if not peaceful solitude of the forsaken queen. On one at least of the giddy throng by whom Francis was surrounded, the meek but dignified resignation of Eleonora had made a profound impression; and that one was the Marechal de Montmorenci. High in the favour of the king, and as upright as he

was brave, the godson of Anne de Bretagne could not, nevertheless, contemplate the unhappy position of the queen without experiencing a deep interest in her fate, which soon grew into a warmer feeling. He knew the pride of her Spanish spirit, and he was, consequently, well aware of the daily and hourly struggle to which she was condemned; and although he had hitherto remained insensible to the blandishments of beauty and the fascinations of coquetry, he suffered himself to be betrayed into a passion for the wife of his sovereign. Conscious, however, of the enormity of his error, he strove for many months to conceal from Eleonora the state of his affections; while she, utterly unsuspecting of the feeling which she had elicited in the breast of the stem soldier, continued to welcome him to her presence with a warmth and kindness which only tended to increase the evil. It was under his protection that she had entered France; he had known her in her own sunny Spain, where she was honoured and happy; she could converse with him upon the past, and, for a time at least, forget the present. He alone cared to remember that she was neglected and desolate; no wonder, therefore, that even in her most melancholy moments she had ever a smile and a gentle greeting for the gallant marshal.

The moment came at last, however, in which Montmorenci could no longer maintain his self-command. The court were hunting in the woods of Chambord. The Queen of Navarre, and Catherine de' Medici, had followed in the train of the king; the blue litter of Madame d'Etampes had passed the gates, and proceeded apparently in the same direction; and the palace of Amboise was deserted by all save Eleonora and the Marechal, who, on a pretext of indisposition, had been permitted to absent himself from the royal sport.

The wife of Francis I was seated at an open casement overlooking the bright current of the Loire. Her head rested upon her hand, and an expression of acute suffering was visible on her fine features; but her eyes were tearless as they followed unconsciously the course of the sparkling ripples upon which they lingered. She started, however, from her reverie when Montmorenci was announced, and extended towards him her hand, which he raised respectfully to his lips.

"You here, M. le Marechal!" she exclaimed with undisguised astonishment; "I heard that the whole court were at Chambord."

"Your Majesty is at Amboise;" was the abrupt reply.

"True" said the poor queen, forcing a smile; "I, as you are aware, am unequal to such an exertion either of strength or skill as that of a royal hunt. But you, Monsieur? Can it be that you have lost taste for this courtly diversion? or, what I should much more deplore, that the king—"

"No, Madame, no", interposed Montmorenci; "his Majesty did not decline my attendance; and I am as keen a sportsman as even your august husband himself; but, nevertheless, I have not followed the hunt."

"And wherefore?" demanded Eleonora absently, as she passed her hand across her brow, and endeavoured to arouse herself more thoroughly from her reverie.

"I will tell you, Madame" said the Marechal with an unsteady voice, as he fixed his eyes earnestly upon her; "because your unhappiness is destroying my existence—Because you are at once the most admirable and the most ill-used of your sex—because—ay, wither me if you will, Madame, with your frown, but I have already suffered for months, and I must now speak or die—because I love you, and would rather expire here, at your feet, than live on longer in the same torment."

"Do you know to whom you speak, Sir?" asked the queen, rising from her seat as the Marechal sank on his knee before her. "Can you, too—you—have forgotten that I am the Queen of

France; the wife of your sovereign?”

“That you are Queen of France may the saints be praised!” murmured Montmorenci; “that you are the wife of Francis I live only to deplore.”

“Sir;” said Eleonora haughtily, as she seized the small rattle of polished steel which was at that period the substitute for a bell, and which lay on a table at her side; “will you compel me to summon my attendants, and to dishonour you? Do you seek to dishonour me?”

“Heaven forbid, Madame” said the Marechal, rising from the floor; “I have already sinned more than enough. That I love you is my misfortune; do not make it my crime. I will deserve your forbearance. Neither commands nor threats can compel me to do otherwise than regard you as the most perfect of your sex. Say or do what you will, that fact must remain unaltered; but I will never again intrude it upon you. Grant me only one favour, and I am yours in life and death.”

“And that favour, Sir?”

“Is simple enough, your Majesty. Only allow me, whenever I have the honour to approach your person, to pronounce the words ‘Good morrow, Madame’, that when they meet your ear they may remind you of the humble and obedient lover, whom even your contempt could not alienate.”

“So be it, M. le Marechal”; said the queen, striving to suppress the smile elicited by so extraordinary a request; “thus much I may in honour concede; but I rely on your good faith.”

“Nor shall you repent the trust, Madame”; was the reply of the supplicant, as he made his parting salutation; “but should you ever want a hand to support, or an arm to avenge you, remember Montmorenci”.

In another instant the Marechal had disappeared; and while the brilliant train which followed Francis through the woods of Chambord filled the echoes of the forest-paths with the clamours of their joyous revelry, his deserted wife flung herself back upon her seat; and, with her face buried in her hands, wept the hot tears of mortification, wounded pride, and that unutterable anguish which not even tears can solace.”

Montmorenci religiously adhered to the compact into which he had voluntarily entered; and from thenceforward never omitted, while respectfully performing his obeisance to the queen, to say in a slow and melancholy tone, “Good morrow, Madame”, without on any occasion adding a single word of homage or of compliment. This peculiarity soon attracted the attention of the court, to whom the “audiences” of M. de Montmorenci became a perpetual source of curiosity and amusement; but neither the sneers of some, nor the smiles of all, disturbed for a moment the gravity of the Marechal; although at times even the lip of Eleonora herself quivered with a transient expression of mirth.

It is certain, moreover, that the self-command and good faith of her eccentric admirer made a gradual impression upon the feelings of the queen; her womanly vanity was flattered, and her gratitude excited by a constancy of devotion to which she had long been unaccustomed; and whereas she originally replied to his address only by a grave bow, she ere long relented so far as to repay his perseverance by a more gracious gesture; although she still received his greeting with dignified reserve.

The marriage of Henry VIII with Anna Boleyn had meanwhile taken place, despite the refusal of the pope to recognise the divorce of Katherine; and although it had been solemnized in the presence of not more than half a dozen witnesses, the fact soon transpired, and excited the

indignation of both the pontiff and the emperor to so high a degree, that despite the entreaties of Francis, who earnestly endeavoured to avert such a calamity, sentence of excommunication was fulminated against the English monarch. This extreme step had only been taken a couple of days, when a courier arrived in Rome, empowered by Henry to declare his willingness to abide the judgment of the holy see for his disobedience, provided that certain of the cardinals, who were inimical to him, should not be included in the council. It was, however, too late. The pope had suffered his passion to betray him into a precipitation as unwise as it was irremediable; and the English king was no sooner informed that the walls of the Eternal City were placarded with the bull which had been fulminated against him, than he openly avowed himself as the head of the Reformed Church, and declared both himself and his kingdom independent of all papal interference or control.

The unfortunate Katherine of Aragon expired in the January of 1534, an event which rendered the impolitic haste of Clement still more conspicuous; and there is little doubt that the annoyance and regret to which he was subjected by a consciousness of the serious error into which he had been betrayed, and the perpetual remorse induced by the reports that reached him of the virulence to which Henry, in order to avenge the insult offered to his own dignity, was persecuting the Romanists in England, accelerated his own end. He died on the 24th of September in the same year, and was succeeded by Alessandro Farnese, who assumed the title of Paul III.

A short time subsequently, the Count de Nassau, with his son the Prince of Orange, visited the French court on their way from Spain into Flanders, and were entrusted by Charles V with proposals of friendship and alliance, in which he represented to Francis the importance of a perfect understanding between the two most powerful monarchs of Christendom; who, were they to combine their strength and their resources with mutual faith and good-will, might defy and control the whole of Europe. In order, as he moreover asserted, to prove his own sincerity in this belief, he offered the hand of one of his nieces to the Dauphin, and that of his son to a princess of France; and, in return for his thus taking the initiative, he requested that the French king, should he decline this double alliance, would at least abstain from invading his territories during his absence on a campaign against the Infidels which he was about to undertake; but the moment was an unpropitious one for the success of such a negotiation.

The death of Clement VII was a severe blow to the previsions of Francis, who had depended upon the exertions of the Medici to insure to the Duke d'Orleans a powerful sovereignty in Lombardy. The late peace, brief as it was, had nevertheless sufficed to weary him of inaction. The treaty of Cambray was an undying source of irritation; the nation was relieved from civil discord, and had ceased to oppose the system of taxation which he had introduced; the bequest of his mother, and the public revenues, had once more replenished his treasury; he was surrounded by a young and impetuous nobility, eager for adventure and distinction, and looking back restlessly upon their past successes; he believed himself secure of the alliance of Henry VIII, in whose cause he had so strenuously exerted his influence with the late pope; and who had, by his repudiation of Katherine of Aragon, so exasperated the emperor, that he was anticipating a descent of the imperialists upon England; and he calculated, moreover, that he could rely not only upon the assistance of the Protestant princes, in the event of his engaging in a new war, but also upon that of the sultan.

No wonder then that, eager at once for excitement and revenge, Francis soon found a pretext for the renewal of hostilities against his old rival. He accordingly busied himself in the re-organization of his army; and formed a militia upon the model of the ancient Roman legions, which was composed entirely of his own subjects, and in which no individual of either the German or Swiss troops who were in his pay was permitted to serve. This force amounted to forty-two thousand men; and in May, 1534, he made a progress through the seven provinces, each of which had supplied its quota of six thousand troops, accompanied by his whole court, and passed the

several legions successively in review.

Charles V was meanwhile actively engaged against the pirates of Africa; his success was signal; and in little more than two months he had landed in that country, defeated Barbarossa before Tunis, reinstated Muley Hassan, taken possession of all the seaports of Barbary, and released upwards of twenty thousand Christian slaves, whom he conveyed to their several countries to bless and extol the name of their deliverer.

All Christendom rang with the praises of the emperor. To every nation in Europe he had restored some of its lost subjects; and the voice of gratitude was loud on every side; while, on the other hand, the intelligence which the French king was known to maintain with the Infidels, had excited universal indignation and distrust. In vain did Francis deny the accusation, and denounce the emperor as his enemy for having suffered it to gain credence. It was known that Solymán had secret agents at his court; he felt that his reputation was shaken throughout the whole Christian world; and he was conscious that he dare not attempt to attack the power of Charles while he was engaged in protecting religion and humanity from the barbarity of the Moslem.

But the year 1534 was, nevertheless, not fated to terminate without its own peculiar tragedy. Alarmed by the evil feeling which existed against him, Francis pursued with redoubled animosity the professors of Protestantism within his own kingdom. The tenets of Calvin were already beginning to rival those of Luther, and were promulgated throughout France and the Low Countries by his disciples; placards, denying the truth of the doctrine of transubstantiation, were scattered in the streets, and even pasted upon the walls of the Louvre and the king eagerly availed himself of this circumstance to regain the influence which he had lost over papal Europe.

He first instituted a rigid search for the authors of these obnoxious documents, and his agents succeeded in discovering six individuals who were declared to be implicated in the crime. He then instructed Jean du Bellay, the bishop of Paris, to order a solemn procession, in public reparation of the insult which had been offered to the most holy sacrament of the church; and not only travelled from Blois to Paris to assist at it in person, but was also accompanied by the queen and his three sons. The procession proceeded from the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois to the cathedral of Notre Dame; and the Eucharist was borne by the bishop attired in full pontificals, attended by a number of priests laden with relics. The king followed, with a lighted taper in his hand; the three princes and the Duke de Vendome supported the canopy; and all the foreign ambassadors, cardinals, prelates, and nobility then resident in the capital closed the *cortége*. Nor did the king satisfy himself with this tacit demonstration of devotion; for, before the ceremonial was at an end, he publicly declared that, if his right arm were infected with the cancer of the new heresy, he would with his left hand lop it from his body; and that, in like case, he would not spare his own children.

Our next paragraph we must transcribe *verbatim et literatim* from Le Pure Daniel, for we should be unable to find words of our own in which to record so horrible a butchery.

“The evening of the same day, the six culprits were conveyed to the public square, where fires had been prepared to burn them. There was, in the centre of each pile, a sort of tall pulley, to which they were attached; the flames were then lighted beneath them, and the executioners, gently loosening the cord, allowed these wretches to descend sufficiently near to the fire for them to feel all its agony; then they were once more hoisted up; and after having made them suffer this cruel torment several times, they were flung into the midst of the flames, where they expired.”

Sismondi (quoting from Jo. Sleidani) gives a somewhat different, although equally terrible, description of the instrument of torture. He says, speaking of the victims: “Had the people torn them to pieces, they would have shown them mercy; their ferocity would not have equalled that of

the king. He had commanded that these unfortunates should be attached to a lofty machine; which was a beam so nicely balanced that, as it descended, it plunged them into the blaze of the pile, but rose again almost instantly, in order to prolong their sufferings, until, the flame seizing upon the cords by which they were bound, they fell into the middle of the fire.”

“ Six”, says Mezeray, “were burnt at Paris, and more than twice as many in several other places; but for two who were put to death, a hundred others rose from their ashes.”

God be praised that it was so! For such enormities, perpetrated by such agents—a profligate king, a licentious prelacy, a venal and corrupted court—were assuredly more than enough to turn the hearts of the right-minded and the prayerful from a faith for which as there was no mercy, so also there could be no hope.



CHAPTER II

[1535-36.]

THE LEAGUE OF SMALKALDEN DECLARE AGAINST THE FRENCH KING•

The year 1535 commenced by a new persecution of the Reformists. By order of the king, all those who had been arrested were put upon their trial, and many of them perished by the swinging beam described in the last chapter.

Francis was desirous to make his peace with the church; and notwithstanding the ambition which he still retained to be considered as the protector of letters, he was no sooner accused by Beda of favouring the new faith in compliance with the entreaties of his sister, than, after having, in the first burst of his indignation, caused him to be arrested, and imprisoned in the ecclesiastical dungeons, he condemned him to make the *amende honorable* before the church of Notre Dame, and to avow that he had spoken against the truth and the king. He however subsequently became alarmed lest this act of severity might fail to remove the impression produced upon the minds of those before whom Beda had asserted his heresy; and availing himself of the circumstance of the placards, to which we have alluded above, he—the proposed founder of the royal college, the correspondent of Erasmus, and the successor of Louis XII—issued letters patent abolishing the use of the press, and forbidding the printing of any book, be it what it might, within the confines of the kingdom of France, upon pain of death! This retrogressive measure paralysed, as a natural consequence, the energies of all the learned men who had sought his court as an assured asylum; and it also produced another and very fatal result; for while Francis, by the blow which he thus struck at the very root of civilization, pacified the priesthood, the court of Rome, and the more fanatical of his subjects, he most imprudently and recklessly overlooked the probable effect of such proceedings upon the minds of the Protestant princes, whose continued alliance had become doubly valuable to him since he had resolved upon renewing the war against the emperor.

The conviction of his error was soon forced upon him. The enormous cruelties which he had perpetrated upon their co-religionists excited the horror and indignation of the members of the league of Smalkalden, who openly declared that the interests of their faith would be less endangered by their adherence to the house of Austria, than to those of a monarch whose barbarity had already sacrificed so many valuable lives.

In vain did Francis, anxious to regain the confidence of the German princes, address each separately, asserting that the culprits had suffered rather as political than as religious delinquents; in vain did he write to Melancthon with his own hand, entreating him to repair to France, and to discuss the subject of his faith with the doctors of the Sorbonne; assuring him that he did not consider it impossible to unite the French and German churches; the league were not to be deluded by a subterfuge; and consequently, although when urged to the step by Luther, Melancthon consented to undertake the journey to France, in order, if possible, to prevent a recurrence of the butchery of the past months, the Elector of Saxony positively refused to permit him to take a step of such importance without the sanction of the emperor.

While thus occupied at home, Francis still maintained his resolution of once more invading the Milanese; and having authorized the Count Guillaume de Furstemberg to levy troops in Germany, he despatched the president Poyet to Savoy, to request from the duke a free passage for the French army through his territories. Charles of Savoy, however, at the instigation of his wife,

refused to hearken to such a proposition, and his refusal so exasperated the king that he immediately declared war against him; upon which, Admiral de Brion Chabot, who, having entered Brescia, had taken possession of all the towns, none of which were garrisoned, thence proceeded to Savoy, where he made himself master of Chambery and Montmelian, with all the territory on that side of Mont Cenis.

The Duke of Savoy, alarmed by a promptitude of hostilities for which he was thoroughly unprepared, urged the emperor to lose no time in coming to his succour; and his ambassadors encountered Charles V at Naples, where he had just disembarked amid the acclamations of the people, with the laurels recently gained at Tunis fresh upon his brow. The envoys of the duke were instructed to propose to the conqueror, with a view of inducing him to espouse at once the interests of their master, the exchange of Nice, and other territories then in the possession of the duke on the French side of the Alps, against such as might be afterwards agreed upon between them; an offer which augmented at once the anger and the alarm of Francis, as the cession of these particular portions of the duchy of Savoy opened up a way into his own kingdom, of which the emperor could avail himself at his pleasure, by invading Dauphiny and Provence, and thus securing an entrance into the very heart of France.

This negotiation was, however, abandoned, the death of Francisco Sforza, which occurred just at this period, having arrested the proceedings of Chabot; who, as well as the king his master, anticipated that the duke having died without issue, the claim of the French princes would no longer be disputed by the emperor; and that, consequently, it would be mere wanton cruelty to take cities by force which must ere long recognise their legitimate sovereign in the person of Francis. Both the one and the other had, however, forgotten that ambition was no less the ruling passion of Charles than of his rival; and that he was little likely at the very proudest moment of his life, to detach one gem from the coronal which he wore with so much jealousy.

Nor did the feeling evinced by the Neapolitans when, by the death of Sforza, they saw the duchy of Milan about to fall once more into his hands, and ascertained that the same distrust and dissatisfaction had manifested, it self throughout the whole of the Italian states, tend to render the emperor more compliant. He had entered Naples as the protector of Christendom against the Infidels; his train had been swelled by the ambassadors of all the princes of Italy, who had submitted to him, as to a supreme arbitrator, their several subjects of dispute and misunderstanding; the Florentine patriots had appealed to him to re-establish them as a republic, and they had yielded passively to his will when he insisted upon confirming Alessandro de' Medici in his sovereignty, stained as he was with crime; and moreover, as an earnest of his favour, guaranteed to him, in accordance with a pledge already given, the hand of his natural daughter Marguerite; to whom the duke was subsequently married on the 28th of February, 1536.

On the 8th of July of the year which we are now recording (1535), France was delivered from an unjust minister in the person of the chancellor Duprat, who expired of phthiasis, at his château at Nantouillet, in intense suffering, not less of mind than of body; the agony of the hideous disease to which he fell a victim being, even exceeded by the torments of a guilty and remorseful conscience, which vented itself in tears and groans, but to which he had listened too late. He was succeeded in the chancellorship by Antoine du Bourg, the president of the parliament of Paris.

The court was at this period sojourning at Amboise, where the Queen of Navarre was on a visit; and her arrival had been hailed as the occasion for a succession of festivities, at which the Duchess d'Etampes openly presided. The favour of Anne de Pisseleu had now reached its extreme point. She had enriched and ennobled her family; she had seen herself powerful enough to assume the place, and almost to usurp the dignity, of the wife of the sovereign; she had secured the friendship of Catherine de' Medici; and she had become the dispenser of all the royal bounties. Many a noble courtier assumed her colours in the lists, and many a titled abbot was content to

stand beside her at her toilette. None cared to remember that her life was one of the most unblushing licentiousness; and while the rabble of the Pré-aux-Clercs bandied her name among them like that of the vilest of her sex, and made her profligate adventures the theme of their ribald gossipry, there was neither prince nor prelate at the court who did not obey her behest as though it had been that of an oracle.

Among other entertainments ostensibly provided for the amusement of the king's sister, a tournament was held in the great court of the castle, at which all the nobles and gentlemen then resident at Amboise were invited to assist. Not only the princes, but even the king himself, had in turn taken their place in the lists, and the Duke d'Angoulême had particularly distinguished himself by his prowess. Of all his children, Charles d'Angoulême, his younger son, was the especial favourite of Francis, whom he greatly resembled both in person and temperament. Impulsive, reckless, and daring, he despised alike danger and difficulty; while, even although yet a boy in years, he had already seriously attached himself to one of the most beautiful women of the court. Unlike the dauphin, he was fair with a profusion of light hair, and dark blue eyes, one of which he had, however, lost at an early age from the effects of small-pox. His ardent love of all warlike amusements and field sports; his frankness, courage, and gallant bearing, had greatly endeared him to the king, who was repelled by the cold stateliness of the dauphin, and irritated by the heavy and unsocial manners of the Duke d'Orleans. Nevertheless, Francis occasionally endeavoured to restrain the impetuosity of the young prince, but with little effect; and his feeling of exultation on the occasion to which we are now referring, was so unbounded when he found himself the hero of the day, that it betrayed him into an imprudence which had nearly cost him his life.

The fatigue that he had undergone in the lists, and his consequent exhaustion, induced the young prince to swallow a large goblet of spiced wine a few moments before the king rose from the supper-table; and this insidious draught acted the more potently upon him from the fact that he had previously pledged the flatterers, by whom he was surrounded, with more than sufficient vigour. In this state of excitement he no sooner ascertained from one of the chamberlains that the monarch had retired to his apartment, than he rose abruptly from his seat, exclaiming to a group of wild young courtiers who were in attendance upon him: "Now then, gentle men; his majesty is safe for the night, and we are the lords of Amboise. Let us go and take the air upon the bridge, and see if we cannot thrash some of the rascally lacqueys who amuse themselves by stopping up the thoroughfare, and striking those who thrust them aside."

This proposal met with unanimous applause; and the hot-headed young prince, and his equally wild companions, at once sallied from the palace, and rushed upon the lounging group on the bridge, who, being in the service of the court, and many among them even in that of the king himself, all carried arms. The darkness of the night rendered it impossible for them to recognise their assailants; and, consequently, when the Duke d'Angoulême, at the head of his little party, fell upon them sword in hand, they defended themselves vigorously; while, as he persisted in retaining his position, he soon became the principal object of their attack; until at length a stroke was aimed at him with so sure a hand, that M. de Castelnau, a Gascon noble, and one of his favourite companions, had only time to throw himself between the duke and his antagonist, and to receive the blow intended for his master, at whose feet he fell dead upon the instant. At once sobered and heart-stricken at the result of his imprudence, the young prince shouted imperiously: "Put up your swords, gentlemen; I am the Duke d'Angouleme."

At this startling announcement every weapon was withdrawn; and in a few seconds the bleeding body of the faithful and devoted Castelnau, the victim of this ignoble broil, was surrounded only by the prince and his followers. Charles d'Angoulême, as he bent over him, shed tears of unaffected sorrow, as sincere as they were unavailing; he did not even seek to ascertain by whose hand his friend had fallen, for he was self-convicted; and he could not disguise from himself that he had been more guilty than the actual murderer.

In order to dissipate the annoyance which he felt at this disgraceful adventure, and if possible to overcome the gloom which the fate of a friend to whom he had been greatly attached, had shed over the spirits of the young prince, the king, after having severely reprimanded his son, removed with the court to Chambord; and it was, probably, the dread which he felt lest the hitherto lively youth should belie the promise of his boyhood, that led him to observe, even more closely than ever, the demeanour of his other sons. On one occasion, as he was leaning over the balcony of the great hall, watching the three princes who were engaged at tennis in the court below, he turned suddenly towards the Grande Sénéchale who was standing near him, and motioning to her to advance, he directed her attention to the listlessness with which the Duke d'Angoulême was pursuing the game.

"I scarcely recognise him", he said with a sigh; "his natural enthusiasm is quenched. Even the dauphin exhibits more excitement."

"Give him time, Sire" replied Diana de Poitiers soothingly; "he is young, and he has lost a friend. His royal highness loved M. de Castelnau."

"Doubtlessly you are right, Madame" acquiesced the king. "At least you are an admirable consoler, and I dare not doubt your words. He is young, and we know that time cures all evils."

"Not all, Sire."

Francis looked at her steadfastly. "You are right again, Madame; not all. There are certain evils which time and memory can only canker; and others for which it affords no hope. You see the dauphin. Time fails to make a Frenchman of the Spaniard."

"Monseigneur is grave beyond his years, assuredly, Sire", said Madame de Brézé; "but his mind is all nobleness."

"And Henry, Madam? what will you say of Henry?" asked the king almost peevishly; "For my own part, I despair of him. Since his marriage he has become more unsocial and unpracticable than ever."

"Surely your majesty did not anticipate that a wife would render him more frank and joyous"; said Diana with a slight accent of sarcasm; "For the Duke d'Orleans there was no cure but love."

"Aha! is it so, fair Diana?" asked Francis, suddenly roused into excitement; "then we have committed a fatal error, for I fear that love and marriage are almost incompatible."

The beautiful widow was silent.

"Catherine is, however, handsome enough to animate a statue"; pursued the king; "it can scarcely be difficult to love her."

"True"; said Madame de Brézé, with an arch look; "but love cannot be compelled; make it a duty, and it turns to loathing."

"He is, then, irreclaimable?"

"By no means. A sincere and ardent passion would arouse him from his present apathy; for none love more deeply than those who resist moral coercion."

“On the faith of a gentleman, you possess more wisdom, Madame, handsome as you are” exclaimed Francis energetically, “than all the doctors of the Sorbonne. I only wish that someone as fair and as fascinating as yourself would undertake his conversion. I should be her debtor beyond all requital.”

“The experiment might at least be tried”; murmured Diana, twisting her pearl chatelaine about her taper fingers.

“But by whom?” asked the king; “For such an undertaking it would require a miracle to ensure success. If, indeed, you could be prevailed upon to sacrifice yourself—”

“Your majesty does not possess a more devoted servant than Diana de Poitiers.”

“I know it, Madame ; I know it”; said Francis, as a strange expression passed over his face; “and I am equally aware that you at least could not fail; but perhaps, the past—”

“Do you fear, Sire”; asked the Grande Sénéchale with an ironical smile; “that the memory of M. de Brézé—”

The king forced an uneasy laugh, as he hastily replied without awaiting the conclusion of her inquiry; “I have no such apprehension, fair lady; therefore let the old Sénéchal rest in peace. We will revert no more to bygone years; nothing is so idle as retrospection. While as regards the future I do not for a moment doubt your power, and only wish that it could be successfully exerted.”

“Your wishes are my law, Sire”; was the rejoinder of the fair widow, as her rich lips parted in affected merriment; “but Madame d’Etampes is approaching, and I will no longer intrude upon your majesty.”

“The duchess is jealous”; said the royal libertine, as he acknowledged her parting curtsy; “and we must not violate the proprieties at Chambord. I will not detain you, Madame la Grande Sénéchale”, and as Diana moved away, the favourite advanced to the balcony; a liberty upon which the neglected queen would have feared to venture.

At this period the widow of Louis de Brézé had already attained her thirty-first year, while the prince Henry was only in his seventeenth; and at the first glance it would appear as though so formidable a disparity of age must have rendered any attempt on her part to engage the affections of so mere a youth alike abortive and ridiculous; but so perfectly had she preserved even the youthful bloom which had added so much to her attractions on her first appearance at court, that she appeared ten years younger than she actually was. Her features were regular and classical; her complexion faultless; her hair of a rich purple black, which took a golden tint in the sunshine; while her teeth, her ankle, her hands and arms, and her bust, were each in their turn the theme of the court poets. That the extraordinary and almost fabulous duration of her beauty was in a great degree due to the precautions which she adopted, there can be little doubt, for she spared no effort to secure it; she was jealously careful of her health, and in the most severe weather bathed in cold water; she suffered no cosmetic to approach her, denouncing every compound of the kind as worthy only of those to whom nature had been so niggardly as to compel them to complete her imperfect work; she rose every morning at six o’clock, and had no sooner left her chamber than she sprang into the saddle, and after having galloped a league or two returned to her bed, where she remained until midday engaged in reading. The system appeals a singular one, but in her case it undoubtedly proved successful, as after having enslaved the Duke d’Orleans in her thirty-first year, she still reigned in absolute sovereignty over the heart of the King of France when she had nearly reached the age of sixty! It is certain, however, that the magnificent Diana owed no small

portion of this extraordinary and unprecedented constancy to the charms of her mind and the brilliancy of her intellect.

The short dialogue between Francis and herself which we have given above, inspired the ambitious widow with new ideas and aspirations. Hitherto she had been content to await a reaction in the heart of Francis himself. She did not believe that Madame d'Etampes could long conceal from him the extent of her profligacy; and well aware that should the favourite be disgraced her successor would soon be determined, she contented herself by exerting all her fascinations against the facile heart of the monarch, and watching for the hour of her own triumph.

The few sentences which had passed in the balcony, however, had sufficed to open up a new career before her. That the king had spoken rather in bitter mirth than in sober seriousness, she was well aware; but this conviction failed to shake her purpose. The saturnine and forbidding nature of the Duke d'Orleans moreover rendered the task which she was about to undertake one of no common difficulty, but this very consciousness piqued her vanity, and determined her to persevere.

The prince was at first annoyed, and even abashed, at the undisguised preference exhibited towards him by the most beautiful woman at court; but Diana soon succeeded in subjugating his heart through his vanity. Conscious that he possessed neither the dignity of the dauphin, nor the frank gracefulness of his younger brother, Henri d'Orleans had hitherto carefully avoided the society of the opposite sex; and had even received the hand of his wife with a marked repugnance which had drawn down upon him the displeasure of the king; but he soon found that there was no resisting the seductions of a syren, who while she looked into his face with the brightest smile and the most brilliant eyes in the world, discovered in himself a thousand estimable qualities and personal attractions to which he had never dreamt he could advance any claim.

That he did not long combat his growing passion is evident from a poem addressed to him by his fair and frail conquest only a few weeks subsequently; and this production, extracted from the MSS. of the Bibliotheque Royale, is so characteristic alike of the taste and the morals of the time, that we offer no apology for its insertion.

“Voicy vraiment qu'Amour un beau matin

S'en vint m'offrir flourette très gentille,

-----Là, se prit-il, a ournez vostre teint

Et vistement violiers et jonquille

Me rejetoit, à tant, que ma mantille

En estoit pleine, et mon coeur se pasmoit;

(Car, voyez-vous, flourette si gentille

Estois garçon frais, clispos, et jeunnet).

Ains tremblottante et destournant les yeux ....

Nenni.. . disois-je . . . Ah, ne serez deçue,  
Reprit Amour, et soudain à ma vue  
Va presentant un laurier merveilleux.  
----Mieux vault, lui dis-je, estre sasse que Royme  
Ains me sentis et fraimir et trembler,  
Diane faillist, et comprendrez sans peine  
Duquel matin je praitends reparler.”

What effect the triumph of Madame de Brézé over the heart of the prince produced upon the mind of the king, the old chronicler who dilates complaisantly upon all the preceding details does not inform us; but the impression which it made upon Madame d’Etampes soon became apparent, and was destined to exert a most unhappy influence over the fortunes of the nation. The first weapon which the haughty favourite wielded against the mature mistress of the young duke was that of ridicule. She affected to discredit the report that M. d’Orleans could be enthralled by the antiquated charms of a “wrinkled old woman” and in support of her argument, amused herself by asserting that she was born in the same year in which the daughter of St. Vallier had espoused the Grand Sénéchal of Normandy. Of course she found many and attentive auditors, not one of whom attempted to disprove her words, although all were aware that Madame de Brézé was the senior of the duchess only by seven years. She next attacked the person of her victim, forewarning those who were bold enough to uphold her claims to admiration, that the beauty of which she was so vain was known to be the result of sorcery, and that they would ere long see it vanish as mysteriously as it had been bestowed. Diana, however, was not to be conquered by means so puerile as these; and, secure of the affections and support of the prince, she treated the calumnies of her persecutor with proud and silent disdain.

The nature of Madame d’Etampes was ill calculated to brook this tacit assumption of superiority; and foiled in her efforts to rid herself of the intrusive beauty by her own agency, she carried her vindictiveness so far as to demand of the king that he should exile Madame de Brézé from the court; but Francis, who had already begun to congratulate himself upon the altered deportment of the duke, which he attributed entirely to the influence exerted over him by Diana, refused to accede to her wishes; reminding her that while the Duchess d’Orleans uttered no complaint, and continued to exhibit towards the Grande Sénéchale the same consideration and regard as ever, it was impossible that he could interfere to prevent the progress of the liaison. Not even this declaration could, however, discourage the pertinacious favourite, who thenceforward studiously avoided all reference to Diana herself, but strenuously endeavoured to disparage the duke in the eyes of his royal father; drawing invidious comparisons between that prince and the dauphin; and seeking by every means in her power to crush his rapidly increasing favour.

It must not, nevertheless, be supposed, that although Madame de Brézé possessed sufficient self-command to exhibit nothing save contempt towards the vindictive duchess, she did not acutely feel, and bitterly resent the sarcasms of which she had been made the subject. Jealous of the superior power of the royal mistress, and exasperated by her insults, even while she displayed worldly wisdom enough patiently to abide her time of vengeance, her heart was to the full as much agitated by hatred as that of Anne de Pisseleu herself; and a conviction that such must in reality be the case once more divided the court into two separate factions, which the doubtful aspect of public affairs alone tended to render for a time innoxious.

Anxious if possible to avoid a war with Francis, while still apprehensive of a Turkish invasion, and awaiting a favourable opportunity to subjugate the princes of the Protestant league, whom he regarded as rebels alike against his own authority and that of the church; and, moreover, alarmed by the rapid spread of Lutheranism in the Low Countries, Charles determined rather to temporize with his rival on the subject of the duchy of Milan, than by an abrupt rejection of his claim to excite him to hostilities; and accordingly he informed the Sire de Velly, who was awaiting him at Naples with the congratulations of the French king upon his victories in Africa, that he was willing to cede the Milanese to one of the sons of Francis, on condition that the duchy should remain a distinct sovereignty, and that Germany and France should become so closely allied by marriage as to prevent the possibility of future aggression on either side.

He declared, moreover, that he was so sincere in this declaration, that he should take no steps towards the disposal of the province until he received the reply of the king upon three points on which he was anxious to ascertain his intentions. Namely, whether he were prepared to lend his assistance against the Turks; to compel the Protestant princes to revert to the Romanist religion; and to co-operate with him in the pacification of all Christendom. Should Francis accede to these terms, he asserted that he was ready to bestow the duchy upon Charles, the younger of the three princes, on condition that the Duke d'Orleans should accompany him to the siege of Algiers.

As he had anticipated, however, Francis, while he consented to the three points upon which he had first insisted, refused to comply with those which regarded his sons; and he instructed M. de Velly to explain to the emperor that he desired the Milanese for the Duke d'Orleans, and that he was ready to offer four hundred thousand crowns of gold for the investiture; directing him at the same time to press for a reply. When this decision was made known to him, Charles contented himself by vague declarations of his good faith, and evaded a direct answer; while the measures which he meanwhile adopted augured ill for the success of the negotiation. He had not only purchased the fealty of Alessandro de' Medici by a marriage which at once flattered his vanity and secured his sovereignty, but he also entered into a new league with the Venetians; who, dazzled by his triumphs in Africa, and induced by the persuasions of the Duke d'Urbino, once more declared themselves his allies; while he directed the Dowager Queen of Hungary, who had succeeded to the government of the Low Countries on the death of Marguerite of Austria, as well as his lieutenants in Spain, to make levies both of men and money; while he was himself occupied in raising supplies throughout Naples and Sicily, and in the reinforcement of his African army.

Francis, nevertheless, deluded himself with the belief, that as the emperor had spontaneously offered the duchy of Milan to his third son, (a concession which he could, only attribute to his reluctance to renew the war,) he would, when he became convinced that he had no other alternative, ultimately consent to transfer it to the Duke d'Orleans; or even, should he insist upon such an arrangement, to himself. He was at this period suffering from severe illness at Dijon; and was totally unprepared for the communication which he received from De Velly, to the effect that the emperor had declared, that had he been aware of the rigorous treatment which the Duke of Savoy had experienced at the hands of the French king, he should never have condescended to the proposition which he had made, but that having mooted the subject he would not retract his offer; while he trusted that his forbearance would induce Francis to arrange matters in Savoy, and to act with similar consistency.

The negotiation was consequently continued, but the position of the two potentates was no longer the same. Charles had by this clever policy gained a supremacy far greater than it at first appeared to be; and he continued to make strenuous exertions to protect himself in the event of any aggressive measures on the part of his rival, he revealed to the pope the correspondence into which he had entered with the French king, and made the same overtures to him which he had



made to Francis; while he, moreover, volunteered to renew his old friendship with Henry VIII, alleging that the death of his aunt had removed the cause of dissatisfaction which had induced him to abandon the interests of England for those of France; and that he, consequently, felt himself at liberty to recur to his former and more genial associations.

These important steps once taken he proceeded to Rome with great pomp, where he remained for thirteen days, holding constant conferences with the pontiff; and finally requested him to summon the cardinals and foreign ministers, before whom, bareheaded, and with his plumed hat in his hand, he indulged in the most unmeasured invectives and menaces against Francis; recapitulating all the grievances of which he had to complain; accusing him of constantly infringing the peace upon frivolous pretexts, of falsifying his word, of troubling the tranquillity of both Italy and Germany, and of persecuting the Duke of Savoy; and ultimately concluding his harangue, by declaring that the French king must either consent to accept the Duchy of Milan for his younger son upon the conditions which he had stipulated, or meet him in single combat with sword and dagger, on the recognised and solemn pledge that the successful combatant should, with all the resources he could command, and under the orders of the sovereign-pontiff, undertake a crusade against the Infidels, or engage in a war which could end only in the total ruin of one of the two powers.

At this period of his speech, he also suffered his irritation to betray him into an insult towards the French army as unjust as it was offensive; for, in alluding to the result of the late hostilities, he exclaimed; “If I had no better soldiers than those of Francis, I would forthwith go with my hands tied, and a halter about my neck, and implore the mercy of my enemy.”

This address having been delivered in the Spanish language was very imperfectly understood by either M. de Velly, or the Bishop of Maçon, the French ambassador at the papal court; but the extraordinary and unaccustomed vehemence of Charles, and the few sentences which they were enabled to connect, rendered them suspicious that a public affront had been offered to their sovereign; whereupon they demanded an audience of the emperor on the following morning, and required to be informed if they had rightly interpreted his words, and if they were empowered to inform their master that his imperial majesty had defied him to single combat. Charles, in reply, assured them that he had in no way assailed the honour of their sovereign, although he had justified himself; and declared that he should be deeply hurt were his words misconstrued, as he had a great esteem for the king his brother, and had never had cause of complaint against him.

De Velly had, a day or two previously, urged him afresh upon the subject of the negotiation, when he became irritated, and demanded impetuously;—“And you who are so importunate, have you authority to conclude the treaty?”

The royal envoy admitted that he was invested with no such powers; but added that the Admiral Brion de Chabot and the Cardinal de Lorraine were already on their way, and fully accredited.

“Such being the case”; broke in Charles; “as you have no power to act, by what right do you tell me that I give you nothing, but words, when in point of fact it is your own case towards me? But of those I have already given you so many, that I shall waste no more until you are authorized to complete the negotiation.”

On ascertaining the result of their audience, the pontiff frankly declared to the French ambassadors, that he saw no prospect whatever of a successful issue to so intricate an affair; and that he was satisfied the emperor was merely amusing them by words in order to gain time, for that he never would be induced to cede Milan to the Duke d’Orleans, who, in the event of his

surviving the dauphin, would thus merge the duchy in the crown of France.

Moreover, there could be no doubt that the sudden violence betrayed by Charles in the assembly, when his previous policy had been to temporize, was occasioned by the intelligence which had just reached him, that Francis, wearied by his procrastination, had authorized his generals to pursue their operations in Piedmont, which they had done so successfully as to compel his brother-in-law the Duke of Savoy to fly.

That he instantly repented is sufficiently evident however from his conduct on the morrow, when he endeavoured once more to cajole the French ambassadors as he had previously done; but the time for forbearance, as was evident to all the foreign ministers who had been present at the meeting, was now past; and they accordingly did not lose a moment in writing to their several courts to prepare them for the war which appeared inevitable; and that the impression produced upon the mind of the sovereign-pontiff was precisely similar, was made apparent by the fact that he summoned M. de Velly and the Bishop of Macon to his presence the same evening, and endeavoured by every argument he could advance to dissuade them from any act of impetuosity which might tend to augment the animosity of their sovereign against the emperor; and thus disturb a peace, of which Europe had only just begun to reap the benefit. He did not conceal his own displeasure at the intemperate language uttered by Charles; but he entreated them to palliate it in their report; and, if possible, to avert the peril by which the whole of Christendom was threatened.

In reply, the French envoys respectfully but firmly represented to His Holiness, that they had no alternative save to render a faithful account to their sovereign of all that had occurred, the insult having been too public to afford a chance of its concealment; but they, nevertheless, willingly consented to use the greatest circumspection, and to abstain from all comment which might aggravate the evil; reminding the pope, moreover, that his own neutrality would tend more powerfully to secure the maintenance of peace than any other measure. This Clement at once promised to observe; and the ambassadors so far complied with his request as to modify certain expressions uttered by the emperor, while they omitted no portion of his after-explanation; and as, upon their application for a copy of the address which he had delivered in the assembly, they were informed by the imperial ministers that it had been already forwarded to Leidekerke, the ambassador of Charles V at the French court, by whom it was to be presented to the king, they felt assured that the more temperate language they had adopted would not be gainsaid by the official document.

Such indeed proved to be the case, for the ameliorations which had been made by all parties had so much weakened the offensive character of the emperor's address, that the reply of Francis was extremely temperate. He declared the treaty of Madrid to be invalid, inasmuch as he had acted under constraint; while as regarded the renewed proposal of the duel, he asserted that he did not consider himself to have received a challenge, the emperor having stated that his words had been misconstrued, and that he had no such intention; although, had he not been dissuaded by his ministers, he would have accepted it with pleasure if it could have tended to spare the blood of his subjects.

This answer, which astonished as much as it disappointed those who believed that he was too highhearted to brook a second affront of so marked and unmeasured a nature, Francis communicated to all the foreign courts whose ministers had been present at the harangue of the emperor; and at the same time he despatched the Cardinal de Lorraine to Piedmont in order to stay the progress of his army, that Charles might have no plausible pretext for entering upon hostilities. Thence the prelate proceeded to Sienna, where the emperor was at that period sojourning; and having obtained an audience, he respectfully reminded him of his promise to cede the duchy of Milan to the French prince.

The demeanour of Charles V was cold and calm. He said that he had only made the concession under certain conditions, which had been infringed by the invasion of the territories of his vassal the Duke of Savoy; but that he was, nevertheless, willing to perform his promise in favour of Charles d'Angoulême; and to give him, moreover, one of his nieces in marriage.

The cardinal in reply stated that his instructions were to demand the investiture of the Duke d'Orleans; and that should his imperial majesty withhold his assent to that arrangement, he was commanded to proceed to Rome to acquaint the sovereign-pontiff with the failure of the negotiation.

Charles, with a faint smile which conveyed more of contempt than courtesy, merely retorted by bidding him farewell, and assuring him that he should see him with pleasure on his return; and thus civilly dismissed, M. de Lorraine at once proceeded on his journey to Rome. Late events had rendered the emperor more impracticable than ever; and since he had seen the armies of the sultan and Barbarossa flee before him, he had begun to entertain the idea that he was destined to be invincible; a delusion in which he was strengthened by the predictions of the astrologers, who early in the present year (1536) had put forth the most extraordinary statements concerning him. What some had merely advanced from a desire of flattering his vanity, others soon affected to confirm in order to further their personal interests; and these extravagant fallacies were industriously circulated throughout Europe, where they produced an impression difficult to understand in the present day.

Among others who were infected with the weakness of believing that it was useless to contend against one whose destiny had been declared by the stars, was the Marquis de Saluzzo; who, not content with the mere treachery which he meditated, remained for some time with the Trench troops, in order to ascertain their proposed plan of operations, and thus to render himself more welcome to the new master, to whom he had resolved to transfer his services.

The mission of the Cardinal de Lorraine to the pope meanwhile produced no effect upon the timid nature of Paul III; who admitted the justice of his representations and the bad faith of the emperor, but persisted in declaring that he should content himself by remaining neuter, and would not engage either himself, or the Roman states, in a war which he deprecated. With this unsatisfactory reply the French cardinal was accordingly compelled to quit Rome; nor did he fare better upon his parting interview with Charles V, who affected great moderation and an earnest desire for peace; but who had, in fact, matured his plans, and was about to put them into operation.

In addition to the astrological predictions to which we have already alluded, the emperor had been careful to circulate throughout Germany exaggerated accounts of the cruelties which Francis had committed against the Protestants within his kingdom, already sufficiently atrocious without the aid of fiction; and the detail was rendered the more revolting to his German subjects by the assertion that all the victims were of their own nation; that all Germans were banished from France, and that the French king had entered into a league with the Infidels, by whom he was to be assisted in the invasion of their empire. As the necessity of disabusing the German people soon became fearfully apparent, Francis deputed Guillaume du Bellay Langei to explain to them the fallacy of these mischievous misrepresentations; and that wise and upright minister ultimately succeeded, although not without great difficulty, in convincing them that their credulity had been abused.

Meanwhile, the Cardinal de Lorraine, on his return to France, had an interview with the king on the 17th of May, in which he assured him that there could no longer exist a doubt, from the preparations made by the emperor, that he meditated the invasion not only of Piedmont, but even of France itself.

By a singular and unaccountable fatality, Francis only a short time previously, when he should have become more than ever suspicious of an enemy by whom he had been so frequently deceived; who had wantonly insulted him in the face of all Europe; and who had spent the last few months in the most active preparations for war; had persisted, in defiance of his counsellors, in disarming his troops in Savoy, as though by such means he could compel a peace; but Montmorenci, justly alarmed by an imprudence which he foresaw might involve the safety of the kingdom of France, having earnestly represented the peril of such a measure, the king was at length reluctantly induced to authorize him to direct Brion Chabot, if he desired really to serve his sovereign, to fortify some of the strongest places which he then held, in order that his troops might be secure of a refuge in the event of the emperor's descent upon Piedmont.

Thus forewarned, Chabot lost no time in fortifying Turin, garrisoning Ivree with a force of two thousand men, and planning a camp on the Po; after which he wrote to entreat Francis not to terminate his negotiation with the emperor for the space of another month, as he should require that time to complete his defensive operations; and the king being anxious to render Charles the aggressor, convinced as he now was that he could no longer avoid a renewal of hostilities, at once acceded to this arrangement; instructing Chabot at the same time to abandon all idea of forming an encampment, and to confine himself to the completion of his fortifications, which were to be further strengthened by an immediate reinforcement of fifteen thousand infantry, and certain squadrons of horse, and brigades of artillery, each under the command of its particular chief, and in readiness to march against the imperialists at an hour's notice.

He also despatched instructions to the governors of Picardy and Champagne to garrison their frontier-fortresses with a force of fourteen thousand men, who were to await within the walls such orders as he might find it expedient hereafter to issue. The defence of Guyenne was intrusted to the King of Navarre; that of Dauphiny to M. d'Humieres, a tried and brave general; Barbesieux was sent to Marseilles to protect that city against the anticipated attack of the Genoese admiral, Doria; and Francis himself, once more awakened from his dreams of pleasure and intrigue, repaired in person to Lyons with the main body of his army, to resist the attempt of the emperor to invade Provence, of which he had declared himself the sovereign by virtue of a cession that he affirmed to have been made to him of that province by the Connétable de Bourbon, as well as by other rights which he did not condescend to explain.

Unaware that his descent upon this particular point had been anticipated, Charles V. was prepared for an easy conquest. He had, or feigned to have, emissaries in all the principal cities; and confidently asserted that the consternation of the inhabitants, the weakness of the several garrisons, and the dilapidated condition of the fortifications, rendered his success certain. The precautions which had been hastily but efficiently taken were, however, destined to convince him of his error. The French king, warned by past experience, had left nothing to chance which could be secured by prudence. Marseilles, Arles, Tarascon, and Beaucaire were all strongly defended. The minor cities, which were unprovided with the means of resistance, were swept of their inhabitants; the adjacent country was laid waste; the mills, the grain, and every agrarian edible which could not be conveyed away, was burnt, and all supplies cut off against the arrival of the enemy. An encampment was then formed near Cavaillon, between the Rhone and the Durance, of which the Marechal de Montmorenci took the command, while with the other moiety of his army Francis established his own quarters at Valence ; and thus prepared, he awaited the advent of the imperial forces.

CHAPTER III

[1536.]

THESE measures were by no means premature; as Charles, having engaged to re-establish the Duke of Savoy in his dominions, had already despatched an army under the command of Antonio da Leyva to besiege Turin, while Francis had instructed his generals to abandon all their other conquests in Piedmont, and to confine their operations to ensuring the security of that city, and the fortresses of Coni and Fossano; the latter of which places he confided to the keeping of the Marquis de Saluzzo, with strict directions to increase its strength and means of resistance to the utmost extent of his abilities.

We have already recorded the meditated treachery of the marquis; who accordingly no sooner found himself in a position to serve his new sovereign, than he commenced his operations by impeding the exertions of the engineers, preventing the entrance of provisions and ammunition into the town, and delaying by every subterfuge which he could invent the efforts of the French officers to complete the defence of the place. Suspicions of his good faith, however, were soon entertained; and, alarmed by the hostile demonstrations of those about him, he abruptly withdrew to his estate at Raval, declaring that as his authority was not recognised, he would not be responsible for the result.

Baffled at Turin, he no sooner found himself beyond the vengeance of the French officers than he wrote to apprise the imperialist general of the unprotected state of Fossano, and to urge him to take possession of the fortress before the enemy had time to strengthen it. Antonio da Leyva did not hesitate for an instant; but availing himself of this unexpected and welcome intelligence, he left a force of ten thousand horse and a few squadrons of cavalry before Turin, under the command of his lieutenant, and marched upon the betrayed city, before which he sat down, in the full conviction that it would become an easy prey.

Ill-supplied and unprepared as they were, however, the garrison defended themselves with great courage and pertinacity; and even when they were compelled to capitulate, from the utter hopelessness of overcoming a force which quadrupled their own, and which was moreover well provided both with provisions and artillery, they stipulated that they should hold the fortress for the space of a month longer, at the termination of which time they were to vacate it if they failed to receive succour from without. As he believed all external aid to be impossible at the moment, Da Leyva consented to these terms, and meanwhile attempted the conquest of two other towns in the neighbourhood, but without success; and a few days before that which had been named for the surrender of Fossano, the emperor arrived in person at Savillano, where he accepted the fealty of the Marquis de Saluzzo, and appointed him 'his lieutenant beyond the Alps.

Then and there it was that Charles V, intoxicated by his late successes, imparted to his generals the design which he had formed of invading Provence; nor would he be turned from his purpose either by their sober arguments or their vehement expostulations. In vain did Antonio da Leyva even kneel at his feet, imploring him not to endanger his military reputation by so dangerous a measure; he remained deaf to every persuasion, and made immediate preparations

for carrying his intention into effect. His army consisted of ten thousand horse, and between forty and fifty thousand infantry; a force with which, as we have already stated, he anticipated that he should be enabled without difficulty to possess himself of the whole province, and thus, secure ingress to the very heart of the French dominions. He accordingly passed the Var on the 25th of July, and at the head of his troops marched to Saint Laurent, the first town on the French frontier, where he planted his standards, and took up his residence for a short time, in order to await the arrival of the fleet under Andrea Doria, which was freighted with ample supplies for the invading army.

After his temporary halt at Saint Laurent, the emperor pursued his march to Provence, and advanced without encountering the slightest opposition until he reached the village of Tourbes, situated between Brignolles and St. Maximin, where he surprised a small force under M. de Montejan, and Boisy, the son of the late admiral Bonnivet, who being unprepared for his immediate approach, and unable to contend against an enemy so formidable, were, after a bold but ineffectual struggle, during which the whole of their little band amounting to no more than five hundred men were cut to pieces, themselves made prisoners by the imperialists. This mischance was rendered the more mortifying from the fact, that these two imprudent young nobles, wearied of inaction, had obtained the reluctant consent of Montmorenci to indulge that taste for adventure so prevalent at the time, and so destructive of good discipline, and to sally forth in search of adventures; their object being to harass the skirmishing parties of the enemy, and, if possible, to gain the first laurels won during the campaign ; and thus, through their own idle folly, they forfeited all future hope of assisting in the war.

The intelligence of their capture was a source of great annoyance to the king, who immediately foresaw that his vainglorious adversary would profit by the circumstance to assert that he had beaten the French on their first encounter; but the event even exceeded his previsions, as Charles, anxious to maintain the *prestige* which had attached to him since his recent triumphs, caused it reported throughout Europe that he had slaughtered or driven back the whole van-guard of the French army.

This comparatively unimportant incident was, however, fated to be soon obliterated from the mind of Francis, by the deepest calamity which had yet befallen him. The dauphin, after an illness of only four days, had ceased to exist. This prince, then only in his nineteenth year, had already, by the urbanity of his disposition, his literary attainments, and his calm and lofty courage, greatly endeared himself to all by whom he was approached. The only defect which he had inherited from his royal father was an inordinate love of dissipation, and besides his accredited mistress, the beautiful Mademoiselle de Lestrange, he indulged in other intrigues less public. This error was, however, counterbalanced by so many amiable qualities that it did not avail to weaken his popularity; and even Francis himself had begun to express his satisfaction that the Spaniard had at length been converted into a Frenchman. The dauphin had recently joined the army at Lyons, where he had been welcomed with enthusiasm; and the rejoicings consequent on his arrival were not yet over when he was attacked by the illness which terminated his existence.

His death was at first attributed to his imprudence in having, when heated at tennis, drank a copious draught of water; but he had no sooner expired than symptoms of poison became apparent which awoke the most sinister suspicions. He was, moreover, in the constant habit of drinking water almost to excess, under circumstances which would have rendered such an indulgence fatal to most constitutions; and this propensity was so well known, that Donna Anna Beatrix de Pacheco, one of the maids of honour to Queen Eleonora, had presented to him an earthen vase; of a peculiar clay which induced an effervescence in the water without divesting it of its coolness, and which she had brought with her from Portugal.

The unhappy dauphin had, as we have mentioned above, been engaged at tennis; and the

weather being sultry, he suffered so severely from the heat, that the moment the game was concluded he desired one of his pages to bring him a draught of water. The youth hastened to obey his commands; and as there chanced to be a well in the meadow which had been selected for the sport, he at once lowered the bucket, placing the vase from which the prince constantly drank upon the margin of the well, while he drew up the water. The weight causing him to be somewhat tardy in this operation, it was soon remembered that the Count Sebastian de Montecuculli, a nobleman of Ferrara, who had been appointed sewer in the household of the dauphin, had approached the spot as if with the intention of hastening his movements, but without interfering to assist him; and as no other individual was near the spring at the time, the fatal event which afterwards took place was attributed to his agency by all who were aware of this circumstance.

Having drawn the water, the page without waiting to rinse the vase plunged it into the bucket, and carried it to the prince, who in accordance with his usual habit emptied it at a draught. In a few seconds he complained of giddiness and intense pain; frightful convulsions supervened; nor could all the science of his physicians afford him the slightest relief. It had been previously arranged that he should leave Lyons early on the following morning for Tournon, in order to join the king who had halted in that city on his way to Valence; nor could the entreaties of his friends dissuade him from persisting in his purpose. The only concession which they could obtain was that he would abandon the idea of pursuing his journey on horseback, and proceed by water; but this exertion, mitigated as it was, probably hastened his death, for he had scarcely reached the presence of his father, when he sank exhausted into the arms of his attendants, and in a few hours expired.

During the first paroxysm of his anguish none dared to inform the king of the peculiar symptoms exhibited by the disorder of the prince; but ere long the existence of arsenic, which was discovered in his body, rendered all further prospect of concealment hopeless; still, even when the fact was ascertained beyond all doubt, each of the attendants shrank from revealing the fatal truth. It was soon evident, however, that Francis had himself become suspicious that his son was the victim of an assassin; and the hesitation of the court physicians was terminated by his vehement questionings; for as during their passage up the Rhone, they had strictly watched every phase of the disease, and conferred together upon its nature, they deemed it expedient at length to request the Cardinal de Lorraine to communicate to the king their solemn conviction that the dauphin had died by poison.

At this confirmation of his own misgivings the anguish of the parent yielded to the indignation of the sovereign; and averting his face from the death-bed, Francis sternly commanded all who were present, as they valued their heads, to point out to him the suspected author of the crime. Thus adjured, more than one of the dauphin's attendants were prepared to accuse Montecuculli; and the king had no sooner heard the grounds upon which the accusation was based than he made instant preparations for his return to Lyons.

Montecuculli was immediately arrested; and, under the agony of the question, the wretched man admitted his guilt; but whether from compunction, or in order to escape the torments to which he was subjected, it would be now impossible to decide. Thus much is certain, however; that, he not only confessed to the murder of the prince, and declared that while the page was drawing up the water, he had flung arsenic into the vase, but even added that it was his intention to destroy the king himself and his two remaining sons by the same means.

When questioned as to his motive for committing such deadly crimes, he replied that he had been instigated to them by Antonio da Leyva and Ferdinand de Gonzaga asserting, moreover, that they had, like himself, acted under superior authority. Although the miserable culprit (if such indeed he were) never once directly accused the emperor by name, as the authority to which he alluded, he nevertheless left no doubt of his meaning, by entering into details which tended to

implicate him in the crime. Among other circumstances, he stated that on one occasion when he had an audience of Charles V, that monarch had expressed considerable curiosity as to the diet of the French king, and his habits at table; an assertion which acquired additional importance from the fact that, only a short time previous to the death of the dauphin, Don Lopez de Soria, the imperial ambassador at Venice, had inquired who would become king of France in the event of the demise of the reigning sovereign and his sons.

Francis convened a council, before whom the confession of the culprit was read, and by whom his condemnation was instantly pronounced. He was sentenced to be first scourged, and then torn to pieces by horses.

Thus far, even barbarous as such a sentence undoubtedly was after the fearful tortures which the wretched culprit had already undergone, some excuse may be found for the king in the fact that he had not only been deprived of his first-born son by the most cruel means, but that his own life, and those of the two younger princes, had likewise been menaced—and this, moreover, by an agent of his most hated enemy; but surely nothing can extenuate the fact, that, not content with a description of the dying agonies of the victim of his vengeance, he resolved to become a spectator of the hideous scene, and even commanded the attendance of the princes of the blood, the prelates, the foreign ambassadors, and all the men of rank then resident in Lyons. Nay more, if the evidence of Roederer is to be credited, the court ladies themselves were not exempted from this revolting spectacle; nor was the vengeance of the king appeased until he had seen the mangled remains of the culprit torn into fragments by the infuriated populace.

At the close of the execution, Francis addressed circulars to the Protestant princes, informing them of all the details of the murder, and the fate of the murderer; and in these letters he openly accused the two imperialist generals of having instigated Montecuculli to the commission of the crime for which he had suffered. Charles V resented, with the deepest indignation, an accusation which he could not but feel was directed against himself; and declared that he would rather have forfeited his empire than have had his name implicated in so heinous and revolting a crime; while Gonzaga and Da Leyva, with still more vehemence, protested that were Montecuculli still alive, they would prove their innocence by meeting him in arms, as they were now willing and anxious to do all those who should dare to affix so foul a stain upon their honour. Nor were they satisfied with mere self-exculpation; for, after demanding to know what benefit could have accrued either to their imperial master or themselves by the extirpation of the royal family of France, they retorted by throwing the guilt of the assassination upon Catherine de' Medici, who, by the death of the elder prince, became dauphiness, and stood upon the very step of the throne.

In ordinary cases such an accusation would have been as incredible as it was monstrous; but her early education, her known subtlety, and her undisguised ambition, rendered the niece of the pontiff, young as she was, so obnoxious to suspicion, that there were not wanting many, even in France, who believed her to be guilty.

Throughout the whole commencement of its march, the imperial army had been enabled to subsist upon the hoards made by the inhabitants of the several villages devastated by order of the French marshal, in order to arrest its progress by famine; the unhappy peasantry having hidden away their stores of grain and wine in the caves and forests, in the vain, hope of securing them until the contending armies should have vacated their immediate neighbourhood; but these secret depositories, which had escaped the hurried researches of the French troops, owing to their eagerness to lay all waste before the advent of the enemy, did not succeed in eluding the more anxious eyes of the imperialists; who, having once discovered that the agrarian wealth of the province had been rather displaced than destroyed, instituted a perpetual survey, which, as we



have stated, rendered them independent of the precautions of Montmorenci.

Doria had, moreover, taken possession of the port of Toulon; and had even announced to the emperor the practicability of navigating the Rhone with his galleys, and of assuring to the invading army all the supplies of which it might stand in need. In this endeavour he, however, found himself frustrated; and as the French troops persisted in remaining within their entrenchments, and the *cachettes* of the peasantry became exhausted, Charles no sooner found himself in the plain, surrounded by dismantled- cities, abandoned villages, and a devastated country, with the enemy entrenched at Avignon, and no chance of supplies save from Toulon, (which he was aware must be cut off before they could reach him,) than he resolved to avert the famine which stared him in the face by compelling an engagement.

He consequently encamped in the middle of August before Aix, where the increasing necessities of his troops induced him to enter the city, which he did, asserting that as the suzerain of Arles and Provence, he took possession of the capital by that right. He, however, found only a desert where he had looked to possess himself of a flourishing and wealthy population. Not only the archbishop and his clergy had abandoned the place, but also the judicial officers and the principal inhabitants; and although by virtue of the claim he had advanced he summoned them to return, as they made no response to his citation, he delivered over the town to pillage; and before its final abandonment on the 13th of September, issued an order for the destruction by fire of the Palace of Justice, at the request of the Duke of Savoy, who accompanied his army, and who was anxious to revenge the excesses of which the French troops had been guilty in Piedmont.

Baffled in his hopes of establishing his permanent headquarters at Aix, and of securing by such means the revictualling of his army, Charles discovered that he had no alternative save to possess himself of Arles or Marseilles. The camp of Montmorenci was too well defended to encourage an attack; and although the position of Arles was favourable to his enterprise, should the siege prove tardy he was aware that the famine which had already commenced in his ranks must inevitably militate against his success, while, even should he make himself master of the city, he might find it as utterly devastated as Aix; whereas in the event of his taking Marseilles, the fleet of Andrea Doria could in a few hours arrive to his relief.

Henry, Duke d'Orleans, now Dauphin of France, had meanwhile joined the French army at Valence, and was no sooner apprised that the emperor had caused his light-horsemen to reconnoitre the camp at Avignon, than he earnestly entreated the king to allow him to join the Marechal de Montmorenci, and to share in the honours of the engagement which appeared inevitable. But Francis, who had been so lately bereft of one son, trembled at the prospect of losing a second; and for a considerable time he firmly refused to allow the prince to separate himself from his own person. His importunities were, however, so vehement and so unceasing, that the king at length yielded, only enjoining him with great earnestness to obey under all circumstances the dictates of Montmorenci; who would, as he declared, while he guarded the honour of the dauphin as jealously as his own, be even more careful of his safety. Moreover, with a prudence which, in so haughty and despotic a monarch as Francis I, sufficiently revealed his anxiety, he bade the enthusiastic young prince remember that he held no official rank in the army which he was about to join; but that he would be a mere volunteer, who could assume no authority whatever, and who must be contented to obey, in order that he might hereafter be competent to command.

Satisfied with his success, the dauphin promised all that his royal father required; and attended by several of his personal friends, he at once took leave of the king, and proceeded to the camp, where he was received with the same enthusiasm which had only a few weeks previously greeted the appearance of his murdered brother.

As we have shown, however, the emperor abandoned all idea of attacking Montmorenci; and the total pillage of a supply which had been landed at Toulon by Doria, and which became the prey of the impoverished peasantry, convinced him that he must at once compel an engagement, or abandon his hitherto abortive enterprise.

He first, therefore, proceeded to Marseilles; but after two or three hostile demonstrations, he discovered that all attempts to take the city would prove utterly vain. In addition to a garrison of seven thousand men, there were thirteen galleys in the port; while his own troops, famished for want of proper and wholesome nourishment, threw themselves eagerly upon the grapes, and even the immature fruits by which they were surrounded, and soon added to the horrors of famine the sufferings of dysentery. Within one month a third of his army perished, and among the rest his brave and faithful general Antonio da Leyva; while the forces of the Drench king were augmented by a reinforcement of twenty thousand Swiss and six thousand Germans.

He was next compelled to abandon the siege of Arles ; for although its position, in the midst of heights by which it was commanded, appeared at the first glance to afford great facilities to a besieging army, the emperor soon ascertained that it was not only strongly and efficiently fortified, but that it contained within its walls some of the first chivalry of France.

Nothing was consequently left for Charless save an open battle or a precipitate retreat; while as no one for a moment suspected that he would adopt the latter alternative, the enthusiasm in all ranks of the French army was excited to the highest pitch; and the king himself, who had hitherto remained at Valence, in compliance with the advice and entreaties of his generals, summoned a council, at which he expressed his determination to join the main body at Avignon, in order to be present at the forthcoming engagement.

In vain did Montmorenci, so soon as he was apprised of this resolution, entreat Francis not to expose his person unnecessarily; and implore him not to incur the risk of involving the kingdom in inevitable confusion in the event of his death or capture, while by remaining at Valence the result of a victory must be equally honourable to him, without involving the same contingencies; in vain did he represent that the present opportunity was unusually favourable for the first essay in arms of the dauphin; and express his conviction that the young prince, with the assistance of his own experience and that of the principal generals, would win honour to himself and to the French name, by convincing the emperor that the subjects of his majesty were invincible upon their own soil; the resolution of the king remained unshaken.

Equally unavailing were the assurances of the Marechal that the emperor was no longer in a position to maintain his ground; and that, decimated as his camp had become by disease and famine, he must of necessity retreat should their own troops refuse to give him immediate battle. The hour of forbearance was past, and Francis refused to defer, to his arguments. Du Bellay added his entreaties to those of Montmorenci, but with no better success. Still, however, the Marechal ventured to insist; and he was prompted to this pertinacity by the fact that a superstitious feeling had grown up in the French army that the presence of the king upon any field of battle would inevitably entail defeat; an unfortunate and mortifying belief which the monarch was naturally anxious to eradicate.

“Enough, my lords, enough”; exclaimed Francis impatiently; “On the faith of a gentleman! it shall never be said that while my archenemy is at the head of his armies, sword in hand, I am content to remain cooped up within the walls of Valence, as though I feared to beard him on my own territories. No, Sirs; harangue as you may, I will go forth to meet him; and perchance the duel of which he hath made such loud bruits throughout all Christendom, may chance to be fought when he least expects it. I am well aware that many among you who are endeavouring to dissuade me from what I hold to be a right royal duty, are infected by a frivolous superstition, to which, as a

Christian king, I cannot yield my faith. My confidence is in GOD : he alone rules the destinies alike of individuals and of armies.”

On the following morning Francis, after having attended the early mass, accordingly embarked upon the Rhone, and proceeded to Avignon, having left a strong garrison for the protection of Valence; and despite the disparaging apprehensions of his army, he was received with joyous acclamations, and entered the camp with a brilliant staff, escorted by the whole of the gendarmerie, who had hastened to meet him.

At this period Doria had succeeded in landing and forwarding supplies to the emperor, which enabled him to silence the murmurs of his troops, and to inspire them in some degree with renovated hope; but the evil had taken too deep a root; and while the French were hourly expecting the engagement for which they had long panted, Martin du Bellay Langei, who had been sent to reconnoitre the movements of the enemy, returned with the astounding intelligence that the imperialists were in full retreat; and that, in order to facilitate their march, they had abandoned all their sick and wounded.

The accuracy of this statement was soon proved; for, on the entrance of Francis and his troops into the deserted camp, a most frightful spectacle presented itself. Nevertheless, Montmorenci refused to pursue the retreating enemy; he dreaded lest the hunted lion should turn to bay, and that in the extremity of his despair he should sacrifice himself rather than not wreak his fury upon his enemy. Peronne was moreover menaced, and he was compelled to detach a strong force to its assistance. He consequently contented himself, so soon as he had ascertained that the emperor was on his march towards Flanders, by despatching the light-horse under the command of the Count de Tenc, Du Bellay Langei, and Bonnivet, to harass his rearguard, by which means a great slaughter of the imperialists took place, as the flank squadrons cut off all the foraging parties that were detached from the main body, sparing neither men nor horses; until the road between Aix and Frejus was strewn with arms and baggage, the wounded and the dead.

This was not the only impediment, however, which the emperor experienced to his retreat; for, as his troops were defiling beneath a tower of the village of Muy which he had supposed to be abandoned, some peasants who had taken refuge there, upon seeing the splendid train of the Spanish leader Garcilasso de la Vega, the first poet of his day and nation, whom, from the magnificence of his appearance, they mistook for Charles himself, simultaneously fired a volley, by which they mortally wounded De la Vega, and killed several of his immediate suite. Enraged by this irreparable loss, the emperor, careless of the danger to which he might be exposed by such a delay, instantly halted his army, stormed the tower which was unable to withstand so formidable an attack, and having secured the miserable men within, hung them from the portal of the tower, and then pursued his march, leaving this ghastly memorial of his passage as his last legacy of vengeance.

Mortified and disappointed, with a diminished and discontented army, and an exhausted exchequer, Charles despatched his troops, under the command of the Marquis del Guasto, into the Milanese, where he quartered them in the cities of the Duke of Savoy; (who thus, invaded alike by his friends and his enemies, found himself dispossessed of all his territories, save the city and fortress of Nice, into which he had retired); and this arrangement effected, he himself proceeded to Genoa, where his galleys were awaiting him, and where he remained for a fortnight before he embarked for Spain. His whole expedition was, however, fated to be unfortunate; for he was no sooner in mid-sea than he was overtaken by so terrific a storm, that not only were six of his galleys sunk, but also two larger vessels, one of which was freighted with his plate, and the other with his stud.

Never was failure more complete or more disastrous. The loud boastings with which Charles

had undertaken his campaign were yet ringing in the ears of all Europe; for only two months had elapsed from the period of his embarkation for France, and of his retreat thence as a fugitive, who had not even met the enemy whom he went forth to defeat. To Francis his triumph was bloodless, while to the emperor his failure was a blot which could never be effaced. The prestige of his military glory was gone; the conqueror of Solyman and Barbarossa was shorn of his laurels; and his keenest pang arose from the consciousness that he had been compelled to fly before the very troops whom he had affected to despise.

CHAPTER IV

[1536-38.]

THE sensation created throughout Italy by the proposed invasion of France had meanwhile been intense. The petty princes of that country, aware that should the emperor be successful, the preservation of their independence could only be secured by an universal coalition, made instant preparations for a league; and not daring to declare their purpose openly, entered into secret negotiations to that effect with the more powerful states. The French king, anxious to second their efforts, had appointed as their general the Count Guy de Rangon, under whose command they placed a force of ten thousand men, with which they attempted to possess themselves of Genoa, but a reinforcement of imperialists which had just reached that city rendered their attack abortive. They next marched upon Ast, when the Spaniards raised the siege of Turin, and allowed them to take Carignano, Raconis, Carmagnoles, and, with slight exceptions, the whole marquisate of Saluzzo.

During the invasion of Provence by the emperor, the Count de Nassau, and Adrian de Croy, Count de Roeux, had entered Picardy at the head of twenty thousand foot and seven thousand horse; and after laying waste the open country and pillaging all the villages upon their route, had made themselves masters of Bray-sur-Somme, and several other places of less importance. Encouraged by this success, they next endeavoured to reduce St. Rignier; but the town being well garrisoned, and the walls furnished with artillery, they received a check for which, from the apparent insignificance of the place, they were totally unprepared. They had, moreover, in this attempt, to combat not only the troops but also the citizens, and even the women, who in many instances ascended the ramparts, and assisted in repelling the besiegers by pouring hot water and boiling tar upon their heads; while others, with a courage which should have immortalized their memory as heroines, however incompatible it might be with their nature as women, assumed the garb of their husbands, and fought bravely with sword and spear, until they succeeded in wresting two standards from the enemy.

Thence the imperialists had directed their march towards the city of Guise; where the Duke de Vendôme, who despaired of making an effectual resistance, had issued orders to the garrison to shut themselves up in the citadel; they had not time, however, to effect this arrangement before the enemy was upon them, and they were accordingly compelled to capitulate. Nassau then proceeded to attack Peronne, which was even less capable than Guise of sustaining an assault; and so great was the alarm of the inhabitants when they became apprised of the approach of the imperialist army, that they resolved to save themselves by flight; a determination which was only abandoned when they were recalled to a more prudent line of conduct by the courageous example of a wealthy landholder in the neighbourhood, M. d'Estourmel, who instead of flying from the city, caused all his grain and other edibles to be transported within the walls, and himself took up his abode there with his family. The example so boldly given was immediately followed; and the unexpected appearance of Fleuranges, at the head of a small force, restored them in some degree to confidence. Their means of defence were, however, so scanty, and the operations of the enemy so vigorous, that hope soon began to fail; their ammunition became exhausted, Their fortifications were dilapidated, and their provisions were inadequate for the supply of the inhabitants.

The emperor's artillery had told fearfully within the first four-and-twenty hours, and several

large breaches were made in the walls. Nassau, moreover, opened a mine under the old tower of Peronne, (an historical pile famous as the prison of Charles the Simple and Louis XI) which overthrew it to half its height, and buried in its ruins the Count de Dammartin who shared the command of Fleuranges. Notwithstanding this misfortune, however, the gallant little band still held out; and just as they were about to become the prey of the enemy, the Duke de Guise, who had been apprised by Fleuranges of the extremity to which they were reduced, no longer possessing either food or powder, succeeded in supplying them with both; as well as in reinforcing them by four hundred crossbow men, whom he introduced into the town across the marshes, which being considered impassable, were less carefully guarded than the other avenues to the city. Although this fact was ascertained too late by the imperialists, they nevertheless continued the siege, and made two or three more assaults upon the outworks; but they were soon compelled to abandon the enterprise, leaving their ladders and a number of their bravest troops in the ditches. On the 10th of September, finding all their efforts to take the place unavailing, while the loss of life became daily greater, they raised the siege; and thus abandoned their enterprise the very day before that on which the emperor had commenced his own retreat from Provence.

The enemy had no sooner withdrawn his forces than Fleuranges hastened to meet the king, who was on his march homeward, and to report the result of his courageous defence. He was not long destined, however, to enjoy the triumph which he had so nobly earned, for only a short time subsequently he received intelligence of the death of his equally brave father at Sedan; and while on his way to pay the last tribute of respect to his remains, he fell a victim to a malignant fever, and France was thus deprived of one of her best and noblest soldiers.

When it became known in Paris that Peronne was in a state of siege, the alarm was universal; little hope being entertained that the enemy would be arrested in their march towards the capital by a city so ill prepared against aggression; and it was entirely owing to the zealous and judicious exertions of the Cardinal du Bellay, the metropolitan bishop, that confidence was ultimately restored. The king on his departure for the south had, in addition to his ecclesiastical rank, appointed Du Bellay lieutenant-general of the capital; and he had lost no time in conveying all the wheat and wine which could be obtained within a round of six leagues into the storehouses of the city; both of which proved to be so abundant in quantity as to suffice not only for the supply of the whole population during the space of an entire year, but also for that of a garrison of thirty thousand men. The energy of the Parisians on this occasion equalled his own; for they no sooner became convinced of his power as well as of his will to protect them, than they volunteered to give him a brigade of artillery and ten thousand troops, to be maintained at their own' cost so long as the enemy should occupy the frontier. The gallantry of Fleuranges and his little garrison soon relieved them, however, from their apprehensions, and the fortifications which they were hastily constructing were accordingly abandoned.

Meanwhile the Admiral d'Annebaut and M. de Burie, who commanded at Turin, not only defended that place with the greatest zeal, but harassed the enemy by frequent and daring sallies beyond the walls, continually making prisoners, and securing booty. On one of these occasions, however, Burie, whom his previous successes had rendered less cautious than heretofore, was surrounded by the troops of the Marquis del Guasto in Casal, which town he had just taken, and was made prisoner after a vigorous resistance, together with the remnant of his men who survived. M. d'Humieres was forthwith despatched to replace him with a reinforcement of ten thousand lansquenets; and the French king, having thus provided for the safety of Turin, proceeded to Marseilles, where he confirmed the municipal privileges both, of that city and of Aix, although he refused to remit the taxes until the devastations to which they had been subjected could be repaired; declaring that however deeply he felt the hardships to which they had been subjected, the outlay necessary for the defence of the kingdom at that period would not permit him to accede to their request. He then strengthened all the frontier fortresses of Provence and Languedoc; and having thus secured the safety of his prowess, however, soon enabled him to attain the grade of a

colonel of infantry, and he was so accomplished an engineer, that he was the rival in that science of Pietro da Navarro, previously considered the first engineer of the age. He next obtained the government of Guyenne, where he acquitted himself with so much honour that the king conferred upon him the order of St. Michael. During the intestine commotions which succeeded he was suspected of Lutheranism, from the reluctance which he evinced to put to death such of the Reformists as fell into his hands. He died poor, never having enriched himself by the spoils of the provinces over which he had been called to rule, as was too much the fashion of that day. southern territories, and the season being adverse to all further operations, he once more set forth for the capital.

At Lyons he was met by James V. of Scotland, who, eager to prove his sense of the alliance which had so long existed between his own ancestors and the French sovereigns, and doubtlessly also anxious to secure the support of Francis against England, had voluntarily embarked with a force of sixteen thousand men to assist him in his campaign. Nor had the Scottish king persisted in his purpose without considerable difficulty, as the fleet which conveyed his little army was three times driven back by adverse winds; but so soon as he was enabled to land at Dieppe with a portion of his troops, he had hastened to make his way to the theatre of war; when, as we have already stated, he encountered the king on his return.

Francis was not slow to express his gratitude for so signal an act of friendship and goodwill; and upon his expressing his desire to requite it, James replied by reminding him that he had already led him to hope for the hand of Madame Marguerite, his eldest daughter, and warmly urging him now to fulfil his promise. At such a moment, and under such circumstances, the French monarch did not hesitate, although James was already affianced to a daughter of the Duke de Vendôme; and accordingly the Scotch king accompanied the royal train to the capital as the future son-in-law of the sovereign.

On the 1st of January, 1537, the marriage was solemnized with great magnificence at the episcopal palace; and it sufficed to alienate the friendship and confidence of Henry VIII, who looked with extreme jealousy upon this alliance. His own position was at the moment so embarrassing, however, that he contented himself by turning his back upon M. de la Pommeraye, the ambassador who had been sent by Francis to announce it to him; the unfortunate Anne Boleyn having just fallen a victim to his ruthless caprice, while he had already become the husband of Jane Seymour. In obedience to his passions he had alternately persecuted both the Protestants and the Romanists, and was, consequently, distrusted by both parties; the alliance of James V with a French princess destroyed, as he was well aware, the balance of the two kingdoms, and rendered his position more onerous than before; nor could he overcome his mortification when he remembered that the hand of his own daughter Mary, whom he had recently bastardized, had been twice offered to the Scotch king; once by the emperor, who had pledged himself that, although thus legally disinherited by her father, she should nevertheless succeed to the throne of England; and on another occasion by himself, as a pledge of alliance between the two countries; on the sole condition that James should, like himself, become the avowed protector of the Reformed religion.

The Scottish king, whose Romanist principles were averse to this concession, but who was nevertheless desirous to form an alliance which would enable him to counteract the devices of the enemies by whom he was beset in his own nation, went incognito, in the first instance, as some historians assert, to Vendôme, in order to obtain a sight of his affianced bride; and being dissatisfied upon finding that she was less attractive than he had been led to suppose, departed as secretly as he had gone, and at once resolved to demand the hand of the Princess Marguerite, then in her seventeenth year.

The fair and delicate character of her beauty at once fascinated James; and the languor which incipient consumption had already cast over her person, added, in his romantic eyes, to the charms of her appearance. It would seem, moreover, according to Buchanan, that the attraction was mutual, and that Marguerite bestowed not only her hand, but also her heart, upon her enamoured suitor; a most uncommon case in royal marriages.

Whether James in reality played the knight-errant as thus represented, must for ever remain questionable; thus much, however, is certain, that, after passing three or four months of constant festivity at the French court, he finally departed with his bride for Scotland, where they landed on the 28th of May; and that on the 7th of the July ensuing, the young queen, unable to withstand the fluctuations of a climate to which she was unaccustomed, fell a victim to the insidious disease under which she had long laboured. Her amiability had already, however, endeared her alike to the court and to the people, who mourned her loss as that of one who would not easily be replaced; although her excessive attachment to her aunt, the Queen of Navarre, had alarmed the priesthood, who dreaded her influence over the mind of the king, and who consequently urged James to take another wife at the termination of his mourning.

To the surprise of all who had witnessed his excessive affection for his young bride, the widowed monarch at once consented to comply with their advice; and, at the expiration of that period, despatched ambassadors to France to solicit the hand of Marie de Guise, the widow of the Duke de Longueville, with whom he had made acquaintance at the French court.

It is probable that Francis, the father of the deceased queen, regarded the demand as somewhat premature; for although from considerations of policy it was conceded, Marie de Guise did not reach Scotland until the 14th of June in the ensuing year, when her nuptials with the Scottish king were immediately solemnized.

During the festivities consequent upon the marriage of the Princess Marguerite, the court of France was, to all appearance, entirely occupied by gaiety and splendour; but such was far from being in reality the case. The death of the elder prince, and the consequent succession of Henry his brother to the rank of Dauphin of France, had effected so great a change in the position of the two royal favourites, that the schism to which we have already made allusion became every day more apparent and more alarming. The separate factions had, in fact, virtually declared themselves; and they were so nicely balanced, that none could decide upon the ultimate triumph of either. At the head of one of these parties were the Duchess d'Etampes, Charles, now Duke d'Orleans, and Brion de Chabot; at that of the other, Diana de Poitiers, the Dauphin, and the Connétable de Montmorenci; while Catherine de' Medici, with a dissimulation as profound as it was politic, remained resolutely neutral; affecting the greatest regard for both the ambitious rivals, and even honouring Madame de Brézé, who had forever alienated from her the affection of her husband, injured her interests, and wounded her vanity, with a display of confidence and attachment wholly incompatible with their relative position. Although perpetually urged by both parties to declare her real sentiments, the wily Italian resolutely refused to side with either. Like Louise de Savoie, she was content to "bide her time" and for twenty long and weary years she so far controlled herself as never to remove the mask which she had assumed towards the mistress of her husband.

The rivalry of the favourites was productive, meanwhile, of the most disastrous results to the kingdom; and its first fruits were to promote disunion in the family of the king; who, influenced by the representations and prejudices of the unscrupulous Duchess d'Etampes, soon began to treat the dauphin with a marked coldness, which contrasted painfully with the favour and indulgence which he evinced towards the younger prince; and a feeling of jealousy and distrust consequently sprang up between the two brothers which threatened to overwhelm France with anarchy and confusion. The birth of a daughter had rendered Diana more than ever dear to the dauphin; and, secure of his affection, she ceased to conceal the hatred which she had long



harboured against Madame d'Etampes, and to repay in kind every affront to which she was subjected by the arrogant favourite.

In the magnificence of her establishment the Grande Sénéchale was already enabled to vie with the duchess, and she did so with an ostentation as insolent as it was reckless; but meanwhile her rival, aware that the health of the king was rapidly failing, exerted all her energies to undermine the interests of the dauphin, through whose disgrace alone she could hope to ruin the prospects of Diana,—prospects which were, moreover, based upon her own overthrow,—and at the same time to enrich herself.

How completely she succeeded in the latter attempt the public treasury bore only too ample testimony. Splendid residences in the capital, and estates and châteaux in the country, passed rapidly into her possession; and even while Francis was engaged in new intrigues, she had become so necessary to his home-happiness that all her wishes remained as before, a law to the infatuated monarch. So jealous, indeed, did he prove himself of securing her society by every possible method, that, on discovering the preference she evinced for a stately hotel which he had presented to her in the Rue de l'Hirondelle, he caused a small palace to be built at the angle of that street where it is connected with the Rue Git-le-Coeur, which, communicating with her residence, he fitted up in the most costly manner. The frescoed walls, the pictures, the groups of statuary, the tapestried hangings, and all the embellishments of the apartments, were made subservient to the display of a passion which was dishonourable alike to both parties; the gilded cornices were ornamented with carvings, in which a heart, whence flame was issuing, was placed between the words alpha and omega; while the salamander, the device of the king, surmounted the large mirrors, and held back the draperies that veiled the windows.

And amid all this magnificence, guilty and heartsick, she saw the health of the king gradually declining; and was aware that on his demise Madame de Brézé would dispossess her of all her ill-acquired influence. For Francis, as an individual, it was evident that she felt no affection; while even her gratitude for the benefits which he had so profusely showered upon her was extremely questionable. To the most inordinate personal vanity she had ever been so notoriously a victim, that she considered him as still her debtor; nor did the slavish adulations of the courtiers, who saw in her only the favourite of the monarch, tend to weaken her self-appreciation. Powerful by her attractions, her riches, and her position, she found herself perpetually surrounded by homage; and the terror with which she contemplated the probable loss of these advantages deprived her of all peace. Nor did she escape other and keener feelings of mortification and disappointment; the only noble of high rank at court who had remained totally insensible to her fascinations was Montmorenci, who, between his chivalric adoration of the queen, and a violent passion for Madame de Brézé, had coldly withstood all her blandishments, and at length so piqued her vanity, that even her callous heart had yielded itself, although unsought; while the constant terror which she felt lest her more ignoble intrigues might become known to the king, kept her in a perpetual state of unrest.

Fortunately, however, for the frail favourite, the recent successes of Francis, and his desire to increase their effect by still further humiliating the pride of the emperor, sufficed to distract his attention from her disgraceful irregularities. After having seemed the safety of Picardy, he determined to reclaim the counties of Flanders, Artois, and Charlerois, which, although they formed a portion of the patrimonial estates of Charles, had been held alike by himself and his ancestors as fiefs of the French crown. This proceeding, which was in point of fact utterly futile, was rather intended by Francis to mark his contempt for the power of the emperor, than to aggrandize his own; but having once resolved upon the measure, it was not long ere his counsellors furnished him with a sufficient pretext for its enforcement, which was supplied by the assertion, that, from his having declared war against France without any provocation, Charles had violated the treaty of Cambray, and thereby annulled the cessions made by France in that

negotiation; among the rest, the homage and cognisance of the counties of Artois and Flanders, by which he was, as his predecessors had previously been, the vassal of the crown.

In order to issue an official edict to this effect, Francis assembled the parliament, and proceeded to hold a bed of justice, surrounded by the princes of the blood, the King of Navarre, the peers, and between forty and fifty bishops ; and at which Jacques Cappel, the king's advocate, read upon his knees a long statement previously prepared by the chancellor, wherein the emperor was merely styled Charles of Austria. In this document, with a sophistry as shallow as it was high-sounding, he attempted to prove that the emperor was a feudatory of the French king for the three counties in question, while he had, nevertheless, frequently taken up arms against his suzerain; an act of rebellion which, as it set forth, justified the reclamation of these fiefs, and their consequent confiscation to the crown. No allusion was made to the treaty of Madrid, by which Francis had relinquished his title to the sovereignty he now asserted, and no discussion was permitted by the chambers; but so soon as the speech was terminated the chancellor collected the votes of the assembly, commencing with those of the dauphin and the other princes of the blood, and concluding with those of the parliament themselves; after which it was decreed that heralds should be sent to the frontiers of the Low Countries to summon the emperor to appear in person, or by deputy, to answer within a given time to the charges brought against him.

To this citation Charles V, as a natural consequence, vouchsafed no attention; and the parliament accordingly decreed the forfeiture of the three counties to the French crown; an empty act of bombast which only tended to degrade the judicial authority of the country, without affecting the tenure of the emperor, who continued to hold the reclaimed counties as though no such edict had ever been promulgated. Exasperated by the silent contempt of his adversary, Francis resolved to enforce his self-constituted claim; and towards the end of March he entered Artois with a force of twenty-six thousand infantry and a few squadrons of cavalry, and took the city of Hesdin by siege; after which he attacked the castle, a post of considerable importance as a frontier fortress. This success, however, was dearly bought, as it cost him the lives of Antoine de Mailli, and Charles de Beuil the young Count de Sancerre, as well as those of many other brave men. Saint-Pol, Saint-Venant, Lillers, and several other towns of less strength, fell successively into his hands; after which he placed a portion of his troops in cantonment upon the frontier, establishing his head-quarters at Pernes; and then marched the remainder into Piedmont, where the enemy were collecting a large force.

The latter division was, however, soon recalled, intelligence having reached the French lines that d'Égmond, Count de Buren, the lieutenant-general of the emperor, had already invested Saint-Pol. As this city was of the greatest importance to Francis, he had no sooner entered the gates than he issued stringent orders for its immediate and efficient defence, but before his commands could be obeyed, the imperialists appeared before the walls. The engineer to whom the king on his departure for Saint-Venant had entrusted the reparation of the fortifications, had assured him that they should be completed within the space of three weeks; but before the expiration of that time, and while they were still in an unfinished state, they were, as we have said, assaulted by the enemy. The garrison was, however, strong; and many able officers were assembled within the walls under the command of Jean d'Estouteville, Seigneur de Villebon,<sup>2</sup> who had been appointed governor of the city; and thus, while the pioneers continued their labours under the very fire of the imperialists, the attack was met by the troops with such tenacious courage, that they were enabled to hold out until the loth of the month, when Buren took the place by assault, and slaughtered the whole of the inhabitants, as well as the greater portion of the garrison. Many of the bravest of the French officers shared the fate of their followers ; and Martin du Bellay was only saved by being dragged from under a heap of dead by a German officer whose prisoner he became, together with M. de Villebon. The two nobles were forthwith conveyed to Gravelines, where the ransom of the former was fixed at three thousand crowns, and that of the latter at ten thousand, which, having been immediately paid, they were permitted to return to

France.

This intelligence reached the dauphin and Montmorenci as they were on their march to relieve the city; and although their assistance came too late to save Saint-Pol, they continued to advance rapidly in order to reinforce the other frontier towns in the event of their being attacked; while the Count de Buren, finding his position untenable from the near neighbourhood of so large an army as that which was approaching, set fire to the city and razed the citadel; he then abandoned his fruitless conquest, and marched upon Terouenne, where his appearance would have excited no alarm had not a scarcity of powder rendered the garrison unable to protect their ramparts.

The great importance of this place determined the dauphin and the Marechal de Montmorenci, who were assembling their army at Amiens, to attempt its relief; and d'Annebaut was entrusted with the perilous duty of introducing the necessary ammunition within the walls. He accordingly placed himself at the head of a corps of gendarmerie, a regiment of light horse, and four hundred harquebusiers, each of whom bore at his saddle-bow a bag of powder; and his arrangements were so skilfully carried out, that under cover of the darkness the whole supply reached the beleaguered garrison in safety; but just as he had commenced his retreat with the same caution as he had evinced on his approach, he was startled by the sound of musketry, and discovered that a party of the young nobles who were serving with the army as volunteers, had without his knowledge joined the expedition, and thus imprudently given the alarm to the enemy's camp.

He immediately sent an order that they should retire on the instant, and waited for some time to enable them to rejoin him; but as the morning was just breaking, and Buren had kept his cavalry on the alert throughout the night, that wary general was not only enabled to charge those who had lingered behind, but also to take possession of a bridge across which the whole of the French force must necessarily pass in their retreat. Annebaut thus found himself opposed to a strong body of cavalry, which he was enabled for a time to repulse; but the imperialists having scattered themselves on all sides, he was ultimately surrounded, his horse was shot under him, and he was taken prisoner together with Piennes, d'O, Sansac, the Marquis de Villars, and several other men of high rank.

Nevertheless, the city had received the necessary supplies; and although by an act of the most reckless imprudence the French had sustained an irreparable loss, the temporary safety of the place was secured. But the dauphin, who had lost several of his personal friends in the skirmish, at once resolved with the sanction of Montmorenci, to compel Buren, who was still besieging Térouanne with a pertinacity which threatened its ultimate destruction, to a general engagement. On the very eve of his contemplated attack, however, a herald despatched by Mary, the Dowager-Queen of Hungary and governante of the Low Countries, reached his camp, with the intelligence that the emperor had proposed a truce to which the French king had acceded, and that the negotiation was entrusted to herself. All hostilities were consequently to terminate on the frontier; and M. de Buren had already received orders to discontinue the siege of Térouanne. Commissioners were appointed on both sides, who met at the village of Bommy; and on the 30th of July a suspension of the war in Picardy and the Low Countries was concluded for the space of ten months.

Francis had at this period entered into an open alliance with Solyman, by which he had excited the indignation of all the Christian princes; and when, according to the conditions of the truce, he withdrew his army from the Low Countries while Buren raised the siege of Térouanne, it was suspected that he contemplated entering Italy, in accordance with the treaty that he had signed with the Turks, who were at the same time to make a descent upon Naples. The sultan had, in fact, already marched a hundred thousand men into Albania upon the faith of this treaty; and

was daily awaiting there the appearance of his ally, when he ascertained that he was engaged in a war with Flanders, upon which he withdrew his own army, and abandoned the enterprise.

In Piedmont the affairs of France were progressing even less satisfactorily; the Italian officers having quarrelled among themselves, the lansquenets mutinied, and the French troops deserted in great numbers; while the Marquis del Guasto, profiting by the anarchy of the enemy, was strengthening the cause of the emperor by overrunning the marquisate of Saluzzo.

In this extremity Francis appointed M. d'Humieres to the chief command of his Italian army, and directed Du Bellay-Langei, upon whose zeal and discretion he was aware that he could rely with safety, to effect a reconciliation between the contending parties. This, however, proved to be impossible, as the virulence of Italian hate was proof against the cool and dispassionate arguments of the royal envoy, who consequently urged the king to lose no time in despatching a strong force to Piedmont, if he wished to retain his possessions in that country. With this advice, judicious as it was, Francis could not at the moment comply; and the French troops, unable to cope with the superior force of their adversaries, were gradually driven from their fortresses until they retained only that of Carmagnole, which was in its turn besieged by the imperialist general.

The Marquis de Saluzzo, whose treason towards Francis we have already recorded, and who was conversant with the weak points of the citadel, undertook the command of the artillery; and in his eagerness to drive the French from his territories, even worked one of the guns with his own hands. Having blown up a couple of houses in order to cover his position, he fired two successive vollies against the city, and was in the act of directing a third, when he was shot dead by a musket-ball. The Marquis del Guasto, who feared that the fall of the marquis might discourage his troops, hastily threw a cloak over the body, and once more summoned the besieged to surrender; promising not only to spare their lives, but to allow them to depart unmolested, the garrison, which consisted only of two hundred men, who had resisted while a hope remained of their ultimate success, were compelled to accede to the offered terms; upon which the gates were thrown open, and the marquis entered the town, warmly expressing his admiration of the courage with which it had been defended; and desiring that the individual might be pointed out to him who had been on duty at a particular window of the fortress. The soldier who had occupied the post indicated, unsuspecting of the motive of this inquiry, and moreover unconscious that he had shot Saluzzo, immediately stepped forward, when del Guasto caused him to be seized, and hanged from the same spot.

On the 8th of June M. d'Humieres reached Pignerol where he established his headquarters, and reiterated the demand of Du Bellay for a reinforcement of troops; when, in reply to his requisition, the king sent him an assurance that he would himself join him during the month of October, with a large force; and meanwhile the dauphin and Montmorenci proceeded to Lyons, at the head of a small body of men, to join a levy of 15,000 Swiss, who were appointed to meet them in that city for the purpose of continuing the operations in Italy.

In order to secure the safety of the kingdom during his absence, Francis appointed Charles, Duke d'Orleans, his second son, lieutenant-general in Picardy, Normandy, the Isle of France, and Paris; and attached Martin du Bellay to his person as his chief councillor. Burgundy and Champagne were entrusted to the Duke de Guise; the King of Navarre was declared Governor of Guienne, Languedoc, and Châteaubriand in Brittany; and these arrangements completed, on the 6th of October Francis, in accordance with his promise arrived in his turn at Lyons, with a strong and efficient army, well prepared to resume the campaign.

His approach was no sooner communicated to the Marquis del Guasto, than that general proceeded to lay waste the whole of the country through which the French troops must pass; and transported all the provisions and forage which could be accumulated into the different fortresses

of which he had possessed himself; while at the same time he detached Cesare da Napoli with a force of 10,000 men to guard the Pas-de- Suze, by which pass he anticipated that the enemy would attempt to enter Italy. Upon the entrenchments which were hastily thrown up at this point, (already a formidable obstacle in itself to the passage of a strong army,) the devastation of the lower lands, and the near approach of the winter season, Del Guasto confidently trusted for the defence of Piedmont; but as this design could not be concealed from the French scouts, Francis no sooner ascertained his intention, than he hastened to provide for the victualling of his troops, and impressed a large number of horses, which he laded with the produce of the adjacent provinces, for the supply of the camp.

As, however, the greatest difficulty against which the army had to contend was the passage of the Suze, he at once issued orders for the march of his vanguard under the dauphin and Montmorenci; who, on arriving at the entrance of, the pass, found the imperialists already awaiting them behind their intrenchments. As the marchai instantly perceived that it would be vain to attack them in front, it was decided that a portion of the troops should endeavour to ascend the two precipitous heights, hitherto considered to be inaccessible, which shut in and commanded the defile.

Notwithstanding the extreme difficulty and danger of such an enterprise, it was successfully accomplished during the night, and with so much caution, that Cesare da Napoli never once had cause to suspect that his position was hopelessly forced; nor was it until dawn that he became aware of the perilous emergency in which he was placed. But when, as morning broke, the imperialists found themselves exposed to a heavy fire of musketry from the rocks, against which they could neither shelter nor defend themselves, while their intrenchments were vigorously assailed in front by the main body of the troops under the dauphin and the Marechal, they were not long ere they discovered that the post which they had hitherto believed to be impregnable was not even tenable; and accordingly they fled in such haste and confusion, that they abandoned not only their baggage, but also the store of provisions which they had housed in the town of Suze. Montmorenci at once hastened to possess himself of the important pass thus abruptly deserted; and having strongly garrisoned both the town and the fortress, descended into the valley to await the arrival of the king and the main body of the army.

Del Guasto was no sooner apprised that the French had made themselves masters of the pass, than he raised the siege of Pignerol, which, but for this fortunate occurrence, would have been shortly compelled to surrender from famine; and immediately marched his army towards Turin, with the intention of taking that city while the enemy were engaged in securing their new conquest. Montmorenci had, however, foreseen this contingency, and willingly yielded to the solicitations of the dauphin, who pursued the imperialist general so vigorously, that he compelled him to pass the Po, and to encamp at Montcalier. As the prince subsequently, however, relaxed in his march in order to possess himself of some small fortresses in the neighbourhood, as well as to relieve Turin, where the garrison were exposed to such severe privation that they had been reduced to subsist on horses, rats, and even food of a still more revolting description, the marquis resolved to re-cross the river, and entrench himself at the entrance of the bridge; but the dauphin no sooner became aware of this movement, than he pressed forward in the hope of forcing him to an engagement. In this expectation he was, however, disappointed; as Del Guasto immediately returned to his camp, and finally took shelter under the guns of Ast; while, on his reaching Montcalier, the prince found himself in possession not only of the town, but also of an enormous mass of grain, which sufficed for the support of the garrison of Turin throughout the entire year.

The French troops, having strengthened the town, where they found the inhabitants zealous in seconding their measures, next encamped at Villedestellon, near Guiers, which was strongly garrisoned by the enemy. Constant skirmishes consequently took place, and Montmorenci had determined at once to commence the siege, when his operations were suddenly arrested by a

courier from the king, who conveyed to the marechal his express commands that he should not enter into any further hostilities until he was himself at the head of his army.

The mortification alike of the dauphin and his general exceeded all bounds when this order reached them, but they were compelled to obey; Francis, still untaught by experience, was jealous of the successes of his own son; and he was, moreover, apprehensive that his enemies might attribute his diligence in overrunning Piedmont to his desire of forming a coalition with Solyman which would have ensured the destruction of Italy, and rendered his name odious to all Christendom; it being matter of notoriety that the sultan was at that moment engaged in the formation of a more formidable army than any with which he had previously menaced Europe, and that his fleet was already prepared for their conveyance to the Italian shores. Under these circumstances, therefore, the French king preferred the alternative of terminating the war by a negotiation; and pretexting the pledge which he had given to the Queen of Hungary, he not only renewed the truce already accorded to the Low Countries for three additional months, but, at the solicitation of the pope and the Venetians, extended it to Piedmont.

The document authorizing this prolonged cessation of hostilities, was signed on the 16th of November, in the presence of the king himself, with orders that it should be published on the 27th of the same month, and that immediately after its promulgation the two armies should be simultaneously disbanded. The arrangement was favourable to the interests of both powers, as it was decreed that each should retain the territory of which he had possessed himself during the campaign, with liberty to garrison the fortresses, and strengthen the cities; its only victim was the unfortunate Duke of Savoy, whose interests were thus sacrificed by both monarchs, and who saw himself despoiled of all his ducal inheritance save the city and citadel of Nice.

The truce was no sooner officially concluded, than Francis, having disbanded the costly army which he had experienced so much difficulty in raising, re-passed the Alps, and established himself at Montpellier; having appointed M. de Montejan his lieutenant-general in Piedmont, and bestowed upon Guillaume du Bellay the governorship of Turin. He then despatched the Cardinal de Lorraine and the Marechal de Montmorenci to Leucate, to meet the imperial envoys, who were authorized on the part of the emperor to enter into negotiations for effecting a permanent peace between the two hostile sovereigns.

The proposals that were transmitted by Charles were no longer couched in the arrogant terms which he had formerly adopted. He offered to bestow the hand of his niece, the elder daughter of the King of the Romans, with the duchy of Milan as her dowry, upon Charles, Duke d'Orleans, on condition that the French king would confirm the treaties of Cambray and Madrid, restore Hesdin and the territories of the Duke of Savoy, co-operate with himself in effecting the entire pacification of Europe, and consent that the Duke d'Orleans should reside at the imperial court for three years after his marriage; or, failing this concession, that he should retain the fortresses of Milan in his own possession during the same period.

Although, in order to second the emperor in the reestablishment of a general peace, Francis was required not only to join in a league against the Turks, but also to abandon the German Protestants, he raised no objection to this clause of the treaty. He had already proved that, in order to ensure his own interests, he could desert those of his allies without compunction; and at this particular period nothing could be more desirable to him than a cessation of hostilities; but the demand respecting the sojourn of his son in Spain, or his cession of the Milanese cities, appeared to imply some covert design on the part of Charles to which he at once demurred. On the 10th of January, 1538, he accordingly replied to the effect that he held, his claim to the duchy to be indefeasible, although he was willing to receive it as the dowry of the emperor's niece, and to effect a marriage between her and his son; but that he considered it only just that he should either retain his fortresses, or receive those of Milan simultaneously with their evacuation.

As neither power appeared disposed to yield this point, the ministers on both sides agreed to prolong the truce until the 1st of June; and at the close of the congress the French ambassadors hastened to rejoin Francis at Moulins, where he was awaiting the result of the negotiation, in order to acquaint him with the obstacles which opposed themselves to the project of peace that had been mooted by the emperor.

At this period the favour of Montmorenci had reached its culminating point. He was, as we have shown, already a marshal and grand-master of France; but there was still a higher dignity to be attained; and it was precisely at Moulins, the capital of Bourbon's appanage,— at Moulins, where the king had once condescended to visit the rebel duke, on what was affirmed to be a bed of sickness,—that he conferred the sword of Connétable, (which had remained unappropriated since the defection of that prince) upon Montmorenci, as a reward for the valuable services which he had rendered to France during the war in Italy; while at the same time he confided to him the absolute disposal of his finances. This ceremony took place on the 10th of February, with extreme magnificence, in the presence of the princes and all the great nobles of the state ; and when the new connétable had been duly invested with the insignia of his exalted office, the bâton of Marechal, vacant by his promotion, was bestowed upon the Admiral d' Annebaut; and that of Fleuranges, who had fallen at Peronne, upon M. de Montejan.

In the spring of this year, the Chancellor Antoine du Bourg, who was following in the train of the king on his return to Lyons, was thrown from his mule; and, owing to the density of the crowd, was so severely trampled upon by the horses of the royal retinue, that he expired before he could be removed from the spot. He was succeeded in his office by Guillaume Poyet, the president of the parliament, who had rendered himself conspicuous from the part which he had taken in the process sustained by Louise de Savoie against the Duke de Bourbon.

CHAPTERV

[1538.]

THE menacing position assumed by the Sultan, and the consequent jeopardy of the Italian states, had excited the apprehensions of Paul III; who, aware that he could effect nothing so long as the emperor and the French king remained at enmity, took advantage of the momentary pause afforded by the truce to attempt their reconciliation. In order to accomplish this object, he despatched a legate to each sovereign, through whom he entreated them to meet at some convenient spot on the frontiers of Provence; volunteering, should they accede to his request, despite his great age, (for he had already attained his seventy-fifth year,) to join them there, and to act as a mediator between them. In conclusion, he proposed Nice as an eligible place for the conference ; a suggestion which filled the Duke of Savoy with consternation, that city being the sole portion of his duchy which still remained to him.

Such a proposal, coming as it did not only from the head of the church, but also from an aged man whose infirmities rendered so long a journey a fatiguing and even dangerous undertaking, admitted of no hesitation on the part of either monarch; although the French king, after he had declared his readiness to meet His Holiness whensoever and wheresoever he should see fit to appoint, hesitated to fulfil his promise when he was apprised that the pontiff hoped during his interview with the emperor, to obtain the imperial consent to a marriage between his nephew Ottavio Farnese, the elder son of the Duke of Parma, and Marguerite d'Autriche, the natural daughter of Charles; whose husband, Alessandro de' Medici, had been assassinated during the previous year. The French ambassador at the papal court, and the Cardinal de Macon, having ventured to hint to His Holiness that, this project was displeasing to their sovereign, Paul III. answered with considerable asperity; and then, after a moment's reflection, he inquired with a slight shade of sarcasm if it were forbidden for a pope to ally his family with that of a sovereign prince; adding, that the King of France might, should he so will it, confer the same honour upon the house of Farnese as the emperor, by admitting one of its members into his own.

Meanwhile the Duke of Savoy, who, as we have already shown, began to apprehend that he should lose the last remnant of his territories if he permitted the conference of the three potentates to be held at Nice, despatched an envoy to Charles V to entreat that he would not compel him to resign his citadel to the pope; and while awaiting his reply, he declared to a chamberlain whom the pontiff had sent to make the request, that he could not take so important a step without the con\* sent of the emperor. The messenger met Charles at Villa Franca, where he communicated the request of his master; but in answer to the entreaties of the duke, the emperor coldly remarked that, he would advise M. de Savoie to comply with the request of His Holiness without further delay.

Before this mortifying intelligence was made known to him, the duke received a visit from the Viscount de Martigues and the Bishop of Lausanne, who strongly urged him to refuse the use of the citadel to the pope; and assured him on the part of the Connétable de Montmorenci, that in the event of his desiring to form a closer alliance with France, either in his own person, or that of his son the Prince of Piedmont, the king would readily consent to his wishes. The duke, however,



had long learnt to mistrust the promises of his selfish allies; and he accordingly answered without hesitation, that he was grateful for the honour which was proposed to him, but that having so recently lost his wife, he had no intention of contracting a second marriage, while his son was too young to avail himself of the proffered privilege; but that if, instead of so high an alliance, his majesty would graciously reinstate him in his possessions, he should consider himself his debtor to the last hour of his life.

Finding from the reply of the emperor that he had no other resource, the duke, who was still as unwilling as before to admit the two belligerent sovereigns within his last stronghold, and who was, at the same time, too timid openly to oppose his imperial master, determined to have recourse to the citizens, to whom he represented the inevitable consequences of introducing a foreign garrison into the citadel; and, as he had anticipated, his arguments were so ably seconded by their own fears, that when the officers of the pope's household arrived to prepare the apartments allotted to him for his reception, all the population rose *en masse*, declaring that the entrance of foreign troops into their city was an infringement upon their privileges to which they would never consent; and having announced this determination, they, proceeded without further delay to close their gates. The pope, who soon after reached Nice, was accordingly compelled to take up his residence at the monastery of San Francisco in the suburbs; while the emperor cast anchor at Villa Franca, a little port in the states of Monaco, where he remained on board his galley; and Francis, accompanied by Queen Eleonora, the Queen of Navarre, the dauphiness, and his two sons, established himself at Villa Nuova, about two miles distant.

Before the conference was opened, the French queen proceeded to Villa Franca by sea to visit her brother, who had caused a wooden pier to be constructed for her accommodation from the point at which she must cast anchor to the port; and as she left her galley he advanced along this pier to receive and conduct her on shore, when the frail fabric gave way beneath their weight, and they were both precipitated into the sea, with several of their attendants. Fortunately, prompt assistance being at hand, the whole party were quickly rescued from their perilous situation.

Although the two sovereigns had thus become close neighbours, the pope could not prevail upon them to consent to a personal interview; and he consequently expressed his willingness to negotiate between them.

A marquee was accordingly pitched in the court of the convent, in which he twice received the emperor, and subsequently the French king and his sons; while the royal ladies by whom Francis was accompanied, in their turn made visits both to Charles and the pontiff.

During these interviews Paul III endeavoured by every argument in his power to reconcile the jarring interests of the two jealous potentates, and proposed sundry conditions and concessions by which the peace which he so earnestly desired might be concluded; but while he was enabled to overrule every other objection on both sides, he found himself powerless on the subject of the Milanese; and he was finally compelled to content himself with effecting a renewal of the truce for ten years, during which time he hoped to carry into execution the offensive league into which he had entered with the emperor and the Venetian states against the Infidels.

The truce was no sooner signed than Francis left Villa Nuova for Avignon, while the pope returned to Rome, and the emperor proceeded by sea to Barcelona; and meanwhile the ill-fated Duke of Savoy, who had incurred the displeasure of both potentates, by each of whom he was openly charged with having excited the revolt of the citizens of Nice, found himself even more powerless than ever, the whole remaining portion of his territories being possessed by the two belligerent sovereigns, who were severally fortifying their strongholds within his dominions with a deliberate caution which rendered him hopeless of their ultimate recovery. He was, moreover, fated to undergo another and a crowning mortification a few months subsequently, when the

connétable, on the part of Francis, proposed to him to exchange the county of Nice for lands in France to the value of twenty thousand annual crowns. The despoiled duke could ill brook this last degradation, and declined the offer with an asperity and vehemence unusual to him; declaring that he had already been victimised sufficiently both by his friends and by his enemies; and that although he now held little of his duchy save the empty title which it had conferred upon him, he would, nevertheless, at least live and die Count of Nice. He, moreover, as if to give additional weight to this declaration, immediately adopted a new device, which consisted of a naked arm grasping a sword, with the motto *Spoliatis arma supermini*; but, as he had never been remarkable for his prowess in the field, this empty vaunt only excited the contempt of his oppressors.

Contrary winds having compelled the emperor, while on his return to Spain, to cast anchor at the island of St. Marguerite, he despatched from thence a nobleman to Avignon to greet the French monarch, and to express his desire to have an interview with him; for which purpose he offered, should his proposal be accepted, to land at Aigues-Mortes.

Francis, equally surprised and gratified, eagerly acceded to the proposition; and, in order to show his confidence in the good faith and friendly intentions of his imperial visitor, he proceeded without further delay to Marseilles, where he rowed off in his barge to the galley of Charles to bid him welcome. As he reached the vessel, the emperor extended his hand to assist him in gaining the deck, and responded by an affectionate salutation to his smiling address of—"Brother, here I am once more your prisoner". This proof of confidence, as it subsequently appeared, was fully appreciated by the emperor; for when, at the close of a long and friendly conference, during which he had requested the French king to admit Doria to his presence, and the Genoese admiral had been courteously received, the latter requested permission to set sail with Francis on board, and thus terminate the war, his proposition was indignantly rejected.

On the following day the emperor landed at Aigues-Mortes, where he was received with great magnificence; and the two courts vied with each other in courtesy and friendliness. Every appearance of jealousy or hostility was at an end, and the most complete confidence was exhibited on both sides. But perhaps the most happy individual of that courtly circle was the queen, who, after having long despaired of a reconciliation between her brother and her husband, now saw them seated side by side in the most familiar conversation. The principal officers of both sovereigns were admitted to the presence; and every allusion to former meetings of a less amicable nature was mutually avoided. The dauphin and dauphiness, the Queen of Navarre, and the Duchess d' Etampes were severally presented to the emperor, who expressed his admiration of the galaxy of beauty by which his brother-monarch was surrounded. None would have supposed, while gazing on the brilliant group assembled in that obscure seaport, that it included the two enemies who had so long troubled the peace of Europe, and made all the interests of Christendom subservient to their ambition.

The festivals continued for four days; and while the nobles and ladies of the two courts were occupied by pleasure and gallantry, several long and secret interviews took place between the sovereigns, to which none were admitted save the queen, the Cardinal of Lorraine, and the connétable on the part of France; and Granvelle, the keeper of the seals, and the grand commander Gouvea, on that of the emperor. The subject of their discussions was not made public, but they nevertheless tended to increase the alarm of the Duke of Savoy, who hastened to ratify the truce by which he was despoiled of his territories, and which he had hitherto refused to do; lest he should draw down upon himself the further hostility of the two sovereigns, thus suddenly and inexplicably reconciled.

On his return to his capital, Francis plunged once more into an abyss of dissipation; and regardless alike of his failing health and his regal dignity, vied in profligacy with his arrogant mistress. Satiated with the affectations of the court beauties, and the ceremonious restraints of his

own circle, he at this period sought his conquests in a more humble sphere of society; and, in order the more readily to pursue his intrigues, adopted the habit of disguising himself as an archer of the royal guard, in which guise he was accustomed at twilight to perambulate the streets of the city. On one of these excursions he was attracted by the extreme loveliness of a fair citizen, the wife of an armourer, who chanced as he passed to be standing at the door of her dwelling, conversing with a neighbour; and after having remained for a moment steadfastly gazing upon her animated face and graceful figure, he beckoned as he moved on to a chamberlain by whom he was accompanied, and with a significant gesture drew his attention to the unconscious beauty.

“ You will recognise the house?” he said in a low voice.

“ Readily, Sire.”

“ Enough. The day after tomorrow I shall be at the chateau of Madrid.”

His attendant bowed in silence; and ere long the king returned to the palace of the Tournelles.

The royal confidant had no sooner been dismissed than he mounted his horse and retraced his steps to the Rue de Fer, where, pretexting business, he entered the shop of the armourer, during whose absence from home his beautiful partner was accustomed to superintend the commercial interests of the house. The appearance of such a customer, even at that somewhat untimely hour, failed to excite any suspicion of his motive in *La belle Feronnière*; nor was it until he changed the discourse from the casques and corselets amid which they stood to a more tender subject, that she discovered the imprudence of which she had been guilty. After having exhausted himself in the most hyperbolic admiration of her attractions, he proceeded to appease her indignation at his impertinence, by declaring that she totally misapprehended the purpose of his visit; which was, as he asserted, to inform her that the queen, who was desirous to retain about her person the most beautiful women of the kingdom, having chanced to see her during one of her progresses through the city, had been struck by her appearance, and desired to establish her in her household.

For a time the young and timid woman stood abashed, assuring the messenger that he must be mistaken, as neither her birth nor her position entitled her to so much honour; but the reiterated assurances and dazzling promises of the royal emissary at length produced their effect, and she consented to accompany him to the palace of the Tournelles, where he declared that she would be instantly admitted to the presence of the queen.

Having closely enveloped herself in her hood and mantle, the fair citizen finally permitted herself to be lifted upon the pillion with which her treacherous companion had come provided; but it was not long ere she discovered that, instead of proceeding towards the palace, they were travelling in a totally different direction; and they had consequently no sooner reached the gate by which they were about to leave the city, than she called loudly for help, when a party of the night-watch, alarmed by her cries, hastily seized their arms, and attempted to arrest the progress of her ravisher. We have, however, already shown that the civic guard of Paris was composed of men who cared little to expose themselves to danger; and, accordingly, they no sooner saw two of their number cut down by the undaunted horseman, than they fell back, and abandoned the terrified victim to her fate.

Whatever might have been the original scruples of *la belle Feronnière*, it is certain that she soon became reconciled to her fate; and that the splendour of a royal palace, and the *prestige* of a royal lover, sufficed to blind her to her moral degradation; but this liaison, which soon became the fable of all Paris, was not destined to be of long endurance, the increasing infirmities of the king

compelling him to restore her to her family at the expiration of three months, at once enriched and “disgraced”

The extreme beauty of this woman, whose real station in life has never been thoroughly ascertained; and of whose rank and position we have, consequently, been compelled to adopt the most popular version; was so remarkable, that, although an intrigue of such brief duration might well have been passed over in silence, her name has become matter of history; and the life of Francis I would, consequently, be incomplete were the episode of *La belle Feronnière* omitted. Her portrait, which adorns the Musée at Paris, is one of surpassing loveliness; the forehead is high and smooth, the eyes large, dove-like, and expressive, the nose finely shaped, the mouth faultless, and the whole outline of the face full of feminine grace and dignity.

About this period Francis was attacked by so severe an indisposition, that he was for a considerable time unable to attend to the business of the state, the whole of which devolved upon Montmorenci, who assumed an authority to which no former connétable had ever aspired. His avowed admiration of the emperor, and his equally undisguised aversion to Henry VIII, awoke the misgivings of many of the higher nobility, especially those of the ambassadors at the several European courts, who still felt the same mistrust of the motives of Charles V as they had previously entertained; and who were loud in their regrets that France should for his sake deprive herself of the allies, which it had cost her so much blood and gold to secure. Montmorenci, however, haughtily disregarded their representations, and thus unconsciously laid the foundation of his own overthrow.

The policy of the emperor in thus suddenly and with such apparent inconsistency seeking the friendship of the French monarch, soon revealed itself. The expenses of the war having compelled him to levy new imposts upon his subjects, he had, in 1536, directed Queen Marie, the Gouvernante of the Low Countries, to raise a sum of money in Flanders, by taxation or otherwise, which might enable him to pursue his operations. In compliance with this command, she proceeded to levy a subsidy of one million two hundred thousand florins on the Flemish provinces, of which the city of Ghent was to furnish the sum of four hundred thousand. To this imposition the citizens resolutely refused to submit; alleging that by the ancient privileges conceded to their city they were exempted from the payment of all taxes; and as they persisted in their refusal, the queen, in order to terrify them into submission, caused several of the principal inhabitants to be arrested, and declared her determination to retain them as prisoners until her orders were obeyed. Firm in their resistance, the Ghentese disregarded her menaces; and for nearly a year, during which their relatives and townsmen remained her captives, they contested the point; and, finally, in August 1537, they presented a petition to the gouvernante, in which they set forth in detail the privileges which had been accorded to them by former sovereigns, and by virtue of which they were, as they had stated, exempted from taxation.

In reply to this document the queen-dowager informed them that she would cause their claims to exemption to be duly investigated, either by her own council, or by the parliament of Malines, but that meanwhile they must furnish their quota to the general subsidy; a decision by which they were so much exasperated, that they immediately determined to revolt against her authority. The citizens, accordingly, flew to arms, compelled the imperial officers to leave the city, and took possession of several fortified places in the environs, declaring that they recognised no sovereign save the King of France; to whom they at the same time appealed for protection, pledging themselves, should he afford them his support, to render him master of the whole of the Low Countries.

The opportunity was tempting; and there can be little doubt that had the emperor received such a proposition from a revolted province of France, he would have evinced no hesitation in acceding to the request; but Francis, with a more generous policy, (in which he was strengthened

by the advice of Montmorenci and the entreaties of the queen) not only refused to accept an allegiance extorted by fear, but even hastened to apprise his brother-monarch of the menacing attitude assumed by his Flemish subjects.

Charles V was no sooner made aware of the extent of the emergency than he resolved to proceed to the Low Countries, and to effect the immediate suppression of the rebellious faction, which was becoming daily more formidable; but however judicious such a project could not fail to prove, there were serious obstacles to its accomplishment. In order to reach this portion of his dominions, it was necessary that the emperor should either make his way through Italy into Germany, where the animosity of the Protestant princes would render it necessary for him to be accompanied by a strong army, in which case he might be subjected by casualties to a delay that would enable the Ghentese to strengthen their position, and thus frustrate the object of his journey; or by sea, where, in the event of contrary winds, he might be cast upon the English coast, and so fall into the hands of Henry VIII, with whom he was at that moment at open enmity; or, finally, through France, which was at once the shortest and the surest route. Had Charles V been possessed of less skill in physiology than he displayed upon this occasion, it is probable that this would nevertheless have been his last alternative; but he was so well acquainted with the peculiar disposition of the French king, that he unhesitatingly determined to confide in his generosity. He had, moreover, as he was aware, a warm partisan in the then all-powerful connétable; nor did he fail to calculate upon the influence of his sister, although he had long known that her position at the court was at once onerous and unhappy.

Having made this resolution, he directed the Bishop of Tarbes, who was at that period the French ambassador at his court, to write to Montmorenci, requesting him to obtain the consent of Francis to his traversing the French territories, in order to reach the Low Countries with greater expedition; and pledging himself that, should this be accorded, he would, in requital of so signal a favour, at once meet the wishes of the French king by investing either himself or one of his sons with the sovereignty of the duchy of Milan, on condition that no further concessions should be demanded of him.

Francis, having convened his council, decided upon acceding to the request; but while every other member of the assembly insisted that, before he was permitted to pass the frontier, Charles should be compelled to give good sureties of his peaceable intentions, and declare in writing that he traversed the French soil only upon sufferance, Montmorenci alone protested against such an exhibition of distrust, which he declared to be unworthy of so great a monarch as Francis, and calculated to lessen his dignity in the eyes of the very sovereign upon whom he was about to confer a signal and important benefit.

A warm, discussion took place, but it was finally decided by the king that the advice of the connétable should be adopted; and that the emperor should be invited to enter France, not only unconditionally, but also that hostages should be offered in the persons of the two princes for his safety during his sojourn in the country.

This was fated to be the last occasion upon which Montmorenci was enabled to prove to the other nobles of the court the extent of his influence over the mind of the monarch. We have already alluded to his romantic passion for the queen; and Francis had no sooner passed from the council-chamber to the apartments of the Duchess d'Etampes to announce to her the approaching advent of the emperor, than the mine was sprung which was to accomplish his overthrow.

As the king entered, the beautiful favourite was seated before her toilette, wrapped in a robe of silver brocade, and almost buried in the cloud of luxuriant hair which one of her women was preparing to bind up. On his appearance the whole of the attendants withdrew, and the enamoured monarch hastened to impart his tidings.

“And this, Sire, if I understand aright” said the duchess with a supercilious smile; “was the advice of the connétable?”

“Even so, *ma mie*” replied Francis, as he passed his fingers fondly through the dark tresses which fell from the tapestried coffer upon which Anne de Pisseleu was seated, to the ground. “And it appeared to me to be so chivalrous, and so high-hearted, that I resolved at once to follow it. You will be glad to see our brother Charles again, shall you not? On the faith of a gentleman he esteemed your beauty at its just value.”

“Her majesty must be enraptured at such a prospect,” said the insolent mistress with the same equivocal expression, and totally regardless of the question put by the king. “Montmorenci is an able courtier.”

“Doubtlessly it will afford her pleasure” replied the monarch, with a languid yawn; “I will desire him to, acquaint her that she owes this gratification in some degree to his agency.”

“He has, in all probability, already accomplished so agreeable an errand”; spitefully retorted the duchess.

“Our good connétable is assuredly enamoured of Charles of Austria”; replied Francis, as he listlessly unlocked a costly casket of inlaid sandal-wood which stood upon the toilet, and began to examine the jewels it contained.

“His imperial majesty is the queen’s brother”; said Madame d’Etampes, still maintaining the tone of bitter sarcasm in which she had hitherto indulged; “But, remember, Sire;” she added more emphatically; “that, although he be the brother of your queen, he has ever proved himself your own enemy; nor do I anticipate that you will henceforward find him other than he has been to this day. It is not yet too late; recall your dangerous resolution; and do not risk the safety alike of your person and your kingdom in order to afford to M. de Montmorenci the privilege of extending the ‘good morrows’ for which he is so famous.”

A cloud rose to the brow of the king, which was rapidly succeeded by a smile. “You are truly, at this moment, refuting those calumniators, Anne”; he said tenderly; “who accuse you of too great a sensibility for the connétable.”

A gesture of proud disdain was the only reply vouchsafed by the haughty favourite.

“We must afford our imperial guest a splendid welcome”; pursued Francis after a pause; “we must give him good reason to remember his visit to our dominions.”

“And you will do well, Sire”; said the duchess eagerly. “Remember Pavia; remember Madrid. Let him come, since such is your will; but once in France, suffer him not to repass the frontier until you are revenged. You have dungeons as secure as those of the Escorial, and jailor as sure and as zealous as M. de Lannoy.”

Francis started. “You cannot be serious, Madame”, he said incredulously.

“At least, Sire”; persisted Madame d’Etampes; “I shall not be unsupported in my advice, like the connétable; you will find that all the best and noblest spirits in France will counsel you as I do.”

As she uttered this assurance, Triboulet the king’s jester, a misshapen dwarf who was permitted to intrude upon his privacy at all hours, and to whom rumour assigned an office about

the monarch's person infinitely more degrading than that which he ostensibly filled, quietly entered the apartment; and approaching a buffet, poured out a goblet of Malvoisie, which he carried to his royal master.

"Nevertheless, I am resolved"; said Francis, in reply to his fair companion; "Charles has asked for a safe passage through our dominions, and he shall depart as freely as he comes."

These words had scarcely passed the lips of the king, when Triboulet, replacing the yet untasted wine upon the buffet, drew an ivory tablet from the pocket of his pour-point, and deliberately inscribed some characters upon it.

"What have you there, *maître-fou*?" asked the monarch, amused by the assumed solemnity of his manner.

"I am making a fresh entry in my journal, which is filling rapidly"; was the calm reply. "Men have called me 'fool', but I have my revenge daily; I am busied upon a catalogue of madmen, and I shall ere long be short of space."

"Let me see this famous list"; said the king, extending his hand for the tablets. "Why, how now, Sir!" he exclaimed angrily; "when did you venture to add the name of my imperial brother to such a record as this?"

"Only a moment back"; answered the dwarf perfectly unmoved; "when I heard you tell fair Madame Anne that he was about to visit France."

The duchess laughed triumphantly, and threw a golden coin into the hand of the jester.

"And when he has returned to his own dominions, sirrah, what will you next do?" inquired Francis.

"Then"; said Triboulet; "if, indeed, Charles should ever live to see the day you mention, I shall efface his name, and insert yours".

"The fool speaks wisdom", said Madame d'Etampes.

"It may be so"; was the reply of the monarch; "but it is mere worldly wisdom, and unworthy of a great sovereign. I will not recall my pledge."

During this interview, another had taken place between the queen and the connétable, which was destined to involve important consequences. Montmorenci had related in detail to his royal mistress the proceedings that had taken place in the council, and she had warmly expressed her gratitude for the eminent service which he had so boldly rendered to the emperor. With true feminine tact she at once discovered the motive of his conduct; but she, nevertheless, carefully abstained from betraying any symptom of such a conviction; and as the manner of Montmorenci became more impassioned, she gradually assumed a coldness of demeanour which was foreign to her feelings.

At the close of the interview, however, conscious that she had ill responded to the zeal and devotion he had displayed, and relieved, by his absence, from the terror of misapprehension which his presence never failed to inspire, she became anxious to convince him that she was less insensible to his good offices than she had striven to appear; and after revolving many projects in her mind, unable to overcome her reluctance to address him in writing, she resolved to send to him, by one of her pages, a rich chain of amber set in enamelled gold which had been wrought for

her in Florence, and was of great value.

It chanced upon, this particular occasion that a slight indisposition caused the queen to receive her evening circle in her own apartments; and as she had hesitated for a long time ere she could decide on the propriety of conferring upon the connétable so marked a token of her favour, the company were already assembling when she confided the chain to her messenger. It happened also, that by a singular coincidence, Francis, who had never hitherto visited the queen save by the state gallery, was induced, by some sudden caprice, to avail himself of a private staircase, in ascending which he encountered the page, who from boyish vanity had flung the costly chain about his neck, and thus decorated was proceeding to perform his errand.

The quick eye of the king enabled him at a glance to recognise the ornament; and as the startled youth drew back to allow him to pass, he laid his hand upon the chain, and inquired how he became possessed of so costly a jewel. The page, who was totally unconscious of the necessity of concealment, and who only apprehended a reprimand for his presumption in having availed himself of such an opportunity to gratify his ostentatious tastes, unhesitatingly replied that he had been entrusted by the queen to convey it to the connétable; at the same time accounting for the fact of its being suspended from his own neck, by declaring that in his dread of losing it by the way, he had adopted that method as the most secure; and imploring the king to pardon a liberty which had been suggested by caution.

“Fear nothing”; said Francis composedly; “you are both prudent and trustworthy; but such a responsibility is too great for your age. Give me the chain. I will myself deliver it to M. le Connétable.”

The page obeyed, and the amber chain was placed in the hands of the king, who at once threw it about his own neck, and then pursued his way to the queen’s apartments.

The amazement and alarm of Eleonora may be conceived, when as she rose to receive her royal husband, the first object upon which her eye rested was the amber chain, rendered unusually conspicuous by the fact that Francis wore a plain pourpoint of maroon-coloured velvet, without embroidery of any description. He, however, approached her in his usual courteous, but cold manner; and, after having made a few civil inquiries regarding her health, without any allusion to the obnoxious decoration, turned away to converse with Madame do Brézé.

The anticipated arrival of the emperor furnished ample subject for conversation throughout the evening; but the spirits of the poor queen, which had been greatly elated at the prospect of again seeing her imperial brother, were painfully subdued by her apprehensions of the misconstruction which the king could not fail to put upon the motive of her present to the connétable; and when Montmorenci, a short time subsequently, drew near to her with his unvarying ‘good morrow’, she replied by a bow so chilling as to excite still further the suspicions of Francis, who had jealously watched the meeting. The inferences of the Duchess d’Etampes were now explained; and although the monarch was too proud to betray that he was conscious of a rival in one of his own subjects, and too indifferent to his royal consort to feel wounded in his affections, he, nevertheless, conceived a hatred towards the connétable which was ere long fated to produce its effect.



CHAPTER VI

[1539-40.]

THE emperor commenced his journey without further delay; and the French king no sooner learnt that he was on his way to the frontier, than, being unable from illness to undertake so long a journey, he commanded the two princes and the connétable to proceed to Bayonne, giving them express injunctions to receive the imperial visitor with every demonstration of respect and affection, and to escort him in like manner to the capital.

In accordance with these instructions the dauphin, the Duke d'Orleans, and Montmorenci, accompanied by a great number of the court nobles sumptuously mounted and apparelled, set forth in time to reach the city before the arrival of Charles; and the dauphin had no sooner greeted him in the name of the king, than he hastened, according to the directions he had received, to offer himself and his brother as hostages to the emperor until he should have reached the Low Countries. Of this proposition, however, Charles under the circumstances found it inexpedient to avail himself; and he consequently replied, that after the important service which had just been conferred upon him by the king his brother, he should be inexcusable did he entertain the slightest suspicion of his good faith. The august party accordingly proceeded in company to Bourdeaux, where they were welcomed with acclamation, and entertained with a magnificence worthy of their illustrious rank. During a long sojourn in that city the favour of the connétable daily increased with the emperor, who also lavished upon the young princes the most marked tokens of regard and affection; nor was it without apparent reluctance that he at length resumed his progress through Xaintonge and Poitiers to Chatellerault, where Francis was in person awaiting his imperial guest; and whence, after a few days passed in splendid festivity, and reciprocal assurances of friendship and confidence, the two sovereigns. and their brilliant train finally set forward to the capital.

Throughout the whole of their journey, (which occupied a considerable time in consequence of the preparations that had been made in the several cities by which they approached Paris, to render due honours to the emperor) all the local nobility and militia accompanied the royal travellers to the limits of their respective communes; and although Charles had reached Bayonne in the month of October, he halted for so long a time at Bourdeaux, at Lusignan, and at several other places upon his route, for the purpose of enjoying the sports of the field, that he did not arrive at Poitiers until the 9th of December. His reception in that city exceeded in splendour and ceremonial all that he had hitherto experienced. As he arrived at the gates he was met by the whole nobility of the province, and was conducted into the town by five hundred cavaliers superbly habited, and followed by two thousand of the citizens dressed in velvet and satin, laced with gold and Silver. At Orleans, which he reached on the 20th of December, his escort was composed not only of all the local nobility and militia, but also of a guard of "ninety-two young merchants of the city, mounted upon fine horses, all attired in overcoats of black velvet, with doublets of white satin, fastened by gold buttons; velvet caps, covered with precious stones, and edged with goldsmith's work; and boots of white Spanish leather, with golden spurs. One of these caps was estimated at two thousand crowns; nor was there an individual among them who did not carry upon his person the value of more than two thousand francs in jewellery."

From this description the enormous aggregate expenditure consequent upon the reception

of the emperor in France may be inferred. At that period it was calculated at two millions of livres; which, when the relative value of money in those days and our own is remembered, presents an amount amply sufficient to have supplied the French army throughout an entire campaign. In every city upon his passage the doors of the prisons were opened in his presence, and the prisoners liberated in his name, without any regard to the nature of their offences; and no opportunity was permitted to escape which could afford the means of convincing Charles that his visit was intended to make one wide holiday throughout the country.

At Châtellerault a magnificent banquet awaited him; and the two sovereigns, after an interview in which they vied with each other in expressions of affection and regard, repaired to the stately hall where it had been served up, followed by the princes of the blood and the cardinals. On reaching the table, Francis insisted that the emperor should occupy the upper seat, and after he had with extreme difficulty induced him to do so, he still further testified his respect for his imperial guest by causing a large space to intervene between them.

But still, despite the flattering nature of his reception, Charles V was ill at ease. He was aware that he had little deserved such a display of confidence and hospitality at the hands of the French king, and accustomed to practise deceit in his own person, he was unable, with all his efforts, entirely to conceal the alarm which he occasionally felt. This apprehension was, moreover, during his sojourn in France heightened by several circumstances, each perhaps trivial in itself, but so ill-timed as to arouse his suspicions that they were not altogether accidental. On one occasion the Duke d'Orleans, who, as we have already stated, was of a gay and thoughtless disposition, and who was moreover extraordinarily active, sprang upon the crupper of the horse which the emperor had just mounted, and flinging his arms about his waist, exclaimed gaily: "Your imperial majesty is my prisoner". Although he recovered his self-possession in an instant, it was remarked by those near him that Charles turned pale, and that it was only by a powerful effort he was enabled to reply to the jest of the young prince.

A short time subsequently, as the chancellor Poyet approached to pay his respects while the emperor was at table, the skirts of his robes became entangled among the wood which had been piled in a corner of the apartment for the supply of the stove; and as he sought to disengage them, he so disturbed the heap, that a large log upon the summit lost its balance, and fell upon the head of Charles, who remained stunned for several minutes; and although he partially recovered the blow, and affected to make light of the accident to the discomfited minister, he was nevertheless compelled to be bled before he could overcome its effects.

At Amboise, which he subsequently visited, he was destined to encounter two other perils, as easily explained, but equally startling at the moment. On one occasion the tapestried hangings of his bed were fired by an attendant; and on the other he was nearly suffocated by the vapours engendered by a foreign perfume, intended to fill, his apartment with an agreeable and refreshing odour. When the latter occurrence took place, the king, irritated by these repeated accidents, and anxious to convince his imperial guest that they were not premeditated, caused the arrest of the unlucky perfumer, and commanded that he should immediately be put to death; a fate which he would inevitably have incurred had not the emperor strenuously demanded his pardon, declaring that he had not visited France to become the cause or witness of a criminal execution.

The imperial retinue was rather elegant than either numerous or magnificent. The great-grandson of Charles the Bold was accompanied only by a hundred men-at-arms, chosen for their personal beauty and dexterity in warlike exercises; by a body of Spanish grandees, whose ambition appeared limited to a desire to excel in the splendour of their costume the nobles of the French court; and by four-and-twenty pages, habited in costumes of orange, grey, and violet velvet, which were at that period his peculiar colours. He himself was clad in a complete suit of polished armour, girt about the waist by a sash of cloth of gold; and rode an Andalusian horse of

extraordinary strength and symmetry. His cap was of black velvet, embroidered with gold and jewels, and his weapons were of the same costly description.

From Châtellerault the illustrious party proceeded to Amboise, where the alarm of the emperor was fated to reach its climax. Assured as he was of the devotion of the connétable, he had not sojourned so long in France without detecting certain indications of his unpopularity with the mass, not only of the nobles, but also of the citizens, which rendered him anxious to pursue his journey to the Low Countries, so soon as this measure could be effected without giving umbrage to his royal entertainer. Meanwhile, however, he dissembled his misgivings, and entered into all the amusements of the court with apparent zest and enjoyment. On the occasion of a ball which he had opened with the queen his sister, and which took place by daylight, as was the common custom of the period, the *royales* and *gaillards*, which were the state dances, were executed with infinite grace and dignity by the dauphiness, the Duchess d'Etampes, and Madame de Brézé; and at their termination the emperor, who had carefully abstained from resenting the neglect that was evinced towards his royal relative, and the supremacy of the favourite who openly usurped her privileges, approached the haughty duchess, and expressed his admiration of the consummate elegance with which she had acquitted herself of her arduous duties. They were still engaged in conversation, when the king, flattered by the deference shown to his cherished mistress, hastily approached them, and laying his hand upon the arm of Charles V, said gaily:— “Be sparing of your compliments, good brother; for permit me to assure you that the fair lady who is now bending beneath their weight, was bold enough to advise me to make you my prisoner until you had consented to the revocation of the treaty of Madrid.”

A shadow gathered upon the brow of the emperor, and his features assumed a stern expression, as turning from the discomfited favourite he said coldly; “If the advice seem good, your majesty will do well to follow it.”

This reply for a moment silenced the whole group; but the king soon rallied, and the amusements resumed their course.

The warning was, however, opportune; for Charles was aware that he could not have a more dangerous enemy than the fascinating and unscrupulous duchess; but he was also conversant with her real character; and, accordingly, a few days afterwards when he was about to seat himself at table, and that Madame d'Etampes, who assumed to herself the office which should by the rules of etiquette have devolved upon a royal princess, presented a napkin, he adroitly drew a magnificent brilliant from his finger, and suffered it to fall to the ground.

The duchess immediately stooped, picked up the jewel, and with a low curtsy presented it on her open palm to its imperial owner.

“Nay, Madame” said Charles, with an obeisance as profound as her own; “the bauble looks so much more attractive in your hands than in mine that I dare not reclaim it.”

“Your Imperial Majesty surely jests”; was the reply of the favourite, as she still tendered the ring; “I am unworthy of so precious a gift.”

“Of what are you not worthy, Madame?” said Charles in an accent of gallantry, as he possessed himself of her hand, and passed the gem over one of her slender fingers; “You, who have won the heart of one monarch, need feel no compunction in wearing the jewel of another.”

It is needless to explain that the offering was accepted; or that from that moment the avaricious favourite ceased to exhibit any hostility towards the politic donor.

From Amboise the emperor was conducted to Blois, and thence to Fontainebleau, where the fetes recommenced; but the crowning triumph was his entry into the capital, which took place on the 1st of January, 1540.

The dauphin and the Duke d'Orleans, the princes of the blood, the French cardinals, the parliament, and all the officials of the government met him at the gates; where the two princes took their places upon his right and left hand, while the connétable preceded him with his sword of office unsheathed, as though he were escorting his own sovereign, and so accompanied him through the city. The keys of the several prisons were delivered to him, as they had previously been in the provinces; and before he entered the palace of the Tournelles, he declared the freedom of their occupants. When he reached the Hôtel de Ville he found all the sheriffs assembled before the portal of the building to compliment him; and at the close of their harangue they presented, as the offering of the city of Paris to its august visitor, a Hercules in silver the size of life, with the lion skin in which he was draped richly gilt and chased. Thence he proceeded in the same state to Notre Dame, where a solemn Te Deum was chanted; after which he was conducted to the palace, and took possession of the magnificent suite of apartments that had been newly decorated for his use; and throughout the whole of the eight days during which he remained the guest of the French king, the most splendid festivals were given in his honour.

On his departure, when he had taken leave of the queen his sister, the queen of Navarre, the dauphiness, and their respective courts, he left the city with the same pomp as he had entered it, accompanied by his royal host and the two princes, and proceeded to Chantilly, where he was entertained in the most costly manner by the connétable.

It is asserted by some historians, that the dauphin, the King of Navarre, and the Duke de Vendôme had entered into a conspiracy to arrest him in the chateau of Montmorenci; and that the latter was only enabled to dissuade them from their purpose by representing the odium which he should personally incur throughout Europe were he to permit such an outrage to be committed beneath his roof. Be this as it may, however, it is certain that after having passed the night at Chantilly, the emperor on the following day pursued his journey to St. Quentin without molestation; and having taken leave of the king in that city, proceeded to Valenciennes, still attended by the two princes and the connétable.

On their arrival at Valenciennes, Montmorenci respectfully reminded the emperor of his promise relative to the duchy of Milan, and requested him to appoint a given time for its fulfilment; upon which Charles with some bitterness replied, that all the courtesy displayed towards him by his royal brother had been counterbalanced by the perpetual annoyance to which he had been subjected upon that question and that he was at the moment so engrossed by the affairs of Ghent, that he could not afford time for the consideration of any other and less pressing interest.

As the connétable, however, persisted in urging him to a decision, he at length declared that he should refer the matter to his council, as he did not feel himself justified in alienating so important a portion of his empire without previously obtaining the sanction of his brother the King of the Romans; but that he should no sooner have done so than he would be careful to make such an arrangement as could not fail to prove agreeable to the French monarch.

With this equivocal assurance Montmorenci was compelled to content himself; and having taken his final leave of the imperial dissembler, he returned to court with the two princes. The emperor meanwhile proceeded to Ghent, where he succeeded in a few days in suppressing the revolt, by an exhibition of severity which effectually terrified the rebels into submission; and this was no sooner accomplished than the Bishop of Lavour again demanded the promised investiture on the part of his sovereign; when Charles, who had secured his own safety, and who had no

longer anything to fear from the enmity of his late lavish host, unblushingly asserted that he had given no pledge, and had no intention of making so serious a sacrifice.

This shameless tergiversation of the emperor produced the most baneful effects upon the moral nature of Francis I. Hitherto, amid all his faults, he had been unsuspecting of those about him, and frank and open-hearted to all in whom he believed that he could confide; but the deceit practised by Charles was so monstrous, and his ingratitude so glaring, that he lost confidence even in his best and truest friends; and eagerly listened to all the whispers which were circulated against those in whom he had hitherto reposed the greatest trust.

The first victim of this morbid feeling was the Marechal de Brion Chabot, the playmate of his boyhood, the companion of his youth, and moreover the near relative of Madame d'Etampes, who, incensed by the coldness of Montmorenci, exerted all her influence to undermine his interests with the king, and to second those of her cousin. For a considerable time Francis had confided the direction of public affairs to the connétable, whose power had become so notorious, that with the exception of the monarch himself, and the Cardinal de Lorraine, all who were in correspondence with him addressed him by the title of Monseigneur. Between the cardinal and Montmorenci an aversion had long existed which was no secret to the court; and it was, consequently, without any suspicion of their new alliance, that they reconciled their differences in order to meet a common danger, when they discovered the energy displayed by Madame d'Etampes in the cause of Chabot.

In the life of a public man it is always easy to discover some foundation for blame. Human nature is ever fallible; and where great power has been entrusted to an individual, it is rare indeed to find that it has never been abused. Nevertheless, Chabot felt so convinced of his own general uprightness, that when he became aware that through the machinations of some unexpected enemy he was accused of having maladministered the affairs of the king in Piedmont, he merely smiled at what he considered as an abortive attempt to injure him.

Such, however, it was not destined to prove; for he had not only excited the indignation of Montmorenci by his ostentatious display of the wealth and power for which he was indebted to the partiality of the monarch, but he had also aroused the jealousy of Francis himself by the extreme interest which Madame d'Etampes undisguisedly evinced in his advancement, and wounded his vanity by presuming upon a familiarity which had commenced in their boyhood, and which no after events had diminished in the manner of the presumptuous favourite.

The train thus laid, it was easy for the king to discover an opportunity of offence; and, accordingly, when upon some trivial occasion, Chabot ventured as usual to dissent from his opinion, he turned sternly towards the astonished Marechal, declaring that he could no longer tolerate his insolence; and threatening that, should he persist in so unbecoming a course as that which he had thus arrogantly adopted, he would put him upon his trial.

Indignant at this menace, Chabot, instead of quailing before the displeasure of his royal master, which the latter had anticipated that he would do, answered in as high a tone, that his majesty was quite at liberty to arrest him upon the instant, should such be his pleasure, as he felt so secure that neither his life nor his honour could be touched, that he should feel no uneasiness regarding the result of the investigation.

This boldness, which appeared to Francis to be intended as an open defiance of the authority of which he was so jealous, at once decided the fate of the imprudent Chabot; who, with his usual impetuosity, had not paused to remember that the friendship of a sovereign cannot be enjoyed upon equal terms; and that it must always be received as a boon, rather than claimed as a right, whatever may have been the obligations incurred by that sovereign towards his subject.

It is, however, evident from the result, that the old affection of Francis for the Marechal was still too powerful to permit him to contemplate any ultimate injury to his favourite; and that all he sought was to humble his vanity, and to diminish his pretensions; but he, nevertheless, gave an order to the chancellor Poyet to appoint commissaries from the several parliaments of France, and to proceed at once to the trial. Chabot was arrested, imprisoned in the castle of Melun, and several times interrogated by the chancellor himself, who presided over the proceedings contrary to all precedent, as his jurisdiction did not extend to the criminal courts. But Poyet, who was at this period the creature of the king as blindly and unscrupulously as he had formerly been that of Louise de Savoie, boldly set all legal conventionalities at defiance; and pursued his undertaking with such overweening zeal, that he ere long announced to Francis that he had convicted the Marechal of no less than five-and-twenty crimes, any one of which merited the pain of death.

Such had not, however, been the opinion of the commissaries; who, upon acquainting themselves with the extreme puerility of the several accusations, declared that they saw nothing in the conduct of the prisoner which could subject him to any penalty beyond that of a brief imprisonment; but, believing that Francis wished to rid himself of an importunate courtier of whom he had become weary, Poyet no sooner found that the other members of the court disregarded alike his arguments and his expostulations, than he proceeded to threats, which proved more efficacious; and thus sentence of death was ultimately signed against the unfortunate noble by his venal and profligate judge.

This result was, however, no sooner communicated to the king, than he expressed his indignation at the absurdity of which both the chancellor and his subordinates had been guilty, in thus condemning a man to die for errors not one of which amounted to a crime; and having so done, he desired that the Marechal might immediately be summoned to his presence. As Chabot entered the apartment, already aware of the decision of the court, he met the eye of the king respectfully but firmly, and having made a deep obeisance, stood silently before him awaiting the event.

“You see, Sir;” commenced Francis sternly; “to what a pass your arrogance has brought you; and that it ill became you to challenge your sovereign to so dangerous a proof as he has now given you of his power.”

“I admit my error, Sire” said the Marechal; but at least your judges have been unable to convict me of any want of zeal or fidelity in your service.”

“Do you then still consider yourself irreproachable?” asked the monarch hastily.

“By no means, Sire;” was the calm and pointed reply; “I have learnt in my prison that before God and his sovereign no man can call himself innocent.”

“It is well, Sir, that you have been awakened to a sense of your indiscretion” said the king, but less sternly than before; “we will, however, spare your life. Whatever may have been your faults, you have ere now done us good service which we care not to forget. Let the remembrance of the latter cheer your exile, as that of the former cannot fail to sadden it.”

The marechal attempted no remonstrance; and a sentence of perpetual banishment was recorded against him, to which was superadded a fine of a hundred and fifty thousand livres; but, believing that he had now sufficiently humbled the vanity of his old and faithful servant, whose presumption had been fostered by the extreme familiarity to which he had been admitted by himself; wearied by the remonstrances of Madame d’Etampes; and aroused once more to his old jealousy of the connétable by her representations, Francis had no sooner thus cruelly suffered his victim to experience all the bitterness of anticipated ruin and disgrace, than he once more set aside

the decree of the court, and restored him unrestrictedly to his former property and honours.

The vanity of the sovereign had, however, miscalculated the character of the subject. Chabot was a man of quick and sensitive feelings, and he had been wounded to the very core. The pardon which had been granted to him as a boon, failed to satisfy his self-respect; and he accordingly declined to resume his official functions until he had undergone a second trial before the regular tribunal; a favour which was at length reluctantly accorded to him. The result of this second investigation was an unqualified acquittal; and it was no sooner promulgated than he returned to court, where he was welcomed by no one more warmly than by Marguerite of Navarre; who, aware that Montmorenci had been the original instigator of his disgrace, and remembering only too keenly the insult which he had offered to herself on the subject of her religious tenets, hastened to assure him of her lively satisfaction at the triumph which he had obtained over his enemies; a triumph in which she was ere long destined to share.

To the Marechal it was, however, of small avail; for the mortification to which he had been exposed, and the anxiety that he had suffered during his imprisonment, had acted so injuriously upon his health that he never recovered from their effects; and in little more than a year Francis was deprived by death of one of the most attached and devoted of his subjects.

The next arrest which took place was that of his persecutor Poyet; who, although his disgrace was well merited, nevertheless owed it less to his crimes than to the vengeance of Madame d'Etampes, and the wounded dignity of Marguerite de Navarre.

Jean de Bary la Renaudie, a gentleman of Perigord, was engaged in a law-suit against M. du Tillet, the registrat-civil of the parliament of Paris, which had already extended over several years; and being anxious to see it terminated, he had applied for letters of evocation which the chancellor upon sundry pretexts refused to sign, although he had been expressly urged to do so by the favourite; who at length, irritated by his opposition, obtained an order from the king by which he was compelled to immediate obedience. It chanced that when this order arrived he was closeted with the Queen of Navarre, who was soliciting his interest in favour of an individual of her family who had recently been convicted of eloping with an heiress; and he had no sooner run his eye over the missive of the king, than taking up the letters of La Renaudie, he held them towards his royal petitioner, exclaiming bitterly:—

“ There, Madame, is a proof of the purposes to which the ladies of the court apply their influence. Not satisfied with confining themselves to their legitimate sphere of action, they undertake even to violate the laws, and to give lessons to the most experienced magistrates.”

The sister of the king, who apprehended that this taunt, which there can be little doubt simply applied to Madame d'Etampes, was intended as an insult to herself, immediately rose, refusing to resume with the minister the subject upon which she had been induced to visit him; and she had no sooner reached the palace than she hastened to communicate to the favourite the insolence of the fated Poyet.

On the 2d of August the French chancellor was a prisoner in the Bastille, where he remained until the conclusion of his trial on the 23d of April, 1545, which had been constantly prolonged by the charges that poured in against him from all directions. Found guilty of malversation, peculation, and legal corruption, he was sentenced “to be deprived of the dignity of chancellor, declared incapable of holding office under the crown, and condemned to a fine of a hundred thousand livres, as well as five years' imprisonment in whatsoever fortress the king might see fit to select.” He was then removed to the town of Bourges, where he was detailed until he had surrendered the whole of his property in payment of the fine; and he ultimately died in Paris in a state of the most squalid poverty, without a home or a friend.

Despite the unworthy requital which had been made by Charles V to the impolitic hospitality of the French king, he was anxious to avoid an open rupture between the two countries; and after his return to Spain he accordingly hastened to propose to Francis a double alliance between their families which might ensure their lasting friendship, and by such means invest them with a supremacy over the whole of Europe. For this purpose he declared his readiness to accept for his son Don Philippe, the hand of Jeanne d'Albret, the daughter of Henry of Navarre and Marguerite, the king's sister; pledging himself to permit Francis to redeem the principalities of Bearn and Lower Navarre, both of which were situate within the French territories, for two millions of livres; and to give his own daughter, the Princess of Spain, in marriage to Charles, Duke d'Orleans, with either the duchy of Milan, or the Low Countries and the counties of Burgundy and Charolois, as her dower, on condition that the king should increase the appanage of his son.

To this proposition Francis, however, refused to accede, although a more brilliant alliance could not have presented itself for the young prince. He declared in reply, that he could not consent to receive the duchy of Milan as the dowry of the Princess of Spain, inasmuch as such a concession would tend to invalidate his just claims to that sovereignty, to which he considered that he had an undisputed right, either in his own person or in that of one of his sons; while he was equally indisposed to accept the Low Countries and the provinces specified on the condition assigned, that should the prince die before his wife these territories were to revert to the emperor himself; while he moreover declined to give any definite reply as to the marriage of Jeanne d'Albret with Don Philippe.

Charles V, who had anticipated a very different result, was extremely chagrined by this unexpected obstacle. He declared that while Francis was exacting in his own demands, he avoided all personal sacrifice; but he, nevertheless, abstained from any demonstration of hostility, believing that upon mature deliberation the French king would accede to his proposals.

The policy of Francis upon this occasion, meanwhile caused severe disappointment to the King and Queen of Navarre, who saw their wildest dreams of ambition realized in the alliance proposed for their daughter; but the idea of an union between this princess and the son of the German emperor alarmed alike the king and his ministers; who foresaw, should it be effected, the almost certain usurpation of the kingdom of Navarre by the Spaniards, as well as that of a considerable portion of territory at the base of the Pyrenees; and, consequently, not all the importunities of his much-loved sister could induce Francis to yield. Either, as he asserted, both the marriages must take place, or neither; adding, moreover, that nothing should induce him to dismember his kingdom in order to increase the territories of Charles V.

The negotiation was, however, continued, but listlessly and indifferently, until the arrival in France of the Duke de Cleves and Juliers, who having been disappointed in his hope of obtaining the duchy of Gueldres (to which both Antoine de Lorraine and himself laid claim as the near relatives of the deceased Duke William) at the hands of Charles V, who was anxious to retain its sovereignty and to merge it in that of the Low Countries; at once proceeded to the court of Francis to solicit his assistance and protection. It happened, unfortunately for the interests of the young princess, that a short time previously the Cardinal de Grammont, Archbishop of Bordeaux and Lieutenant-Governor of Guienne, had succeeded in intercepting a secret correspondence between the emperor and the King of Navarre on the subject of the proposed marriage of their children; and this letter having been forwarded to the king, he became so incensed by this daring opposition to his will, that he forthwith offered to the Duke of Cleves, as an earnest of his friendship, the hand of his niece; an offer which was gratefully accepted. In vain did Henri de Navarre remonstrate, and his sister weep; Francis remained immovable, declaring that he would not retract a pledge voluntarily given; and despite the opposition of both parents, he accordingly made known to the duke that his marriage would be solemnized at Châtelleraul on the 15th of July.



On that day the ceremony accordingly took place with a magnificence which excited much murmuring among the people, upon whom a new tax was levied in order to liquidate the outlay consequent upon this demand on the treasury; and the only consolation experienced by the disappointed mother was afforded by the fact, that as the poor child, who had only just attained her eleventh year, was so overloaded with jewels, and gold and silver damask, that she had not strength to walk under their weight, the king commanded Montmorenci to take her in his arms, and carry her to the altar; an order which startled the whole court, such an office being derogatory to the exalted rank of the connétable, and obviously intended as an affront.

Montmorenci, however, obeyed in silence; but as he lifted the little princess, who was clinging to the side of her mother, his cheek flushed upon hearing Marguerite remark scornfully to Madame d'Etampes: "Is it not amusing? Here is the man who would fain have ruined me in the good graces of my royal brother, now playing the part of lacquey to my daughter." A taunt which had no sooner reached his ear, than he in turn exclaimed to one of his friends: "My season of favour is over, and I bid it farewell for ever."

The event proved the justice of his previsions, for at the close of the banquet it was announced to him that the king authorized his retirement to one of his estates, and would dispense with all leave-taking.

The next morning the once-powerful connétable was on his way to his château at Chantilly.

The positive cause of his disgrace was never publicly ascertained. Many ascribed it to the evil counsels by which Francis was induced to allow the emperor a free passage through his kingdom, an act of impolicy which he had since repented; and others, to the jealousy felt by the king at the excessive attachment existing between him and the dauphin; but its undoubted motive was revealed by the fact, that while that prince was on one occasion repeating his entreaties for the recall of his first tutor in arms, the king exclaimed bitterly: "No more of this, Sir. Never again mention to me the name of that dispenser of 'Good-morrows!'"

The Duchess d'Etampes was revenged. No one thenceforward dared to plead the cause of the outraged connétable; and his enforced exile terminated only with the death of the ungenerous monarch who had so ill requited his brilliant services.

The departure of Montmorenci was no impediment to the gaiety of the court; which, on the occasion of the marriage of Mademoiselle de Navarre, drank deep of every species of dissipation. Superb banquets, and magnificent tournaments, daily took place; and at the latten a number of knights-errant presented themselves in the lists, who rigorously observed all the traditional ceremonies of the Knights of the Round Table. The most costly gifts were showered upon the bride; and at the conclusion of the festivities, the Duke de Cleves took his leave of the royal circle, and returned to Aix-la-Chapelle, whither his young wife was to follow him when she should have attained her fourteenth year. This arrangement, however, was never completed; as Marguerite and her husband, against whose consent the alliance had taken place, caused it to be annulled a short time afterwards; nor was the princess finally married until the year 1548, when she became the wife of Antoine de Bourbon, Duke de Vendome, who succeeded his father-in-law as King of Navarre.

From Châtellerault Francis removed with his court to the capital, where an incident occurred which occasioned considerable amusement to the idle and licentious circle. The monarch, soon wearied by the gloomy palace of the Tournelles, proceeded with a few chosen courtiers to the château of Madrid; an arrangement which afforded great satisfaction to the favourite, who, whatever contempt she affected to feel for the forsaken queen, evinced on all occasions the utmost anxiety to escape from her vicinity. The royal party had no sooner arrived at

the villa, than the king commanded a grand hunt in the Bois de Boulogne; from which, however, the duchess, being slightly indisposed, absented herself. It is true that the gallant and handsome Christian de Nançay, the captain of the body-guard, had been prevented by his duties from joining in the sport and it was well known that Madame d'Etampes had long ceased to conceal her passion for this noble young soldier. Suffice it, that while she sat musing in her own apartment, De Nançay, leaning from the balcony of the outer gallery, was watching the shades of evening as they thickened, in as deep a reverie as her own.

At length the great clock of the château struck seven; and De Nançay, starting from his waking dream, adjusted his helmet and coat-of-mail, and hastened to his post to arrange his pikemen; after which he returned to the gallery, whence he proceeded to the private apartments; and having traversed the arched corridor by which they were approached, suddenly stopped before a hanging curtain of blue silk, richly fringed with gold, and embroidered all over with the royal salamander in the same costly bullion. A deep flush rose to his cheek, and for a moment his eyes fell before the significant device; but he was young, bold, and fully conscious of his personal advantages. It was not, consequently, from any dread of personal danger that he paused; but only one short year had elapsed since he had been a personal attendant of the sovereign, who, in requital of his services, had permitted him to exchange the plumed cap and embroidered pourpoint of the page for the helm and halberd of the soldier; and he was conscious that, by his meditated intrusion, he was about to violate the respect which he owed to his royal master.

Behind that mystic curtain was an apartment into which no one had a right to penetrate, save the king himself, the Apartment of the Duchess d'Etampes; who, dear as she might be to the monarch, the enthusiastic youth believed could be loved by no one so devotedly as by himself. As we have said, he paused for a moment; but as he apprehended no severity on the part of the fair favourite herself, he soon forgot all save his mad and ungovernable passion. With a desperate clutch he drew back the folds of the frail barrier, and cautiously entered the forbidden chamber.

The room was of small dimensions, oval-shaped, and imperfectly lighted by the faint flame which was confined within a lamp of ground glass, placed upon a precious secretaire of ebony, inlaid with sandal-wood, ivory, and coral; rich hangings of purple damask veiled the walls, and were looped back at intervals by hands wrought in polished steel; a noble Venetian mirror faced the portal; and a gorgeous sofa, upon which were scattered cushions of gold-coloured satin, tasselled with pearls, stood immediately beneath it. Two of the velvet-covered coffers, which were at that period the ungraceful and inconvenient substitutes for chairs, were placed near it; while the only window by which the daylight was admitted into the apartment was flung open, its draperies drawn aside, and its space partially occupied by the slight figure of a woman, whose head was bowed over her bosom, and whose hands rested upon the sill.

The breath of De Nançay came thick and fast, as he stood with his eyes riveted upon the dimly-traced outline of the solitary muser; he could neither speak, nor move a limb; he felt like one who is deprived of all power of volition. How long this trance might have continued, is uncertain, had not Madame d'Etampes suddenly started, swept back her dishevelled hair, and, moving from the window, approached a table on which lay the miniature rattle destined to summon her attendants; when, as she reached the centre of the floor, the rays of the lamp, feeble though they were, glinted over the armour of the intruder, upon which she uttered a faint scream, and sank fainting on the sofa.

“It is only I—Christian—most adored of women”; murmured De Nançay, as he hastened to reassure her; “It is only I, your worshipper. Will you not pardon me?”

“You mad boy!” gasped out the terrified favourite; “do you seek your own destruction?”

“What could I do, Anne?” urged the impassioned youth. “I knew that you were here—here, and alone.”

“But the king--”

“The king!” echoed De Nançay petulantly; “Can you not forget him at such a moment as this? He is still in the forest. The stag has afforded him right royal sport, and he cannot return hither for hours.”

“Nevertheless, you have acted with great imprudence”; said the duchess tenderly, as she wreathed her slender fingers in his clustering curls; “you may have been suspected—even seen.”

“I thought only of you, sweet Anne.”

“I dare not trust you. You will involve both yourself and me.”

“Spare your reproaches”; said Christian impatiently; “for I have exercised more discretion than you seem willing to believe. The king, I repeat, cannot be here for two happy, blissful hours.”

“From whom did you ascertain that fact?”

“From the Count de Saint-Pol, who has this moment returned from the hunt.”

“Enough”; said the duchess with a smile; “the boy is, I see, fast ripening into the man, and must not be idly chidden”. Then, springing her small rattle, a summons which was instantly answered by the entrance of one of her women, she made a significant gesture, and the attendant departed as silently as she had appeared.

Scarcely had half an hour elapsed when a great noise was heard in the courtyard. The archers and pikemen flew to their arms; and the *suivante*, who had slumbered upon her watch, rushed into the apartment exclaiming hurriedly: “Madame, you have not a moment to lose. His majesty has returned.”

In an instant both the duchess and De Nançay sprang to their feet; the clatter of horses’ hoofs, and the baying of hounds, became every instant more audible. There was no longer time either for concealment or for flight, and moreover the captain of the royal guard was absent from his post. Meanwhile the king had sprung from his horse; and booted, spurred, and muddy as he was, had hurriedly entered the château, and ascended by a private staircase which led immediately to the apartments of the duchess, in order to allay her uneasiness by assuring her of his safety.

Already the clanking of his spurs echoed sharply through the arched gallery. The duchess had recognised his footstep, and the young guard had resigned himself to his fate. The silken curtain of the portal was flung back, and in another instant Francis appeared upon the threshold of the apartment, preceded by two pages bearing flambeaux. On discovering De Nançay in the saloon of Madame d’Etampes, the king suddenly stopped short, and his eyes flashed with rage; but he nevertheless maintained sufficient control over his feelings to suppress his indignation. Christian stood, with bowed head, in the centre of the floor, and beside him knelt a female, whose face was buried in her hands, and whose whole frame quivered with emotion.

“You here, Sir!” said Francis sternly.

Christian replied only by a respectful bow.

“And apparently in good company” pursued the king bitterly. “Who is this woman? Let her stand up.”

The recumbent figure slowly rose from her Magdalen-like attitude.

“You are indeed over-bold, young Sir”; thundered the indignant monarch; “would no light-o’-love serve your turn save one of the attendants of the Duchess d’Etampes? and no place of rendezvous suffice except her private chamber? Hola! guards! seize your prisoner.”

De Nançay respectfully drew his sword from its scabbard, and in silence laid it at the feet of his irritated master; after which, with a profound obeisance, he surrendered himself to the royal archers who awaited him at the entrance of the apartment.

About a month subsequently, Francis summoned the delinquent to his presence. “M. de Nançay,” he said; “I have been induced to pardon the crime of which you were lately guilty, at the powerful intercession of the noble lady to whom you offered so deep an insult that she might well have been excused had she rather solicited your lasting disgrace; but who, with a generosity for which you can never sufficiently prove your gratitude, condescends to overlook the outrage committed upon her dignity, and in consideration of your youth, freely forgives you. It is to her, and her alone, I repeat, that you owe your escape from a fate which, to a young and proud spirit like yours, would have been worse than death. Do not suffer the lesson you have now received to prove unprofitable. Return to your duty. Here is your sword, Sir; and endeavour to guard it better in time to come.”

Christian knelt, and having dutifully kissed the knee of the sovereign, once more took possession of his forfeited weapon; pledging himself, upon the honour of a soldier, that he would never again be guilty of the enormity of pursuing with his addresses any of the attendants of the outraged favourite.

The clever duchess was saved. She had, indeed, sacrificed the fair fame of one of her women, but she had succeeded in securing her own immunity. And, after all, what was the value of character to the daughter of a citizen, or to an inmate of the court of Francis I?

During the course of this year, that maddest of all mad geniuses, Benvenuto Cellini, was introduced to Francis by the Cardinal de Ferrara, where he soon drew upon himself the enmity of the Duchess d’Etampes; and although he enriched the collection of the king by several of the finest specimens of his art, he was compelled, notwithstanding the partiality evinced towards him by Francis himself, to request permission to leave the country a short time afterwards, feeling unequal to cope with so dangerous an adversary.

The exile of Montmorenci from the court was speedily followed by that of the profligate Cardinal de Lorraine, who was accused of having accepted an annual revenue of six thousand crowns from the emperor, on the archbishopric of Saragossa; an equivocal meanness in which he was countenanced by several of his colleagues, but to which the king affected to attach a suspicion of treachery in his case, in order to escape from the continual importunities rendered necessary by the enormous outlay in which he indulged.

CHAPTER VII

[1541-42.] .

THE exile of Montmorenci and M. de Lorraine, and the death of de Brion-Chabot, had meanwhile changed the whole aspect of the French court. The connétable had sooner retired to Chantilly than Francis transferred to the Marechal d'Annebaut all the confidence which he had formerly bestowed upon his old favourite; but it was not long ere he was destined to feel his error, for the moment in which he had deprived himself of his two most zealous and devoted friends was pregnant with menace, and the nation could ill afford to sustain so serious a loss.

The emperor, after having awaited for some months a renewal of the negotiations into which he had entered with the French king, was no sooner apprised that a marriage was about to take place between the Duke de Cleves and Jeanne d'Albret, whose hand he had demanded for his own son, than, feeling the futility of anticipating any satisfactory result to his propositions, on the 11th of October, 1540, he had at Brussels invested Dom Philippe with the duchy of Milan; and this important step once taken, his next care was to promote a rupture between the courts of Paris and Constantinople; and at the same time to excite the suspicions of the Christian princes as to the good faith of Francis.

The sultan was already prepared to view the policy of the French king with a jealous eye, first from his having failed him in Piedmont, and still more recently from the fact of his having suffered the passage of Charles V through his dominions; while the Venetians, conscious that they had narrowly escaped destruction, and convinced by experience that they had more to fear from the enmity of the Infidels than they had to hope from the support of the emperor, had determined to effect an alliance with Solymán. This was a catastrophe which had not been foreseen by Charles V; and one so formidable that all his measures were at once arrested by the necessity of maintaining the semblance of a perfect amity with the French king. In order to accomplish so desirable an object, he therefore at once wrote to request of Francis that he would permit the Marechal d'Annebaut to proceed to Venice in the company of the Marquis del Guasto, to assure the States that their apprehensions were unfounded, and to endeavour to include them in their league against the Infidels. His request was immediately complied with, but the Venetians had been so frequently deceived by statements of the same nature, that they received the envoys very coldly, declaring that no real friendship could exist between their several sovereigns until the Milanese were ceded to France; an event which had now become more improbable than ever. Del Guasto argued and remonstrated in vain; the States civilly declined to declare themselves convinced; and it was not long ere they concluded a truce with the Ottomans, which was subsequently ratified by a treaty of peace.

This open demonstration of contempt on the part of the Venetians aroused the indignation of Francis; who, not without cause, attributed the affront to which he had thus been subjected, to the double-dealing of the emperor; and he at once resolved to justify himself in the opinion both of the sultan and the states of Venice, by imparting to them without reserve a detail of all that had taken place between himself and Charles V. For this purpose, he despatched as his ambassadors to the council of Venice a gallant officer named Caesar Fregosa, a knight of the order of St. Michael, who had done him good service in Piedmont; and Antoine Rincon, one of the gentlemen of his bed-chamber, who was invested with the like dignity, and instructed to proceed to Constantinople by the same route, and, consequently, to accompany his colleague to his allotted post. Rincon, however, having some private business to arrange at Lyons, first visited that city, where he was detained for a short time; while Fregosa advanced as far as Suza, to inspect a troop of gendarmes of which the command had recently been confided to him. Du Bellay-Langei, who had been

appointed lieutenant-general in Piedmont after the death of Chabot, was at that period residing at Turin; and the delay of the two ambassadors afforded him an opportunity of discovering a treacherous plot which had been laid by the Marquis del Guasto for their destruction.

The extreme corpulency of Rincon rendering him unable to attempt the exertion of riding, it had been decided that the envoys and their suite should avail themselves of the barges upon the Po, which, by virtue of the then existing truce, was considered to be an equally safe and convenient method of performing the journey. Del Guasto had, however, no sooner ascertained this arrangement, than, disregarding the sacredness of the pledge given by his imperial master, he hired assassins, who were stationed at different points along the river, for the purpose of intercepting their progress, and possessing themselves of their despatches, with strict orders to secure them at all hazards, even should the lives of the envoys be sacrificed in the struggle, or their destruction rendered necessary to ensure the secrecy of their mission.

On the 1st of July the two ambassadors reached Rivoli, where they were met by the vigilant Langei, who strongly urged them to abandon the river, and at any sacrifice to pursue a different route; but Rincon, who, as we have stated, could ill brook the saddle, and who had, moreover, been long accustomed to travel in uncivilized countries, disregarded the advice, declaring that, whatever might be the determination of his companion, he should himself proceed by water; nor was it without extreme difficulty that Du Bellay finally induced him to entrust his despatches to his own care, pledging himself for their safe delivery in Venice. Fregosa, who had not the same reasons for exposing himself to gratuitous danger, hesitated for a time as to which measure he should adopt; but he soon permitted himself to be won over by the confident assurances of his colleague; and, despite the persevering expostulations of the more prudent Langei, the ill-fated envoys left the city at twilight, on the 2d of July, in two swift boats, each pulling eight oars.

At midday on the morrow, when they were within three miles of the mouth of the Ticino, and about the same distance from Pavia, they were suddenly attacked by a couple of barges full of armed men, who immediately cut off all communication between the two boats; and they had no sooner boarded that containing the ambassadors, than a desperate encounter took place, in which both Fregosa and Rincon lost their lives; when their rowers were immediately secured, and conveyed to the dungeons of Pavia.

Meanwhile the boat which conveyed their attendants, forgotten for the instant by the miscreants who were intent upon their principal prey, was enabled to reach the opposite bank, where all its occupants sprang to land, and escaped into the forest; whence they made their way to the quarters of Du Bellay, and gave him a detailed account of the frightful catastrophe. With his usual caution, however, that able general, until he could succeed in seeming the most irrefragable proofs of the delinquency of Del Guasto, forbore all complaint; and even compelled himself to receive with civility the affected condolences of the marquis, and to appear to give credit to his assurances that the crime had been committed by brigands; but he had no sooner possessed himself of sufficient evidence of the guilt of the imperialist assassin, than he formally accused Del Guasto of the outrage which had been offered to his sovereign in the persons of his- accredited ambassadors, and challenged him to prove his innocence.

This was, however, impossible, as Langei, resolved to leave no method unattempted to unmask the whole conspiracy, upon learning from the fugitives that the rowers of the captured, boat had been made prisoners and conveyed to Pavia, soon found means to bribe a servant of the governor of that citadel, who secretly provided the boatmen with files, by which they were enabled to effect their escape; and from whom he obtained all the information which he could desire.

The reply of Del Guasto to this overt accusation was the puerile expedient of challenging his accuser, the overwhelming proofs of his guilt possessed by Du Bellay depriving him of all means of

self-justification; while the Republic of Venice, indignant that so base a murder should have been committed within their territories, pursued the assassins, and succeeded in arresting several of their number, all of whom were recognised to be in the pay of the marquis; but, although they were publicly tried and executed, Del Guasto, in order to complete his work of treachery, suffered them to undergo their sentence without the slightest effort at interference; simply protesting that, if they were justly condemned, they had acted upon their own responsibility, and without his knowledge.

This investigation was no sooner terminated than Du Bellay drew up in duplicate a detailed statement of the whole occurrence, one copy of which he forwarded to the emperor, and the other to the diet of the German States which was shortly afterwards assembled at Ratisbon; and ere long all the princes of Christendom were informed of the atrocious deed which had been perpetrated, in violation of the recognised rights which are held sacred by all civilized nations.

Great was the indignation expressed, by the respective sovereigns, who thus saw the very foundations of their safety shaken; but it was still feeble beside that of Francis, who at once summoned the emperor to make reparation for the affront. Which had been offered to him; and reminded him that this was not the first occasion upon which he had been called upon to suffer from the treachery of his assassins. Charles, however, replied to this demand only by recriminations; alleging that if, instead of pursuing a correspondence with Solyman, Francis had, like himself, been preparing for a new crusade against the infidels, his envoys would not have fallen victims to his crooked policy; or, as he himself believed, to the cupidity of a horde of robbers. Although he could not mistake the meaning of the French king, he abstained from any allusion to Montecuculli, or to the murder of Maraviglia, as if in disdain of accusations so vague and monstrous; and thus the outraged monarch found himself compelled to adopt more stringent measures in order to secure his vengeance.

Charles V was, effectively, at that precise moment raising a powerful fleet to operate against the African corsairs; his previous successes against the infidels having roused his ambition to maintain the distinction which he had already won, and to be regarded as the champion of Christendom; a title of which, moreover, he was aware that Francis was more jealous than of any other he had acquired.

The opportunity of reprisals so ardently desired by the French king was not long in presenting itself. George of Austria, Archbishop of Valence, the natural son of the emperor, who was on his way from Spain to Belgium, having halted at Lyons, Francis caused him to be arrested, declaring that he would retain him as a hostage until Fregosa and Rincon, if still living, were restored to him in safety; or in the event of this being impossible, that their murderers should be consigned to an ignominious death; a mode of revenge which, puerile as it appeared, was far from being so in fact, the extreme partiality of the emperor for this prelate being matter of notoriety. A short time subsequently, moreover, Francis having ascertained that Charles V. and the pope were to have an interview at Lucca before the embarkation of the former for Algiers, he desired his ambassador to attend the conference; and to demand once more, in his name, the restoration of his murdered envoys, or the condign punishment of their assassins.

This demonstration was, however, met as coldly as the last, Charles being well aware that a considerable period must elapse ere the king could proceed, with any chance of success, to aggressive measures; and it was in consequence of this conviction that he persisted in disregarding the expostulations of the pontiff, who earnestly represented that he would better consult the safety of Christendom by remaining to guard the frontiers of Italy against Solyman, (by whom his brother Ferdinand had recently been vanquished before Buda, and compelled to abandon that city) than by any distant expedition, however important.

The arguments of his Holiness availed nothing; the emperor feeling convinced that he must at once set sail, or altogether abandon his darling project; as, should he afford Francis sufficient time to assemble an army, he would inevitably avail himself of the opportunity of his absence to possess himself of the Milanese. He therefore continued to hasten his preparations; having already at the diet at Ratisbon accorded to the Protestant princes, whose friendship he was anxious to secure during his foreign campaign, an *interregnum* or truce, by which they were authorized to retain the free exercise of their religion until the decision of the general council; while, in requital of this concession, the Diet consented to supply him with a large body of troops to assist against the Turks; declared the Duke de Cleves the enemy of the empire; engaged to co-operate in the reinstatement of the Duke of Savoy in his sovereignty; and prohibited all subjects of the empire from serving in the armies of France.

Although the original intention of the emperor had been to proceed at once to the coast of Africa, it was anticipated that the defeat of his brother would induce him to commence his campaign by an attack upon Solyman; but, contrary to all expectations, he persisted in his original project, although the close of autumn having arrived, the season was most unpropitious to such an enterprise. Accordingly, on the 18th of October, he set sail from Majorca with twenty thousand infantry and two thousand horse, the *élite* of his combined armies. On the following day a severe storm scattered his vessels, and exposed the troops to severe suffering from the crowded state of the ships; but on the 20th the imperial fleet was enabled with considerable difficulty, owing to the continuance of the hurricane, to cast anchor between the city of Algiers and the river of El Harach, where the disembarkation took place. The soldiery effected their landing in safety; but before the bulk of their ammunition and provisions could be secured, the tempest became once more so violent that fifteen vessels of war, a hundred and forty transports, and eight thousand seamen, were swallowed by the waves; while at the same time an immense water-spout, burst over the camp, which caused a great sacrifice of life; and thus the elements within five days revenged Barbarossa for his former defeat.

Andrea Doria, with the wreck of the gallant fleet which had so recently excited such brilliant hopes, had taken refuge behind Cape Métafuz; and he was fortunate enough to be enabled within a few hours to apprise the emperor, whose situation was at that moment desperate, of his safety. The small quantity of powder which had been landed was utterly destroyed by the water, and a considerable number of the troops were drowned; while the remainder, utterly without food of any description, and harassed by the Algerine horsemen, had scarcely sufficient strength left to make their way to the ships, although the distance did not exceed four leagues; but at length, on the 31st of October, they once more found themselves on board, although no longer in a condition to molest the Infidels. Nor were they more fortunate in their exodus than in their advent; for the tempest, still unsated with its prey, pursued the fleet so relentlessly, that it was once more dispersed; nor was it until the 3d of December that the emperor arrived at Carthage storm-tossed and alone, each of the vessels which were fortunate enough to survive the passage having made a different port.

Great was the terror which the knowledge of this calamity spread over Europe. The Turks were now masters of Hungary, and were threatening Vienna; the whole coast of the Mediterranean was defenceless; the triple army of Charles destroyed; and all Christendom exposed to the power of the conquering Solyman. In France alone was a secret *Te Deum* raised, for her most dreaded enemy was laid low; and Francis resolved no longer to postpone a war which he justified by pretexting the non-fulfilment of his demand for vengeance on the murderers of his two ambassadors.

Some of the more cautious of his councillors suggested the expediency of delay until he should have completed the fortification of his frontiers, and terminated the treaties into which he had entered; but he merely referred them to the ruined condition of the emperor's army, and



refused to listen to their representations. He was next advised to make an immediate descent upon Piedmont, an act which would in itself be equivalent to a formal declaration of war; and had he acted upon this suggestion he must speedily have made himself master of the whole of that province; but his desire to avoid the immense outlay necessary to maintain an army in Italy, determined him to commence his campaign by the Low Countries, to which he had been urged by several of the German princes, who pledged themselves to support him in any act of aggression against Charles which might assist their own views. He was also anxious to secure the co-operation of the Duke of Cleves, of whom Charles had vowed the destruction; and he accordingly proceeded formally to declare hostilities against the emperor.

This was no sooner done than he divided his troops into five distinct bodies, in order simultaneously to attack the enemy on as many different points. The dauphin proceeded to Perpignan, with Antoine Desprez-Montpezat as his lieutenant; the Duke d' Orleans was despatched to Luxembourg, seconded by Claude, Duke de Guise; third division marched to Brabant, under the joint command of Nicholas de Bossu, Sire de Longueval, and of Martin Van Rossem, Marechal de Gueldres; a fourth, under Charles, Duke de Vendôme, was entrusted with the protection of the Flemish frontiers; and the fifth was marched into Piedmont by the Marechal d'Annebaut. The latter, however, having been compelled to remain inactive for the space of two months, was recalled to join the army under the dauphin, which ultimately amounted to forty-five thousand men, headed by the first nobility of France.

The Marechal de Gueldres, who was a general of consummate skill and daring, and, moreover, utterly without scruple as regarded the means by which he carried out his measures, was anxious to follow the example of Seckingen, and to make the war pay its own expenses. He consequently no sooner found himself at the head of twelve thousand lansquenets and two thousand German horse, than he permitted his troops to indulge in every species of excess towards the inhabitants of the invaded provinces, while he nevertheless maintained the most rigorous discipline among themselves.

The Queen of Hungary, Governante of the Low Countries, terrified by the enormities committed on her frontiers, appealed to the Duke de Cleves to declare the nature of his intentions; but he contented himself by assuring her that the force of which she complained was not in his pay, nor was he responsible for its proceedings; although he imagined that it was composed of volunteers about to march against the Turks. She then addressed herself to Francis, who merely replied by telling her that his own intentions were pacific; and thus left to her own resources, she had the mortification of seeing Van Rossem advance to Liege, cross the Meuse, and ultimately compel the Prince of Orange to shut himself up in Antwerp, after a loss of fourteen hundred men and six standards.

The assemblage of a strong army in the south awakened all the ambition of Marguerite de Navarre, who entreated her brother to employ it in the recovery of her husband's kingdom; but he was dissuaded from the attempt by the Marechal de Montpezat, and it was determined that the dauphin should at once proceed against Roussillon, while the emperor was concentrating his forces upon the Milanese.

This campaign was destined to complete the moral turpitude of the unprincipled favourite, who in her anxiety to ruin Diane de Poitiers through her lover, entered into a secret correspondence with the emperor, which tended to counteract all the endeavours of the dauphin. Her agent in this act of treachery was the Count de Bossut, of the house of Longueval, who at the commencement of the following reign narrowly escaped decapitation for his share in the nefarious transaction. This noble was one of the many lovers of the duchess, and was induced to requite her condescension by betraying the interests of his sovereign.

The two young princes were equally brave, and equally ambitious of renown; but the advantage was on the side of the elder, who, more prudent, more self-possessed, and less the victim of impulse than his brother, was far better calculated for the command of an army. Nevertheless, he was compelled to abandon the siege of Roussillon, the enemy having, through the agency of Madame d'Etampes, been apprised of his design upon the city, in time to strengthen it by throwing ten thousand troops into the citadel; while d'Annebaut, whom tradition boldly affirms to have been united to her by closer bonds than those of mere friendship, was guilty of such extraordinary errors during the siege, as to draw down upon him the suspicions of all the other generals; and even to extort from the king himself the avowal that he was aware he had been betrayed, and that he did not attribute the failure to the dauphin personally, but to those by whom he had been misled, either through ignorance, or a jealousy of others who had succeeded better than themselves.

This allusion bore reference to the Duke d'Orleans, who had in succession taken Danvilliers, Yvry, Arion, Montmedy, and even Luxembourg, although, from some motive which has remained unrevealed, he suddenly quitted the army, and rejoined the king his father at Montpellier; an imprudence of which the enemy immediately availed themselves to recover the two latter cities. The Duke de Guise, however, succeeded in once more possessing himself of Montmedy, but Luxembourg remained in the hands of the Imperialists.

The war in Roussillon was languidly pursued; Perpignan, which the French had trusted to find an easy conquest, from the imperfect state of its fortifications, still held out; and had been so strongly garrisoned by the emperor as to resist every effort of the French generals to take it by assault; while the appearance of dysentery among the troops, and the approach of winter compelled the dauphin to dissolve his camp and to abandon the siege of the city; upon which Francis despatched d'Annebaut to Piedmont, where Du Bellay-Langei had, with a very insufficient force, been employed in thwarting the operations of Del Guasto; not having it in his power, for want of troops, to adopt any more active measures. To the mortification of the veteran commander in thus finding himself superseded in his command by a younger and less experienced general than himself, was superadded that of discovering that d'Annebaut, inflated by court favour, was little disposed to defer to his advice; and he consequently resolved immediately to withdraw from a position alike irksome to his feelings and perilous to his honour; and to make a personal communication to Francis, of such circumstances as he believed to be of importance to the interests of the kingdom.

Injured and wounded as he had been, Langei would not permit any selfish consideration to influence his sense of duty as a loyal subject; and accordingly he had no sooner made the requisite arrangements than he commenced his homeward journey; but the exertion proved too great for his infirm and war-worn constitution, and on reaching St. Saphorin, near the mountain of Tarare, he was seized with a sudden attack of gout in the stomach, which terminated his valuable existence on the 9th of January, 1543.

Another pearl had fallen from the diadem of Francis I.

A wise counsellor, a brave soldier, an able scholar, and an honest man, Du Bellay-Langei was a noble illustration of the age; but his very virtues had operated against his fortunes. His merit had been cheerfully and frequently admitted by the king, but his reward had been merely lip-deep. Charles V, however, did him nobler justice, by exclaiming when the intelligence of his death was communicated to him: "Is Langei dead? Then have I nothing more to apprehend from a man who has done me more mischief in his time than all the other subjects of France combined."

He was succeeded by his brother, Martin Du Bellay; who in his turn assumed the family name of Langei; and was promoted to the government of Turin on the departure of d'Annebaut;

who during the winter repaired to France, to confer personally with the king upon the measures necessary to be pursued in the campaign of the following spring, leaving the command of the army to M. de Boutières.

The sustained and even increased disgust which Francis exhibited towards the disgraced connétable, was destined to react in a favourable manner upon the marechal d'Annebaut, who, a short time after his arrival at court, was appointed to the Tank of admiral, vacant by the death of Chabot; but still the king, irritated by the equivocal success of the war, which he had commenced under the conviction that like Caesar he had only to come, to see, and to conquer, could not reconcile himself to the failure before Perpignan; and accordingly, having resolved not to visit upon d'Annebaut the humiliating defeat which he had suffered upon that occasion, he was persuaded into attributing the disaster to his colleague Montpezat, who was accordingly deprived of his office, and sent into exile for not having implicitly obeyed the orders of his superior officer.

The health of the king, which at this period was beginning rapidly to fail, rendered him unable to pursue the course of dissipation in which he had hitherto indulged; while the moroseness and suspicion to which we have already alluded increased with his infirmities, and was, moreover, augmented by the growing enmity of the two princes. The dauphin had now attained his twenty-third, and the Duke d'Orleans his twenty-first year. Each was emulous of renown, and personally brave; but there the resemblance between them ceased. Henry was grave and taciturn, with a pale complexion, languid expression, and singularly heavy eyes; while Charles was high-coloured, vigorous, frank, and active. The dauphin inspired awe; but his brother won the affections of all about him.

It might have been anticipated that, under these circumstances, the king would have sought sympathy and comfort in the society of his amiable and forbearing wife, but he still continued to evince the same indifference towards her as he had done in his days of pride and strength. Catherine de' Medici, Madame d'Etampes, and Diane de Poitiers, were all-powerful; and although the undying hatred of the two latter ladies convulsed the court with broils, Francis permitted them to pursue their career of jealousy unrebuked; while the deportment of the dauphiness was so remarkable as to elicit his increased admiration and regard, although in many who looked deeper it awoke a feeling of apprehension which was afterwards fatally justified. Coldly respectful with the queen, and even obsequious towards the favourite, she apparently attached herself more warmly to her rival than to any other individual of the royal circle; soothing her wounded vanity whenever it was stung by the bitter and epigrammatic wit of the duchess, and affecting to be totally unconscious of her *liaison* with the dauphin.

Catherine was a thorough Medicis; she did not exhaust her hatred in vain complaints or passionate sarcasm, but like the tiger was content to watch until she could make her spring deadly. As she was now rarely called upon to hunt or play tennis with the king, whose debility compelled him to abjure all violent exercise, she at once assimilated her own habits to his; and abandoning the pursuits in which she had hitherto appeared to take delight, she turned her whole attention to such an organization of her little court as could not fail to render it attractive to the sensual monarch. The ladies of her household were all eminent for their beauty, their accomplishments, and the splendour of their apparel; while, as regarded their moral attributes, no further detail is necessary than that of the mere fact' that by the gallants of the court they were distinguished as the *light brigade*. Nothing, in short, could be more profligate than their whole deportment; and although Catherine herself preserved the dignity of her sex, she attempted no interference with the conduct of her attendants; and thus her immediate circle became a hot-bed of vice and intrigue, rendered only the more pernicious by the specious gloss of wit, fascination, and splendour. Her saloons were bright with light, and vocal with song and laughter; every day brought its pleasures, many of them ruinous to the royal treasury, but all welcome to the querulous invalid, who yet clung to the shadow of his former vices, and was eager to encourage himself in the delusion that a

few roses were still strewn among the thorns of his painful existence.

It is consequently scarcely surprising that the private apartments of his beautiful daughter-in-law became the chosen resort of the king; nor was it long ere, in the intervals of a ballet, or during the representation of a comedy, she succeeded in possessing herself of all his secrets, and influencing all his actions. Indisposed by bodily suffering for public business, it was only at rare intervals that he would permit his ministers to intrude the subject upon him; but he, nevertheless, discoursed freely on the most important measures with Catherine; who, seated at her tapestry frame near the cushioned divan upon which he reclined, found means, now by one of those equivocal witticisms which never failed to awaken the mirth of the king. <sup>and</sup> now by a shrewd suggestion, calculated to determine his decision, to mould him to her purpose; and thus, unsuspected and unenvied, to exercise immense influence over state affairs.

That, notwithstanding her extraordinary self-command, she nevertheless failed in concealing at all times the real vindictiveness and hypocrisy of her character, is evident from the fact that she never addressed any individual as “My friend” without alarming their apprehensions: from her lips this apparently familiar and confidential appellation was considered to be as threatening as the “My father” of Francis himself had proved to the unfortunate Semblançay: “Ah, Madame”; exclaimed upon one occasion a gentleman of her household, whom she had so named; “I would far sooner that you called me your enemy; for the title which you have just bestowed upon me, convinces me that you either esteem me a fool, or that I have forfeited your favour; so well and so thoroughly do I understand your nature.”

Catherine laughed heartily at this frank expostulation; and it is a curious fact that, with a heart as callous and as bitter as ever beat in the bosom of a woman, she was remarkable for her addiction to laughter, in which she frequently indulged to a most uncourtly excess.

Her worldly wisdom, however, met its reward; for when, on her continuing childless throughout several years, the king was urged by his advisers to induce the dauphin to divorce her, in order to secure a successor, so firm a hold had she taken on his affections that he resolutely refused to countenance such a measure; nor was the prince himself more willing to yield to the suggestion : his attachment to Madame de Brézé, who had made him a father, and his total indifference to the dauphiness, whose forbearance left him at liberty to follow his inclination without comment or reproach, being more congenial to his apathetic and easy disposition than the prospect of a prolific wife, who might consider herself aggrieved by his infidelity.

The pecuniary resources of Francis had been so much exhausted by the unprofitable campaign of his sons, that before he could again undertake a renewal of the war, he found himself compelled to devise some new method of raising the necessary funds; and he accordingly embraced with eagerness the suggestion of his two closest friends, d’Annebaut and the Cardinal de Tournon, that he should augment the receipts of the salt-excite, by equalizing the price of that important article of consumption throughout the kingdom.

The inhabitants of La Rochelle, however, resisted this impost; and not only refused to pay the additional tax, but, pleading the privileges accorded to them by previous monarchs, and ratified by Francis himself, proceeded to eject by force the officers commissioned to collect it. When apprised of the attempt about to be made, they had assembled within their walls a garrison of three hundred volunteers ; and the revolt ere long became so serious, that the king found it necessary to despatch the Duke d’Orleans and the Marechal de Tavannes with a strong body of men to the rebellious city, in order to subdue it. As, however, by virtue of an ancient charter the Rochellois had the right of defending their own walls, it was considered expedient to introduce a portion of the troops by stratagem; after which the main body applied for admittance, which was peremptorily refused; when M. de Tavannes showed himself in the main street, at the head of a

hundred cuirassiers, while a strong force marched against the gates, declaring that if free ingress were not immediately accorded to the troops of the king, the whole population would be put to the sword, and the city burnt to ashes. Terrified by this menace, the citizens abandoned a resistance to which they felt unequal, and laid down their arms.

Francis no sooner learnt that the town was in the possession of his son, but that the same spirit of disaffection continued to exist along the coast and in the neighbouring islands, than he at once proceeded to Rochelle in person; announcing that he would inflict condign punishment upon the instigators and abettors of the revolt. The threat produced its anticipated effect; a deputation of twenty-five of the principal citizens were sent to meet him from the town, and a similar number from the islands, for the purpose of deprecating his wrath; but they were instantly seized and placed in irons. In the meanwhile he ordered a vast platform to be erected near the residence which had been prepared for him, and caused it to be made known in the city that on the 31st of December he would preside over a tribunal before which the whole of the inhabitants were summoned to appear; and on that day he accordingly made his entrance into the town, preceded by the manacled deputies; while the whole population, to whom it had been forbidden to cross his path, to ring their bells, or in any other way to recognise his arrival, crowded the churches, where, by prayers and processions, they implored the Almighty to deliver them from a destruction which appeared inevitable.

At one o'clock, Francis, in his royal robes, ascended the throne which occupied the centre of the platform, surrounded by the princes and great officers of state; and there he summoned the advocates of the rebels, who declared, that far from seeking to justify their disobedience, the burghers of the city, and the inhabitants of the islands, were alike anxious to confess their error, and to implore the clemency of their offended monarch. This short but pithy address was barely concluded, when the whole population who were collected at the foot of the platform, throwing themselves on their knees, with bare heads and outstretched hands, joined in a shrill, wild, thrilling cry for mercy.

It was a grand moment for Francis,—one which enabled him to perform an act worthy of the crown he wore; and to his eternal honour be it recorded, that he did not suffer it to escape him. Waving his hand with a quiet dignity which at once silenced the agonized crowd, he looked around him with an expression of reproachful sadness, in which there was no vestige of severity.

“Rise! men of La Rochelle, and of the Isles” he said, in a low but distinct tone; “Rise. You are pardoned. You have recognised your crime, and I will not punish you for a treason of which you have already repented. Resume your privileges, and receive back your deputies. The royal troops shall be withdrawn from your city; your arms shall be restored to you; and all that I ask from you in return is to be loyal and faithful to a sovereign who knows how to forgive. Your persons and your property shall alike be respected; nor will I act towards you as a neighbouring monarch acted only a short while since towards the revolted citizens of Ghent; for I love mercy more than justice, and the affection of my subjects better than their confiscated wealth. Nay, more, to convince you of my willingness to forget the past, I will this evening sup with your magistrates, and be served and guarded only by your citizens.”

The scene must have been an impressive one. For an instant the immense and closely-packed crowd remained motionless and silent; then another cry,—the cry of relieved and grateful hearts,—went up to heaven; and ere long numerous individuals detached themselves from the mass, and disappeared. In a few minutes every belfry in the city gave forth its peal, a sound unheard during the last three days; the Hôtel-de-Ville was brilliantly illuminated in honour of the king's visit; murmurs of happiness resounded on every side; the soldiers and the citizens pledged each other in brotherly amity; and Francis was thenceforward secure of the loyalty of La Rochelle.

CHAPTER VIII.

[1542-43.]

THE bright page with which our last chapter concluded was the last which we are fated to turn in the history of Francis I; for, as his malady gained upon him, he became a prey to superstition of the grossest description ; and even while he clung with a tenacity as puerile as it was unyielding to the follies and ribaldry of a court which had become the proverb of all Europe, he believed that he could take Heaven by storm through the persecution of the Lutherans. On the 30th of August, 1542, he issued an edict, by which he enjoined the national parliaments, “with all diligence, and in precedence of all other business, to proceed vigorously, and without delay, against those who disobeyed the statutes and holy decrees of the Catholic Church, in order that justice, punishment, correction, and demonstration may be so fully and severely administered, that the example may be a lasting one to others.”

This public proclamation was not, however, so dangerous to the persecuted Reformists as the system of *espionnage* which was at the same time organized, and by which the curates of the several parishes were instructed to examine with caution and subtlety all the inhabitants of their districts whom they suspected of heresy, and to endeavour to lead them to convict themselves: the parliament of Paris, moreover, fulminating the most severe threats against the vendors of obnoxious books, and especially the “Christian Institution” of Calvin.

This barbarous policy was also, undoubtedly, dictated in some degree by the fearful position in which the king found himself placed by his alliance with Solyman, which had excited against him the ire of all the Christian princes. After the murder of Rincon, he had appointed as his successor, by the advice of Du Bellay, a certain captain of infantry, and soldier of fortune, named Paulin Iscalin a man of extraordinary nerve and capacity, who at once proceeded to Constantinople with a caution which enabled him to reach that city unsuspected by the spies of the emperor. On his arrival, however, he found himself beset by difficulties. Charles V, who was aware of the Sultan’s indignation at the failure of Francis during his meditated invasion of Italy, had profited by the circumstance to detach him still further from the French interests; and accordingly, when Iscalin presented himself as the accredited envoy of his sovereign, he refused to grant him an audience, alleging that, as he had lost faith in his master, he desired no communication with him upon any subject.

The zealous agent was not, however, to be so easily repulsed; and, while he abstained for a time from prosecuting his mission, he employed himself in securing friends about the court, in which attempt he proved so successful that he at length ingratiated himself with an aga of the Janissaries, by whose influence he obtained the desired interview; when he so skilfully ministered alike to the vanity and the ambition of Solyman, while he plausibly explained all the motives by which Francis had been induced to turn his arms against the Low Countries, instead of prosecuting his design on Piedmont, that the sultan ultimately declared himself convinced, and ready to fulfil all the pledges to which he was bound by the treaty that existed between them.

Iscalin then urged His Highness to despatch a fleet to Marseilles, to co-operate with that of the French king; and Solyman, to whose warlike spirit every period of inaction was a pang, at once consented to send Cheir-Eddyn Barbarossa, the King of Algiers, his own high admiral, to the coast of Italy, with express orders to follow the counsels of his Christian colleague in every emergency. Iscalin next attempted to engage the Venetian states to include themselves in this alliance against the power of the emperor, but the gold of Charles proving more influential than any representations which he could offer, he was unable to effect his object.

Meanwhile the campaign of 1543 was commenced, as that of the previous year had already been, by Van Rossem, the Marechal of the Duke de Cleves. The duke himself, profiting by a dense fog, had in the month of November succeeded in retaking Dueren; and Van Rossem, on the 24th of March, followed up this advantage by defeating the imperialists at Sittard in the duchy of Juliers.

This event at once determined the measures of Francis, who decided upon marching his whole army northward; but at the same time instructed Antoine, Duke de Vendôme, who had recently succeeded to that title by the death of his father, to throw supplies into Téroouanne; while d'Annebaut was ordered to attack Avesnes. This he did with so much vigour that the town was on the point of a surrender, when, by a counter-order, he was recalled to undertake the siege of Landrecies. The state of that city was, however, so deplorable, that, although the garrison were well provided, both with ammunition and provisions, they no sooner learnt the approach of the enemy than they determined to abandon it; and had Francis been guided by the advice of Langei, he might have cut off their retreat; but, instead of making them prisoners, he allowed them time to burn down the fortifications, and the spacious magazines containing their stores, and to make their escape to the forest of Mormaux, where they were beyond his reach.

D'Annebaut, consequently, only took possession of a waste of ruins; and it soon became evident that the king had arranged no fixed plan for the campaign; as the Duke de Vendome had scarcely taken the town of Bapaume, and ascertained that the citadel was on the point of capitulating, than he was recalled in his turn, and compelled to abandon his conquest and join the main army at Marolles, a league beyond Landrecies, Francis having hastily resolved upon fortifying that city, and being anxious to cover the engineers with as formidable a force as he could assemble; but in order that the army should not remain altogether inactive, he authorized the dauphin to possess himself of the citadel of Emery, the towns of Barlemont and Mauberge, and ultimately to attack Binche. In the first three of these enterprises the prince succeeded; and he encountered such slight resistance at Binche that he anticipated equal good fortune; but, although the town yielded with facility, the citadel resisted with a pertinacity by which he was soon undeceived.

Prepared for the attack, the imperialists had strengthened the garrison, and victualled it for a siege; a precaution which afforded them an immense advantage over the dauphin, whose army was not only a small one, but moreover considerably harassed, and very scantily provided with provisions. The incessant fire of the imperialists meanwhile told fearfully upon his troops; and becoming rapidly aware of his inability to sustain a conflict so unequal, he applied to the king both for supplies and a reinforcement. To this appeal, however, Francis replied by declaring that he could not weaken the defence before Landrecies until the fortifications were completed; and that the dauphin must raise the siege of Binche if he found himself unable to prosecute it without aid. This decision, against which there was no appeal, was a bitter disappointment, not only to the prince himself, but also to the officers under his command, among whom was Gaspard de Coligny, who afterwards fell a victim in the bloody massacre of St. Bartholomew.

The fortifications of Landrecies were no sooner completed, and the city well garrisoned, than Francis struck his camp, abandoned the unimportant places taken by his son, disbanded a portion of his army, and took up his residence at Rheims; where, in order to recompense himself for his late exertions, he summoned the ladies of his court to join him; and profiting by a temporary return of strength, and relief from pain, once more divided his time between the chase, and the society of the bright circle which he had collected about him.

Nothing in the ancient city, where he had taken up his temporary abode, prophesied an early and inevitable war in which the best interests of the whole kingdom were involved; the splendid litters of the two royal favourites, with their attendant train of pages and footmen, traversed the picturesque streets, exciting the wonder and admiration of the honest burghers;

groups of magnificently dressed nobles followed in their wake; the royal guards flaunted their white plumes in the cathedral square; bands of musicians disturbed the silence of midnight; and torches flitted like meteors on all sides, as they lighted the young and gay upon their errands of gallantry and debauch. During the day the horns of the royal hunt re-echoed through the forest; and many a wondering peasant concealed himself in the underwood as the gallant train swept by, almost persuaded that it was a mere vision which he beheld. Every moment was at that time precious to France; and while her monarch thus suffered them to pass unimproved, his more prudent enemy was rendering each subservient to his interests.

Previously to a contemplated progress through Italy, Germany, and the Low Countries, for the purpose of alienating their several populations from the interests of Francis, Charles earnestly endeavoured once more to detach Henry VIII from his favourite ally; and he could scarcely have made the attempt at a more fortunate juncture. Enraged at the invasion of his territories by the troops under the Duke of Norfolk, the Scottish king resolved, in his turn, to attack the English; but he found no responsive feeling on the part of his subjects, who either openly resisted, or tacitly disobeyed all his orders, an insult to his dignity which he resented by transferring the command of his army to Oliver Sinclair, whose authority the Scottish barons refused to recognise.

A second and unimportant demonstration on the part of the English, before which his own troops fled without resistance, leaving many of their principal officers in the hands of the enemy, and which, moreover, involved a great sacrifice of life, completed the discomfiture of the unhappy prince; who, yielding without any further effort to his fate, fell into a state of hypochondriacism, which terminated his existence on the 14th of December, 1542, leaving an infant daughter, the fair and unfortunate Mary, Queen of Scots, whom Henry VIII. at once resolved to render a bond of union between the two countries, by uniting her to his own son and successor.

In this project he was, however, destined to be thwarted. The dowager-queen, Marie de Guise, was supported by all the national nobility in her desire to secure the protection of France against the pretensions of Henry, a step to which she was moreover strongly urged by Bethune, the Cardinal of St. Andrews; and she accordingly applied to Francis for protection, who, without hesitation, furnished her with troops and money; when a series of intrigues on both sides excited such ill feeling between the two sovereigns that the English king readily accepted the overtures of Charles, and furnished him with ten thousand men as an earnest of his future support.

Although the army of Algiers had been destroyed; the emperor had only required time to organize a second; and this the supineness of Francis enabled him to do. From Barcelona he had proceeded to Genoa, where he was met by Del Guasto, Pietro-Luigi Farnese, Fernando Gonzaga, and Cosmo de' Medici, Duke of Florence; the latter of whom redeemed from him the fortresses of Florence and Livourna, at the cost of two hundred thousand golden crowns. Towards the close of June he had a conference with the pope, which produced no political results; and ultimately he continued his route to Germany, where he immediately commenced his operations by an attack upon the Duke de Cleves. On the 22d of August he presented himself before the city of Dueren, with an overpowering army, consisting of thirty thousand foot soldiers, and four thousand cavalry, under the banner of the Prince of Orange; a demonstration for which the citizens were ill prepared, having been assured by the agents of Francis that the emperor had perished in his retreat from Algiers.

The imperial heralds who summoned them to surrender, were accordingly treated with ridicule, the garrison declaring that they did not recognise the summons of a dead enemy; a sarcasm which so irritated the troops that they immediately opened a battery and effected a breach in the walls, which enabled them to take the place by assault on the 26th. Still writhing under the taunt with which their heralds had been dismissed, the infuriated soldiery no sooner found themselves masters of the city, than they indulged in the most frightful excesses. They were aware



of the declaration of the emperor, that he would so revenge himself upon the Duke de Cleves, that he would not leave one stone upon another in any of his fortresses; and they, accordingly, threw off all restraint. Not a single citizen of the ill-fated town escaped: neither age nor sex afforded protection to the vanquished; and before the day closed no soul remained alive, save those who had entered the breach.

This fatal massacre paralysed the other cities of the duchy; and while the Duke de Cleves despatched courier upon courier to implore the aid of the French king, (who, by disbanding his army while Charles was augmenting his own, had rendered himself powerless) the imperialists took in succession Juliers and Ruremonde, neither of which attempted even a show of resistance; and Venloo, which surrendered immediately that the enemy appeared before its gates. Until this moment the duke had relied upon the support of France; but now, as he saw city after city of his duchy fall into the power of the emperor, against whom he was utterly unable to contend without assistance, he resolved, in a paroxysm of despair, to throw himself at the feet of the conqueror, and implore his clemency. After considerable difficulty he was enabled to make his way to the imperial presence, and to explain his errand, but the vengeance of Charles was not yet satiated; and he was suffered to kneel for a considerable time before any notice was vouchsafed by his haughty suzerain; nor was his pardon ultimately conceded until he had bound himself to renounce the reformed religion; to acknowledge himself the vassal of the emperor and the King of the Romans; to renounce the alliance of France; to release the population of the duchy of Gueldres from their oath of allegiance to his person; and, finally, to transfer Van Rossem and his band of quasi-freebooters to the imperial service. To these conditions, bitter as they were, the unfortunate prince was compelled to accede; and, in consideration of his obedience, he was reinstated by Charles in his sovereignty of the duchy of Juliers, now almost entirely in the hands of the imperialists.

Throughout the whole of this struggle, Francis, although unable to render any efficient aid to his nephew and ally, had never ceased to give him assurances of effectual support; and in order, as he declared, to prove his sincerity, he confided the hereditary Princess of Navarre, his bride, to the care of Du Bellay, with orders to convey her to her husband; after which, having at length succeeded in assembling a strong body of troops, he entered the duchy of Luxembourg, where he retook several minor cities, and ultimately possessed himself of the capital; whence he was about to despatch a force of ten thousand men under d'Annebaut to the support of the Duke de Cleves, when he was apprised that the latter had made his submission to the emperor.

This intelligence at the same time reached M. du Bellay and Jeanne de Navarre, who had already reached Soisson; and the young princess was no sooner informed of the fact than she resolutely refused to proceed beyond that city. She was well aware that her marriage had been distasteful to both her parents; and young though she was, for she had only at this period attained her fourteenth year, she had retained memories of her enforced husband by no means agreeable to her own tastes; and thus Guillaume de Cleves, the brother of the ill-used Anne, whom the English king had repudiated, was destined to meet a similar fate at the hands of a mere girl. Du Bellay remonstrated in vain; the princess remained firm; and when, enraged by her opposition, the duke despatched a herald-at-arms to Francis to demand his wife, for whom he had received a safe-conduct from the emperor, he had the additional mortification of being told that, so protected, he could require no assistance from the monarch of France, and that he had only to apply to the King and Queen of Navarre. As we have already stated, Marguerite and her husband availed themselves of this opportunity to annul the marriage; and the hand of the princess was five years subsequently bestowed upon Antoine de Bourbon, Duke de Vendome; while the Duke de Cleves obtained that of a daughter of Ferdinand, King of the Romans.

Contrary to the advice of his generals, Francis had determined upon fortifying Luxembourg; and having confided the command of that city to the Prince de Melfi, he retired to Coucy, five

leagues beyond Laon; while the emperor, having augmented his army to fifty thousand men, including the troops furnished by Henry VIII, commenced simultaneously the sieges of Landrecies, Guise, and Luxembourg; the former in person, and those of the latter by Fernanda Gonzago and Guillaume de Furstembourg, who had abandoned the cause of Francis for that of his rival. The siege of Luxembourg was continued until the winter was far advanced; Gonzaga, after several attempts, renounced his attack on Guise; and the main body of the imperialists concentrated itself in the neighbourhood of Landrecies. The great strength of the citadel determined the joint governors, M. de Lalande and the Sieur d'Esser, to abandon the lower quarter of the town, which, from its defective means of defence, would, as they apprehended, involve considerable difficulty, while it promised no adequate advantage; and the imperialists no sooner became aware of this fact than they threw a strong body of troops into the vacated streets, by whom the garrison were so much harassed that it was resolved to dislodge them at any sacrifice. The skill and courage evinced by both officers throughout this enterprise acted so powerfully upon the men under their command that they undertook without a murmur the most threatening enterprises. Constant sallies were made from the citadel headed by one or other of their brave and adventurous leaders; and these were uniformly so well conceived, and so courageously executed, that they succeeded in spiking the guns, killing the miners, and fatiguing the troops of the enemy, almost without intermission. The winter had, however, set in with great severity, and the garrison were beginning to suffer from a scarcity of food. Their wine and beer were totally exhausted, and the troops, men and officers alike, were reduced to a half ration of bread.

Aware of this circumstance, the emperor, desisting from all further attack, contented himself with blockading the city, in the belief that he should soon be enabled to reduce it by famine; but, despite the vigilance of his spies, Du Bellay by a clever stratagem contrived to throw in abundant supplies; and at the same time to alarm the imperialists, by concealing the cattle and sumpter-horses in the centre of his escort, and thus giving it the appearance of a dense and formidable body of cavalry. Under this impression the emperor, fearing that he should be surrounded, hastily retired from the city, a movement which determined the fate of the siege; and, although Francis had constantly assured his troops that he ardently desired an engagement, it is a curious and inexplicable fact, that, while the two armies were in such close contact that constant skirmishes took place between the out-lying picquets, he suffered the enemy to withdraw without molestation; and, in his turn, made a night-retreat to Guise, where he took up his winterquarters.

The emperor had not, however, wholly lost his time, as four days after he raised the siege of Landrecies he took possession of Cambray, which he garrisoned, and strengthened by the erection of a citadel at the cost of the inhabitants; silencing their murmurs by assuring them that he did so solely to secure the safety of their city in the event of any molestation from the French.

Solyman meanwhile redeemed his word. He pursued his conquests in Hungary, and took Strigonia and Alba; at the same time that he despatched Barbarossa with a hundred and twelve galleys, forty vessels of war, a number of transports, and fourteen thousand fighting men, to join the fleet of the French king. At Calabria the Moslem admiral cast anchor, and having landed a considerable body of troops, he cut down the olive trees, vines, and palms, and carried off a number of the peasantry, whom he subsequently sold as slaves; he then burnt down the city of Reggio, which had been abandoned by its inhabitants, the whole of whom had fled to the mountains. His appearance at the mouth of the Tiber next spread consternation throughout Rome; but this was allayed by Iscalin, who assured the Cardinal de Carpi, its governor, that the Turkish allies of his master would respect the neutrality of the pope; and on the 5th of July this formidable armament reached the shores of Provence without committing any further ravages along the coast.

It would appear that Francis, even although he had invited the co-operation of the Infidels, had placed but little faith in their advent; for it is certain that instead of preparing a fleet whose

magnitude might have inspired them with respect, and placing it under a commander whose age and experience must have secured his authority, he merely despatched to Marseilles Francois de Bourbon, Count d'Enghiee, then in his twenty-third year, at the head of twenty-two galleys, with a few hundred men-at-arms, and with a sum barely adequate to their immediate subsistence. Undismayed, however, by this circumstance, discouraging as it was, the young prince, who was eager to distinguish himself, eagerly acceded to a proposition which was made to him that he should attempt the reduction of the citadel of Nice, accompanied by an assurance that he would receive support from within the walls. Inexperienced as he was, however, the Count d'Enghien had too much prudence to endanger the whole of his force; and, apprehending treachery, he resolved to send four of his galleys to reconnoitre, while he lay to with the remainder within gunshot of the shore. The result proved the sagacity of his previsions; for the four galleys had no sooner rounded a small headland, behind which Doria was lying in ambush, than they were attacked by an overpowering force, and he was compelled to set sail with the remainder of his fleet.

When Barbarossa arrived at Marseilles, and saw the insignificant preparations which had been made for the campaign in which he was called upon to assist, his rage knew no bounds. Bitterly did he vituperate the dogs of Christians who had invited a great fleet from a distant country, only to endanger the lives of the men and the honour of their leader, by requiring them to act in conjunction with a handful of troops and a beardless boy; and so great was his irritation, that Iscalin found it necessary to travel post to Guise, in order to urge upon the king the expediency of forwarding an immediate reinforcement, and a supply of money and ammunition, as well as instructions for the commencement of the campaign; the Algerine monarch having threatened that should the summer pass by without affording him an opportunity of signaling himself, he would induce the sultan to revenge him upon those by whom he had been deceived.

Eager to pacify his dangerous ally, Francis accordingly despatched a few troops with Iscalin to strengthen the fleet, together with an assurance that more should follow without delay; and instructed the Count d'Enghien to make an immediate attack on Nice. This was accordingly done; and on the 10th of August seven thousand French and fifteen thousand Turks appeared before the city. After some difficulty the town itself fell into the hands of the besiegers, not being sufficiently strong to resist the powerful artillery which was brought against it; but the victors gained little by their conquest, as the inhabitants had removed every article of value beyond the walls; while the citadel resisted all their attempts, its natural position, together with its artificial defences, rendering it almost impregnable. Moreover, the Count d'Enghien had nearly exhausted both his provisions and his ammunition; while the citizens of Marseilles, to whom he appealed in his extremity, refused to render him any assistance, declaring that they would not, even inferentially, act in conjunction with the enemies of Christendom.

In this emergency the prince had no other alternative than to apply to Barbarossa himself, humiliating as he could not but feel such a necessity to be; nor did the Infidel ally of Francis spare him one drop of the bitter draught which he was compelled to drain; for already indignant at a defeat which he had not anticipated, the exasperation of the Turkish admiral increased to such a degree, that he openly ridiculed the pretensions of a Christian monarch who undertook a war when he was unable to provide his troops with powder and ball. A final attempt was made, however, with the assistance of the ammunition thus procured, but it proved as abortive as those by which it had been preceded; and the siege was accordingly raised on the 8th of September.

Francis had the less cause to regret this result, as Barbarossa had, immediately upon the surrender of the town, claimed a right to garrison it with his own troops, upon the plea that they were its real captors; a claim which was imperatively denied by M. d'Enghien, who was well aware that although the city was comparatively of little value to France, there was not another port on the northern coast of the Mediterranean so valuable to the Algerine pirates, from the facility which it afforded of extending and protecting their depredations. Moreover, the count was informed that

the Duke de Savoie and the Marquis del Guasto were advancing with a strong force in aid of the town, at the very moment when he became convinced that he could not calculate upon the good faith of his discontented colleague; and the unfortunate city was consequently sacked, and then fired; after which the prince, who was led to believe that a general engagement was about to take place between the emperor and his own sovereign at Landrecies, marched his troops towards that citadel.

This ill-omened and unnatural coalescence with the Infidels was destined to prove fatal to the French king in many ways. In the first place, nothing had been accomplished. A mighty array had been brought before a single stronghold, and had signally failed. All Christendom had been thrown into a state of panic, when a handful of native troops might have achieved the same result. The last possession of a petty and unoffending sovereign, (that sovereign being moreover his own uncle, and perfectly independent of any rupture between himself and the emperor,) had been recklessly and unjustly attacked; and, as a climax, Francis had been so much alarmed by the indignant menaces of the Turkish admiral, and so much wounded-by his expressed contempt for the inefficiency of his allies, which he persisted in attributing to their poverty, that he could not venture to allow him to return to Constantinople until he had appeased his discontent.

Presents were consequently despatched to Barbarossa and his officers in such profusion, that these, and the maintenance of his fleet to which the French king was pledged, are stated to have cost the nation the immense sum of eight hundred thousand crowns. The port of Toulon was, moreover, abandoned to the Turkish fleet for the winter; and all the inhabitants of the city were compelled to retire beyond the Walls, in order to leave the town free for the occupancy of the Infidels. Barbarossa repaid this generosity and confidence in the manner which might justly have been anticipated. When he at length withdrew in his turn, he illustrated his departure by attacking several cities on the coast of Naples and Tuscany, and by sacking and depopulating the island of Lipari, whose inhabitants he carried into slavery.

The relief of Nice was no sooner effected, than Del Guasto returned to Piedmont, where the strength of his army enabled him ere long to render himself master of the whole of the open country; while M. de Boutières, from want of troops, was compelled to remain inactive. The city of Montdovi was besieged, and being unable to withstand the forces brought against it, was constrained to capitulate, on the understanding that the garrison should march out with all the honours of war, carrying with them their property and ammunition. The treaty was, however, shamefully violated, for the unfortunate men had no sooner opened their gates than they were put to the sword. After this act of perfidious cruelty, the insatiable marquis next marched against Carignano, where he was again destined to prove successful; and De Boutières, having received a reinforcement of nine thousand men, advanced into the north of Piedmont, in the hope of retrieving his reverses, and laid siege to Ypres; which he had nearly succeeded in taking when he was apprised that he was superseded in his command by the Count d'Enghien, whom the king had recently appointed as his lieutenant in that province; and who, having already reached Chiras, had sent to him to demand an escort.

This was an affront which the zealous veteran, who had failed rather from want of resources than from any deficiency of courage or ability, could not calmly brook; and he accordingly raised the siege, and marched his whole army to Chiras, where he transferred his authority to the prince, declaring that he wished him better fortune than he had himself experienced; nor could all the expostulations of the count induce him to remain at his post.

“It has been considered expedient to supersede me in my command”, he said bitterly; “and to place the troops who have fought and sufficed with me in the hands of a younger general than myself. My path, therefore, is plain.”

On the following morning he left the city; and having retired to one of his estates, he appeared to have foresworn altogether his military career. But Boutières was as generous as he was brave; and it was not long ere at the battle of Cerisola he revenged himself in a manner worthy of his high character.

The indignation of all the Christian princes was at once profound and legitimate. An indelible disgrace had fallen upon the French banners—they had been unfurled side by side with those of the enemies of the Church; nor had Francis even hesitated to direct his own cousin to tread the deck of a Turkish corsair. Cities had been burnt, villages ravaged, countries laid waste, free men captured, helpless women outraged, and the progress of civilization retarded by his selfish and narrow-hearted policy; he had weakly and unprofitably justified the enmity of the emperor, and had alienated the confidence and regard of all who had trusted in him. The blood that had been spilt, the desolation that had been created, and the enormous outlay which had been made, had availed him nothing; and with an exhausted treasury, diminished popularity, and general distrust, Francis I. terminated the campaign of 1543; so bright in prospect, and so disastrous in its results.

CHAPTER IX

[1544.]

THE campaign which had just terminated, despite the blood that had been spilt, the treasure that had been lavished, and the panic which it had caused to the whole of Europe, ended, as we have shown, most unprofitably for both parties; and had, nevertheless, left each in a position which necessitated a renewed struggle. Personal animosity was so interwoven with national policy on either side, that a reconciliation upon equal terms had long been hopeless; and it was evident that the peace of Christendom hinged upon that unequivocal supremacy of one or the other sovereign which was yet to be decided. The attitude of Charles V was threatening. He had surrounded himself by allies all more or less powerful, and he had organized an immense army; while Francis had made enemies even of those who were previously devoted to his cause; and although the legions which he had formed provided a strong body of infantry, his treasury was exhausted, and the undue favour he evinced to his gendarmerie, which was composed entirely of men of good family, gave umbrage to his foot soldiers, who, whatever might be their merit, were treated with comparative neglect. Aware of the discontent which had been thus engendered, but still influenced too entirely by the prestige of birth to renounce so fatal an error, the king placed no reliance upon these latter troops; while from want of funds he was unable to make such levies of Swiss and German soldiers as might have supplied their place. He could no longer raise a loan, as the merchants who had formerly advanced money to the government, having been unable to recover it, declined to furnish further supplies; and he was equally unable to impose new taxes, the country being already crushed beneath the weight of those which had been already inflicted. In this extremity Francis resolved to create a number of new judicial offices, which were sold at an exorbitant rate, without regard, to the rank of the purchasers; and were eagerly bought up by the citizens, who by such means acquired augmented importance, and were protected from many abuses to which their want of birth had hitherto exposed them.

Aware that the failure of De Boutières in Piedmont had arisen entirely from his want of supplies, although unwilling to admit such a conviction, Francis had no sooner completed his financial arrangements than he raised a force of four thousand Gascons, and five thousand Italians and Swiss, levied in the cantons of Berne and Fribourg, of which he formed an army for the Count d'Enguien. Nevertheless, the position of the prince was an onerous one; his youth excited the jealousy and distrust of the veteran officers, his near relationship to the king discouraged the higher nobility engaged in the war, whose ambition was thus checked; and the extreme severity of the season rendered every manoeuvre at once hazardous and difficult. The intensity of the frost was so great that the wine became frozen in the barrels, and was obliged to be broken up in lumps, and sold to the troops by weight. Everything, in short, appeared to conspire against the new general; for although the military talents of De Boutières were not of that brilliant description which could inspire an army with entire confidence, he had nevertheless so endeared himself to the soldiery that they did not attempt to conceal their discontent at his departure.

Soon, however, the young prince by his affability, his firmness, and his watchful care of their interests, succeeded in allaying this regret; and he had no sooner taken the necessary measures to ensure the safety of the few fortresses which still remained in the hands of the French, than he proceeded to blockade Carignano, in the hope of reducing it by famine. Since its capture Del Guasto had repaired the fortifications of the city, furnished it with a garrison of four thousand men, and provided it with ammunition and stores; while his own army was moreover greatly superior to that of his adversary. He, therefore, no sooner perceived the intention of the prince,

than he endeavoured by manoeuvring in the vicinity of Carignano to throw in additional supplies; after which he designed to pass the Pd, and thus cut off the communication of the enemy with the marquisate of Saluzzo, whence they derived all their subsistence.

Had he succeeded in this attempt, the French troops must have perished from famine, as they would have been driven back upon a stretch of country entirely devastated; and he was induced to believe that he should ultimately compel them to this measure, on perceiving that d'Enghein carefully avoided the risk of a general engagement.

Such, indeed, was the fact. The parting command of the king having been that the prince should avoid an open battle, and confine himself to the capture of such fortresses as he might be able to reduce. But ere long the ardent spirit of the young commander revolted against this enforced supineness; a long arrear of pay was due to his troops, who complained that while they suffered all the privations of poverty, they were not permitted to revenge themselves upon the enemy; and the taunts of the imperialists, who believed, or affected to believe, that he was afraid to meet them, rendered him equally dissatisfied. Early in March, therefore, he resolved to despatch a messenger to the monarch to represent the difficult and humiliating nature of his position, and to entreat the royal permission to give battle to the opposing army.

The prince was fortunate in his selection of an envoy, his choice having fallen upon Blaise de Montluc, a veteran Gascon, no less remarkable for his fearless frankness than for his daring courage and the exuberance of his animal spirits.

On the arrival of M. de Montluc at court, Francis, after having read his despatches, summoned a council at which he desired him to attend. All the princes and great officers of state were present, including the dauphin, who stood behind the seat of the king; the Count de Saint-Pol being placed on his right hand, and d'Annebaut on his left. The circle was no sooner formed than, the monarch opened the proceedings by addressing the anxious envoy.

“Montluc”; he said; “you will return without delay to Piedmont, in order to inform M. d'Enghein of the decision at which I and my council have arrived; and I wish you to hear the reasons by which we are compelled to refuse his request.”

The Count de Saint-Pol then entered into a detail of these reasons, urging the meditated invasion of Picardy and Champagne by the emperor and Henry VIII; and declaring that the success of the prince, even could it be insured, would be comparatively unimportant, while his defeat would involve the most serious consequences, and might even tend to endanger the safety of the kingdom. “Rather”, he concluded; “let us abandon Piedmont altogether than incur so useless a hazard; or, if we deem it expedient to retain our present possessions in that province, let us simply act on the defensive, and avoid all gratuitous contact with the enemy.”

These sentiments were echoed by d'Annebaut; and finally all the members of the council expressed the same opinion.

Meanwhile the excitable and eager Montluc had been standing first upon one leg, and then upon the other, quivering with impatience, and making the most hideous grimaces in his attempt to control himself. At length, however, his forbearance was exhausted; he had forgotten even the presence of the sovereign, and was about to speak unbidden, when his intention was detected by the Count de Saint-Pol, who with an imperative gesture whispered; “Gently, gently.” This attracted the attention of Francis, who upon witnessing the contortions of the rebuked envoy could not restrain a smile. In an instant, however, he recovered his gravity, and once more addressing the discomfited soldier, he asked; “Have you perfectly comprehended, Montluc, the reasons which restrain me from complying with the wishes of M. d'Enghein?”

“Perfectly, Sire”, was the ready reply; “but if your majesty could be induced to allow me to give my opinion upon the subject, I should be glad to do so; although it may have no effect either upon yourself or your council.”

“Speak then”, said the king good-humouredly; “speak freely, and we will hear you.”

“Then, Sire”, said Montluc, throwing himself into a military attitude which however he did not long retain, and increasing in gesticulation as he proceeded with his harangue; “I will not trouble your majesty with a lengthy speech: there are between five and six thousand of my countrymen beyond the Alps, all good and tried soldiers, who are eager for glory; besides these, there are as many Swiss, who will fight for you to the death as we are ready to do. There, then, Sire, are nine thousand men upon whom you can depend. We will lead the van; and it will be hard if we are not followed by the Italians and Gryérians, who cannot fail us for very shame. With one arm tied up we should beat the enemy; fancy, therefore, what we shall do with both arms free, and a good blade in our right hand.”

“Surely, Sire”, interposed M. de Saint-Pol; “you will not suffer yourself to be influenced by the rhapsodies of this madman, who is intent only upon fighting, and careless of the consequences which such an imprudence may involve? Considerations of so serious a nature as this are too important for the heated brain of a Gascon.”

The enthusiasm of Montluc had, however, produced its effect; and while the king remained for a moment silent, the dauphin continued to make the most encouraging gestures to the envoy.

D’Annebaut, who, with the quick apprehension of a courtier, at once detected the hesitation of Francis, and the anxiety of the dauphin, now interposed in his turn; “Confess, Sire he said; “that the energy and good faith of this brave captain have almost induced you to waver in your resolve. God alone knows what may be the result should you decide upon allowing this battle. Take my advice, therefore, appeal to Him; and then declare your final resolution.”

Thus adjured, Francis removed his plumed cap, and with elapsed hands and upraised eyes, remained for a brief interval in prayer; then, throwing his cap vehemently upon the table, he shouted; “Let them fight! Let them fight!”

The council shortly afterwards broke up; but before the king retired he desired Montluc to approach, and graciously laying his hand upon his arm, he said kindly; “On your return, Montluc, commend me to my cousin D’Enghien, and all my other captains; and tell them, that if I have yielded to their wishes in opposition to the advice of my most trusty councillors, it has been because I have a firm confidence in their valour and discretion, and that I confidently anticipate a victory.”

“I will repeat the message of your majesty, word by word”; exclaimed the blunt soldier; “and those who may have wavered heretofore will become brave when they hear it.”

As the Count de Saint-Pol came into contact with Montluc, who remained stationary until all the members of the council had preceded him from the hall, he said bitterly: “Montluc, you are a madman; and you have this day caused either a great gain, or a great loss to your country.”

“Have patience, my good lord;” said the Gascon, too much elated by his triumph to resent the uncourtliness of the address; “Make yourself easy; and rely upon it, that the next intelligence which you receive from Piedmont will be that we have fricasseed the enemy, and have nothing left to do but to make a meal of them.”



Montluc on the morrow took his formal leave of the king, and commenced his journey back to Italy, accompanied by a crowd of the young courtiers, who were anxious to join in a campaign which now promised them both excitement and renown; and among whom were scions of many of the most ancient and noble families of France. He was shortly afterwards followed by Du Bellay, whom Francis had promised to despatch with a strong reinforcement, and the arrears of pay due to the troops. As usual, however, he only partially, and very inadequately redeemed his pledge, for the sum thus sent amounted only to forty-eight thousand crowns, instead of the three hundred thousand requisite to release the prince from his obligations towards the army ; and with such a mere handful of men, that they barely sufficed to furnish him with a sufficient escort to protect him upon his way.

Disappointed as he was, M. d'Enghien would not suffer himself to be discouraged. Eager to meet Del Guasto upon equal terms, he borrowed a large sum of money from the young nobles who had joined his banner, and commenced paying his troops; who, immediately they were apprised that the king consented to their doing battle upon the enemy, became less eager to enforce their demands.

The imperialist general, who was as anxious as his adversary for an engagement which must decide the fortune of the campaign, no sooner learnt that the French were preparing for open hostilities, than declaring that he would soon rid Piedmont of their presence, he began his march, and halting before Sommeriva, which was garrisoned only by a very small body of troops, he summoned it to surrender. In reply, the commandant of the fortress merely desired him to survey the heights in the immediate neighbourhood, which were bristling with armed men; but the marquis, who from the previous reluctance of M. d'Enghien believed that he had little to fear, nevertheless commenced an assault, which was, however, soon silenced by the French artillery.

Had d'Enghien at that moment availed himself of his advantage, and instead of resting satisfied with the preservation of Sommeriva, followed the advice of his officers, and immediately commenced the attack, he must have totally destroyed the body of troops by whom Del Guasto was accompanied; as it was subsequently ascertained that a large portion of his army were at a considerable distance in the rear, engaged in the extrication of the guns which had been swamped in a morass. Of this circumstance the French were not, however, aware, until it was too late; and the marquis, anxious to defer an engagement until he was joined by the whole of his troops, profited by their supineness to retire to Censola for the night.

Del Guasto had no sooner retreated than the prince was guilty of the serious error of abandoning the heights, which had hitherto rendered his position so advantageous; and in his turn retired to Carmagnola, leaving two hundred horsemen to observe the movements of the enemy.

It would appear that this duty was intrusted to a very inefficient officer; for it is certain that when on the following day the French were preparing to resume their ground, they discovered that it was already occupied by the imperialists, who had drawn up their army in readiness for the conflict, and who were, at least, one third stronger than themselves. The mortification of M. d'Enghien was intense; aware as he instantly became that his own imprudence had enabled Del Guasto to obtain this advantage. He had on the previous day refused to attack the imperialists, owing to his apprehension that the exhaustion of his troops, from the sudden heat of the weather, would militate against their success; but he had confidently calculated upon resuming his position, which he now saw wrested from him. Under the circumstances he had, however, no longer an alternative, for he felt that should he fall back once more upon Carmagnola his army would become disheartened ; and he consequently resolved to attack the marquis at Cerisola on the following day.

The brave De Boutières had meanwhile no sooner ascertained that the prince was

authorized to engage the enemy, than, forgetting his personal wrongs, he rejoined the army, and was put in command of the van-guard; the prince himself headed the main body; and Dampierre was intrusted with the rear-guard; while Montluc, who always coveted a post of danger, was thrown forward with a body of three thousand harquebussiers, as a forlorn hope, to meet the first attack of the enemy.

As the sun rose, the hostile armies faced each other, and the engagement commenced by a skirmish between the troops of the Gascon captain and a corresponding force of imperialists, which lasted from dawn until an hour before midday; Del Guasto being unwilling to abandon the heights, and his enemy equally reluctant to attack him at such a disadvantage. It was the object of each leader to take the other in flank, but both were sufficiently on their guard to render this manoeuvre impracticable. The gallantry displayed by Montluc and his little band was conspicuous; and although from their exposed position many among them fell, they nevertheless retained their ground, and fought bravely until the very close of the engagement.

At length the two main bodies came to a charge, and the battle became general. D'Enghien throughout the day proved himself worthy of the trust which had been reposed in him; and although, as Montluc had evidently foreseen, the Italians proved almost useless during the combat, and the Gryérians fairly turned and fled without striking a blow when they saw the enemy with Del Guasto approaching to charge them, he was nevertheless enabled through his own gallantry and that of the French gendarmerie to break through the imperial ranks, and to force them back upon the neighbouring forest in such disorder, that they were cut to pieces on their retreat.

The Prince of Salerno had received express orders from the marquis not to quit the post assigned to him on the left wing of the imperialists, nor to suffer the division under his command to take any part in the conflict until he received his permission to do so, however urgent circumstances might appear; and he obeyed these directions so implicitly, that when the tide of battle had earned Del Guasto to such a distance that he was unable to revoke them, he remained perfectly passive, although he was aware that his co-operation must have enabled the main body to rally, and thus possibly have changed the fortunes of the day; nor did he even commence his retreat until he felt that further delay must involve his own safety and that of his troops; when he effected the manoeuvre so skilfully that he escaped with very little loss.

Thus a victory was secured to d'Enghien, for which he was in a great degree indebted to the injudicious measures of the enemy, but it was purchased by the sacrifice of many valuable lives; two of his own equeuries and fifteen of his noble volunteers having perished during the charge; a casualty which was, however, counterbalanced by the fact that his total loss of rank and file amounted only to two hundred men.

The imperialists had, meanwhile, suffered much more severely. Del Guasto was himself struck in the knee by a musket-ball, and received a blow upon the head from a mace by which his helmet was crushed; and he found himself compelled from the anguish of his wounds to quit the field, and make the best of his way to Ast, with a troop of four hundred horse, which were all that remained to him. The repose which he so greatly needed, he was not, however, fated to find in what he had trusted would have been to him a city of refuge. On marching from Ast to encounter the French army, he had arrogantly authorized the citizens to close their gates-against him, should he return otherwise than as a conqueror; and they no sooner saw him approaching wounded and a fugitive, than they obeyed him to the very letter, and refused to admit him within their walls, he had, consequently, no alternative save to proceed to Milan; where, although shelter was conceded to him, he was bitterly taunted with his non-fulfilment of a promise which he had made to certain of the Milanese ladies, that he would bring the young French nobles who had joined the banner of M. d'Enghien as volunteers, in chains to their feet; a vaunt which it appeared was intended to be

less empty than those in which he usually indulged; as it is asserted by more than one historian that chains and padlocks were found in considerable numbers among the captured baggage. So enraged, moreover, were the population of Milan by a defeat for which they had been totally unprepared, that during his recovery he found it expedient to live in close retirement, as he was pursued through the streets, whenever he ventured to appear in public, by the jeers and execrations of the mob; and the clamorous demands of an unhappy class of females for the handsome young cavaliers whom he had promised to march as his prisoners into their city.

These indignities, which were as gall and wormwood to the arrogant spirit of the marquis, sufficed to fill up the measure of his mortification; for never was defeat more disastrous than his own at Cerisola. Ten thousand of his best troops had fallen during the battle; the whole of his artillery, ammunition, and baggage had become the prey of the enemy, as well as four thousand prisoners, among whom were several of his best officers. The costly armour, ponderous plate, and bulky treasure-chest by which he was always accompanied to the field, and which amounted in value to upwards of three hundred thousand crowns, shared the same fate; while the city of Carignano, and the whole marquisate of Montferrat, with the exception of Casal, were retaken by M. d'Enghien.

At this period, had the French king responded to the entreaties of the prince, and furnished him with a sufficient reinforcement, the Milanese must inevitably have fallen into his power; but the league into which the emperor had entered with Henry VIII, and their meditated descent upon France, rendered him not only unable to do so, but compelled him moreover to withdraw a force of twelve thousand men from the victorious army, for the defence of his own kingdom; a circumstance which decided the Count d'Enghien to consent to a truce for three months, which was proposed by Del Guasto. This had no sooner been ratified by their respective sovereigns, than the French prince reluctantly retired from Piedmont, and, after having strongly fortified all the fortresses of which he had possessed himself, marched his army back to France; while the imperialist general proceeded towards the frontiers of Picardy and Champagne, to assist in the attack which Charles was about to make upon those provinces.

By the messenger whom he despatched to the court to request supplies, M. d'Enghien forwarded to his sister, the Duchess de Nevers, a superb watch which had been found in the tent of the marquis, with directions to present it to the king; a commission of which she gracefully acquitted herself in the presence of the assembled courtiers.

“Sire”; she said, as bending upon one knee she tendered to him the costly trinket upon a small cushion of crimson velvet; “my brother d'Enghien having been unable to send you the Marquis del Guasto, thanks to the fleetness of his good horse, ventures to offer to you the watch of the fugitive imperialist; which, although perhaps in point of fact as valuable as its owner, did not chance to be so well mounted.”

“I thank my good and brave cousin and lieutenant for the courtesy, Madame”; replied the king, as he accepted the jewel, and at the same time raised the duchess from her kneeling position; “and yourself no less. And I shall greatly value the offering, not only as a memorial of his valour, but also of your own wit and beauty”

Throughout the whole of that evening the *mot* of Madame de Nevers afforded more conversation than the manoeuvres other successful kinsman.

Nevertheless, the period was not one for idle jesting or empty frivolity. France was threatened to her very core. The emperor and the King of England had assembled a strong army upon the Rhine for the capture of Paris, which they had resolved to sack; and afterwards to lay the whole country waste to the banks of the Loire. The avowed object of the treaty into which they had

entered was the entire conquest, and subsequent partition, of the kingdom between themselves; and they had even calculated with such security on success, that Normandy and Guyenne, with the title of King of France, were by the said treaty guaranteed to Henry, while Charles was to inherit the duchy of Burgundy and the northern provinces watered by the Somme.

The army with which Francis proposed to repel this threatened invasion was intrusted to the dauphin and d'Annebaut, but with the usual reservation that they should encamp on the banks of the Marne, and keeping that river between their own forces and those of the emperor, dispute the passage whenever it should be attempted; avoiding at all hazards a general engagement. Unfortunately for the king, he could not at this juncture calculate upon the slightest assistance from without, his allies having indignantly abandoned him from the moment that the fleet of Barbarossa had anchored off the coast of Provence; while their indignation had been still further excited by the outrages committed by the Turkish admiral on his departure from Toulon; when, not content with devastating the surrounding country for the purpose of victualling his ships for their homeward voyage, he availed himself of the opportunity to carry off a number of the criminals from the arsenal to man his galleys; and some of the handsomest women of the province for his harem. Thus Francis could not venture to recal his Infidel allies even in the present perilous emergency; the hatred which they had engendered towards him, and the enormities of which they had been guilty even upon his own territories, having convinced him of the seriousness of his previous error.

The invading armies consisted of eighty thousand infantry and two thousand horse; and it had been agreed between the allied sovereigns that they should advance simultaneously upon Paris, without lingering by the way to lay siege to any of the intervening cities. Had they pursued this course they must at once have made themselves masters of the capital, where a panic terror and a great scarcity of troops would have rendered it impossible to offer any effectual resistance; but so great a jealousy still existed between the two allied potentates, that instead of honestly fulfilling the stipulations of their mutual contract, each determined to possess himself of the several fortresses which lay upon his route; and thus the unity of their action was destroyed.

Henry VIII landed at Calais, accompanied by the Duke of Norfolk, and an array of thirty thousand men, with the pomp of a conqueror rather than the prudence of an invading general; and he was joined upon his arrival in that port by a force of fifteen thousand imperialists under De Buren and De Roeux, who were to act in conjunction with his own troops. The emperor meanwhile pressed forward towards Champagne, whither Francis, who considered him as the more formidable enemy of the two, had, as we have shown, despatched the main body of his army; taking no further precaution against the English king than that of fortifying Boulogne and the other important fortresses of Picardy.

Charles commenced his operations by the siege of Luxembourg, which, contrary to the anticipations of the king, capitulated almost immediately; the garrison having suffered from famine throughout the whole of the preceding winter, and being reduced to a state of exhaustion which rendered them unable to oppose his attack. He then continued his onward march, making himself master as he advanced, of the citadels of Commerey on the Meuse, Ligny, and Brienne; after which, crossing the frontier of Champagne, he halted before St. Dizier, a place of great importance, inasmuch as it commanded the passage of the river.

Aware that its garrison was insignificant in number, its outworks very imperfectly fortified, and its position unfavourable for defence, Charles anticipated as easy a conquest of this city as that to which he had looked forward at Luxembourg. He was, however, fated to disappointment, the command having been confided to Louis de Beuil, Count de Sancerre, the lieutenant of the Duke d'Orleans, and to M. de Lalande, who had so greatly distinguished himself during the preceding year at the defence of Landrecies; and who, upon receiving a summons from the emperor to

surrender, replied by assuring him that there was not one traitor within the walls, and that if he coveted the place he must win it at the sword's point.

Irritated by this defiance, Charles V at once sat down before the city, angry at an impediment which he considered gratuitous, and believing from day to day that the morrow must witness its reduction. Contrary, however, not only to his own expectations, but to those of Francis himself, the town resisted despite all its disadvantages, for the space of six weeks; during which time the garrison not only thwarted the operations of the imperialists, by continual sorties, but even sustained an assault which lasted for seven hours, and cost the emperor the lives of eight hundred of his best troops; while the remainder of his forces retreated in such disorder that they abandoned a great quantity of powder, which fell into the hands of the French. The loss on the side of the garrison did not amount to more than forty gendarmes and two hundred infantry; but the Count de Sancerre was grievously wounded in the face by the fragments of his sword, which was shivered by a shot. On the following day the emperor sent a herald to Sancerre, to offer him honourable terms if he would consent to capitulate; but the French general, who was aware of the importance of delaying the march of the enemy towards Paris, refused to admit the envoy within the walls, and declared his intention of still holding the city.

Convinced by this reply that he should obtain nothing from the fears of the count, and irritated by the loss of life which had already ensued, Charles resolved to starve out the garrison, which he was aware was already driven to great straits both for food and ammunition; and he consequently remained passively in his camp, awaiting the result of this determination. A few days subsequently a drummer was despatched from the beleaguered city to propose the exchange of some prisoners; and he had no sooner delivered his message and left the enemy's lines, than a stranger, with an apparent amount of caution which disarmed suspicion, jostled him on his path, and at the same time thrust a sealed packet into his hand, which he hurriedly informed him he had received from the Duke de Guise, and was waiting an opportunity to convey to the Count de Sancerre. A look of intelligence was then exchanged between the two men; and in a few moments the mysterious packet was delivered. The letter was written in the cypher adopted by the duke, of which M. de Sancerre had the key; and so much was he astonished at the nature of its contents, that he at once called a council, and read it aloud.

In this missive Sancerre was enjoined to surrender the garrison upon the best terms he could make with the emperor, and that with all possible despatch, as it was found impossible to introduce either men or provisions into the city. Many of the officers intreated their commandant to disregard an order, which had merely emanated from the governor, and not from the king himself, alleging that they could but surrender when their means of subsistence and defence were utterly exhausted, and that meanwhile they were doing their sovereign good service by checking the onward march of the enemy. The majority, however, had become disheartened by the privations and suffering which they had already endured, and strongly urged De Sancerre to immediate obedience. Yet, for a time, the count still hesitated; until his duty as a soldier at length overcame, his pride as a man, and he consented to follow the directions of his superior officer. He therefore despatched in his turn a herald to the imperial camp, demanding to know upon what conditions he would be permitted to evacuate the fortress, should he consent to capitulate. These were immediately detailed, and were of the harshest description; the emperor declaring that M. de Sancerre had forfeited all claim to the lenity which he had previously determined to exert towards him, by an obstinacy as weak as it was unavailing. He had, however, miscalculated the nature of the count, who at once peremptorily refused to accede to the terms proposed; and Charles at length reluctantly consented to permit the garrison to retain the fortress for the space of twelve days longer, when, if they did not receive succour from without, they were to be allowed to vacate the place at midday with all the honours of war, carrying with them the whole of their baggage and a portion of their artillery. The order which had been transmitted to him, and the death of M. de Lalande, who was killed during the assault, combined with the total exhaustion of his ammunition,

determined Sancerre to comply with these conditions; and, accordingly, on the appointed day, not having in the interval received the help on which he had still ventured to rely, he vacated the city, which was immediately garrisoned by the imperialists.

This protracted struggle had, however, very much exhausted the forces of the emperor; and it had also cost the life, among others, of René de Nassau, Prince of Orange, one of his favourite generals, who fell on the same day as M. de Lalande, to the regret of the whole army, to whom his courage and affability had greatly endeared him.

The intelligence of the surrender of St. Dizier affected Francis more deeply than any loss which he had previously sustained, it being the last formidable impediment to Charles's advance on Paris. At the moment when it reached him he was confined to his bed by indisposition; and the despatches were delivered to him in the presence of the Queen of Navarre, Madame d'Etampes, and other ladies of the court who were assembled in his chamber for the purpose of beguiling his hours of enforced inaction. "Oh, my God!" he exclaimed when he had finished their perusal; "how dearly dost Thou make me pay for a kingdom which I had believed was freely given. Nevertheless, Thy will be done." Then turning to his sister he said sadly; "Ma *mignonne*, I entreat of you to attend *complines* at the cathedral, and to pray to God for me, that even should it be His will to support and favour the emperor more than myself, He may at least spare me the misery of seeing him encamped before the capital of my kingdom; and of having it placed on record that my rebellious vassal defied me to my beard, as his ancestor the Duke de Burgogne formerly defied Louis XI. Come what may, however, I am resolved to meet him and give him battle; and I pray God that I may die rather than be condemned to become a second time his prisoner."

Two days subsequently he appeared in public in the midst of the panic-stricken citizens, whom he endeavoured to reassure by the calm fearlessness of his own deportment. "Remember, my faithful burghers", he said, as they crowded about him with loud cries of terror and distress; "Remember, that although I may protect you from all harm, I cannot preserve you from fear, for God holds the hearts of men in His hand. You must strive therefore to do your duty as I shall do mine."

These were brave words, and worthy the sovereign of a great nation, but unfortunately they were only lip-deep. The court intrigues, to which frequent allusion has already been made, had at this period attained to such a height, that plots and counterplots were perpetually circumventing the most prudent public measures. As Madame d'Etampes saw the king daily becoming more feeble, she began to tremble at the consequences which his death must inevitably entail upon herself; and although she cared little for the Duke d'Orleans personally, she determined to exert all her energies to induce Francis to accept the former proposition of the emperor, and to marry him to the Princess of Spain, in order that she might herself secure a safe asylum, either in the duchy of Milan or the Low Countries, after the demise of her royal lover.

This alliance would, moreover, as she was well aware, mortify the pride of Diane de Poitiers, by placing the younger prince in a position as advantageous as that of the dauphin; and accordingly in pursuance of this resolution she urged Francis to terminate the war by an alliance for which, as she assured him, the emperor was still anxious. The stipulation made by Charles, however, that the ceded territory should never be united to the French crown, induced the king to persist in his refusal; and she no sooner found that her influence was on the wane, than she determined to effect her purpose by other and less unexceptionable means. We have already stated that Bossut, Count de Longueval, was at once her lover and her slave; and, through his agency, she entered into a treasonable correspondence with Charles, to whom she communicated the most secret decisions of the council. The first-fruits of her infamous and selfish treachery were the loss of St. Dizier; the supposititious order of the Duke de Guise having been written by the imperial chancellor Granvella, to whom she had communicated the secret of his cypher.

From St. Dizier Charles wrote to apprise the English king that he was about to march forthwith upon Paris; but Henry, who had no sooner ascertained that his ally had taken Luxembourg than he determined to follow his example, drily replied by an assurance that he should not follow until he had possessed himself of Boulogne and Montreuil; the former of which places he had already invested in person with a force of twenty thousand men, while the Duke of Norfolk menaced the latter with the remainder of the English troops, and the Flemish forces of De Buren and De Roeux.

The emperor, indignant at this selfish policy, which, although he had considered it legitimate on his own part, he condemned as a breach of faith upon that of his coadjutor, retorted by requesting that since such was the case, and that his army was seriously weakened by a delay which he had not foreseen, he might be permitted to save his honour by demanding a truce. To this request Henry, bent upon the conquests which he meditated, offered no opposition; declaring to those about him that he was quite strong enough to carry out his measures without extraneous aid; and thenceforward the two potentates ceased altogether to act in concert.

CHAPTER X

[1544-45.]

THE emperor meanwhile pursued the course of the Marne, and advanced so far into the province of Champagne that he found himself closely pressed by the troops of the dauphin, who cut off all his supplies, and threatened his army with famine. The noble defence of St. Dizier, had notwithstanding the apprehensions of the king, proved the salvation of France, by affording time on the one hand for the better organization of her army, and on the other by harassing and exhausting that of the enemy; but the most important of its results was the coolness and jealousy which it had produced between Charles and the English king; the refusal of Henry VIII. to march upon Paris, when he was apprised by the emperor of his own intention of proceeding thither, having convinced Charles that he must not calculate upon that blind deference to his wishes which he had led himself to expect from his equally arrogant ally and, accordingly, while he resolved to advance unsupported, in order to impress upon Francis the peril to which he would expose himself by persisting in hostilities, he seconded the views of Madame d'Etampes by declaring to several French officers whom he had made prisoners, that so far from seeking to provoke a war, he was ready to effect a reconciliation with their sovereign; and at the same period a Spanish monk, of the order of St. Dominic, who was the confessor of Queen Eleonora, entered, by her commands, into a correspondence to this effect with Martin de Gusman, who held a similar office about the emperor.

Granvella, his chancellor, strongly urged him to a reconciliation; and he was the more inclined to such a measure, as the protracted resistance of St. Dizier, under the most unfavourable circumstances, had sufficed to convince him that his meditated campaign presented more difficulties than he was either prepared, or enabled, at that particular moment, to surmount. On the other hand, both the queen and the favourite, although from very different motives, laboured to convince Francis of the impolicy of permitting the emperor to approach nearer to the capital, where the impossibility of effecting a safe retreat in the event of defeat would render the imperialist army desperate, and involve the whole country in bloodshed and ruin while their success would equally prove the destruction of his kingdom.

At length a conference between the representatives of the two powers was opened at La Chaussée a small village midway between Vitry and Châlons; but although it was admitted by all parties that the war must prove unprofitable to both potentates, and that a general peace was desirable for the welfare of Europe, they separated without having effected any definitive arrangement.

During this negotiation, and, beyond all doubt, with the intention of alarming Francis into a compliance with the conditions upon which he had consented to forego all further hostilities, the emperor continued his onward march until he reached Châlons; where the Duke de Nevers, who held the city, immediately prepared for a siege. Charles V. however, who had received sure intelligence of the great strength of the garrison, continued his march without evincing any intention of attacking the fortress, to the extreme annoyance of the prince and his officers; and the disappointment so enraged several young nobles of the suite of the Duke de Nevers who had thrown themselves into the place, that they made a sudden sortie, and commenced a skirmish with



the rear-guard of the imperialists, by which imprudence they all sacrificed their lives; the German cavalry having a short time previously been armed with pistols, a fact of which their enemies were not aware.

The position of the dauphin became daily more difficult; as, in order to avoid an engagement, he was compelled to retreat as the emperor advanced; and consequently; to fall back so closely upon the troops of Henry VIII, that a few forced marches would have enabled them to attack him in the rear. He had, moreover, lost all confidence in d'Annebaut, and urged the king, in this extremity, to permit the recal of Montmorenci; but Francis was still too much exasperated against him to consent to such an arrangement; a fact of which Madame d'Etampes was well aware, and by which she so skilfully profited as to secure d'Annebaut in his post, and thus deliver herself from the peril to which she must have been exposed, had she been compelled to exchange a fast friend for a watchful enemy during her secret negotiations with the emperor.

As the imperialists had ere long discovered that the dauphin, whom they were aware was constitutionally brave, must be acting under stringent orders thus to suffer them to approach the capital unmolested, they resolved, if possible, to compel him to give them battle before the rapid exhaustion of their provisions forced them to an ignoble and dangerous retreat; and Count Guillaume de Furstemberg, who had during his service in the French army made himself intimately acquainted with the surrounding country, volunteered to point out to his new master a ford a little below the town, by which the troops might pass the river, and turning the flank of the dauphin's forces, render an engagement inevitable. Anxious, however, not to fail in his promise, he resolved to attempt it himself during the night with a few followers; a purpose which he effected in safety, and he was about to return and report his success to the emperor, when the advanced guard of the French suddenly surrounded his party, the whole of whom they either killed or made prisoners. The renegade count was among the captives; and so exasperated were those by whom he was taken, that they assailed him with the most violent invectives, and he was forthwith conveyed under an escort to Paris, where he was committed to the Bastille.

This disappointment proved the more serious to Charles that his army was beginning to suffer seriously from want; the dauphin having laid waste the country on both banks of the Marne, after he had filled the storehouses of Epernay and Chateau-Thierry for the supply of his own troops; and, thus convinced of the failure of his enterprise, the emperor authorized Gusman secretly to pursue the negotiation which had been commenced at La Chaussée; after which, as a last resource, and still with the same view of compelling a peace, he resumed his march along the river, although uncertain how long he should be able to subsist his troops. He was not suffered, however, to remain in doubt upon this important point, for the Duchess d'Etampes no sooner ascertained the jeopardy in which he was placed, than, apprehending that the retreat of the emperor to the Low Countries must at once destroy all hope of the alliance which she was eager to forward, she desired de Longueval to inform him that she could give him information which would enable him to possess himself both of Epernay and Château-Thierry, and thus readily to victual his army. Charles at once accepted the offer, assuring the treacherous duchess that he would in requital of so signal a service pledge himself to second her own projects regarding the marriage of the Duke d'Orleans; upon which Jean de Bossut, by a heavy bribe, induced the captain who was intrusted with the destruction of the bridge of Epernay, by which the dauphin had designed to prevent the entrance of the enemy into the town, to delay the performance of his duty for so long a period that it afforded Charles sufficient time to attack the outpost, to force his way across, and to take possession of both places.

The consternation of the Parisians when they became assured that the imperialists were actually in Château-Thierry, and that they had even thrown their outposts forward to Meaux, exceeded all precedent; nor could the wise precautions taken by the dauphin serve to allay them. Immediately upon the surprise of the two important posts which had thus been wrested from him

by treachery, he had despatched a force of nearly eight thousand men to occupy that city; while Charles, who was now at ease as regarded the subsistence of his army, did not again attempt to cross the Marne, but abandoning the course of the river, proceeded to Villars-Cotterets, and thence to the town of Soissons, which he delivered over to pillage for the space of three days.

The panic in the capital remained at its acme. The most opulent of the citizens fled to Rouen and Orleans for safety, carrying with them all the movable portion of their property; and the different roads were covered with wagons filled with household goods, women, and children, while equipages of every description threaded their way among the more cumbrous vehicles; and bands of robbers, to whom every public disorder affords a harvest, rifled the fugitives as they endeavoured to escape with the wreck of their fortunes.

In this season of individual peril all national pride and all sense of loyalty were alike forgotten. In vain did the king send the Duke de Guise to reassure the inhabitants, and subsequently attempted the same unprofitable errand himself; they were alike unheeded; and at that precise moment Francis received intelligence that Boulogne had capitulated, and that Henry VIII was in his turn marching upon Paris. This information at once determined the measures of the king. D'Annebaut had already arrived with the conditions of the emperor, which he had previously resolved to reject; but fearing that Charles might become even more unreasonable in his demands should he learn the recent success of the English monarch, he hastened to conclude the treaty; and once more the Marechal was despatched to Brussels by express to procure the signature of Charles, whom he found on his arrival suffering severely from an attack of gout. Having received express injunctions not to return without having effected his mission, he however ventured to urge its immediate accomplishment, notwithstanding the undisguised reluctance of the emperor, when the latter said with considerable irritation of manner, as he took the pen which had been prepared for him between his swollen fingers; "You are pressing, M. le Marechal; but I pray you to observe from what you now see that I am not likely to forfeit the pledge which I have given, as he who cannot hold a pen in time of peace would be little able to wield a sword in the hour of battle."

"Sire", was the immediate and pertinent reply of d'Annebaut, accompanied, however, by a profound obeisance; "it is scarcely to be anticipated that your imperial majesty will be for ever afflicted with the gout."

The universal satisfaction evinced throughout France on the conclusion of the new treaty, was, however, premature; for although wearied of a war which had impoverished their cities, devastated their provinces, and involved an enormous sacrifice of life, the unfortunate subjects of Francis I had merely purchased a temporary tranquillity by a more threatening danger than even that from which they were thus delivered. The principal articles of the treaty set forth that "within the space of two years the emperor should bestow the hand of his daughter, or that of his niece, according to his own pleasure, upon the, Duke d'Orleans; with either the Milanese, or the Low Countries and the counties of Bourgogne and Charolois as her dowry, also at his own option. Should he decide upon thus ceding the Milanese, moreover, he was to retain the citadels of Milan and Cremoma until the princess should have male issue; while Francis was to resign his claim alike to the kingdom of Naples and the Milanese duchy, should he determine to endow the duke with the Low Countries; and moreover restore all the territories of the Duke de Savoie, although he was permitted to retain his fortresses until the emperor relinquished those of Milan and Cremona, save such as had been taken since the truce of Nice, which were to be at once given up on both sides, as well as all those which had been taken in France and the Low Countries."

This treaty, however advantageous it was likely to prove to the Duke d'Orleans, was one by which France as a nation was at once weakened and endangered; and the dauphin accordingly protested strongly against its acceptance. It aggrandized his brother at his expense, and

dismembered the kingdom which he regarded as his just inheritance. Rather, as he declared, would he still trust to the force of arms, than consent to a concession by which he was humiliated, and which threatened to involve the nation in anarchy; but his representations were disregarded; the king, failing in health, with all his energies depressed, and surrounded by advisers who from private interests or public policy were anxious to secure a termination of the war, treated his arguments with a cold and resolute indifference which convinced him that further opposition would be useless; and, accordingly, he signed a solemn protest against it at Fontainebleau on the 12th of December, in the presence of the Duke de Vendôme, the Count d'Enghien, and the Count d'Aumale, afterwards Duke de Guise; a ceremony which although common at the time could be of little effect.

The treaty had no sooner been concluded by the two contracting parties at Crespy, on the 18th of September, than the emperor despatched an order to De Buren and De Roeux, who were assisting the English in the siege of Montreuil, to disband their troops and retire; while the Duke d'Orleans, the Cardinals of Lorraine and Meudon, and several nobles of high rank, proceeded to join Charles at Brussels, where they were to remain as hostages until the fortresses designated by the treaty were evacuated; the Marechal d'Annebaut was also despatched to Brussels, and the dauphin marched to the relief of Montreuil, greatly to the chagrin of Henry VIII, who was vigorously besieging that city; but who, abandoned by his German allies, and unable to resist so powerful an army as that now brought against him, raised the siege, threw a strong garrison into Boulogne, and retreated with the remainder of his forces to Calais, where he at once embarked for England. He moreover retired in such haste, that although he had left a large body of troops to defend the city, he had not organized any plan by which that defence might be assured; the principal portion of his artillery was still planted outside the walls, and all his military stores remained in the lower town, which was rendered imminently unsafe by the numerous breaches that had induced the besieged to abandon it, and to retire into the upper portion of the place, where they were hovered by the citadel.

The dauphin, apprised of this negligence, determined to hazard a night attack, for the double purpose of recovering the town, and securing the stores which were housed in its magazines. Placing himself at the head of a few companies of infantry, the whole of whom by his orders wore their shirts over their uniforms that they might be enabled to recognise each other in the darkness, he accordingly directed M. de Tais, his second in command, to march in profound silence towards the breaches in the walls of the lower town, which were defended only by a slender guard; while M. de Dampierre advanced upon the tower on the sea-shore with his corps of Grisons.

M. de Tais readily effected his entrance into the place, by overpowering the few troops who were there stationed; but he was unfortunately so severely wounded during the attack that he was compelled to retire to the camp, upon which the French troops, although already in possession of the town, finding themselves without a leader, and being informed that the English were about to make a sortie, and to repossess themselves of the breaches in order to intercept their retreat, became so terrified that they began to fly in the utmost confusion; nor could all the efforts of their other officers, among whom was the brave Montluc, succeed in inducing them to rally and hold their ground. Day was beginning to dawn when the place was abandoned, and Montluc was the last to pass the walls, with three arrows in his buckler and one in the sleeve of his coat-of-mail; declaring as he rejoined his friends that he bore about him all the booty that he had made at Boulogne. Immediately afterwards the fugitives were met by a strong force of lansquenets under d'Annebaut who was advancing to their assistance, but it was already too late; and the dauphin having strengthened the garrison of Montreuil as a check upon its threatening neighbour, the campaign terminated for the winter.

The war which was thus closed, inglorious as it had proved to both sovereigns, had, nevertheless, been a source of immense suffering to the French people. The peasantry had been oppressed and outraged alternately by friends and enemies; their cattle had been slaughtered, their grain cut down before it ripened, their houses pillaged, their wives and daughters insulted, and the provinces of Champagne and Picardy, once so abundant in produce of every description, laid waste, and the cities abandoned; while even many of the nobles, who had hitherto lived in affluence, were compelled to quit their devastated estates, and to throw themselves upon the charity of those who had escaped a similar ruin.

The emperor, on quitting France, had disbanded a large portion of his army, but he had retained his most efficient force, and quartered all his Spanish troops in Lorraine. He had abandoned all further projects against the Infidels, and he was weary of making war against Francis, terminating, as it ever did, in new treaties, which each in turn disregarded when such a breach of faith suited his policy. Still he was unwilling to remain in inaction; and once more he resolved to humble the pretensions of the Protestant princes, whose partial independence he regarded as an affront to his own dignity.

Meanwhile his affection for the Duke d'Orleans increased daily; the lively, frank, and fearless disposition of the young prince amused his leisure, and diverted his hours of suffering; while his undisguised ambition, and the jealousy which he evinced of his elder brother, only the more tended to increase his favour. Charles had already resolved to give him the hand of his daughter; but, at the suggestion of the duke himself, he addressed a letter to Francis, in which he affirmed his intention of marrying him to his niece, unless the king should consent to increase his appanage in France, which, by the treaty of Crespy, amounted only to a hundred thousand annual livres. Francis, as had ever been the fashion with both monarchs, made no definitive reply to this demand, but deferred his decision until the period of the projected alliance should have arrived; and the emperor, absorbed by his newly-awakened hatred of the Reformers, forbore on his side to urge him further upon the subject.

The emperor was eager to pursue his persecution of the Smalkalden league, and to compel the princes to submit once more to the dominion of the Roman Church, in order to secure at the same time his own supremacy, and to conciliate the favour of the pope, which he had forfeited by his alliance with Henry VIII. The pontiff had evinced his displeasure by convoking, without his concurrence, the council of Trent, which reversed the *interim* granted by Charles to the Protestants, while at the same time he openly declared that Francis had conferred a greater benefit upon Christendom by his persecution of the heretics, than injury by his momentary alliance with the Infidels. He had, moreover, addressed a caustic letter to the emperor, in which he advised him to refer to himself all the ecclesiastical questions in which he had hitherto permitted his imperial diets to intermeddle; declaring that he alone was competent to decide them, and threatening him with his vengeance should he disobey.

As this precise measure was at the moment that which appeared the best calculated to assist his own projects, Charles, instead of resenting the haughtiness of the pontiff, commanded all his subjects in the Low Countries to obey, on peril of their lives, the bull which had been issued, and immediately to discontinue the practices of their religion; but the Lutherans, although they dared no longer worship in public as they had for some time been permitted to do, would not so lightly abandon the faith they had adopted; nor was it long ere Charles ascertained that the inhabitants of Tournay had summoned to their city a celebrated French preacher, called Pierre du Breuil, who was accustomed to perform the reformed service secretly; upon which he caused him to be arrested as he was returning from the ramparts, and burnt him by a slow fire in the great square on the 19th of February.

This fearful example aroused the jealousy of the French king, who, anxious not to be

surpassed in zeal for the Church by a monarch who had already injured him in the opinion of all the Romanist princes by his crusades against the Infidels, determined, in his turn, to strike a decisive blow which should reinstate him in their esteem, by exceeding the efforts then making by his rival.

After the frightful religious persecution of the 11th century, by which the Albigenses were exterminated, a few of the Vaudois, who had succeeded in effecting their escape, had concealed themselves in the narrowest and most secluded valleys of the Alps, where, by their exemplary industry and peaceful demeanour, they had so much ingratiated themselves with the surrounding nobles, that they were permitted to pursue their agrarian avocations unmolested. Thus they had in time greatly increased in numbers, and while the rest of Europe was engaged in war, they had quietly reared their crops, tended their herds, and made many a hitherto barren spot smile with vegetation. Their life was a purely pastoral one; and, although occasionally disturbed by some passing persecution, they relied so implicitly upon the privilege accorded to them by Louis XII, who—having compelled them to declare their submission to the Church of Rome, granted them free permission to remain unmolested in their mountain-fastnesses—that they had toiled and prospered, spreading themselves by degrees along the range of the Alps, and occupying some of the highest points above the marquisate of Saluzzo. Subsequently their agricultural skill became so greatly appreciated that they were, towards the close of the thirteenth century, put into possession of a confined and desert district to the north of the Durance; and there they had during nearly three centuries made their abode, converting the waste into a smiling garden, and peopling the adjacent heights with innumerable flocks and herds.

This prosperity, calm and patriarchal as it was, however, excited the envy and malevolence of their Romanist neighbours. Their territory, which extended from the foot of the Alps to the district of Venaissan, contained two towns, those of Merindol and Cabrières, and about thirty villages; while midway between the towns stood the borough of Oppede, which belonged to the Baron Jean Meynier, president of the parliament of Provence, and was entirely inhabited by Roman Catholics, which faith he himself professed.

It unfortunately happened at the period to which we must now return, (1545,) that one of the vassals of De Meynier, having incurred a heavy debt to his rigorous master which he was unable to liquidate, left his home stealthily, and fled for security to Cabrières; a fact which the baron no sooner ascertained, than, determined to avail himself of so favourable an opportunity of persecuting his detested neighbours, he hastened to apprise the king that the whole district was in a state of revolt, and that it was apprehended the Reformers had formed a plot to possess themselves of Marseilles.

Francis made no effort to assure himself of the truth of this statement, but at once authorized De Meynier to put in force the decree promulgated against the Vaudois in 1540, daring his first persecution of the professors of the reformed religion; a decree which had consigned all the heads of families to the flames, their wives and children to slavery, their property to confiscation, and their habitations to demolition. This iniquitous sentence had, however, been remitted at the entreaty of Du Bellay-Langei, who, after having made a survey of the little colony, convinced the king of their usefulness and love of order; upon which, moved by his representation, and about to enter into a new war in which these border-allies might probably prove serviceable, Francis had consented to revoke the edict; and, by a declaration addressed to the parliament of Aix, pardoned the Vaudois all their past errors, and accorded to them a period of three months at the termination of which they were called upon to recant them.

In reply to this summons the Vaudois forwarded to the king a written confession of their faith, humbly entreating that he would point out the errors which they were thus commanded to abjure; but, although no attention was vouchsafed to their appeal, they had since been suffered to

remain unmolested.

Now, however, the cessation of hostilities, and the mutual engagement of the emperor and the French king to exterminate all heresy throughout their respective dominions, had rendered his frontier-towns of comparatively small importance to Francis; and he resolved, although Charles had once more taken the initiative, and that the pyres had been already lighted in Belgium, that he too would purchase his salvation by the same means. Unhappily for the victims whom he had resolved to immolate, he was again prostrated by a relapse of the malady to which he had long been a victim; and the Cardinal de Tournon, while entreating him to make his peace with God lest he should not survive the attack, assured him that he could not more effectually do so than by persisting in so pious an intention. The Archbishop of Arles, the Bishop of Aix, and sundry other ecclesiastics who were then assembled at Avignon, seconded the efforts of the cardinal, by conjuring him to revoke the amnesty which he had granted to the heretical Vaudois; and thus, even had he subsequently repented the barbarous order which he had caused to be transmitted to De Meynier, the hourly-increasing superstition of Francis, which always displayed itself under a fear of approaching death, hardened his heart against every thought of mercy; and the secret preparations of the vindictive baron were continued with a caution and celerity which blinded the wretched Lutherans to their danger, even when it had reached their very thresholds; nor was it until he issued an order that all individuals who were capable of bearing arms throughout the province should immediately assemble, well provided with food and weapons for an expedition which was not explained, that they were awakened to a sense of their peril.

The fated victims of selfish bigotry immediately despatched messengers to inform the Lutheran princes and the Protestant cantons of Switzerland of the jeopardy in which they were placed, and to entreat their assistance; and their co-religionists lost no time in forwarding a deputation to the king, which was commissioned to implore his clemency for the poor mountaineers, and to petition that they might still be permitted to retain their liberty of conscience; offering, moreover, themselves to become sureties, that, should he be prevailed upon to spare them, they would never in any way endeavour to disturb the tranquillity of the state.

Francis received the deputies, who were introduced into his sick-room, with great haughtiness; and the sole reply which he vouchsafed was to the effect, that, as he never interfered with the national legislature of those whom they represented, he begged of them not to intermeddle in his own.

The levies which, by virtue of his office, De Meynier was authorized to make for the public service, joined to the local militia thus raised, formed a considerable force; which was augmented by a troop of horse under Iscalin, who had been recently created Baron de la Garde, and whose services in Italy had rendered both himself and his men callous to human suffering, and intolerant to all who rejected the Romish tenets. Nor had De Meynier failed to inform the popish legate, Antonio Trivulzio, of the proposed campaign; and from him he received a further reinforcement of a thousand foot-soldiers and several pieces of artillery.

The soul sickens at the record of the foul butcheries committed by this horde of legalized assassins. As they advanced towards the nearer villages the inhabitants fled in terror to the mountains, leaving their habitations to be burned, and their flocks and herds to become the prey of the spoilers; those who from bodily weakness could not effect their escape, were cut down; and soon the flames which ascended to the sky on all sides spread the alarm in the more distant parts of the district. In like manner the other hamlets were consecutively abandoned, pillaged, and finally burnt, as well as the corn-stores, and such trees as would ignite. No resistance was offered; the miserable victims, unprepared for such an attack, sought only to save themselves by flight; and on the following morning De Meynier divided his troops into two bodies, one of which pursued the mountain road, while the other followed the course of the river. The carnage that ensued was

frightful; many of the fugitives were encumbered either by children of tender years, or by aged parents, to whom they clung even in their despair; and all these perished miserably. Neither age nor sex proved a protection ; and horrors were committed in the face of day which cried aloud to heaven for vengeance.

Thus was this army of extermination engaged until the 18th, when it reached Mirandola; but the once flourishing town, although it had so recently been warm with life, was totally abandoned, save by a poor idiot, who, while wandering through the deserted streets, was seized, bound to an olive tree, and shot. At Cabrières, on the morrow, the royal army, which was to secure the salvation of its sovereign, found sixty men and half the number of women, who, still trusting that they might save themselves from the general slaughter, made a show of resistance, and then offered to capitulate. The proposal was accepted, and they were assured that their lives would be respected; but they had no sooner delivered up the town, than they were informed that no terms could be kept with heretics, and they were one and all put to death.

Nor did those who had escaped from the city fail to become in their turn the prey of the still unsated barbarians. Eight hundred of the male inhabitants perished by the weapons of their remorseless enemies; while the women were, by the orders of De Meynier himself, shut up in a barn which was fired from without; and whenever a poor tortured wretch strove to save herself from the flames by leaping through the solitary window, she was immediately transfixed by a pike, and hurled back upon the recking pile.

Suffice it, that before the work of death was finally accomplished, three thousand persons had shared the common fate, while a yet greater number were still wandering in the woods and among the fastnesses of the mountains; but the agents of murder were soon upon their track, and they also successively fell into the hands of De Meynier, who selected from among them six hundred and seventy of the younger and more vigorous, whom he consigned to the galleys, where they perished miserably within a few weeks. Upwards of two hundred and fifty others, after having been subjected to the mockery of a trial as heretics and traitors, were executed; and, finally, a proclamation was made that all individuals convicted of harbouring those who were still at large, should suffer death; a threat which so terrified the few who might have possessed sufficient humanity to afford shelter to the miserable fugitives, that they closed their hearts and their homes against them; and with the exception of a mere remnant, who succeeded in effecting their escape to Geneva and the Swiss territories, all ultimately died from famine. Twenty-two towns and villages were annihilated; such crops and timber as could not be destroyed by fire, were torn up by the roots; and the flourishing district which had been for so long a period the garden of Provence, was in a few short days converted into a desert and unpeopled waste.

With the exception of a few of the more bigoted of the priesthood, all Christendom concurred in regarding this wholesale and unprovoked butchery of an inoffensive population with undisguised and genuine horror; but Francis, whose increasing infirmities rendered him more than ever anxious to conciliate the Church, and who weakly imagined that he was doing it good service by exterminating its enemies with a zeal even greater than that of the emperor himself, subsequently (on the 18th of August) registered his approval of the carnage, declaring that the Vaudois had only received a fitting chastisement for their obstinate heresy.

It was precisely at this period that the dauphin committed an act of imprudence which strengthened the jealousy and dislike that the king had long evinced towards him. While his paternal ambition was flattered by the brilliant alliance about to be contracted by the younger prince, (an alliance which promised to place him upon a throne little inferior to that of France,) and his vanity was soothed by the conviction that the same qualities which in himself had excited the jealousy of the emperor in his youth, had tended to attract him in his more mature years to the Duke d'Orleans; he gloomily remembered that the dauphin had neither aggrandized the dignity of

the crown by his espousals with Catherine de' Medici, nor increased the glory of the nation by his arms. The open and ardent nature of the Prince Charles, moreover, which responded to that of his father, had led him to evince towards the king an affection and gratitude which were never exhibited by the dauphin; who, long habituated to consider himself as an object of suspicion and distrust, retorted the injustice by augmented reserve and indifference. The personal court of the king was the chosen resort of the younger prince, and many of his closest friends were members of his father's household; whereas the dauphin formed a circle of his own, wherein figured all the friends and adherents of the exiled Montmorenci.

It was when surrounded by these favourite nobles that he was betrayed into the imprudence to which allusion has been made. The banquet to which he had bidden them was nearly at its close, and the potent Hungary wine, which had been lavishly supplied to the guests, had heated more than one brain, and quickened more than one pulse. The conversation of the party had turned upon the future; and the dauphin, believing himself to be surrounded by none but friends, began to explain his intentions so soon as he should have succeeded to the crown; and, finally, he declared to each the office which he had determined to confer upon him.

So interesting was the conversation to all parties, that no one observed the presence of Briandas, a buffoon of the court, who, however vacantly he affected to look around him, gathered up every sentence of this premature and ill-chosen discussion. Seated in the deep recess of a bay-window, and perfectly motionless, he retained his station until a chorus of acknowledgments from the assembled guests convinced him that he had better retire as unobtrusively as he had entered. When convinced that he had heard all, he accordingly withdrew, and at once proceeded to the apartments of the king.

"God help you, François de Valois"; he said abruptly, as he approached the divan upon which the monarch lay, and indulged in a shrill and sardonic laugh, which implied more of sarcasm than of merriment.

"How now, Briandas", exclaimed the king somewhat sharply; "who has taught you this lesson?"

"What matters it?" asked the buffoon in reply; "You are no longer King of France; I have just seen it proved; and you, M. de Thais, who believe yourself to be grand-master of the artillery, you are deceived; Brissac holds that rank; and you too, who stand so proudly beside the sick-couch, you are not as you suppose the first-chamberlain; Saint-Andre has the appointment." Thus, with a bitter chuckle, he transferred all the great offices of the court; after which, once more addressing the astonished king, he added; "On the faith of a fool, Francis, you will soon see the Connétable de Montmorenci back once more, who will rule you with a rod of iron, and teach you never again to play the madman. Fly while you can; I renounce you; you are dead."

"Inform me instantly of your meaning, sirrah, or I will wring it from you by the lash"; exclaimed the indignant monarch; "Are these seemly words to utter to your sovereign in the presence of his nobles?"

"I am but the echo of your own loyal and devoted son, M. de Valois"; replied the unabashed buffoon; "Henry the dauphin, at his own board, has so declared it to his partisans."

"Say you so", shouted Francis indignantly, as he sprang from the divan with an energy of which a moment previously he would have been incapable. "It is then indeed time that I should assert myself. Summon the captain of my Scottish guards."

This order was instantly obeyed; and, forgetting alike his suffering and his debility, the king



placed himself at the head of the royal archers, and proceeded to the apartments of his offending son. The dauphin had, however, been already apprised that he was betrayed, and when the indignant monarch entered the banquetting-room, he found it occupied only by a bevy of attendants who were removing the remnants of the repast. Unable to suppress the rage by which he was at the moment wholly mastered, Francis commanded his escort to throw the whole contents of the saloon out of the windows; not only the plate, glass, and furniture, but also the officers themselves; an order which was so promptly put into execution, that those members of the dauphin's household who could not effect their escape by other means, were compelled to leap from the balcony in order to save themselves from the pikes of the guard. The whole suite of apartments was then emptied, and every article which could be wrenched from its place flung into the courtyard; after which, exhausted by so unwonted an exertion, Francis returned pallid and trembling to his sick-couch.

Nor was his indignation merely momentary; the very sense of his rapid decay only rendered him the more morbidly sensitive to all that touched his dignity, or affected his authority; and so deeply was he wounded by the indelicate proceeding of the prince, that it was only at the expiration of a month that he could be induced, by the entreaties of the whole court, to permit the dauphin to appear once more in his presence; nor would he even then consent to receive him, without enforcing the condition that no individual who had occupied a place at his board at the late ill-omened banquet, should venture to accompany him.

The loss of Boulogne had deeply mortified the king, who felt that its capture had been a disgrace to the French arms which it behoved him for the honour of his nation to efface; and, despite the fearfully exhausted state of the public finances, he resolved, if possible, to wrest it once more from the enemy. Aware, however, that so long as it was protected on its seaward side by the vessels of war which were stationed in the port, such an attempt must necessarily be attended by great uncertainty should he rely only on his land forces, he determined, while marching an army to its rescue, to avail himself at the same time of the services of a fleet which he had recently formed, and with which he proposed to attack the English on the high seas; or, failing in this attempt, to descend upon their coast in order to withdraw them from his own, and thus render the enterprise less hazardous.

In addition to this precaution, he despatched a strong body of troops to Scotland under M. de Lorges, to the support of the queen-mother, who was anxious to protect herself against the power of Henry VIII, and to prevent the marriage of the infant Princess Mary with his son. De Lorges had instructions to induce the Earl of Arran and the Cardinal-minister to invade the frontier of Northumberland; a mission in which he was so successful, that he had no sooner communicated his errand than he was authorized to assume the command of the Scottish army, amounting to about fifteen thousand men, with which he at once marched upon the frontier.

Meanwhile, the French fleet had assembled in the port of Havre, and the command of the expedition was intrusted to d'Annebaut, who was shortly afterwards joined by the Baron de la Garde with the war-gallies of the king, which had previously been stationed at Marseilles, whither he had himself returned immediately after the massacre of the Vaudois. The armament, exclusive of the five-and-twenty gallies, consisted of a hundred and fifty ships of various sizes, most of them trading vessels; and of sixteen transports; several Genoese carracks had also been procured to strengthen the fleet, but they were, unfortunately, lost at the mouth of the Seine from the incapacity of their pilots.

The preparations on land were equally important. By raising strong levies of lansquenets and Gascons, the army was augmented to a force of thirty-four thousand infantry, twelve hundred

gensdarmes, and eight hundred light horsemen; and with this formidable body of troops an incident which has been recorded in the body of this work. De Lorges, as he was constantly designated in France, died in 1559, in his 81st year.

Francis resolved, during the operations of his fleet, to attack Guines, lay waste the Terre d'Oye, and reduce the garrison of Boulogne by famine. The Terre d'Oye, whence the English drew their supplies, although inconsiderable in size, was extremely fertile, and abounded in pasture and cattle; it was, moreover, intersected by ditches which had enabled Lord Lisle, to whom the defence of the city had been intrusted, with the addition of a few redoubts, to defend it very efficiently; while the fortified town of Marcq, which was situated nearly in the centre of the district, and surrounded by marshy land, was strongly garrisoned; numerous outposts were stationed in the most exposed positions; and the arrangements of the English general had been so judiciously made, that the whole force could be brought to bear simultaneously upon any given point in case of attack.

By the commencement of July, the fleet was ready for sea; but before its departure the king resolved to visit Havre in order to inspect it; which he did in great state, attended by the whole of his court. The novelty of the spectacle so delighted the royal and noble ladies by whom he was accompanied, that Francis decided upon giving a banquet on board the Carraquon, a fine vessel of eight hundred tons burthen, carrying a hundred guns, and in every respect the most efficient ship of his navy. Preparations were accordingly made; the king's cooks and sewers were embarked two days previously; and on the appointed morning numerous barges lined with crimson damask, and richly cushioned, manned by the most skilful sailors of the fleet, and bearing the national flag at their mast-head, conveyed the invited guests to the admiral's ship. As the monarch had, in deference to the expressed wishes of the court ladies, declined to embark under a salute, the heavy guns of the Carraquon, which had been prepared for this purpose, remained loaded, and the embarkation was effected amid no other demonstration than that of the amazed and delighted population of the town, who lustily cried "Noël" for their king, as they feasted their eyes upon the floating plumes, jewelled vestments, and brocaded draperies, which passed before them, glittering in the sunlight like a fairy pageant.

A temporary canopy had been erected over the deck of the vessel, beneath which the tables were spread with the costly viands and delicate wines prepared for a repast which was not, however, destined to be eaten; the officers of the royal kitchen having disregarded the repeated expostulations of those about them, and persisted, in order to secure the perfection at which they aimed in their several departments, in kindling fires in places ill adapted for such a purpose; an imprudence which was fated to be productive of a frightful catastrophe.

The king had scarcely assumed his seat, having on his right hand the queen his consort, and on his left the Queen of Navarre; and the nobles and ladies of the royal train were in their turn respectively engaged in taking possession of the places assigned to them by the court-usher, when flames were seen to issue from below, and in an instant all was horror and confusion. It fortunately chanced that several of the barges which had conveyed the monarch and his suite on board, had remained in the immediate vicinity of the vessel, to be in readiness in the event of any of the august party requiring to be put on shore before the termination of the banquet; these were instantly brought along-side, and the king, the two queens, and all the ladies of their respective courts were rapidly conveyed from the vessel; together with the treasure-chest, which had been destined for the supply of the fleet. While this hurried embarkation was taking place, the other vessels in the port, having first despatched their boats to the assistance of the sufferers, made all sail to escape from so dangerous a vicinity; but, as they had been unprepared for an event of this nature," several of them were unable to effect their object, and sustained great damage from the guns of the Carraquon, when she shortly afterwards blew up.

Once assured of the safety of the king, d'Annebaut hoisted his flag on board the Maitresse, now become the principal vessel of the fleet; re-embarked the treasure; and having repaired, in so far as was possible, the injuries sustained by his ships, at once put to sea. On the eighteenth of the month he arrived off the Isle of Wight, where he anchored in sight of the English fleet, and despatched the Baron de la Garde with four gallies to reconnoitre the enemy : by advancing to St. Helen's, he was enabled to do this so effectually as to ascertain that it consisted of sixty large vessels of war fully manned and armed ; and he had just finished his survey, when he discovered that fourteen of the number were already making sail towards him; nor was it without considerable difficulty that he escaped.

A short time subsequently, the whole fleet was in motion with a fair wind, bearing down upon the French ships, and several broadsides were fired in the hope of bringing them to a closer engagement; but though d'Annebaut returned the fire, he did not deem it prudent to advance, being unacquainted with the nature of the coast; and thus, although the cannonade was continued for a considerable time, little injury was sustained on either side. The mortification of the French admiral was, however, excessive, when he discovered that the Maitresse, which had struck on leaving the port of Harfleur, was so seriously damaged that she leaked in several places, and was wholly unserviceable; once more, therefore, he was compelled to transfer his flag and the jeopardized treasure to a vessel of less calibre; while the disabled ship returned to Havre to be repaired.

On the following morning a dead calm enabled d'Annebaut to resume the engagement with his gallies; and throughout the space of an hour a brisk fire was maintained on both sides. Meanwhile Iris larger vessels, profiting by the tide, were enabled without entering the channel, to approach sufficiently near to bring the enemy within range; and the English king, who had come in person to Portsmouth to watch the operations of the hostile fleets, had the mortification of seeing the Mary Rose, a noble ship, carrying seven hundred men, sunk by the well-served guns of the French. This was, however, the last triumph they were destined to achieve, as the turn of the tide compelled the gallies to make a precipitate retreat, during which they were unable to return the fire of the enemy, by whom they were hotly pursued; they, however, succeeded in securing the safety of the main fleet by their skilful manoeuvring; and d'Annebaut, convinced that it was impossible to renew the attack with any prospect of advantage while the English remained in their present position, resolved to make a descent on the coast of Sussex, in order to induce them to abandon it. The stratagem proved unsuccessful, as the king, satisfied that they could not possess themselves of any important point of the coast, all of which were carefully defended, suffered them to land unmolested at Brighton and New Haven, where they destroyed the huts of the fishermen, and being unable to do any further mischief, re-embarked, and returned to the Portsmouth road.

Enraged by the immobility of the English fleet, which persisted in retaining its position, d'Annebaut next determined to effect a landing on the Isle of Wight, where he accomplished his purpose with equal facility; the English having prudently withdrawn from it all that could render its capture valuable. A few soldiers and about a hundred peasants alone opposed the disembarkation of the enemy, and they were, after a brief and useless struggle, overpowered; but, once in possession of their conquest, the French were at a loss to decide upon the use to which it might be applied. A council was held, at which the expediency of retaining possession of the island was discussed, until it should be ransomed by the surrender of Boulogne; but this chimera was soon abandoned, when it was remembered that the troops who must be left to protect it, could not long contend against the force which would be brought against them, denuded as it was of every description of mural defence; and this question was scarcely decided when d'Annebaut ascertained that a considerable reinforcement was expected by the English fleet, a piece of intelligence which determined him to return to France. He accordingly abandoned the conquered territory; and, regaining his ships, set sail for Boulogne, whither he was followed by the vessels of whose advent he had been apprised.

Once more the roar of cannon pealed over the waves; but after a brisk and well-sustained fire of two hours, when the hostile fleets were at too great a distance to render it effectual, they eventually separated; d'Annebaut returned to the port of Havre, and the vessels of the English to their old anchorage: and so terminated the naval contest between the two countries, which, although it had been productive of no result to either, had nevertheless been the cause of an enormous outlay to both.

CHAPTER XI.

[1545.]

WHILE the French fleet had been engaged in its unsuccessful expedition, Francis resolved, in order to prevent the garrison of Boulogne from receiving supplies by sea, which would have rendered the devastation of the Terre d'Oye comparatively useless, to erect a fort that should command the harbour. This erection was entrusted to the Marechal de Biez, who held the command in Picardy; but, through the ignorance of the engineer who selected the site, it proved a complete failure ; and, to complete the annoyance of the king, as it was about to be roofed in, the English garrison made a sudden sortie; and after a sharp skirmish, during which the Marechal, having had his horse shot under him, fought on foot at the head of his troops with a gallantry that for a time promised to prove successful, compelled the French troops to a retreat, which they did not effect before they had sustained considerable loss.

Shortly afterwards, De Biez was informed that a convoy was about to pass from Calais to the besieged garrison, upon which he established his camp on the height of St. Lambert; in order to impede its arrival. Several skirmishes took place while he occupied this post, and during one of these the Count d'Aumale was so seriously wounded that his recovery was considered almost a miracle. During the affray he received so vigorous a thrust from the pike of an English officer, that the weapon, which struck him between the nose and the right eye, broke off short in the wound, leaving the iron and a portion of the wood firmly fastened in his head. Nevertheless, the young prince still retained his seat, and in the extremity of his agony dug his spurs into the flanks of his charger, which galloped furiously towards the French camp, where he was immediately lifted from the saddle and conveyed to his tent. The operation which ensued was a formidable one; but the count, by his firm endurance of the consequent suffering, so ably seconded the skill of the surgeon, that in a short time he was declared convalescent.

Meanwhile the troops whom Henry VIII had levied in Germany had arrived at Fleurine, a village near Liege; and Francis, in order to prevent their further progress, at once detached three divisions of his army to Guise, Champagne, and Messières, to cover his frontier. They then demanded a passage through the territories of the emperor, which was definitively refused ; and thus, finding themselves impeded on all sides, after having been detained for three weeks at Fleurine, the Germans began to clamour for their pay, and their demands remaining unsatisfied, they disbanded themselves, and returned home.

Anxious to expedite the capture of Boulogne, the king soon afterwards arrived in person at the Abbey of Toret-Moutiers, between Abbeville and Montreuil, accompanied by the two princes. Unhappily, the plague was then raging in the environs; and the Duke d'Orleans, dissatisfied with the apartment which had been prepared for him in one of the houses of the village, selected another, of which he signified that he should take possession. The owner of the dwelling endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose, by informing him that it was rife with the infection, the last three persons by whom it had been occupied having successively died there. With his usual recklessness, however, the duke adhered to his resolution, declaring that such a circumstance could not affect him, as there had never been an instance of a prince of the blood falling a victim to the pestilence. He accordingly passed the night in this fatal chamber; on the following morning unequivocal symptoms of the disease betrayed themselves ; the skill of the

physicians proved powerless; and in the course of a few days he ceased to breathe.

The grief of the king was excessive; his ambition as well as his affection had been bound up in his younger son; and the prince had no sooner expired than he left the village which had proved so fatal to his hopes, and established himself in a hamlet at the other extremity of the forest of Crecy.

Whilst Francis was still absorbed in the deep and bitter grief by which he had thus been so suddenly overwhelmed, the Marechal de Biez announced his intention of attacking the fortifications erected by the English in the Terre d'Oye; an enterprise of so much danger, that it was no sooner publicly known, than crowds of the young nobles, anxious to share in the honour of so adventurous an attempt, hastened to the camp; and the Count d'Enghien, newly risen from his sick-bed, the Duke d'Aumale, the Count de Laval, the Duke de Nevers, and M. de la Tremouille, were among the foremost. The principal fort was attacked by the old Drench bands, under M. de Tais, and taken by assault; when the victors made a cruel use of the success for which they were indebted to their superior numbers, by putting the whole garrison to the sword. M. de Brissac, who commanded the vanguard, consisting of several troops of gendarmes, all the light cavalry, and a strong force of foot-soldiers, marched meanwhile upon the town of Marcq; but he had not proceeded more than half a league when he encountered a body of two thousand English who were advancing to the relief of the beleaguered fort. After a desperate resistance these also were defeated, being unable long to cope with so unequal an enemy; and as no further impediment presented itself, the French troops continued to advance, pillaging and burning down all the villages, until they reached the gates of the town.

Here, however, they received a check. The bridges which had been prepared for the passage of the troops across the ditches had been forgotten; torrents of rain rendered the environs of Marcq one wide marsh; and they were reluctantly compelled to retire from before the walls of the threatened town, in order to secure their own safety.

The fortress which De Biez had constructed was, mean while, finished; and the English garrison made continual sallies in the hope of taking it: constant skirmishes occurred in consequence, which involved a serious loss on both sides, but no decisive result ensued; and both monarchs began to "weary of a war which, while it exhausted their finances and weakened their armies, could not terminate favourably for either.

The energy of the French king was, moreover, shaken by the calamity which had befallen him; he saw the noble troops, that it had cost him so much exertion to raise, rapidly perishing alike under the weapons of the enemy and the attacks of the insidious disease which had reached his camp; he foresaw many difficulties in the completion of a new treaty with the emperor, now rendered necessary by the death of the Duke d'Orleans; and he became morbidly conscious of the failure of all his enterprises. Under such circumstances, therefore, he resolved rather to enter into a negotiation with the English king, than to persist longer in so unavailing a contest.

Nor was Henry VIII less anxious than himself to terminate the war. The immense outlay which it had occasioned could produce no remunerative return; while he moreover apprehended that the absence of so large a body of troops might occasion him much embarrassment, should the Scotch army, as he had some reason to apprehend, profit by the opportunity to invade his frontiers. He was alarmed also by the attitude assumed at this period by Charles V, who had convoked his council, and was making preparations for a war against the Protestant princes of the League. Aware that he was personally as obnoxious to the court of Rome as the German Reformers, he began to apprehend that, should the emperor prove successful, the result might be fatal to himself; and thus, as a French courtier wittily remarked, a peace might be easily negotiated, one monarch being anxious to secure it, and the other compelled to do so.

Commissioners were accordingly appointed on both sides, who met midway between Ardres and Guines; and on the 7th of June, 1546, a treaty of peace was signed between France and England; in which Henry VIII, after some difficulty, consented that the Scotch should be included, provided they saw fit to avail themselves of it within the space of thirty days. By the conditions of this treaty, Francis bound himself to pay off all the arrears of the pensions claimed by the English king, and to continue them during eight years; as well as to reimburse him for the expenses of the war, amounting to the sum of two millions of golden crowns, before the anniversary of St. Michael in 1554, at which period Henry VIII. was to deliver over to his officers the city of Boulogne.

The death of the Duke d'Orleans, as Francis had foreseen, afforded a new opportunity for the display of that selfish policy which formed so prominent a feature in the character of the emperor. At the close of the year 1545, he had despatched d'Annebaut and the Chancellor Olivier to Charles to engage him in a new treaty, which might, replace that of Crespy; but they were totally unsuccessful. He felt or affected a deep regret at the untimely death of the young prince who was so shortly to have been his son-in-law, but at once declared without hesitation, that the event which he deplored had released him from all his engagements that he never had, and never would, acknowledge the claims of the French king to the duchy of Milan, which Francis had, moreover, personally renounced upon two separate occasions; and that he considered himself perfectly absolved from all tile obligations to which the treaty of Crrspy would, under other circumstances, have bound him; although he had no desire to enter into renewed hostilities with France, unless he should be compelled to do so.

With this ambiguous reply, the baffled ambassadors returned to court; and Francis, conscious that he was not at that period in a position to enforce his demands, and more anxious to repel aggression than to provoke a war which he was unable to sustain, suffered the declaration of his wily rival to remain without retort; and employed the remainder of the year in inspecting and strengthening his frontier-fortresses, which he did so effectually, that he was enabled to await without apprehension the result of the new struggle in which Charles was about to engage.

The death of Luther, at the commencement of this year, was a severe blow to the Reformers, and an equally great source of rejoicing to the pope; although it by no means disposed him to second the violent designs of the emperor against the new religion, he was well aware that the zeal which Charles affected for the church had in every case been made subservient to his own interests; and he considered himself aggrieved, moreover, by the fact that after he had invested his son Pietro Luigi Farnese with the duchies of Parma and Piacenza, the emperor had refused to recognise or to ratify his sovereignty; and consequently, even when he entered into a treaty with that monarch for the extirpation of the Reformers, he could not divest himself of a distrust which rendered him less energetic in the cause than he might otherwise have been. Charles, with his usual subtle policy, had been anxious to keep his intentions secret, until he could overwhelm his victims by some sudden coup-de-main, a desire which increased the suspicions of the pontiff; and accordingly he had no-sooner pledged himself to assist in this religious war, than he ordered public prayers to be put up in Rome for the success of the undertaking.

Had Francis, at this period, come to the succour of the Protestant princes whom he had formerly protected, there can be little doubt but that he would have been enabled to ensure his kingdom thenceforward from all attempts at aggression on the part of the emperor. Many of those about him endeavoured to convince him of this fact, and of the magnanimity of assisting the oppressed, who were about to contend not only for their religious liberty, but also for that of their several states, by which alone the independence of all Europe could be secured against the insatiable ambition of Charles. They represented to him that he could do this without any breach of honour, as they were his allies, and had a right to look to him for help; that, moreover, his interference in their behalf could not affect his conscience, inasmuch as the emperor had declared that he was not about to punish them for their schism, but for their rebellion against his authority; and

that it well became a great monarch to uphold the cause of the weak against the strong.

These arguments, however, availed nothing; the languor of premature old age, a dread of increasing responsibility, and the persuasions of the Cardinal de Tournon, who was constantly about his person, rendered the king not only unwilling to reply to the appeal of the German princes, but even incited him to renew within the limits of his own kingdom the atrocious persecution of the Reformists which had already affixed an indelible stigma upon his reign.

Once more the stake and the rack did their deadly office; inoffensive citizens, convicted of an adherence to Lutheranism, were seized in their houses, loaded with chains, put to the torture, and finally burnt alive. A few were suspended by their armpits, in front of the pile on which their co-religionists were expiring under a slow fire, then publicly flogged, and finally flung into different monasteries, where the mind dare not follow them; four escaped with castigation and banishment; and others were imprisoned for life. As some of these victims of intolerance were on their way to Meaux, a weaver of their own persuasion followed the wagon in which they were performing their melancholy journey, and exhorted them to meet with faith and resignation all the sufferings which they might be called upon to endure, remembering that they would have a mighty and abiding reward in heaven. He did but add another martyr to the number. He was seized by the archers of the provost, bound with cords, and flung into the vehicle with those who were already, condemned to death.

It is fearful to pursue so terrible a subject; but the faithful chronicler has no alternative. We will, therefore, record it in the very words of Theodore, de Bèze, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, Book I. p. 51—53.

“Arrived at Meaux, they underwent the extraordinary question in all its cruelty, which they suffered with such resignation, that they never accused any of their brethren. On the 7th of September they were led to execution, the tongue of Etienne Mangin having been previously cut out, notwithstanding which he thrice exclaimed loudly and intelligibly, ‘God’s name be blessed!’ He was then drawn upon a hurdle, as was also Guillaume le Clerc, the rest following in carts, to the market-place, where they were hoisted up and burnt upon fourteen gibbets, placed in a circle. Thus, face to face, they encouraged each other, and mingled their prayers and praises, which were, however, interrupted by the priests and the populace, who shouted aloud like madmen, *O salutaris hostia!* and *Salve Regina*. This accomplished, on the morrow, the 8th of the month, Picard, (Doctor of the Sorbonne,) in order to complete his triumph, went with a magnificent procession to the spot where the fire was still smouldering, preaching under a canopy of cloth of gold; and said, among other things, after having displayed great violence, that it was essential to the salvation of all to believe these these fourteen condemned persons were damned in the bottomless pit of hell; and that should an angel from heaven come and declare the contrary, they must reject his evidence, as God would not he God if he did not damn them to eternity.”

We dare not venture to comment upon such a passage of history as this; but surely it offers a fearful warning to after-ages. Moreover, the pyres which had been lighted, and the racks which had been set in motion in the capital, were emulated in the provinces; many other victims, and some of these men of exemplary lives and high literary attainments, fell victims to the atrocious persecution which disgraced the closing reign of the quasi-demigod of many an historian. The “chivalrous Francis I.—the “First Gentleman of France”—the monarch whose name has for three centuries been as a landmark of glory in the record of the French annals— to what conviction does a perfect knowledge of his real character lead? Surely but to this: that he was vain even to puerility in his youth, sensual even to profligacy in his manhood, and bigoted even to brutality in his decline. Conscious of his own enormities, he took refuge in a cruel superstition; and sought to win heaven by the tears, and groans, and agonies of his fellow-men. While he clung to his vices, feasted with his mistresses, laughed at the ribald jests of his obsequious courtiers, and wrung from his



exhausted people the hard-earned produce of their industry, he strove to blind himself with the belief that all would be forgiven in his zeal for the Church, and that his own transgressions would be washed out in the blood of his sectarian victims.

It has been the fashion with modern authors to pass lightly over this frightful episode of the reign of Francis I. It destroys the illusion which attaches to his name; it renders him less attractive as a sovereign; and converts the splendid sensualist into a gloomy and heartless barbarian. But let the thinking mind fall back upon the whole chain of his previous career, and its close will scarcely prove matter of astonishment. The morals of the age were unhappily lax; the example of the most exalted of the priesthood venal profligate, and degrading; Religion, even by the several pontiffs, made subservient to expediency; the cardinals more celebrated in the annals of gallantry than in those of piety; the ambition of the great nobles confined to personal aggrandizement; and the bulk of the people buried in ignorance and superstition.

That there were glorious exceptions in all ranks is most true but these have almost universally been overlooked,—many, too many of them, altogether forgotten. The pure gold sinks to the bottom of the stream, while the more worthless dross rises and sparkles upon the surface of the current. We admit, therefore, that the vices of Francis may find some extenuation in the character of the age, and the nature of his education; but we repeat, that those who have recorded only the brilliant and attractive portions of his career, and have wilfully and advisedly buried his backslidings in oblivion, have not done their duty either to themselves or to those who may be influenced by their researches.

The flame and the wheel were still in full operation in France, when, in January, 1547, news arrived at St. Germain-en-Laye, where the court was then sojourning, of the death of Henry VIII; an event which produced the most fatal effect alike upon the moral and physical temperament of the French king. He had long indulged the hope that Henry, whose rupture with the emperor had rendered it necessary for him to strengthen his position, would be desirous of entering into a closer alliance with himself; while at the same time the similarity, not only of their ages, but also in many respects of their several characters, combined with a consciousness that the disease under which he was then suffering was daily becoming more virulent, filled him with alarm. He felt a conviction that his own end was approaching; and he became nervous and depressed. He commanded that a solemn funeral service should be performed at the cathedral of Notre Dame in honour of the deceased monarch, a ceremony which took place with great pomp; and then, in order to divert the melancholy that was rapidly gaining upon him, accompanied by a slow fever which robbed him of all rest, Francis, who could no longer brook a moment of inaction, removed to La Muette, a country-house which he had recently embellished, on the borders of the forest of St. Germain. There he sojourned for a whole week; but his mind was in so unsettled a state that he could not long remain upon one spot; and he accordingly proceeded to Villepreux, where an increase of his fever induced him to travel the following day to Dampierre, near Chevreuse; and thence he pursued his way in order to pass the period, of Lent at Limours. Throughout the whole of this time he was accompanied by the court, but even his favourites now sought in vain to arouse him from the lethargy into which he was rapidly falling. Nowhere could he find peace; and after having spent three days at Limours, he once more removed to Rochefort, where he endeavoured to amuse himself by hunting. To this violent exercise, however, his strength was no longer equal; and every evening his fever increased to a degree which alarmed those about him so greatly that they urged his return to St. Germain-en-Laye.

After some difficulty the physicians succeeded in obtaining his consent to this measure, by representing that he could travel slowly, and indulge in his favourite pursuit by the way; and he accordingly left Rochefort for Rambouillet, where he had decided to remain only one night; but the game proved so plentiful and the sport so exciting, that he was induced to change his resolution. Two or three days were consequently spent in field sports, in which once more

Catherine de' Medici participated; but the fever of the king, which had hitherto been intermittent, became, by reason of this perpetual exertion, continuous; and his malady increased so rapidly, that it was found impossible for him to proceed further.

Once apprised of his danger, Francis summoned the dauphin to his sick-bed, and conversed with him at intervals for several hours; giving him the most wholesome advice concerning the future government of the kingdom over which he must so soon be called upon to rule; and consequently, like many other monarchs, he, in this supreme moment, gainsaid, in almost every particular, the system which he had himself pursued. He recommended him to diminish the public taxes under which the nation was then groaning; to be guided in all things by the Cardinal de Tournon and the Admiral d'Annebaut; and, above all, to exclude from his confidence the Connétable de Montmorenci and the family of the Duke de Guise. He then received the sacraments of the Church; and his persecutions of the Protestants had apparently convinced him so thoroughly of his own salvation, that he expired peacefully, while the ashes of his victims were still floating between earth and heaven.

To say that he died unregretted would be to assert a fallacy. Too many interests were interwoven with his existence to render such an event possible, he had, moreover, during the later period of his life, laboured to replenish the national treasury; in which attempt, despite the enormous outlay consequent upon the various wars that he had undertaken, and the expensive character of his court, in which to the last he introduced no retrenchment, he had so far succeeded as to bequeath to his successor the sum of four hundred thousand crowns. But his death was not accompanied, like that of Louis XII, with the tears and regrets of his subjects. Three great events alone had signalized his reign—the victory of Marignano, the restoration of literature, and the struggle which he had sustained against Charles V.

And what had been the actual result even of these? The glory of Marignano had been quenched at Pavia; at which period his reign, as affected his own greatness, may well be said to have terminated; for his after-triumphs were all inconsequent and valueless. He never again hazarded his personal safety in an open engagement, although he was rigorous in his punishment of those through whose errors or want of courage he failed in the accomplishment of his designs; and it was therefore the nation which fought, and bled, and suffered, not its sovereign. He invited learned men to his court; lured them thither by the brightest prospects and the most extravagant promises; and then, not content with disappointing the hopes that he had raised, not only ceased to encourage them when they no longer ministered to his own gratification and that of his favourites, but even persecuted them for their religious opinions, and abandoned them to the stake, to the rack, and to the anathemas of a bigoted priesthood.

That he manfully met, and boldly opposed, the usurpation of Charles V is quite true; but to what abiding benefit had he turned this opposition? It had been throughout rather a personal struggle than a great question of national policy. Charles was the only sovereign of whose prowess he was jealous, and whose supremacy wounded his pride alike as a sovereign and as a soldier, he had expended millions, and sacrificed a fearful amount of human life, only to leave his kingdom to his son as he had received it from his predecessor, he had gained no territory, secured no advantage, realized no triumph. It is certain that he had driven the conqueror of Germany, Asia, Africa, and Turkey from his kingdom, but it must also be remembered that he had been unable to arrest his inarch even to the very neighbourhood of his capital.

While the king was in the last agony, the dauphin, who, whatever might be his failings, was endowed with a depth of feeling which caused him for the moment to forget all his real or imagined wrongs, cast himself in a fit of bitter grief upon the bed of his wife; while Catherine de' Medici herself, seated upon a low stool, remained with her face buried in her hands, like one utterly oppressed by sorrow; and did not reply to his lamentations by a single syllable. There were,

however, other watchers in that spacious room, as anxious although less absorbed than either the future sovereign or his wife. The one was Diane de Poitiers, who with flashing eyes and hurried step traversed the floor, listening to every sound, and awaiting from moment to moment the announcement which was to make her a queen in all save the empty name; and the other was the Count d'Aumale, the friend and favourite of the dauphin, who in his impatience, repeatedly passed from the chamber of the dauphiness to the ante-room of the dying king; exclaiming in an accent of undisguised triumph from time to time; "The lady-killer is going!"

Francis finally expired on the 31st of March, 1547, and was buried with a magnificence far surpassing anything which had yet been witnessed in France; eleven cardinals assisted at his obsequies, and the ceremony extended over two-and-twenty days. The bodies of his two sons, the dauphin Francis and Charles Duke d'Orleans, were conveyed to St. Denis together with his own; and Henry II succeeded to the vacant throne.

Only a few months elapsed ere Montmorenci was once more all-powerful at the court; the unhappy queen under the protection of her imperial brother in Spain; and the Duchess d'Etampes an exile on one of her estates. The bâton which had been broken over the coffin of Francis I. had involved more changes than that which placed the crown that he had worn so proudly upon the brow of his surviving son.

RHE END