XI.'s dower to his daughter Marie, and that for this reason it was furnished with the arms of the Saint Valliers some time after the body of the work had been completed. Before Diane de Poitiers entered upon her notorious career she had married Louis de Brézé, the eldest son of a renowned sportsman, Jack de Brézé. Louis had lost his mother in a tragic manner. One night Jack de Brézé, the father, returned home unexpectedly and discovered his wife, who was no less a personage than Charlotte of France, natural daughter of Charles VII. by Agnes Sorel, in a compromising position with Piere de la Vergne, a knight attached to his household. Drawing his sword the angry husband forthwith killed both his wife, who was forty-three years of age, and her paramour. It was a deed which, on account of his victim's relationship with the King, involved Jack de Brézé in consequences far more serious than usually marked reprisals of this sort. Indeed, he escaped the death sentence which was passed on him after four years' confinement, only by the payment of the enormous fine of 100,000 gold écus.

But there was yet another tragic event to befall the family. In 1523 Jean de Poitiers, Diane de Poitiers' father, involved himself in the Connétable de Bourbon's conspiracy, and the discovery by the King's minions among Jean's secret papers of the code treacherously used by the Connétable in his correspondence with the Emperor Charles V. sent Jean speedily to the scaffold. He was in the act of kneeling down to receive the deathblow when the pardon obtained by his daughter from her royal lover, the King, saved his life. But all his goods and chattels were confiscated by Francis I., and amongst them was most probably our Codex, for we know from other sources that Francis took personal possession of this volume, and prized it very highly. So much so, indeed, that when a year or two later he started on his invasion of Italy he took with him on this ill-fated expedition this very volume.

As there were at least three, and possibly four, printed editions of "Gaston Phoebus" published by the year 1525 (by Antoine Verard, Jehan Trepperel, and Philippe-le-Noir), it is curious that Francis did not take with him on his Italian campaign one of these infinitely more portable printed copies. It is another proof of the love for finely illuminated MSS. which was a ruling passion with him.

On the fateful 24th of February, 1525, when Emperor Charles' generals, Lannoy and the burly Frundsberg, founder of infantry tactics, defeated at Pavia Francis' army, taking not only him but also Henry II. of Navarre prisoners, the Codex formed part of the immensely rich booty garnered by the victors. So rich were the spoils found in the two Kings' gold-laden tents that for generations the "Day of Pavia" formed the subject of soldiers' song and tale. The fortunate captors of Francis' personal belongings were the famed *Landsknechte*, who under their giant Captain Georg von Frundsberg, of whose personal strength wonderful tales were told, had borne the brunt of that hard-fought day by storming the *Thiergarten* or deer park.

Richard, Duke of Suffolk, one of the last male scions of the house of York, commanded on that fateful day the *bande noire*, the famous bodyguard of Francis I., a force hitherto considered invincible; and it is a curious proof of the rare fighting qualities of our Plantagenet princes to find that, like his ancestor who translated this very book more than one hundred years before, he too lost his life in battle on foreign soil. The gallant heavily mailed French nobility, who on that day felt for the first time to the full the dire effects of small arms fire, were shot down or cut to pieces by Frundsberg's *Landsknechte* almost to the last man, Francis, severely wounded in three places, escaping death only by a miracle.

The *Landsknechte* were recruited almost entirely in Tyrol and adjacent districts of Southern Suabia, and for this reason it is not surprising that the next authentic news we have of our book comes from the former country. A long Latin inscription on the fly-leaf (see Bibliog.: *Gaston Phoebus*), unfortunately unprovided with a date, shows that Bishop Bernhard of Trent, in Tyrol, after "coming into possession by chance of this book, and seeing that its subject was one of interest to you," humbly presented it to Archduke Ferdinand of Tyrol (brother of Emperor Charles), one of the greatest collectors of any age, whose museum and library at his castle Ambras, near Innsbruck, continued to be the wonder of the world long after his death. The Manuscript remained in the

possession of the Hapsburgs for about a century and a quarter, when victory once more returned it to the country whence defeat had removed it. During Turenne's campaign in the Netherlands, General the Marquis of Vigneau became possessed of the Codex—how remains unfortunately a mystery—and, on his return to Paris, presented it, according to the inscription on the Index leaf (verso) on July 22, 1661, to his splendour-loving King, Louis XIV. The Grand Monarch deposited it in the Royal Library, where it received its librarian's birthmark, the number 7097, which it retained down to recent days, when it was rechristened, to be known henceforth, as already stated, as f. fr. MS. 616. It never should have left those sacred halls, but Louis XIV. was no venerator of his own laws when it suited him to break them. Regretting his gift to the library a few years afterwards, he demanded the volume back, and back again he got it; his son, the Count of Toulouse, becoming the next owner of it. From him it passed to Orleans princes, the late Duc d'Aumale being the last of them. At the outbreak of the revolution of 1848 our Codex formed part of the private library of Louis Philip in the Château of Neuilly, near Paris. There it very nearly came to a deplorable end, for when this royal residence was plundered and fired by the mob the MS. escaped destruction only by a miracle. As it was, its covers and clasps were badly damaged and blood-bespattered, but the inside of the book was fortunately left intact. That it escaped the fate of the other contents of Neuilly was greatly due to the efforts of M. Joseph Lavallée, who at the moment of the disaster hurried to Neuilly, and did his utmost to save from destruction the volume he knew so well. By his efforts it was soon afterwards placed in its present home. The reader will probably agree that the great libraries of the world contain few volumes that have had a more adventurous career, or have passed through greater peril, or whose leaves have been turned by the hands of so many men and women who have played great parts in history.[1]

[1] When recently making some researches in the magnificent library of the late Duc d'Aumale at Chantilly, now the property of the French nation, I came across a pathetic little note in the late duke's hand in his catalogue respecting our Codex, which, as we have heard, belonged to the House of Orleans for nearly two centuries. It occurs where the Duc d'Aumale speaks of the MS. 616, and it runs: "Saved from the conflagration of 1848, it was taken to the Bibliothèque Nationale, but our appeals for a return of the volume addressed to the conservateurs of the Library were rejected, however well founded we considered our claim!"