he was making his way through the darkness under the guidance of Black Simon.

Outside the camp the two other men-at-arms were waiting for them, and the four advanced together. Presently a little group of figures loomed up in the darkness. It was a cloudy night, and a thin rain was falling which obscured both the castle and the fort; but a stone had been placed by Simon in the daytime which assured that they were between the two.

"Is blind Andreas there?" asked Simon.

"Yes, kind sir, I am here," said a voice.

"This man," said Simon, "was once rich and of good repute; but he was beggared by this robber lord, who afterwards put out his eyes, so that he has lived for many years in darkness at the charity of others."

"How can he help us in our enterprise if he be indeed blind?" asked Nigel.

"It is for that very reason, fair lord, that he can be of greater service than any other man," Simon answered; "for it often happens that when a man has lost a sense the good God will strengthen those that remain. Hence it is that Andreas has such ears that he can hear the sap in the trees or the cheep of the mouse in its burrow. He has come to help us to find the tunnel."

"And I have found it," said the blind man proudly. "Here I have placed my staff upon the line of it. Twice as I lay there with my ear to the ground I have heard footsteps pass beneath me."

"I trust you make no mistake, old man," said Nigel.

For answer the blind man raised his staff and smote twice upon the ground, once to the right and once to the left. The one gave a dull thud, the other a hollow boom.

"Can you not hear that?" he asked. "Will you ask me now if I make a mistake?"

"Indeed, we are much beholden to you!" cried Nigel. "Let the peasants dig then, and as silently as they may. Do you keep your ear upon the ground, Andreas, so that if anyone pass beneath us we shall be warned."

So amid the driving rain the little group toiled in the darkness. The blind man lay silent, flat upon his face, and twice they heard his warning hiss and stopped their work, whilst some one passed beneath. In an hour they had dug down to a stone arch which was clearly the outer side of the tunnel roof. Here was a sad obstacle, for it might take long to loosen a stone, and if their work was not done by the break of day then their enterprise was indeed hopeless. They loosened the mortar with a dagger, and at last dislodged one small stone which enabled them to get at the others. Presently a dark hole blacker than the night around them yawned at their feet, and their swords could touch no bottom to it. They had opened the tunnel.

"I would fain enter it first," said Nigel. "I pray you to lower me down." They held him to the full length of their arms and then letting him drop they heard him land safely beneath them. An instant later the blind man started up with a low cry of alarm.

"I hear steps coming," said he. "They are far off, but they draw nearer."

Simon thrust his head and neck down the hole. "Squire Nigel," he whispered, "can you hear me?"

"I can hear you, Simon."

"Andreas says that some one comes."

"Then cover over the hole," came the answer. "Quick, I pray you, cover it over!"

A mantle was stretched across it, so that no glimmer of light should warn the newcomer. The fear was that he might have heard the sound of Nigel's descent; but soon it was clear that he had not done so, for Andreas announced that he was still advancing. Presently Nigel could hear the distant thud of his feet. If he bore a lantern all was lost. But no gleam of light appeared in the black tunnel, and still the footsteps drew nearer.

Nigel breathed a prayer of thanks to all his guardian saints as he crouched close to the slimy wall and waited breathless, his dagger in his hand. Nearer yet and nearer came the steps. He could hear the stranger's coarse breathing in the darkness. Then as he brushed past Nigel bounded upon him with a tiger spring. There was one gasp of astonishment, and not a sound more, for the Squire's grip was on the man's throat and his body was pinned motionless against the wall.

"Simon, Simon!" cried Nigel loudly.

The mantle was moved from the hole

"Have you a cord? Or your belts linked together may serve."

One of the peasants had a rope, and Nigel soon felt it dangling against his hand. He listened and there was no sound in the passage. For an instant he released his captive's throat. A torrent of prayers and entreaties came forth. The man was shaking like a leaf in the wind. Nigel pressed the point of his dagger against his face and dared him to open his lips. Then he slipped the rope between his arms and tied it.

"Pull him up!" he whispered, and for an instant the gray glimmer above him was obscured.

"We have him, fair sir," said Simon.

"Then drop me the rope and hold it fast."

A moment later Nigel stood among the group of men who had gathered round their captive. It was too dark to see him, and they dare not strike flint and steel.

Simon passed his hand roughly over him and felt a fat clean-shaven face and a cloth gabardine which hung to the ankles. "Who are you?" he whispered. "Speak the truth and speak it low, if you would ever speak again!"

The man's teeth chattered in his head with cold and fright. "I speak no English," he murmured.

"French, then," said Nigel.

"I am a holy priest of God. You court the ban of

I will not take your surrender, you black villain — Draw and defend yourself!

Holy Church when you lay hands upon me. I pray you let me go upon my way, for there are those whom I would shrive and housel. If they should die in sin, their damnation is upon you."

"How are you called then?"

"I am Dom Peter de Cervolles."

"De Cervolles the archpriest, he who heated the brazier when they burned out my eyes!" cried old Andreas. "Of all the devils in Hell there is none fouler than this one. Friends, friends, if I have done aught for you this night, I ask but one reward: that ye let me have my will of this man."

But Nigel pushed the old man back. "There is no time for this," he said. "Now hark you, priest—if priest indeed you be—your gown and tonsure will not save you if you play us false, for we are here of a set purpose and we will go forward with it, come what may. Answer me and answer me truly, or it will be an ill night for you. In what part of the castle does this tunnel enter?"

"In the lower cellar."

"What is at the end?"

"An oaken door."

"Is it barred?"

"Yes, it is barred."

"How would you have entered?"

"I would have given the password."

"Who then would have opened?"

"There is a guard within."

"And beyond him?"

"Beyond him are the prison-cells and the jailers."

"Who else would be afoot?"

"No one save a guard at the gate and another on the battlement."

"What then is the password?"

The man was silent.

"The password, fellow!"

The cold points of two daggers pricked his throat; but still he would not speak.

"Where is the blind man?" asked Nigel. "Here, Andreas, you can have him and do what you will with him."

"Nay, nay!" the priest whimpered. "Keep him off me! Save me from blind Andreas! I will tell you everything."

"The password then, this instant?"

"It is '*Benedicite*'!"

"We have the password, Simon," cried Nigel. "Come then, let us on to the farther end! These peasants will guard the priest, and they will remain here, lest we wish to send a message."

"Nay, fair sir, it is in my mind that we can do better," said Simon. "Let us take the priest with us, so that he who is within may know his voice."

"It is well thought of," said Nigel; "and first let us pray together, for indeed this night may well be our last."

He and the three men-at-arms knelt in the rain and sent up their simple orisons, Simon still clutching tight to his prisoner's wrist.

The priest fumbled in his breast and drew something forth. "It is the heart of the blessed confessor Saint Enogat," said he. "It may be that it will ease and assoil your souls if you would wish to handle it."

The four Englishmen passed the flat silver case from hand to hand, each pressing his lips devoutly upon it. Then they rose to their feet. Nigel was the first to lower himself down the hole; then Simon; then the priest, who was instantly seized by the other two. The men-at-arms followed them. They had scarcely moved away from the hole when Nigel stopped.

"Surely some one else came after us," said he.

They listened; but no whisper or rustle came from behind them. For a minute they paused and then resumed their journey through the dark. It seemed a long, long way, though in truth it was but a few hundred yards before they came to a door with a glimmer of yellow light around it, which barred their passage. Nigel struck upon it with his hand.

There was the rasping of a bolt and then a loud voice: "Is that you, priest?"

"Yes, it is I," said the prisoner in a quavering voice. "Open, Arnold!"

The voice was enough. There was no question of passwords. The door swung inward, and in an instant the janitor was cut down by Nigel and Simon. So sudden and so fierce was the attack that save for the thud of his body no sound was heard. A flood of light burst outward into the passage, and the Englishmen stood with blinking eyes in its glare.

In front of them lay a stone-flagged corridor, across which lay the dead body of the janitor. It had doors on either side of it and another grated door at the farther end. A strange hubbub, a kind of low droning and whining, filled the air. The four men were standing listening, full of wonder as to what this might mean, when a sharp cry came from behind them. The priest lay in a shapeless heap upon the ground, and the blood was rushing from his gaping throat. Down the passage, a black shadow in the yellow light, there fled a crouching man, who clattered with a stick as he went.

"It is Andreas," cried West-Country Will. "He has slain him."

"Then it was he that I heard behind us," said Nigel. "Doubtless he was at our very heels in the darkness. I fear that the priest's cry has been heard."

"Nay," said Simon, "there are so many cries that one more may well pass. Let us take this lamp from the wall and see what sort of devil's den we have around us."

They opened the door upon the right, and so horrible a smell issued from it that they were driven back from it. The lamp which Simon held forward showed a monkey-like creature mowing and gri-