

CHAPTER II.

CHEVALIER BAYARD.

Illustrious Ancestors—Early Education—As a Page—Putting his Bucephalus through his paces—In the service of King Charles—Personal merits—Heroic conduct at the Battle of Formosa—Duel with the Spanish Knight—Fighting two hundred Spaniards—"I have always loved men better than money"—Battle of Ravenna—Bayard seriously wounded—At home—Again in the field—"Battle of the Spurs"—Captured by the English—Novel surrender—Paroled—Fighting the Germans—The Stone Bullet.

STANDING out in vivid contrast to the dark characters stained with selfish passions, deceit, avarice and treachery, that marked the century in which they lived, the name of Bayard is as a gleam of light upon the moral darkness of that time. The chivalry of Europe had lost all that had once characterized it as the defence of the defenceless, the safeguard of honor and virtue, save its name.

Sunk in hopeless depths of passion, sloth and all manner of evil, the knights of England, France, Spain and Italy were a reproach to the manhood they were supposed to ennoble; and it was for the name of the Chevalier Bayard to redeem the now decaying remnant of chivalry from its taint of perfidy; and show to the world that, in a time when princes and nobles scrupled not to deceive and to betray, there lived a man

ably pretend to the greatest. In accepting your affections, I would destroy your hopes."

She gently urged him to subdue his passion for her to a friendship which could bring them no reproach. He declared that he would speak to the duchess upon the subject; but destiny decreed that the lovers should soon be separated. Before he could carry out his intention of speaking to his mistress, the duke set out for Lyons with his retinue, including Bayard, where he was to meet the king, Charles VIII. The Count de Ligny was sent with an escort to conduct the Duke of Savoy to the king's presence. He was so struck with the bearing and splendid horsemanship of Bayard that he instantly advised the duke to present both horse and rider to the king. Glad of so good an opportunity to further the advancement of his favorite page, the duke at once expressed his willingness to transfer the boy to his sovereign. The king, after witnessing Bayard's spirited manœuvres on horseback, exclaimed, "It is impossible to do better!" "I will not wait till you give me your page and horse—I beg them at your hands. It is impossible that he should not become a man of worth."

"The master himself is yours," replied the duke, "and the rest may well be so. God give the boy grace to do you some great service;" and so in six months from the time he had entered the service of the Duke of Savoy, Bayard was transferred to the care of the Count of Ligny, whom he served faithfully for three years as page. During that time he gained the sincere affection and approval of his master by his noble and generous disposition; as well as his confidence in his future greatness, by the unerring and faithful discharge of his duties.

At the early age of seventeen he was promoted to the rank of man-at-arms, and was assigned to the immediate command of the Count de Ligny. This was not simply a place in the French army, but gave Bayard a position in the household of the count, and he became an attendant about his person—a post very like that of the aide-de-camp of the present time, except that the man-at-arms held retainers of his own. It was a rank much sought after by the gentry of France, and was conferred only by special favor. The man-at-arms bore a lance with sword or battle-ax, and was attended by three archers, a page, and an esquire. Thus early in life had he begun to reap the benefits of his fidelity, courage and noble demeanor. No trait was more conspicuous in Bayard's character than his modesty. He never spoke of his own achievements, though he early distinguished himself in jousts and tournament, where he invariably carried off the prize. He was generous to a fault; always sharing with his comrades whatever good fortune threw into his hands. One biographer says of him, "He never suffered any rivalry in grace and generosity; his successes never made him forget his moderation and his wise regard for the feelings and pride of others. He was the most gracious and liberal of gentlemen; he was, indeed, the *gentle man*. In short, Bayard entered upon manhood with all the promise that his childhood had given, and when the Count de Ligny sent him into garrison at Picardy, he parted from Bayard with the affectionate regard of a father sending his son forth to carve out for himself a name in the world's rolls of honor.

The first two years of his military life were spent pleasantly enough amid "the shadows and images" of

war, practicing all manner of manly exercises, and in not a few tournaments contending with the bravest and most renowned knights of Christendom. Now he was to taste something of the realities of war. Charles VIII., flattered by the idea of extending his dominions, and becoming, in fact, another Charlemagne, determined upon the conquest of Naples; some shadowy right to which he pretended to assert by force of arms. Our "good knight" took the field under the Count de Ligny. At first the war seemed to promise nothing to our ambitious hero but a triumphal march into the enemy's country; for Charles entered Naples after passing through Florence and Rome, with scarcely a show of resistance.

The Italians were chagrined at the easy conquest of their country by the French king, and still more deeply mortified by the indignities they suffered at the hands of the conquerors. According to their own historians, the French behaved in the grossest and most licentious manner. The king himself is said to have acted "like a school-boy suddenly possessed of an abundance of novel playthings." Yet amid all the disorders that disgraced the French on this occasion, the chronicles all acquit Bayard of taking any part in the excesses. A writer says of him, "The noble propriety of his deportment toward the people among whom he moved as an enemy, proved him to have forgotten none of his early lessons of gentleness and good faith." The Italians, roused at last to indignation against their foe, forgot for a time their petty quarrels and leagued together to drive the invader from their soil. Charles was unexpectedly informed amidst his carousals that an army of 40,000 men were ready to

take the field against him. His position was critical, and he resolved to retreat with part of his army, leaving a part behind to hold possession of the fortresses of the kingdom. Bayard was with the retreating army that attended the king. Passing over the Alps into the plains of Lombardy, Charles' little army of 9,000 encountered the Italians, 40,000 strong, under the Marquis of Mantua, at Fornovo. The battle began upon the attempt of the French to cross the river Taro. The Italians fought with such courage under the Marquis of Mantua that they forced themselves into the very presence of the King of France, who did the duty of a common soldier in this battle, and was only saved from captivity or death by the most heroic actions of his guard. Very little artillery was used in this battle. It was fought almost wholly by sword and lance. Although the Italians were so greatly superior in numbers, various circumstances conspired to give the victory to the French.

Bayard showed such valor in this, his first battle, as to attract the attention of his superior officers. He rushed impetuously into the thickest of the fight in the very beginning, and bore himself bravely through every charge. He had two horses shot under him, and received from the king a present of five hundred crowns for his gallant service. In return he presented Charles with the standards of the Italian cavalry he had taken.

During an interval of quiet that followed the battle of Fornovo, Bayard made a short visit to the house of the Duchess of Savoy, now a widow. There he again met the lady who had won his boyish affections, and whom he seems never to have forgotten, for he re-

mained all his life unmarried. She was now the wife of the Lord of Texas. After a brief visit, during which he found time, amid the gayeties of the little court which the duchess held, to seek out and reward some of his former servants who were still in the household of the duchess, he returned to his command.

Charles had been succeeded on the throne of France by Louis XII. The Italians had regained many of their principal cities, among them Milan, their capital. It was held by a crafty and treacherous Italian. Bayard, chafing under the inaction of the French king and longing for adventure, persuaded forty or fifty of his companions to join him in a reconnoissance of the little town of Binasco, where his spies had reported a small garrison of Italians stationed. Cazache, the Italian commander at Binasco, was on the alert, and, when the little party of French knights came upon him with their war-cry of "France! France!" he was ready for them.

The shock of the battle was terrible. The odds were fearfully against the little band of Frenchmen, and the combat lasted more than an hour, when Bayard, feeling the necessity for concentrating all his strength upon a final struggle, called out, "How, comrades, shall they keep us at work all day?" and, without waiting for answer, or pausing to see if he were supported, dashed forward to renew the combat. The Italians were wholly discomfited, and, in his eagerness to follow up the victory, Bayard pursued them into the very city of Milan before he discovered that his companions had more prudently retired after the last shock of battle was over. The gates of Milan were closed behind him, and he found himself a prisoner in

the hands of the Italians. When brought before the Italian prince, his bearing was so courageous and noble, so fearless, and withal so gentle, that the crafty Italian was struck with admiration for him and at once gave him his freedom and a safe escort back to the French camp. He was at this time but twenty-three years old.

For various reasons the French had suffered many reverses in Italy. In the kingdom of Naples but one stronghold was left them—the fortress of Gaeta. Here the remains of the French army were collected, under a leader in whom they had but little confidence. The conduct of the "good knight" at this time was in startling contrast to the general behavior of the French, who were utterly dispirited by their reverses. The safety of the entire French army depended at one time upon the defense of a bridge which the Spanish force under Gonsalos attempted to cross. Bayard, well armed and well mounted, happened to be near the bridge at the moment. He had but a single companion, one of the king's equerries, and not a single follower. Hearing the tread of horses, he looked toward the side of the river where the enemy were and saw two hundred horsemen making directly for the bridge. "To dream of arresting the torrent by the single will and resistance of one man would scarcely be thought of by one person in a million. Yet such was the instinct of our chevalier, that he considered it a thing of course to keep the post at all hazards. Sending the equerry instantly back for help the dauntless knight spurred his horse for the bridge, and, choosing an advantageous position, set his lance in rest and charged the head of the advancing column. Two were in-

whose name could be handed down to posterity as the knight "sans peur et sans reproche."

The Chevalier Bayard was descended from one of the oldest and most illustrious families of France. For five generations the House of Tenail had been distinguished for the valor and intrepidity of its lords. Philip, the great-great-grandfather of our hero, had perished in the battle of Poitiers; and Pierre, his son, had fallen likewise on the field of Agincourt. Bayard's grandfather, also named Pierre, won for himself the name of "The sword of Tenail" by his distinguished prowess in the war with England. He also died on the battle-field; while his son Aymond, the father of Bayard, following too the profession of a soldier, was disabled at the battle of Guinegate, by the loss of the use of his arms. He is represented as a man of large stature and unusual vigor, while his wife, Helene des Allemans, was quite *petite*, but possessed of a great heart and courageous spirit.

Bayard was born in 1476 in the province of Dauphiny. He grew up a bright, frank and open-hearted lad, commending himself to all who knew him by the unusual wisdom of his deportment and conversation—a wisdom which his boyish face in some degree concealed. He was but thirteen years old when he was called to the bed-side of his father, then eighty, to receive his dying words, and there make choice of his profession. His brothers, one older and two younger than himself, had decided; two for the church and the other to remain at the castle. Without hesitation, Bayard, with the spirit of his brave ancestors stirring in his soul, answered that he would be a soldier. He said, "I should like to remain with you, my

father, to the end of your days; but your own discourses daily, in my hearing, of the noble men by whom our house has been distinguished in times past, lead me to desire, with your permission, that I may also embrace the profession of arms. This is the pursuit I most affect, and I hope with the grace of God to do you no dishonor."

These words, uttered with modesty and with the perfect freedom of a mind untainted with duplicity and bent upon one aim, viz., the determination to uphold the fame of his illustrious house, so touched the heart of the old soldier that he shed tears of joy. "God grant that it may be so, my son," he replied; "already in face and figure thou lookest like thy grandsire, who was one of the best knights in Christendom. I will put thee in the way of obtaining thy desire."

The Bishop of Grenoble, a relative of Bayard, and all the leading gentry of the neighborhood were immediately invited to dinner at the castle; and after the meal was served their advice was asked by the Lord of Tenail, as to the best disposition to be made of the young Bayard, who had declared so decidedly for the life of a soldier. Several powerful houses were mentioned, whose patronage might be secured for so promising a youth; and even the King of France himself was named as the proper master. The Duke of Savoy had always been a friend of the house of Tenail, and by the advice of the Bishop of Grenoble it was decided to place Bayard as page in his household, if the duke were willing to receive him. The very next day after this conference the boy was fitted out in the dress and style suitable to a page in such a noble house, and went in company with his uncle, the Bishop of Greno-

ble, to be presented to the duke. Before setting out on his journey his father gave him his blessing, and charged him never to forget that the King of France was his sovereign; and that his claim must take precedence of all others, and that he should never bear arms against France. His mother, the gentle sister of the Bishop of Grenoble, while pleased with the bright prospect in store for her boy, could scarce restrain her tears at parting with him. She called him aside from the gay company assembled in the court, where Bayard had been performing some wonderful feats of horsemanship, upon a fine charger which his uncle, the bishop, had presented him with, and thus addressed him: "Pierrie, my son, you are going into the service of a noble prince; now, as much as a mother can command her child, look, there are three things which I commend to you. First, you love and serve God in all things without offending Him; night and morning recommend yourself to Him. Second, be you mild and courteous to all, casting away pride. Be humble and obliging. Be not a liar nor a slanderer. Be temperate in eating and drinking. Avoid envy; it is a mean excess. Be neither tale-bearer nor flatterer—such people never excel. Be loyal in word and deed. Keep your promise. Succor the widow and orphan, and look for your reward to God. The third is, be bountiful to the poor and needy."

Never were a good mother's parting injunctions more faithfully carried out than by this bright, heroic youth, now starting upon a career in which every species of temptation would assail him. But so spotless did he keep his soul, so free from soil of avarice, pride and corruption of every sort, that he won for himself the

name of the "Good Knight; without fear and without reproach."

The Duke of Savoy was delighted with Bayard's manly bearing, and at once received him into his household as a page, where he was soon so great a favorite that he was treated as if he were the duke's own son. He was given in charge of one of the duke's most faithful equerries; and here he was to serve a sort of apprenticeship in all manly exercises, and to receive that thorough training and discipline which was to fit him for the life of a soldier. He was to learn "to wait, and to obey"—two very important lessons in those days—ere he could be promoted to the rank of "man-at-arms" in the service of his king and country. While the page performed the duties of a domestic, there was nothing menial in his office; but his position was rather a school in which he learned not only good manners and pleasant address by conversations with his superiors, but he was also taught, in particular, religion, and his duty to the gentler sex. As a page, he was required to choose from the young maidens of the court one who should be to him the representative of all that was pure and lovely, and whose name should be to him as a talisman in moments of danger and temptation. The warm-hearted, impetuous boy soon attached himself to a young lady in the service of the duchess. She was of noble birth, but poor like himself. "I will make myself famous," he said to her one day, "and when I have acquired distinction, I will return and make you my wife."

The young lady was more prudent than her generous lover, and replied, "Alas! we must not entertain such projects. I am without fortune, and you may reason-