

not followed the fashion. Also it was not uncustomary for some spoiled favorite of a player to trip down, between her scenes, the step or two from the stage to the pit, and mingle with the gallants there, laugh, jest, accept languishing glances, audacious comparisons, and such weighty trifles as gilt snuffboxes and rings of price. But this player had not heretofore honored the custom; moreover, at present she was needed upon the stage. Bajazet must thunder and she defy; without her the play could not move, and indeed the actors were now staring with the audience. What was it? Why had she crossed the stage, and, slowly, smilingly, beautiful and stately in her gleaming robes, descended those few steps which led to the pit? What had she to do there, throwing smiling glances to right and left, lightly waving the folk, gentle and simple, from her path, pressing steadily onward to some unguessed-at goal. As though held by a spell they watched her, one and all, — Haward, Evelyn, the Governor, the man in the cloak, every soul in that motley assemblage. The wonder had not time to dull, for the moments were few between her final leave-taking of those boards which she had trodden supreme and the crashing and terrible chord which was to close the entertainment of this night.

Her face was raised to the boxes, and it seemed as though her dark eyes sought one there. Then, suddenly, she swerved. There were men between her and Haward. She raised her hand, and they fell back, making for her a path. Haward, bewildered, started forward, but her cry was not to him. It was to the figure just behind him, — the cloaked figure whose hand grasped the hunting-knife which from the stage, as she had looked to where stood her lover,