

*bye-path,* but go part of ye by that path, and prepare for me in the city; I and the rest will pursue the highway."

Onward rode the knights and the soldiers by the *bye-path*, and hastened towards the city; as they neared upon the ambush, the traitors sprang upon them, for they thought the king was among them. Every man slew his opponent, and there remained not one of the king's company to bear the tidings to the king, save a youth, a little page whom the conspirators did not remark during the attack.

At the city gates the king found the merchant who had sold him the maxims.

"Halt, O king!" said he, "the second maxim has been proved."

"How so?" replied the king.

"The company that rode by the *bye-path* are slain, every one of them, save this little page who is here to tell the sad tale."

"Is this so, good youth?"

"Alas, my lord, it is too true: from behind the trees they rushed upon our company as we rode lightly and merrily, and no one, but your poor servant, lives to tell the tale."

"For a second time is my life saved by thy maxim: let it be inscribed in gold, 'NEVER LEAVE A HIGHWAY FOR A BYE-WAY.'"

"A murrain on the old fool's maxims," grumbled the chief of the conspirators, when they discovered that the king had escaped their malicious designs; "we are beaten out of every plot, and had best submit to his dominion."

"Nay," exclaimed a young and licentious noble, "there is luck in odd numbers, let us have one more trial—a sink, or a swim."

"I care not if we try once more," said the old rebel; but come, who suggests a new scheme?"

"I, and I, and I!" exclaimed several at once; but their schemes were pronounced futile.

"What say ye to this?" said the young man who had spoken before: "every year the king goes to the small village town where his old nurse lives: there is but one house in the village where he can lodge; let us bribe the master of the house, that he slay our tyrant while he sleeps."

The plan was approved by the rebel lords, the bribe offered and accepted by the old man, to whose house the king always came. The king came as usual to the village town, and to his old lodgings. As he entered, the old man received him with humility and feigned delight, and a young damsel, not eighteen years of age, attended at the door-step. The king noticed the damsel, arrested his steps, and called to the old man:

"Good father," asked he, "is yonder damsel thy daughter or thy niece?"

"Neither, may it please my lord the king," replied the old man, "she is my newly-married wife."

"Away, away," said the king to his chamberlain, as soon as the old man had retired, "prepare me a bed in another house, for I will not sleep here to-night."

"Even as my lord wishes," rejoined the chamberlain; "but my lord knows there is no other house in this place fit for the king's residence, save this one; here everything is prepared, everything commodious."

"I have spoken," replied the king; "remain thou here; I will sleep elsewhere."

In the night the old man and his wife arose, stole on tiptoe to the chamber which was prepared for the king, and where the chamberlain slept in the royal bed; all was dark as they approached the bed and plunged a dagger into the breast of the sleeping noble.

"It is done," said they, "to bed, to bed!"

Early the next morning, the king's page knocked at the door of the humble abode where the king had passed the night.

"Why so early, good page?" asked the king.

"My lord, the old merchant waits thy rising; and even now strange news is come from the village."

"Let the merchant and the messenger come in!"

The merchant seemed greatly elated, his eyes glistened with joy and his figure appeared dilated beyond its ordinary height. The messenger was pale and trembling, and staring aghast with fear.

"My lord, my good lord," exclaimed the pallid messenger, "a horrid murder has been committed on your chamberlain; he lies dead on the royal bed."

"The third maxim is tried and proved," said the merchant.