

his spring, with his fierce eye upon the bonnet of the prince, with a long noiseless and elastic bound he stood beside the couch, and bearing the blade high in air unseen and unsuspected, struck with the whole might of his body at the heart of the fearless reader. An accident alone diverted his sure aim; a casual movement of the prince's arm, which thus received the blow intended for a part more vital. A long and ghastly wound was the result, ripping the flesh clear down to the bone, nearly the whole length from the shoulder to the elbow; the blade rose into air again, now crimsoned with the noble blood, to speed a second and a surer thrust; but, every energy alive, cool and collected, though in the midst of sudden pain and strange surprise, Edward arose to meet him, and, with an iron grasp even of his wounded arm, he seized the wrist of the assassin as he brandished the keen knife on high, and held it there fixed and immovable as though it had been griped by a vice of steel.

"Ha! dog! Ha! traitor," he exclaimed in voice clear as a trumpet call, feeling at the same time with his right hand for the dagger which should have hung at his own girdle, but finding it not, he struck him one blow on the chest with his clenched hand—one blow that would have felled a bullock. "Ha! by St. George! Die thus!" and under that tremendous blow the whole frame of the infidel shrank palsied, and as it were collapsed, his eyes rolled wildly in their sockets, his lips turned white as ashes, and, hearing footsteps rushing to the door, Edward now flung him off with his whole power, that he reeled blindly backward, while the Prince reached his own dagger from the table, and quietly unsheathing it, stood in an attitude of perfect majesty, awaiting if perchance his enemy could again rally to attack him.

But, while the villain was yet reeling to and fro, uncertain whether to fall or no, Wilfred rushed in with his long double-edged sword drawn, in his hand, and crying out in his blunt English,

"By God! I knew it would be so! Die, dog!" ran him completely through the body, that he hung for a moment on the blade which transfixed him, until the baron cast him off with a blow of his foot, and rushed forward to assist the Prince. A faint smile played upon the lips of the dying infidel, and he muttered in his own tongue, "It is done—it is finished—God is Great, and Mahommed is his prophet," and with the words he rolled over with his face to the ground, and expired, dumbless and

confident that he had won by that awful deed an immortality of bliss and glory. Scarcely had the assassin fallen, and the breath had not as yet left his body, ere Edward, faint from loss of blood, and not that only, but still more from the effects of the poison with which the blade of the murderer had been anointed, turned pale as death, and after staggering for a moment fell at full length upon the couch from which he had arisen to do battle for his life, drew a long sob or two, and fell into a swoon.

The outcry of the chamberlain soon brought assistance; pages, and squires, and aged knights, came crowding round the bed of their loved Prince, and terror, grief, and consternation occupied all the camp. The leeches, who had examined the wound and succeeded in arresting the flow of blood, pronounced the cut in itself trifling, and, scarcely even sufficient to account for the sudden swoon of the stalwart Prince; but at the same time hesitated not to give it as their opinion that poison had been used, and that unless some person could be found who would risk his own life, by sucking the venom from the wound, the life of the young warrior might be considered forfeit. Meanwhile, supposing that a sally of the enemy would be made while the camp might be deemed in confusion, owing to the assassination of the Prince, the veteran knights of the array proceeded to get the host under arms—the wild and pealing clangor of the trumpets, the deep booming of the Norman kettledrum, and the loud shout of "Bows and bills! bows and bills! St. George for Merry England!" were blended with the clang of arms and harness, the trampling of barbed chargers, and all the din and dissonance of battle, so dear to those ears that heard not now, nor perceived any mortal sound—if ever they should do so any more.

So sure it is that the hardest and bravest spirits, nursed in the very lap of peril, and accustomed to incur the deadliest dangers of one especial order, will often shrink and tremble at the first encounter of something new and strange—that it was perhaps scarcely to be wondered at, that of the gallant and determined band, who clustered round the bed of their Prince, who would have rushed upon death if he came on the arrow's point or the spear's thrust, who would have bared their brows undauntedly to the dread brunt of mace or battleaxe, all now shrunk back aghast at the idea of drawing from the veins of him—to preserve whose life or crown or honour they would have gladly met death in the field—the