

We stormed across the loggia like a whirlwind, narrowly escaping a table in our course, then bearing down on the staircase. Just as we reached it I swung in a skilful circle and started back again for the gate, still driving my reluctant and panting prey before me. Round and round the loggia we went, while the spectators cheered us on; and now I began to add mockery to my torture.

"So there, so there!" I cried, shaking with laughter, but taking good care not to miss a thrust. "To the right, my friend—now to the left—ha, you obey my guidance as prettily as could be wished! *Prime, seconde, coupe*—come, what makes you squeal so like a stuck pig? Did I go too deep? Yes, I see a spreading blood-stain on your fine satin hose: but it is only a prick, as I can show you if I choose to go deeper. Does my needle please you, my needle concerning which you were so witty? Does it still amuse you, now that you know it better? Is it a sharp needle, eh?" I thrust again, and my wretched victim leapt into the air with a yell.

"Sir John! Sir John Hawkwood! Are you mad?" called an angry voice from the gallery, and I knew that Antonio della Scala, Prince of Verona and Vincenza, was now numbered among my audience.

I feigned to have heard nothing, and my pretense was aided by the delighted clamor of the onlookers, which might well have drowned the Prince's words. "Bravo, bravo, Sir John!" the soldiers and pages were crying, in an ecstasy. O'Meara, who had fol-