

I looked again at the little group of courtiers, all of whom were gazing at me in manifest amusement, and exchanging whispers which, it took small wit on my part to guess, were at my expense. The man whom O'Meara had indicated stood at Della Torre's elbow, laughing loudly, and with an appearance of delighted mockery which I instantly assured myself would not last many moments. He might have been five and fifty years old, and was very fat and pompous, with shrewd choleric blue eyes half buried in thick pockets of flesh, and a short gray beard carefully cut in a square. His dress of green and gold velvet was magnificent, and he had all the manner of a person used to exacting his full due of deference from those about him, as was suitable in one of his rank and importance. Though I had never exchanged a word with him in the whole time I had spent in Verona, I knew him well enough for a rich noble of the Court, a kinsman, in some distant fashion, of Prince Antonio himself, and therefore treated by every one with a flattering attention which there was little about him to warrant.

To speak frankly, I would have given something to have avoided a quarrel with him; for the Prince, under whom I now fought, and whose pay was as generous as his name in Italy was evil, had very high ideas of his royal dignity, and of the dignity of all who belonged to his house. A quarrel with Lord Raimondo was plainly not likely to assure or