

dazzling checkered pattern. An arched cloister of pure white marble supported a marble gallery above, which had a great door in the centre, and a winding staircase leading down to the court. Over the gallery, through the arches, and on the stairs were masses of roses and lilies and jasmine, twining, mingling, smothering the senses with their rich color and their heavy perfume. From beneath these gorgeous blooms peeped out, like pictures in their gilded frames, rare fresco paintings in the stiff golden Byzantine style, alternating with voussoirs of marble covered with gilded leaves and flowers. This splendid place stood empty as I swept into it with Del Mayno stumbling and cursing at my sword's point; but the hubbub raised by the shouting, dancing rogues who followed me was such that it could not help but rouse the palace—the very end I had in view. Almost within the moment startled voices sounded in-doors, and a great crowd of ladies and courtiers, some frightened, some curious, came quickly out into the gallery to see what was afoot. I had a good audience now—half the Prince's Court above, half his servants in the outer square and packed about the loggia gate. Certainly the jest was at present on my side.

Putting forth all my skill, I advanced on Del Mayno in such fashion that I believe he thought me turned into the devil in person. Easily parrying all his desperate thrusts, between them I pricked him prettily in whatever spot my fancy suggested to me.