

"You cannot deny that the Duke has such in his service; and as to his nobles, I hold them little better in espousing such a cause."

The cheek of the traveller was flushed with crimson as he involuntarily grasped the dagger beneath his cloak; but he stifled his emotion, and said calmly—"A large number of your fellow-citizens, then, Signor, are like to fall under your evil report. It is said that the Emperor has as many well-wishers as the Pope, in Florence."

"He lies most foully who says so!" said the Florentine, starting fiercely from his seat.

"Gently, good Antonio," said a third, who had hitherto remained a silent listener, "this cavalier does but repeat what he has heard, doubtless, without giving it credit."

The traveller's eye glanced at the speaker, as if he suspected a snare in the moderation of his words. He was a man advanced in life, with a watchful eye, and a cool, wary countenance; which did not greatly please the inspector.

"You are right, Signor," he rejoined, with an air of indifference. "I meant no offence, but your friend is somewhat fiery."

"He is young," said the other. "You and I, who have seen more years over our heads, can talk without quarrelling, though we may differ in opinion,"

But the traveller seemed to have no inclination to accept the implied invitation to a prolonged discussion. He arose, and adjusting his cloak, ordered his servant to bring out the horses, and bade them good evening.

"There goes a spy of the Ghibeline faction; but I will watch his motions," muttered Antonio between his teeth; and snatching up his sword, he followed in the same direction. For some time he kept the horsemen in sight, till his progress was impeded by the crowd following in the train of the Gonfalonier, who was returning from council, in state. Before he extricated himself they

were gone. Still, however, Antonio, who was a youth of fierce passions, and hated the opposite faction with an intensity known only to the parties in a civil discord, kept up the chase till the night was far advanced. While he hesitated whether to continue the pursuit, or return home, two persons suddenly issued from a low door near the church of the Annunziata, near which he stood, and remained for some time in deep consultation. The street was dark, but the lamp burning in a niche before an image of the Virgin, discovered to Antonio's eager gaze the countenances of the elder traveller, and a person whom he knew to be in the service of a nobleman suspected of a correspondence with the Emperor. Presently the former drew a purse from his bosom, and gave it to the other, who took it hastily and disappeared. The stranger turned also to depart; but Antonio sprung forward, and crying "Traitor!—Spy!—Ghibeline!"—attacked him so vigorously, that the other, taken by surprise, had scarcely time to draw his sword before Antonio's furious outcry attracted several persons to the spot; who, on hearing the exclamation, joined in the fray. The stranger planted his back against the wall, and defended himself with such superior skill, that had the odds been less against him, must speedily have secured the victory. As it was he began to feel exhausted by so unequal a contest; when an auxiliary appeared in the person of a youth, who, shocked by the unfairness of the combat, ranged himself on the side of the stranger, and bestowed his blows with such right goodwill, that the assailers, in their turn, began to give ground. Amid the confusion caused by the raised voices and clashing swords, they did not heed the approach of half a dozen men, clothed in crimson, and carrying halberds, till their swords were struck, and they themselves arrested in the name of the republic. "The city guard, by St. Peter!" exclaimed