

that made him better worth gazing at than any picture on the palace walls. To-day he stood among the laughing young courtiers like a king among his subjects, and I had never seen a more splendid sight than he, in his rose and silver satin, swinging gold-embroidered cloak, and wide hat with its plume buckled with jewels. If I gave him a certain grudging admiration, however, I nevertheless hated him with all my heart, and so sure was I now that the whispered taunt had come from him that I swung about in his direction, one foot poised for an advance.

At this instant I felt a hand laid on my arm. It was Michael O'Meara, my Irish lieutenant, who stood second in authority in my company of mercenaries, and was the only man in all Verona to whom I gave an absolute trust. "Whist, now, Sir John, 'tis wrong you are," he whispered in my ear. And I paused, for I knew well enough that, whatever he wanted, it was not to withhold me from fighting. He was too thorough an Irishman for that—nay, at this very moment his blue eyes were fairly blazing with delighted zest for battle. "'Twas not Della Torre," he continued, in the same low voice. "'Twas the old rogue beside him, Raimondo del Mayno they call him—blessed saints, 'tis a heathen fashion of name, and enough to break the jaw of the man who says it! Shall I be after going up and taking him by the nose, Sir John, and teaching him manners to fit his station?"