

taken from two or three horsemen one night:—what had become of the prisoners he knew not.

Acting on this information, the minstrel attached himself to the armourer, and ingratiated himself so much with the latter, that, to his announcement, two or three days after, that he was about to set off for the fair at Rescaldina, and at the same time to visit his kinsman, was added a strong invitation to accompany him. Tremacoldo needed not much urging, and the morning of the fair found them both installed in the kinsman's house. During the day, he exercised his profession of minstrel, and on returning to supper, found six or seven armed men added to their company, whose ruthless visages and rough demeanour led him to consider them as the companions of his host in their midnight attack. During the repast, the eyes and ears of Tremacoldo were on the alert for any hint of their former doings; but in vain.

Towards the end of the feast, a roasted peacock was set on the table, a dish generally reserved for the banquets of the great: but which, on this festive day, their host did not hesitate to smuggle before them.

"Here," cried Tremacoldo, "bring it here! Let me carve it! We minstrels have all the rights of cavaliers where none such are present. Let me at it!"

And leaping on the table, he drew his dagger, the usual carver of the period, and after a few flourishes, planted it in the breast of the noble bird, so that the silver handle might be displayed to the whole company. A few whispers passed from one to another, and he could hear more than one mutter—"The very same! how came he by it?"

"By-the-bye!" said the master of the house to one who sat opposite to him, nodding significantly towards the poignard, "what has become of the two thrushes we caught that night?"

"The one from the mountains," replied the other, "we have safe here in the rock: the other has changed his cage, but we have allowed neither yet to sing."

"I understand," thought Tremacoldo, as he busied himself with the carving, seemingly unconscious of every thing else.

When the meal was finished, the men-at-arms entreated their host and their fellow guests to accompany them to the Castle of Rescaldina, which rose immediately above the village, where they were stationed, to crack a flask and chant a stave. The invitation was readily accepted, and Tremacoldo, by his songs, his jests, his stories, and his feats of activity, made himself so universally popular, that ere he left the castle for the evening he promised, nothing loath, to return that day week, to join in a feast and a running at the

quintain that was then to be held. From scattered hints, and from his own keen observation, he had gathered enough to assure him that Lapo was confined in the castle; and even to ascertain his place of imprisonment, which was a small chamber looking out upon the surrounding ditch.

At midnight he issued quietly from the house, wrapped in a dark mantle, and finding that part of the ramparts unguarded, approached sufficiently near the prison of Lapo to attract his attention, and interchange a few sentences in low and guarded tones.

"I am come to free thee," he said, when he had announced himself, and answered the prisoner's anxious enquiries regarding his master and friends; "I am come to free thee, if possible; but this window here seems impracticable. These two enormous bars are firmly enough fixed in the solid and massive walls to defy our utmost efforts."

"The inner opening," replied Lapo, "is more available. I would easily undertake to get out by it; but then I am worse off than ever, landing in the very middle of my guards. I could never get out of the gate without being discovered."

"Trust me for that!" returned the minstrel, "six nights from this expect me here again. Meantime be of good cheer!"

The time that intervened before the festival in the castle, was spent by Tremacoldo in preparing two jester's dresses, both exactly alike, such as we have previously described, but having large fantastic bonnets from the front of which a sort of silk visor fell over half the face. One of these dresses he conveyed under his mantle to Lapo on the appointed night, sure of success.

Next morning betimes he was at the castle, and for a few hours the whole garrison did nothing but look and laugh at his tricks and buffooneries. He twisted his bonnet into a thousand shapes, now wearing it inside out, now with the silk streaming behind, but more generally with the visor of silk hanging like a veil in front.

At mid-day they began to run at the quintain, and when several courses had been finished between the soldiers of Rescaldina, and several men-at-arms from a neighbouring fort, Tremacoldo advancing to the most successful of the players, a tall, broad built personage, offered boldly to try two lances with him, the conqueror to carry off the steel of the other.

"Aha! friend," exclaimed the challenged man, in a voice like the roaring of a bull; "think not to escape with any of thy tricks, and quirks, as thou didst at the tourney at Milan. Thou wilt find me no such simpleton as Arnaldo Vitale."

"Prithee what occasion is there to tell me so?" rejoined the jester. "Thou canst not draw wine