were upon us, so great was the Bedlam you raised!"

This was no time for hesitation; my only hope lay in boldness. I lounged cheerfully across to the stairs and faced Antonio, while Del Mayno, letting out a startled squeal at my approach, climbed half a dozen steps and took sanctuary behind his royal master's back. "Why, my lord," I explained, laughing, "the matter is of the simplest. It appears that various wits among your courtiers are curious as to my birth, my parentage, my ancestry, and other matters concerning me which might be thought no affair of theirs. Since I have not cared to gratify their curiosity, they have invented various histories to fit me, and of these inventions the favorite one is that I am the son of a tailor. Therefore, it seems, they have christened me Giovanni della Guglia—John of the Needle. You see? I have done my best to take the point from this jest by dealing roughly with all who cracked it, but it appears I have been too patient; for to-day, as I came into the palace court, I passed this noble standing among a crowd of his friends, and he called me very audibly by the name I have mentioned. Perhaps he thought his rank would awe me into patience, perhaps he flattered himself that his skill at the sword equalled mine—I cannot say; at any rate the fancy took me to show him how sharp my needle was and how dangerous, that he might address me more circumspectly in future. I think he has learned his lesson well," I ended, pointing with a roar of laughter