

hind him. The hall in which we stood was ghostly still and dark, and my guide bade me be dumb and follow him. We tip-toed a few yards, then he stopped and cautiously unlocked a door and let me into his "salon." It was lighted from an inner courtyard, but now the sun had to make its way through yellow blinds, and the white covered chairs glimmered ghostly in the half light. It was a veritable blue-beard chamber, and my barber standing in his shirt sleeves, razor in hand, and pipe in teeth, was quite a tragic personage. I found myself thinking so while he was at work, but thinking also how the affair would end. It was exciting. It was even romantic, though the shop was a very common little place, with prints of horse races and boxing matches on the walls. When everything was over and settled (the charge, by the bye, was more than double the regular one, because of the danger, as he explained), we again stole across the room and down the hall toward the street door. I was pressing forward recklessly to open it when my conductor stopped me with a wave of his hand, and whispered, "Arrêtez un moment, monsieur." (He seemed to have the police very much on his mind.) Then carefully he turned the lock, lifted the latch, and looked up and down the street.

It was a thrilling pause, a moment of intense excitement, the very climax of my adventure. I held my breath and listened, and as I did so my fancy awoke. The present time and place, with all their sordidness, faded away, and I found myself back in the days of splendid pageants and joyous carnivals, of plots, and feuds, of party struggles, treason and fighting.

I knew myself a conspirator within the walls of some Venetian or Florentine Palace. The secret meeting is over. The plot is ripe for execution. One by one my comrades have departed; I alone am left. The faithful Jacopo withdraws bolt and bar, and the heavy door swings back a little, while he peers forth into the night. No sound breaks the stillness. All seems safe. But who shall assure us it is as it seems? Who knows but that passing gondola may conceal