

---

*A Merry Tale of a Merry Time*

---

ply but was stayed by the sound of a struggle without.

It befell in the nick of time for Nell, as all things, indeed, in life seemed to befall in the nick of time for her. The impious huswives shook their heads and attributed it to the evil influence; the pious huswives asserted it was providential; Nell herself laughingly declared it was her lucky star.

"Ho, without there!" Charles cried, impatiently—almost angrily—at the interruption. "Whence comes this noisy riot?"

James, Rochester and the others unceremoniously re-entered.

"Pardon, Sire," explained the Duke of York; "the guard caught but now an armed ruffian prowling by the house. They report they stayed him on suspicion of his looks and insolence."

"Adair! Adair! My life upon't!" laughed the King, ever ready for sport. "Set him before us."

An officer of the guard departed quickly to bring in the offender. The courtiers