

if you want a battle won at once, I am in the mood to do it."

"This morning at sunrise," said Della Torre, repeating my words with a sneer on his darkly handsome face. "Yes, to be sure. It was near dawn this morning when I passed you, I think. You were reeling through the streets of Verona in great uncertainty whether you lodged near the river or near Sant' Anastasia. Two of your rogues were holding you up, and you had a bare sword in your hand, with which you were pricking all who came in your path——"

"Bedad, thin, and what was yourself doing in the streets at such an hour, at all, at all?" broke in O'Meara, before I could speak. His voice was suspiciously sweet, a bright glint danced in his blue eyes, and his head was thrown back a trifle, all of which spelt danger where he was concerned. "May I be after asking, pray, if it goes against your conscience to see a man that's had his glass? Truly, then, I've been misinformed; this Court of Verona, which I've heard is a gay place enough, is now turned to a nunnery; you gallants taste nothing stronger than water; at sight of wine you raise your hands in holy horror! God forgive me if I do you wrong, me friend, but 'tis in my mind you're no better than a hypocrite! And for this you may take my word—Sir John Hawkwood will be remembered long after your tomb falls to bits from old age!" He paused, for want of breath, not for want of