

CHAPTER II

MISCHIEF

As I sheathed my sword a tumult of cheers broke from the spectators, and the soldiers of my Company, in a mad burst of delight, came circling round me in an impromptu dance of triumph. "Begone, begone!" I cried, forcing a way through them. "What have you to do in the Prince's loggia? Take yourselves off, knaves, or you will get into trouble!"

Antonio della Scala came slowly down the staircase from the gallery. He was obviously in a rage, though the fact showed only in his increased pallor and the slight trembling of his hands. For a moment I had an insane desire to treat him as I had treated Raimondo del Mayno, for, truth to tell, I loved one scarcely better than the other. He was not to my taste, this last of the Scaligeri, this languid, foppish, sulky man who painted his cheeks and covered his hands with rings, and wore his blond hair so low that it shaded his pale lack-lustre eyes. It was a part of my trade to read men, and I read this Prince as easily as any ruffling cutthroat among my free companions, and judged him as evil at bottom as the worst of them. He came of a bloody