

lord to his worthy ally, Mistress Charlbury. Uncle Matthew had not brain enough to be more—yes, Mr. Dane desired to be just even to Uncle Matthew, and must confess to a dry humour in that good kinsman. Sure, 'twas a happy thought to come rallying him on his love for Mistress Charlbury when she had been bought to betray him. A damnable happy thought!

Mr. Dane surprised his captors by laughing aloud.

For he was not angry. Sure, no, he was not angry with her. He bowed to superior craft. Oh, admirable Delila! To scold him, to take offence at his manners—sure, this was the refinement of the decoy's art. Great was Delila of Byfleet, great past all whooping.

Once more, since it sounded bravely, he laughed aloud.

Faith, Sunderland owed her a heavy fee. It were well if she saw herself paid. Nay, trust Delila to guard her own interest. For her a prosperous future waited. Never decoy had brighter eyes (poor fool, he had said as much in her deceitful ear), never one a cheek more delicate, a wit more subtle. Nor, by heaven, a falser heart! But better laugh—laugh always. A splendid lure she was. Gad, he admired her vastly. Vastly! Zounds, never so much as now.

On which admirable conclusion he was jerked forward as they halted all in a bunch.

Mr. Smithers had come to his bridge and, holding a lantern aloft, peered to see if it were safe. Wherein he showed no cowardly caution, for the roar of the weir was thunderous and the river swirled in foam and fretted at the oaken beams. Mr. Smithers was satisfied, and two by two (since the bridge had no room for more) they began sedately to cross. Two by two: on his near flank the Prisoners' Hackney had no restraining tipstaff, and, behold, the infatuate steed must needs try to rear and gesticulate at the river.

“Have a care, man, have a care!” cries Mr. Dane to the one swearing tipstaff who jerks the bridle. “Death and hell! Have a care!” and drives his spur into the tipstaff's steed. That also begins a dance, and the two slipping, bumping,