

"What! your former lover!" he thundered. "You forget, madam, that I have a short temper and a long dagger!"

"For mercy's sake, listen!" entreated the Marchioness.

"And did you think," he continued, furiously, "that I would allow myself to be thus outraged by her who was to bear my name? In our family, madam, the honour of the men is bright as the steel of their swords—the honour of the women unsullied as the snow!"

"But, sir!" interposed the Baron.

"Call me not 'sir!' my name is Sire Olivier!"

"Well, my good Mr. Oliver! permit me to state, that I was acquainted with the Marchioness de Vallorin long before you, and that our marriage was determined on long ago."

"Then liest in thy throat!" exclaimed Sire Olivier, violently.

"Allow me to remind you," returned the Baron, calmly, "that strangers do not 'thou' and 'thee' each other since the days of the Revolution."

"This insolence is too much!" cried Sire Olivier; and drawing his poniard, he struck fiercely at the Baron, who fell heavily to the ground.

He then turned towards the pale, trembling and almost fainting Emilie.

"Do not approach me!" she cried; "you inspire me now with the utmost horror and aversion!"

"Tell me, madam!" answered Olivier, with a sarcastic smile, "do you remember the story of Othello and Desdemona?"

"Othello!" she murmured to herself; "does he mean to smother me?"

"Perhaps," continued he, "you have heard of the fate of my ancestor, Raoul de Coucy, and of the fair Gabrielle de Vergy, the lady of Faye!"

"What a monster!" thought the poor Marchioness. "Will he force me to eat the heart of the Baron?"

"As for me," he went on to say, "who am more jealous and more passionate than Othello or the Sire de Faye, I must have more fearful vengeance still!"

Emilie fell on her knees, half dead with terror.

"Have you forgotten, madam, what building you now inhabit? This hall is placed above the castle dungeon—and you know what these ancient dungeons are," he continued, placing his hand on her shoulder. "You are at this moment kneeling on a trap, which, at the slightest motion, will open beneath you, and you will fall into a cell, the pavement of which is stuck full of sharp scythes and dagger-blades!"

The lady uttered a cry of terror, and instinctively

rose to fly from the fatal spot; but this movement was enough—the trap opened, and the Marchioness disappeared.

IV.

In another room of the building, where this scene had passed, might be seen, a few minutes afterwards, a merry company seated round a table, well furnished with all manner of delicacies, liquid and solid. They were all elegantly dressed; copies, one would think, of the very last plate of the fashions—except one, a lady, who appeared strangely enough apparelled in the costume of the sixteenth century. She seemed just recovering from a faint, and was anxiously attended by another fair creature, who was employing every means for her recovery.

"Come, rally yourself, my poor sister!" said the latter—Marceline de Thionville—to the masquerading lady, in whom no doubt our readers have recognised the Marchioness de Vallorin.

"Give the Marchioness a little of this water," said one of the company, a young man, dressed in the height of the mode, who was none other than our friend, Sire Olivier. "As for me, I require something stronger; pass me the Margaux, De Jirens!"

"Where am I?" exclaimed Emilie, according to the immemorial usage of ladies recovering consciousness. "I remember a fall—a gloomy dungeon. And now, these flowers, this banquet—what mean they?"

Sire Olivier turned to reply to this question; but recognising him, in spite of his white waistcoat and black cravat, she sprang to her feet in horror, though she started back again with almost equal dread, on finding herself close to the slain Baron de Lircas, who held out his arms to receive her.

"Do not tremble, madam!" said Sire Olivier, respectfully addressing her; "Pardon the deception we have used. Your faithful knight is a simple gentleman of the present day; his old time-worn castle looks gay enough by day-light; the 'hall of the dungeons' is nothing else than the stage of a theatre, the curtain and wings of which were masked by heavy tapestry. At a given signal the trap on which you stood was gently lowered down; you fainted, and in that state were conveyed amidst this goodly company, who were passing the time at luncheon, till our arrival.

"How! it was all a trick, then?" cried Emilie, with a glance of indignation at Sire Olivier, whom she found much less noble-looking in his black coat.

"I am the culprit," interposed the Baron de