

"Signor," now interrupted Richard, "you forget yourself; and forget, too, the courtesy of a gentleman."

"When I need your counsel, sir," returned the other, haughtily, "I will ask it."

He still held the hand of Marie, whose heart was palpitating wildly.

"Whilst here, sir," exclaimed Richard, "that lady is under my protection; nor, in my presence, shall any dare to offer her an insult."

"Away!" cried the courtier; for, altho' the prince had left the room, he presumed upon his presence in the house; but he had overshot his mark. The word was scarcely uttered, when Richard grasped the Spaniard by the throat, and with one powerful effort he was hurled to the distance of several yards, and went reeling to the floor. Livid with rage, he sprang to his feet, and his naked sword glistened in the light. But, with a cry of horror, the guests interposed.

"I demand satisfaction!" shrieked the Spaniard; "Stand back! Blood for the insult!"

"How now, Malpertz?" demanded the prince, who, attracted by the noise, at that moment re-entered the room. "What means this disturbance? A drawn sword in the presence of ladies!" and then he sharply added, "Take you this for a camp, sir? Restore your blade to its scabbard—instantly."

Alessandro bowed to the presence of royalty, and obeyed. The circumstances were then rapidly explained to the prince, and Malpertz was violent in his demand for immediate satisfaction.

"This is no place nor time for brawls," said the Dauphin; "I must adjust this quarrel myself. Monsieur Bridgnorth, and you, Signor Malpertz, will follow me."

And, accompanied by the count, in whose mansion the outrage had been committed, and by a crowd of gentlemen, the prince and the disputants retired to a distant room.—Arbitration, however, was of no avail—the Spaniard would hear of no postponement; and, emboldened rather than abashed by the presence of his master, claimed immediate decision. It was an age of few words and sudden deeds; and, in the presence of the company, and by the sanction of the prince, as at a tournament in yet earlier times, the combatants were now arrayed, sword in hand. The ladies, and those who remained

in the drawing-room, listened eagerly for the issue of the consultation; when suddenly the alarming sounds of clashing steel struck upon their ears. Marie uttered a faint scream, and rushed from the room; and, ere a moment had elapsed, guided by the sound, the entire assembly broke into the chamber.

But the battle was decided. In an unguarded moment the sword of Malpertz was struck from his hand, and he was at the mercy of Richard. The guests entered the room as Richard took possession of the fallen weapon, when gracefully presenting it to his antagonist, he said,

"Take back your sword, Signor Malpertz, and when next it is drawn may it be in a nobler quarrel."

A murmur of applause broke from the lips of the auditors at the magnanimity of the victor; and the defeated Spaniard, sheathing his sword with a scowl, threw upon Richard a look of hate and scorn, and immediately disappeared.

A month passed, and the day was fixed for the marriage of Richard and Marie.—The parents of both had consented; and as Richard had now secured a handsome competency, he had resolved—for the horizon of France was darkening—to relinquish commerce and return to the land of his birth.—With that view, his accounts were closed, and the bulk of his property transmitted to his father's care, in London, retaining only sufficient for immediate wants. His domestic affairs were easily and quickly arranged, and a ship was in preparation for the voyage. The aged Delvise had been prevailed upon to follow them to England, as soon as his arrangements would permit.

When it became publicly known that their marriage day was fixed, the invitations to fashionable parties were even more numerous than before; and, whether by accident or design, wherever Marie was, there the prince made it convenient to be also. Not that he noticed, or appeared to notice, Marie more than another; or that his attentions were more particularly addressed to her; but it became the subject of pointed remark that the prince was more frequently in public than had been his custom. However this might be, or to whatever extent surmises were directed towards Marie, she scarcely noted the circumstance, and was certainly too much occupied with her own