

"Well done, boys! Give it to the cowardly rebels. Give it 'em again!"

A hearty cheer from the men responded. But at the instant a wild shriek in a woman's voice rung out clear and distinct above the din.

Who had uttered it? None in the Hall, it was evident. The bevy of women, grouped together in affright, looked round on each other with glances startled anew.

There was a sound of hasty footsteps running along the upstairs hall, and immediately a voice in manly tones shouted,

"Fire, fire! Help for the women!"

What has occurred?

Madeline in her night-robe was kneeling at her evening prayer. Her golden veil of hair half hid her face, and shrouded her alabaster shoulders. A noise behind her made her half turn. An evil face glared at her from the window embrasure. It was Marie. With one hand she held the casement half open. Her voice was husky and hissing.

"Ah!" said she, "Doubtless you are very fair; but I will spoil your beauty for you!"

Then from her free hand came flying in an object that, missing the girl but by a hair's breadth, crashed with the shiver of breaking glass against the bedpost. A mocking laugh, and the casement was shut down; then the fiendish visage was gone. Paralyzed with terror, the child still knelt in the same attitude; till stifling fumes and then flames breaking out all around her, and a sudden intolerable agony of burning round her naked knees made her start up with that shriek of anguish that had startled the dwelling.

Beyond this she knew nothing.

Nitro-glycerine would have been more suddenly destructive in its effects. Probably vitriol was preferred, because of its slower action, and its inextinguishable tortures.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HARVEY, through the painted window of the corridor, had been absorbed in watching the struggle outside. Not until roused by the voice of his sister was he conscious of a growing heat and a stifling in the air. As he rushed to the door of her suite of rooms he found it locked. He called; a stifled cry was his only answer.