

might seem to Emelie, was very like the jog-trot of a Flemish farmer to market, with his dame on a pillion behind him. No bandit, no spectre, no wizard crossed their path. The moon looked down upon the fugitives with the most perfect indifference—but then, she has witnessed so many elopements since that of Helen!

The thick veil in which she was wrapped, however, kept the Marchioness perfectly ignorant of their route, and left her imagination free scope to portray the most dreadful precipices, the most rugged ravines, the most frightful dangers of all kinds. After the lapse of a couple of hours, the horse's hoofs clattered on a pavement—which Sire Olivier informed her was the causeway that led to his fortress; and shortly afterwards he checked his steed, and assisting her to dismount, conducted her carefully along several long galleries and narrow staircases, till at length halting, he removed the veil from her eyes. Then, respectfully saluting her, he left her alone with an old crone, who, to all her impatient enquiries, could only mumble some unintelligible words.

The Marchioness, in despair, raised her eyes to heaven, and they naturally encountered the ceiling. Such a ceiling! festooned, it is true, but only with cobwebs, which hung gracefully from the rough heavy joists, unadorned with any carving, save the marks of the axe, very evidently remaining. Involuntarily she regretted the gilded cornices of her own boudoir, and began to suspect that romance did not mean comfort. She took a few steps along the room, and felt the cold seize on her feet; instead of the rich Turkey carpet, to which she had been accustomed, the floor was covered with cold hard tiles; but she consoled herself with the idea that the feet of Blanche of Castille, or of Agnes Sorel, had doubtless been frozen in a similar manner, in their day.

The poor Marchioness began to tremble with fear and with cold. The vast, desolate chamber, with its indistinct, gloomy recesses, seemed built for the habitation of spectres. She dared not go to bed, and as the aged crone had left her to herself, she took up a book which lay on the oaken table; it was a gothic missal, which she strove in vain to decipher. Suddenly, she heard a rustling noise, and a dark object passing close by the lamp, very nearly extinguished it. As the Marchioness could not pretend to the courage of Clorinda or Bradamante, she uttered a faint shriek; but, fortunately, the spectre was only a swallow, disturbed by the light from its nest on the rafters above. Scarcely had she recovered from her alarm, when she heard from without a mournful and choking cry.

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed, "is that

some unfortunate vassal, whom they are hanging from the battlements?"

While entertaining this agreeable reflection, the moonlight showed her a large screech-owl flitting past the window, which repeated at the moment its lugubrious cry.

"It is foolish to alarm myself, thus," she thought; "but in the way of birds, I must confess that I prefer my little pet curiary!"

### III.

For several successive days, Sire Olivier came to pay the Marchioness a visit. His manner was tender and respectful; his conversation, though short, was to the point; we cannot say that it had much variety.

The first day, he said, with a sigh, "I love thee!" The second day, with two sighs, he repeated, "I love thee, fair Marchioness!" Emelie thought this very sentimental.

The third day, he said; "If thou lovest me not, I will cast myself into the torrent, that foams past the foot of the castle wall." This was very exciting, and the Marchioness thought, with profound disdain, of the tame speeches of the Baron de Lirens.

The fourth day, he said; "If thou lovest me not, I will pierce thy heart with this poniard." This was irresistible—the marriage was fixed for next day.

The following forenoon, he conducted her into a hall, where he left her, to go, as he said, and have the chapel prepared for the ceremony. She had been alone but a few moments when a small side door opened; she turned her head and beheld the Baron de Lirens.

"You here, sir!" she exclaimed in astonishment.

"Yes, madam!" he replied, "I learned that a villain had carried you off, and rested not till I had traced you hither."

"He of whom you speak," answered Emelie, with indignation, "is the most noble of men. He loves me to madness, and I shall soon be his wife. Leave me, sir! remonstrance is vain."

"Think not, fair Marchioness!" returned the Baron, "that I will yield you thus tamely to a rival. You forget that I, too, love you passionately!" And falling on his knees, he seized her hand, and raised it to his lips.

What the lady's answer might have been we cannot say, for at this moment the bridegroom returned.

"Hell and fires!" he exclaimed; "my bride alone with a stranger!"

The poor Marchioness stammered out that this was the Baron de Lirens.