

A Ladder of Swords

he added, with a lumbering attempt at humor "and, on my oath, I'll set up another dove-cote without my sovereign's favor, with your leave alone. By Our Lady, I do love that color in yon cheek! Just such a color had my mother when she snatched from the head of my cousin of Carteret's milk-maid-wife the bonnet of a lady of quality and bade her get to her heifers. God's beauty! but 'tis a color of red primroses in thy cheeks and blue champions in thine eyes. Come, I warrant I can deepen that color"—he bowed low—"Madame of Rozel, if it be not too soon!"

The girl listened to this cheerful and loquacious proposal and courtship all in one, ending with the premature bestowal of a title, in mingled anger, amusement, disdain, and apprehension. Her heart fluttered, then stood still, then flew up in her throat, then grew terribly hot and hurt her, so that she pressed her hand to her bosom as though that might ease it. By the time he had finished, drawn himself up, and struck his foot upon the ground in burly emphasis of his devoted