

"Now, messieurs," said the man with the moustache, "you can fight in peace."

During the skirmish which had taken place, De Nanci advanced to his antagonist, and whispered in his ear, "this duel is to the death; one of us must fall."

De Valmont seemed much surprised, but contented himself with bowing in silence. In a few minutes every thing was arranged for the deadly encounter which was to take place. The seconds were chosen, the principals were examined, to see that no hidden armour might afford them any unfair advantage, and the word was given "*en garde messieurs!*" The swords crossed each other with a sharp clash, and the combat commenced. It was however by no means an equal one. On one side, exquisite skill and temper were opposed to rashness and passion, and the result could not very long be doubtful. After an impetuous and spirited assault on the part of De Nanci, which was however baffled and completely turned aside by the skill of his cool and wary antagonist, he began to lose his temper, and received several slight flesh wounds. Summoning every energy for one last and desperate effort, De Nanci rushed on his opponent, but in the act of advancing his foot, slipped, and De Valmont's sword passed entirely through his body, the point coming out near the left shoulder blade. His friends rushed forward immediately to raise and support the unfortunate young man who had fallen heavily to the ground. But it was useless; the wound was a dreadful and fatal one; there was a gasp, a slight shudder, and all was over. The gay and reckless group which surrounded the dead man, looked on the bloody tragedy for a short time in unbroken silence. At length the man with the moustache relinquishing the body which he had attempted to lift up, exclaimed, "It is, no doubt a great pity; he was an excellent fellow! but as we can do no good here, I propose that we decamp forthwith, before that rascally guard gets reinforced, and returns to attack us."

"Yes, yes," cried another, "the comedy is finished; let us go to supper,"—and the thoughtless crowd swept away to their various pursuits and amusements, leaving the corpse of their late associate to be taken care of by his servants. Now-a-days, such conduct and remarks would be considered cold blooded and revolting. But it was the tone of that age to treat the most serious and sacred subjects, in a light and mocking spirit. Religion, virtue, morality, even the Deity himself, all was a jest.

Whatever might have been the feelings of the young Spaniard on learning the result of her scheme of vengeance, she confined them to her own bosom. By neither word nor look did she betray her interest in the events which had become the public topic of conversation, nor did she for a moment neglect her theatrical duties.

A few nights after the duel, as De Valmont was walking behind the scenes, a hand was lightly laid on his arm, and on looking, he was somewhat surprised to see Nina. "Ha! truant," she exclaimed, with a gay and joyous smile, "have I found you at last; you shall not go again until you promise to grant me my request."

"Fair Nina," replied the former lover, with an air of gallantry, "what could you ask that I should refuse?"

"Then promise to sup with me to-night," she replied with a quick and eager glance.—"What! you hesitate! nay, then I must bribe you, for, know, fair sir, that the charming Rosalie will be there; so no refusal."

"Since you are so kind," at length said De Valmont, "be it so; I will wait on you."

"Till then, adieu," said the fair dancer, kissing her hand to him.

That night a merry party of three was gathered around the sumptuous repast of Nina, who did the honours of her table with charming grace and simplicity. The rich viands, and the rare and costly wines were seasoned by many a sparkling jest; and the light musical laugh of the young Spaniard, was a constant echo to all the lively sallies of her companions.

Thus passed the hours away unheeded, in mirth and revelry, until De Valmont declared that it was time to part. "Fair Nina," he exclaimed, "it is a pity that such charming moments as we have spent this night, should have an end. But, alas! so it is. Farewell, and a thousand thanks for your delightful entertainment."

"Nay," said the dancer, "go not yet, sit, I entreat you. Before you depart, you must drain one bright and sparkling cup, and the pledge shall be, 'love and pleasure.'"

While speaking, she rapidly changed colour and slightly trembled, but recovering her calmness by a strange effort, she went to a large sideboard covered with glittering and costly plate, and filling two richly chased gold cups from a flask of wine, which she appeared to select with some care, handed them to De Valmont and his companion. The pledge was named, and the fatal goblets emptied. After