THE VICTIM;
OR THE DREADFUL FATE OF THE MARCHIONESS DE GANGES.

This lady, whose misfortunes have furnished the subject of romances, poems and melodramas, was born at Avignon, in the year 1636. Nature and fortune seemed to have united to load her with their favours in her early life, only that she might feel more acutely the horrors of her subsequent fate. When she was little more than thirteen she was married to the Marquis de Castellane, a grandson to the Duke de Villars. On her being introduced at Versailles, Louis XIV., who was then very young, distinguished her amidst the crowd of beauties which embellished the most brilliant court in Europe. The exquisite loveliness of the Marchioness, the illustrious family of her husband, the immense fortune which she had brought him, and the kind of attention with which she had been honoured by the king, all conspired to render her the fashion, and she was soon known in Paris by no other appellation than that of the "beautiful Provençal." Her first ties were soon broken. The Marquis de Castellane, who was in the naval service, perished by shipwreck, on the coast of Sicily. The Marchioness, a blooming widow, rich, and without children, quickly saw all the most splendid youths of the court flocking round her and suing for her hand. Her unpropitious star destined her to give the preference to the youthful Lanède Marquis de Ganges. She was united to him in the month of July, 1658. Two months after the celebration of the marriage, the Marquis took his wife to Avignon. Their bliss during the first years of their union was uninterrupted. The Marquis de Ganges had two brothers, the Abbé and the Chevalier de Ganges. Both were so deeply smitten with the charms of their sister-in-law, that they instantly became enamoured of her. At the expiration of two or three years, some differences arose between the married couple: on the one side too strong a tendency to dissipation, and on the other a little coquetry, which, no doubt, was entirely innocent, occasioned this slight disagreement.
 Abbé, who was naturally of an intriguing disposition, exasperated and reconciled the husband and wife just as it suited his purposes. As his sister-in-law made him her confidant, he hoped that he should ultimately render her favorable to his passion; but, as soon as he disclosed it, his love was disdainfully rejected. With the same pretensions, the Chevalier made the same attempt, and was just as badly received. Not being able to succeed, the two brothers mutually confided to each other their criminal wishes, and, blending together both their resentments, they agreed to take joint vengeance. From that period they sought the means of getting rid of their sister-in-law. Poison was administered to the Marchioness in milk chocolate; but whether it was that the poison, being put in with a trembling hand, was not in sufficient quantity, or that the milk blunted the effect of it, she sustained but little injury from it. The crime, however, did not pass undiscovered. To put a stop to the rumours on this subject, which were current in the city, the Marquis proposed to his wife to spend the autumn on his estate of Ganges. The Marchioness consented, which seems rather extraordinary; but in human events there are always some circumstances which are inexplicable. It appears that the Marchioness had forebodings of her fate; for, in a letter to her mother, dated from the castle of Ganges, she declared that she could not traverse the gloomy avenues of that melancholy residence without a feeling of terror. Her husband, who had accompanied her thither, left her there with his two brothers, and returned to Avignon. Not long before her quitting that city, the Marchioness had come into possession of a considerable inheritance; and it is a fact that proves that she suspected the family into which she had entered, and perhaps even her husband, that she made a will at Avignon, by which, in case of her death, she confided the management of her property, till her children were of age, to Madam de Rossan, her mother. This will became the pretext of an inveterate persecution of the Marchioness by her brothers-in-law. They so strongly and perseveringly pressed her to revoke it, that she was at last weak enough to consent. They had no sooner carried their point than they made a second attempt to poison her, but with no better success than before. The monsters had, however, gone too far to allow of their receding. Being one day obliged to keep her bed by indisposition, the Marchioness saw her brothers-in-law enter the room. In one hand the Abbé had a pistol, and in the other a glass of poison; the chevalier had a drawn sword under his arm. "You must die, madam," said the Abbé; "choose whether by pistol, sword, or poison." The Marchioness, in a state bordering on distraction, could not believe her senses: she sprang out of bed, threw herself at the feet of the brothers, and asked what crime she had committed. "Choose!" was the only answer which the assassins made. Seeing that there was no hope of assistance, the unfortunate lady took the glass which the Abbé presented to her, and swallowed the contents, while he held the pistol to her breast. This horrible scene being finished, the monsters retired, and locked the victim into her room, promising to send her a confessor, the spiritual aid of whom she had requested as a last favour. She was now alone; her first thought was to escape; her next was to try various means of removing from her stomach the poison which she had been compelled to take; in the latter she partly succeeded, by putting one of the locks of her hair down her throat. Then, half naked, she threw herself into the court-yard, though the window was nearly eight yards from the ground. But how was she to escape from her murderers, who would be speedily aware of her flight, and were masters of all the outlets from the
castle? The unfortunate Marchioness implored the compassion of one of the servants, who, let her out into the fields through a stable door. She was quickly pursued by the Abbé and the Chevalier, who represented her as a mad woman to a farmer in whose house she had taken refuge. It was here that the crime was to be consummated. The Chevalier, who had hitherto appeared less ferocious than his brother, followed her from room to room, and, having come up with her in a remote apartment, the villain gave her two stabs in the breast, and five in the back, at the moment that she was trying to get away. The blows were so violent that the sword was broken, and part of it remained in the shoulder. The cries of the miserable lady brought the neighbours to the place, and the Abbé, who had staid at the door to prevent any help from coming to her, entered the house with the crowd. Enraged to see that the Marchioness was not dead, he presented his pistol to her breast, but it missed fire. The spectators, who had hitherto been terrified, now rushed to seize the Abbé; but by dint of hard struggles he effected his escape. Madam de Ganges lived nineteen days after this horrible event, and did not expire before she had publicly implored the divine mercy for her assassins. On her body being opened, the bowels were found to be corroded by the effects of the poison. Her husband was present during her last moments. There were very strong presumptions against him; but the Marchioness, still compassionate amidst the severest sufferings, did all that lay in her power to clear him from suspicion. The parliament of Toulouse lost no time in instituting judicial proceedings against the criminals, and, by a decree which was issued on the 21st of August, 1667, the Abbé and Chevalier de Ganges were outlawed, and sentenced to be broken on the wheel. After having had his property confiscated, and been degraded from the rank of nobility, the Marquis was condemned to perpetual banishment by the same decree. The Chevalier found shelter at Malta, and was subsequently killed in an engagement with the Turks. As to the Abbé, he sought an asylum in Holland, and there, under a fictitious name, he passed through a variety of adventures, which might furnish the subject of a romance. It is much to be regretted that two such execrable wretches should have escaped the punishment which was so justly awarded to them by the parliament of Toulouse.

SINGULAR MARRIAGE.

Extract from the Parish Register of St. Martin, Leicester, February 15, 1576. "Thomas Tilsly and Ursula Russet were married, and because the said Thomas was, and is naturally deaf and dumb, could not for his part, observe the orders of the form of marriage, after the approbation had, from Thomas, the Bishop of Lincoln, John Chippendale, LL.D. and Commissary, and Mr. Richard Davis, Mayor of Leicester, and others of his brethren, with the rest of the parish, the said Thomas, for expressing of his mind, instead of words, of his own accord used these signs: first, he embraced her with his arms; then took her by the hand, and put a ring on her finger, and laid his hand upon his heart, then held up his hands to heaven; and to shew his continuance to dwell with her to his life's end, he did it by closing his eyes with his hands, and digging the earth with his feet, and pulling as though he would ring a bell, with other signs approved."