

But you don't know him, Sir Walter; let me have the pleasure of introducing him to you."

"Spare me, Dame Brandon," returned Walter, biting his lips, while the red blood mantled over his cheek. "Your spouse can only awaken in my bosom feelings of hatred and regret."

Then changing the conversation, he said :

"By St. George! your cousin looks bravely in her gay dress. Who would have imagined that the little prim Barbara would have changed places with the stately Lady Monica, and become Lady of Conway Place?"

This was partly said to see how far Monica sympathized in the unexpected elevation of her sometime dependant kinswoman. How little he understood the generous character of the noble being whom he professed madly to love!

"Dear Barbara!" replied Monica, following her with her eyes, as she fluttered from group to group of her admiring guests. "She used to scold me now and then, and I, like a wilful girl, too often rebelled against her sage advice. But she is a good woman, and deserves her splendid fortune. Most sincerely do I hope that she may be happy."

Fenwick could not doubt her sincerity; but in his eyes, blinded as they had been by the selfish ways of the world, it appeared little less than madness.

"Do you accompany Lady Conway to London, this winter?" he asked, with some engerness.

"To what intent?" said Monica.

"To visit the court. Have you no ambition to become the centre of attraction there? No curiosity to behold our gracious Queen?"

"None," replied Monica, calmly.

"And, are you really going to immure yourself alive in the dull, dark country?"

"It is neither dull nor dark to me, Sir Walter."

"One month spent amongst the gaieties of town would cure you of these romantic notions. There is only one thing upon earth which would reconcile me to a country life."

"It must be something very attractive," said Monica, "that could induce a man of the world to quit his proper element."

"Could I exchange places with Richard Brandon, and have Dame Monica for a ministering angel, the country would then breathe for me the fragrance of Paradise," replied Walter, casting upon her a glance of passionate regard, as he mingled with the crowd.

"I have sinned against my noble husband in listening, for one moment, to the vain flatteries of this foolish man," thought Monica; and she

felt sad and depressed, until she stood once more beneath the shadow of her own roof.

"Oh, Richard!" she sighed, as she sunk upon his breast, and hid her face there, "I always act imprudently when I leave your sheltering side, and my own dear quiet home. I am certain that were I to mingle much with the world and worldly people, I should become just as vain and sinful as the rest."

"Not while you possess this darling sincerity," replied Brandon, kissing away the tear that slowly trickled from beneath the long dark lash that veiled the blue eye of his beloved. "But how came Monica to prefer the plain Richard Brandon to you gay gallant, with his handsome face and bright plumes?"

"Which would you have me to prefer, Richard: the outside of the casket, or the jewel which it contained?" said Monica, raising her head, and gazing fondly upon him. "Walter may be compared to a handsome casket, from which the world has long ago stolen the jewel of great price. But my Richard shall shine as a star in the firmament of heaven, when the earthly tabernacle is dissolved in the dust."

"May you prove a true prophet, my best wife!" replied the husband, pressing her to his heart. "Poor Fenwick! I cannot help feeling an interest in the fate of one who has loved my Monica."

Before the mellow fruits of autumn had ripened in the sun, the domestic felicity of the Brandons was increased, by the birth of a son, whom Monica called Conway, in honour of her father, and for the love she bore to the place of her birth. Engaged in the first and all engrossing duties of maternity, Monica did not observe the alteration which was rapidly taking place in the appearance of her adored husband. His cheek, always pale, was now at times flushed with a delicate but vivid tint of colour, and his dark eyes glittered with unusual brilliancy. Accustomed to the simplest diet, which generally consisted of fruit, milk, and eggs, he scarcely partook even of these; and often the day would pass away without his breaking bread. Matilda was the first to notice her brother's feverish appearance, and want of appetite.

"Monica," she said, "have you observed Richard lately? Do you not think that he is looking ill?"

"Ill!" exclaimed Monica, almost dropping the babe she held in her arms. "Matilda! do you think he is ill? I thought that he was looking beautifully."

"Ah!" said Matilda, with a sigh, "it is a false bloom. He eats nothing, and he is grown so thin; and I have often seen him stop and rest, as he comes up the hill to the house. Yesterday,