

ity. This, through a feeling of false pride, Monica refused to accept; for, though she respected Sir Miles, she could not help viewing him in the light of a supplanter, and his control over her was a restraint upon the freedom she enjoyed as her own mistress. It was now—when she stood alone, divested of the barrier that wealth had, in the sensitive mind of Richard Brandon, placed between them,—that that high-minded gentleman came forward, and offered himself as a suitor for the hand of the portionless Monica.

Master Brandon was a man after Sir Miles' own heart, and he of course placed no obstacles in the way of their union; and, when the year of mourning for her father had expired, Monica entered the quaint old fashioned home of Brandon, as his happy bride. There were two persons to whom this wedding gave deep dissatisfaction. To Hubert Vincent, who performed the marriage ceremony, it was the death blow of secret, but long cherished hopes; and it filled the mind of the less philosophic Fenwick with feelings of rage, hatred, envy, and despair.

CHAPTER XIII.

ALL that heaven could bestow, of calm and rational enjoyment, was to be found under the peaceful roof of Richard Brandon. Love, pure, disinterested love, whose chief aim was to secure the eternal welfare of its cherished object, was there,—with holy friendship, fraternal affection, and pious submission to age and virtue. Religion, with simple and heavenward trust, ennobled the possessors, and sweetened with its holy influence, all the petty cares and vexations of life. Monica now felt that life was a glorious boon—that the happiness of man, had been his Maker's chief object, in his creation—and that he must fulfil his high destiny, if he obeyed the precepts and walked in the footsteps of his Redeemer. The most perfect confidence existed between her and her husband. They had but one heart, and were soon actuated by the same spirit. Looking up to him, as her guide and monitor, she soon renounced those heretical opinions, which, in the enthusiasm of youthful presumption and inexperience, she had adopted on her first perusal of the Scriptures of Truth. She now read and prayed with her husband. Often, with hands locked within each other, they offered upon the household altar, eloquent petitions for each other; and some of the happiest moments of their lives were experienced during these blessed reunions of prayer and praise. Thus a year of peaceful, heartfelt joys, rolled over the newly wedded pair. The world, and its false pleasures, were nothing to those who had such a world within themselves.

The cultivation of a pretty flower-garden, containing many rare foreign plants—the care of her dairy, dove-cot, and poultry yard, afforded hours of innocent amusement and relaxation. Then, there were the poor to visit and work for, and her household affairs, which, as she was no longer the wealthy heiress, but the wife of a private gentleman, were not above her notice. Mrs. Brandon, Richard's aunt, was getting old and feeble; and much of her time, and that of Matilda, Brandon's only sister, was necessarily occupied in attending to her comfort, and contributing to her amusement. Monica was always employed, always cheerful, and bearing with her a grateful and contented heart, always looked beautiful and happy. If her delighted husband had an idol, it most certainly was his charming wife.

Sir Miles Conway often came to visit them. He was generally accompanied by Barbara Heatherton, who was Monica's cousin by her mother's side, and neither she nor Brandon were much surprised, when one fine spring morning they received a pressing invitation to Conway Place, to witness the nuptials of Sir Miles and prudent Mistress Barbara, now Lady Conway. Monica thought her hitherto quiet cousin looked rather big in her rich brocaded dress and suit of pearls, and gave her hand, with an air of great dignity, to her guests; but if she were amused by the sudden assumption of superiority, it awoke no feeling of envy. Monica was too happy to envy any one. Among the guests she beheld her old flame, now Sir Walter Fenwick; he having received the honor of knighthood from Queen Elizabeth when she visited Kenilworth Castle. He was a great favourite with his Lord, the handsome and dissipated Leicester; and his court airs, and elegant dress, added greatly to the grace of his handsome person, but did not render him more attractive to Monica. He seemed struck with the improvement in her personal appearance, and hovered about her like her shadow. Once, when he found himself alone by her side, he exclaimed, with an air of playful raillery:

"This is the first time I have had the happiness of paying my respects to Dame Brandon, since she made the great sacrifice."

"How mean you, Sir Knight?" said Monica, in some surprise.

"Destowed that fair hand upon a commoner, when its beautiful and accomplished possessor might have won a coronet."

"A crown, perhaps, had I been fortunate enough to have lived in the days of King Henry," said Monica, laughing. "I would rather be the crown, spoken of in the Scripture, to my husband.