

Dorothy looked very sulky, and twitched her apron string without answering a word.

"Nay, do not look so sulky, Dolly. I love her against my will: you by choice. Now you could help me, if you had a mind, to get rid of this tormenting passion, for whilst Dame Brandon lives, I tell you candidly, I never can make you my wife."

"I wish she were dead!" muttered Dolly, and her brow contracted, and her cheek grew very white. "But I hope you don't mean me to kill her?"

"Kill her! Oh no; that would be too bad. But, hark ye, Dolly! you know that she gained, by that mad frolic in the park, the reputation of a witch. I want you to strengthen that impression. Could you not feign sickness, and occasionally fall into fits?—pretend to vomit toads and frogs, bits of bloody straw, pins, and such like trash? It would not be very difficult to deceive your father and brothers; and ever and anon, when the devil comes strongly to your aid, call out, 'Dame Brandon! Dame Brandon! Take away the witch; she torments me in this flame!'"

"An excellent joke!" quoth Dorothy, clapping her hands; "and one that I could play off to the life. But how would it work against Dame Brandon?"

"It would raise such a hue and cry against her, that she would be obliged to quit the country, which would break the spell which she hath thrown over me."

"I see, I see," cried Dorothy, who hated the innocent Monica for the passion which her charms had inspired in Fenwick, and who would have felt no scruple in murdering her, could she have perpetrated the deed without the fear of detection. "When shall I begin the farce?"

"Not yet," returned her tempter. "Wait patiently until the early days of her widowhood are past. The public would feel too much sympathy with her at present."

"And what is to be my reward?" asked Dolly, "if I bring this about to suit your humour?"

"A holiday suit of rich silk."

Dolly shook her head.

"What would be the use of a dress which I could not wear, without betraying myself. I trow, my father would soon thrust it behind the fire, and the wearer out of doors. Give me a title to wear the silk, and I will take the bribe."

"Trust to my honour, Doll, and you shall not lack a rich reward."

"This will not satisfy me," said the girl. "I have proved, to my cost, what truth there is in a rich man's vows. Nothing less than a solemn covenant to make me your wife, will win me to work your will in this matter."

"Then I must seek another agent," returned Walter, coldly, for the idea of promising to wed such a degraded being was revolting to him.

"Please yourself, Sir Knight," said Dolly, tauntingly. "You have armed me with powerful weapons; take care that I use them not against yourself."

Sir Walter started, his lip quivered, and the working of the muscles of his face expressed considerable alarm.

"You think to deceive me," continued Dolly, "but I am just as crafty as you are. If I had an end to answer, I would not let it out as easily as you have done. This story of Dame Monica having bewitched you is all a sham. She is no more a witch than I am. But you love her, and always did love her, more than ever you loved me, and I vow to be revenged upon you both, or my name is not Dorothy!"

"Dorothy! dear Dorothy!" exclaimed the astonished knight, sinking on his knees before her; "why act in this perverse manner? have I not given you a thousand proofs of my affection? and if any were yet wanting—look here my love;" and he dexterously displayed the rich silk fringed mantua cloak, and a small string of pearls clasped with a gold sprig.

The sight of these gewgaws so completely dazzled the eyes of the avaricious, vain girl, that in order to possess treasures of which she had only dared to dream, she pretended to be appeased, and throwing the mantua round her shoulders, and winding the pearls in her flaxen hair, she stood smiling before her perplexed lover, and putting on a thousand affected airs. Her vanity would have afforded him amusement at any other time; but he now looked upon her with a sort of loathing, for he felt keenly that he had committed himself, and was in her power; and he knew not how far such power, lodged in the hands of a wicked, malicious, revengeful woman, might operate against himself. The finery and the person that it adorned were so ill suited to each other that he thought she looked marvellously like a mess of beans and bacon in a silver dish. But in the degraded position in which he stood, he was obliged to have recourse to flattery.

"Thy ornaments become thee bravely, Dolly, or rather thou becomest them. Our Queen would give half the wealth of the realm could she look like thee."

"Is she like another woman?" asked Dolly, opening her eyes very wide.

"Why, what should she be like?"

"I thought she was a great beauty, dressed in silver and gold, and covered all over with diamonds and rubies, and sitting upon a throne of