

feet, and, without uttering a single word, both vanished.

Monica was struck by the man's look and manner. She felt something was wrong, and ran out of the house to satisfy her doubts. On the steps, she met a mournful cavalcade. Some one was borne upon a rude litter in the midst. Monica rushed forward, put aside the arm that vainly endeavoured to keep her back, and, lifting up the cloak that covered the face of the dead, she beheld her father! Sir Luke had dropped down in the stables whilst inspecting a favorite horse, and died of apoplexy.

Monica neither shrieked, nor wept, nor fainted. She turned very cold, and very pale; but she demanded in a low firm voice, if medical assistance had been sent for—if nothing could be done to restore the apparently dead to life?

"It is all over with poor Sir Luke," said Walter. "Dear Monica, we will do all that is necessary. Pray retire to your chamber."

The certainty of her bereavement now seemed for the first time to strike Monica. She pressed both her hands tightly upon her heart, cast one sad and hurried glance towards the litter, and suffered her cousin Barbara to lead her from the scene.

This blow was so sudden, so unexpected, that it was some hours before Monica could fully realize the anguish that it brought. Whatever her father had been to others, however lightly estimated, and little loved, he had been an indulgent, tender parent to her, and, in return, he was all but idolized, by the warm-hearted and affectionate girl.

"Oh! that I could shed tears, Alena," she cried, as she sat rocking herself to-and-fro in her chair, and pressing her hands upon her breast. "My poor heart will surely break. Oh! my father! my dear, honored father! Can it be that you have left your Monica?—left her alone in this world of ill! Come Alena, let us go to him. Let me see him—speak to him once more; and this burning, suffocating weight, which crushes my heart and brain, will melt in tears."

Tonset instantly upon the impulse of the moment, was so common to Monica, that, before Alena could detain her, she found herself by the side of her young mistress, leaning over the newly dead.

The stately, canopied bed, was hung with black and ornamented with sable plumes. The body lay extended upon a snow-white linen sheet, falling on all sides to the floor, which was covered with black cloth; a large pall of velvet, with the Conway arms embroidered with gold in the centre, and bordered with a band of gold, and rich fringes,

lay over the dead, leaving the face and head alone bare.

Ah! how unlike the rosy, handsome Sir Luke Conway, were the swollen features and blackened hue of the poor remains.

"Is this my father! my dear, dear father!" shrieked Monica, as she gazed, with blanched cheeks and startling eye-balls, upon the livid object before her.

A hand drew the pall gently over the ghastly face. That hand belonged to Richard Brandon; he had heard of his neighbour's death, and had come to render his assistance in performing the last sad rites.

"This is all that remains of the rich and powerful," he said. "Death is a great leveller. My dear young friend, may God enable you to bear this heavy trial."

But she to whom he spake heard him not; she had fallen insensible upon the pall that covered her father.

CHAPTER XII.

Sir Luke Conway slept with his fathers. The mourners had departed; and the lawyers had assembled in the oak parlor to open his will.

Monica was there as the heiress of Conway, dressed in deep mourning, and as pale as a marble statue.

Master Vincent was at her right hand, and Dame Fenwick and Barbara Heatherton were also present.

"Sir Luke," asked one of the professional gentlemen, "had no other relative?"

"He had one brother," said Monica, "who went abroad when young, and was killed in a duel. My father succeeded Sir Miles."

"Your father was the eldest son?"

"The second."

"Did your uncle leave any children?"

"We never heard that he was married," said Monica.

The gentleman then proceeded to read the will, which left to Monica all the Conway property, in default of male heirs, while it particularly bequeathed to her, and left at her entire disposal, the lands which had been granted to Sir Luke by the Crown, which had once belonged to the father of Brandon. This clause in the voluminous roll of parchment, was the only thing which seemed to interest Monica; and she remarked to Master Vincent, when the lawyers departed, that she was glad that her father had left it in her power to perform an act of justice.

"Explain yourself, Monica," he said anxiously:

"It is my intention immediately to restore to Richard Brandon, his father's forfeited inheritance."