

She found Dame Fenwick, Barbara, and young Walter, in the oak parlor.

"Fair mistress Monica!" cried the young cavalier, kissing her hand. "What has happened to disturb you, that you suffer a frown to mar the serenity of your countenance?"

"Now judge for me truly, my friends, if I have not reason to feel angry. I amuse a dull hour by repeating to myself aloud, the chivalrous verses of our admirable Chaucer, and one of my father's servants imagines my conversation to be held with evil spirits. I wish I had the power to command such attendant spirits; if they inspired me with the same glorious thoughts, and pictured to my mind's eye such bright fantasies, I would cherish them as ministering angels."

"Shall I chastise the rude fellow for his impertinent remarks, Lady Monica?" said Walter Fenwick, as he watched with delight the color that mantled over her beautiful cheeks.

"Oh, no! no! that would be too great a punishment for a slight offence. Leave him to me; if he believes that I possess supernatural powers, one of these dark nights I will dress myself up in the bearskin, which my great grandfather, Dennis Conway, wore at the mask given by the French king, in honour of our gallant Henry the Fifth's marriage, which cannot fail to frighten him out of his wits!"

"By your Lady!—" commenced the young cavalier.

"Fush, master Walter," said Monica, smiling. "Our Lady is out of fashion; you are a Protestant, and must choose some other name to swear by."

"Then, by your own bright eyes, charming Monica! I would barter my hopes of knighthood, for a hug from that same bear!"

"What think you of a stroke of her paw?" returned Monica, striking him smartly over the cheek with her small white hand. "Is that worth the gold spurs?"

"Ah, if I could ever hope to claim the paw as mine own!"

"Seek the gold spurs, master Walter, and win and wear them; but the hand never! He who hears with my bearish humours, I must bear always on my heart; your image leaves no impression there. Like the shadow which the sun casts upon the dial, it varies with the hour, and the first cloud that covers his face, obliterates it altogether."

"Is your heart, then, Lady Monica, a heart of stone?"

"I hope so."

"Wherefore?"

"Because I would have the impressions made upon it lasting," said Monica, laughing. You,

my brave waver, have a heart of wax, I am told, which melts at the glance of a lady's eye; but the wound is so slight, that the next fair dame you meet can heal it."

"Ah! you have been told that I am a general admirer!—and so I am! for I admire the whole sex; but, charming Monica, I never loved but one."

Walter Fenwick spoke the truth. He was a gay, dissipated, extravagant man, who possessed a handsome person and a winning address, and whose leading propensities might be embodied in three words, war, woman and wine. A brave soldier, a general lover, and a reckless boon companion, his ambition never rose above being thought conspicuous in one, or all, of the three. Yet he loved Monica, and for her sake would have resigned the worthless distinctions he coveted.

He had sought her hand from her father, and gained from him a hearty consent; but Monica, who neither regarded his noble figure, nor fine face, nor the fashionable accomplishments of the day, in which he greatly excelled, with a favourable eye, laughed at his suit, and turned all his amorous speeches into ridicule. This, which might have provoked him into anger, only served to stimulate his passion. A practised and successful gallant, he would not suffer himself to be beaten out of the field by a wild country girl. He haunted her like her shadow, fluttering like a poor moth around the taper which consumes it. There were times when Monica, tired with her own disdain, suffered herself to be amused by her lover; but in her gayest moods, she never held out to him, by word or deed, the least promise of his ultimate success.

Vanity is a powerful passion; it blinds us even yet more than love. The handsome Walter Fenwick believed it impossible that Monica Conway could really behold him with indifference. He was so accustomed to say: "She shall be mine!"—to consider her as a costly jewel reserved for his own wearing, that the idea of another attempting to gain possession of it, never troubled him. Her scorn, he construed into a playful *badinage*, a reckless way she had of showing her power; and as her pretty disdain gave more zest to his passion, than the flattering speeches of less fastidious dames, he rather encouraged, than resented a war of words.

"I have no wish to be convinced," said Monica, turning from him to the window; "and if we are to remain friends, you must mention this subject no more."

She spoke with so much firmness and decision, that a pang of doubt and jealousy, for the first time, thrilled through Walter's breast.