

she continued, "that he were but old enough to understand me, I would so convince him of my innocence, that the condemnation of the whole world could not blacken my memory. Farewell, my precious babe! God will not desert you for your good father's sake. Your mother's last sigh will be a prayer for you."

The gentlemen now interposed, and separating the weeping child and his mother, left the poor convict to silence, night, and tears.

CHAPTER XIX.

NEVER was there such a crowd collected in the good old town of Leicester, as on the morning which was to witness the execution of the notable witch, Dame Monica Brandon.

Long before daylight, people from all parts of the country thronged the highways that led thither. Strange curiosity that, which can strive with such eagerness to see the last dying agonies of a fellow creature, however guilty! What a melancholy spectacle to angels, what a matter of sarcastic triumph to devils, what a painful and humiliating object of meditation for a benevolent and regenerated mind! But so it has been, and so it ever will be, until the blessed doctrines of the Cross, shall have subdued the evil passions, and called into fresh existence the original good, which was breathed into man by his munificent Creator.

The close packed mass of human forms, that surrounded the market place, undulated like the waves of a swelling sea, while every moment increased the dense wall of heads, whose staring eyes were directed by one impulse to a general centre. The middle of the market place was occupied by three stakes, surrounded by faggots. Two were already filled by bound and helpless victims; the one in the middle was still vacant. The old witch, or rather maniac, Margery Laws, had openly confessed her guilt, and for her the crowd felt but little interest. She was poor, ugly and old—friendless, afflicted and destitute; and was rather an object of increased scorn, from these circumstances, than of compassion. Azubah, who was a foreigner and very beautiful, filled them with more awe, she looked so stern and grand. They wanted to know if that proud erect brow, could quail, if that keen, dazzling eye, could look upon the flames without losing sight of its own fire.

But she, the great object of attraction, for whose especial benefit all this vast throng had been collected—why was her place vacant?

Willing to give her a last chance of saving her lost soul by the confession of her guilt; the Sheriff had for that purpose decreed, that she

should witness the dying agonies of her companions in suffering. This inhuman act of mistaken kindness was vehemently opposed by Monica, who declared that she could endure her own torments better than witness theirs. This mercy was however denied her. Seated in a high chair and wrapped in a winding sheet, her beautiful head alone bare, sat the young and innocent victim.

Her small white hands were clasped in gyves, most piteous to see, and her lovely brown tresses were meekly parted upon her high, snow-white, placid brow, and waved down below her girlish. Her lips were slightly compressed, and like her cheeks, were blanched and cold as marble.

The eyes of the pitiful women were blinded with tears whilst gazing upon her; and men who stood behind the great circle of the crowd, climbed upon each others' shoulders to look at her, and having seen they slid down exclaiming: "Alack! alack!"

There was one face, however, which from the opposite side contemplated that injured excellence with malignant scorn, and raising her finger slowly to a level with Monica's face, gave the first hiss of triumph and execration. Her example was followed by many like her, but the general aspect of the spectators was grave and sorrowful.

When the executioner applied the torch to the piles which contained the forms of her companions, Monica shuddered and turned her eyes away.

"Confess thy guilt, thou black witch!" screamed old Margery Laws. "Thou art as deeply dyed in crime, as worthy of Hell as we are."

"Be firm, Monica," said Azubah, in her thrilling voice. "The breath of the Lord can restrain the waters in their wrath, and cooling as the ripple of soft waters, is this flame to my thirsty soul. The body may shrink and shiver, but the soul feels it not."

Then extending her chained hands, and lifting them above her head, she cried in a loud voice:

"My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!"

The flames soared around and over her, and she spake no more; in a few moments she was but a heap of ashes.

The Sheriff now approached Monica, and said to her:

"Does not this dismal spectacle move thee?"

"Yea, to grief," she replied calmly, "that thou shouldst have inflicted upon me this further pain. May God forgive thee, and charge not my blood upon thy head!"

As she said this and the executioners approached to lead her to the stake, there arose from