

stay the execution, until further notice. Seizing this order, which might be considered as his own death warrant; and, without having trimmed his beard, or changed his dress, or scarcely broken bread, since he heard of Monica's condemnation, Sir Walter threw himself into his saddle, mounted upon the fleetest steed that could be found in the Earl's stable, and was once more upon the road to Leicester.

But to return to his victim. Entertaining no hope, save the hope of speedily being united to her beloved husband in heaven, she had spent the little time which remained to her in this world, in diligently preparing herself for a better; and such was her cheerful confidence in the Divine Disposer of events, that she felt that all that had happened to her was for the best; that if the gate was narrow and painful, through which He had called her home, endless bliss awaited her on the other side. Yes! there were moments when her gloomy cell seemed radiated with divine light; when the spirit of Brandon hovered round her, to strengthen and comfort her; when, stretching her arms upward, she felt as if wings alone were wanting, to waft her to those realms of bliss.

She doubted not that God, who sent his angel to strengthen the three Hebrew worthies, when cast into the fiery furnace would likewise support her in the same trial.

Her astonishing constancy and firmness was a matter of no small surprise to the Sheriff, and Master Vincent; who daily visited the prisoner in order to induce her, to confess her guilt and unburden her conscience.

Her answer was invariably: "My conscience is clear—I have no guilt to confess. God, I trust, has absolved me of my sins, and washed me in the atoning blood of the Lamb. I am happy in the prospect of a blessed immortality. Your presence alone entices me uncensured."

Once she enquired with great earnestness, how Azubah bore her sentence?

"With the same self-righteous confidence," replied Master Hubert. "The one spirit seems to inspire you both."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Monica joyfully; "that spirit is of God; it will make for us an easy bridge from this world to a better."

The evening before her execution, she was permitted to embrace her child; but in the presence of the Sheriff and Master Vincent, lest she should do him some mischief. The little fellow, who was a beautiful creature of about twenty months old, came in, led by his affectionate aunt, who was delighted to have this opportunity of speaking to her dear Monica once more. Alena followed, for, faithful to the last, the good girl would

not believe her mistress guilty. The accusations against her were just as true as the story about the bear, which, she said, both Master Vincent and herself knew to be false.

The attachment of this girl was highly gratifying to her mistress, who received the beloved group which gathered round her, with tears of joy. The little Conway at first was frightened, but recognising his mother's voice, he sprang up into her arms, clung about her neck, and covered her face with kisses.

"Mammy, mammy come adain! Dear mammy!" he cried, then laying his pretty head upon her bosom, he nestled to her, with smiles of quiet delight.

"Ah! my poor boy, if that heart could tell thee all that is in it respecting thee," sobbed Monica, "thou wouldst never forget me. Oh! that I could take thee with me to those realms of joy, never to know the cares and troubles of this wicked world. How happy would it be for us both!"

"Mammy cry?" said the child, looking up wonderingly at the tears which fell fast upon his innocent face.

"It is for thee I weep. Not for myself but for thee," said Monica, pressing him closer to her heart.

"We must part, my tender babe, in this world for ever. In a few days you will forget your mother, but I pray to God to vindicate my memory, that in after years when you hear her tale of woe, you may think of me with pride."

"My dear Lady," cried Alena, kneeling beside her. "May God punish the wretches who have baited and pursued you to the death."

"Rather pray, my kind girl, that ho may pity and forgive them."

"Ah!" exclaimed Matilda, clasping her in her arms; "I feel as if my heart would burst with indignation when I behold you here. When I think of your ignominious sentence, and cruel, shameful death. Gentlemen!" she cried, turning and addressing herself vehemently to the Sheriff and Master Hubert; "can you look upon this injured angel and believe her guilty? Did guilt ever wear a brow like that?"

"Young lady, your relationship to the criminal excuses your ardour," said the Sheriff, "but we do not judge by appearances but by facts; her sentence is just. Her appearance of tranquillity, while she obstinately refuses to confess her sin, is only a delusion of Satan."

"I am falsely condemned," said Monica firmly, "and that time will prove. But I submit to it patiently, as it is the will of God. This dear child alone makes me grieve at my doleful fate, less for the pain, however, than for the disgrace which it will bring upon him. Oh!"