

MONICA; OR, WITCHCRAFT.*

BY MRS. HOODIE.

CHAPTER VI.

It was a bright moonlight evening that followed the events of this day, and Monica Conway had barred the door of her chamber, and was busily engaged, by the light of a small silver lamp, in thrusting her slight person into a strange dress, made of the skin of a huge bear, the grim head still crowning the whole, and glaring upon the spectators with a pair of fierce green eyes, made of glass.

Ever and anon Monica paused in arranging her strange toilet, and, glancing at her hideous shadow in the mirror, burst into fits of exultant mirth.

"By our lady! if this does not scare him out of his wits I know not what will. I will stand in that lonely dingle in the park, just behind the great oak tree, and growl at him as he goes past. Ha! ha! I think I see the terror depicted in his wan face—hear his teeth chatter and his knees shake. Ha! ha! Master Wilde! If this does not repay you for your impertinent remarks, I am no witch."

Then opening the door gently, she called in a subdued voice, "Alena! Alena!"

In a few minutes the waiting woman appeared, but sprang back with a ghastly shriek, the moment she entered the apartment.

"Hush! hush! foolish feather-pate. It is I, I, Monica—what did'st thou take me for?"

"Sathanas!" murmured the girl. "Good lord! how you scared me. My heart flutters yet. What dost thou, dear lady, in this rude, bearish dress?"

"Do I not make a charming bear? The bear's legs are rather too long for me, my grand-dad was a tall fellow—and I have no doubt was a delightful barbarian. And look at my paws, Alena. Now don't run away from me, I want to give you an affectionate hug."

The woman drew back, and turned very pale.

"Why, surely, Alena—you are not afraid of me!"

"I don't know, my lady. You do look so awful like. It makes my flesh creep."

"Ha! ha, Alena. Only think how it will frighten him—"

"Whom, my lady?"

"That solemn prig, Laurence Wilde. Master

Vincent sent him to the town, to bring up his valise, and it will be late before he returns. I know he will come the back way through the park, and I will slip out through the garden, and meet him, as the clock strikes twelve, in the lonely dell."

"Ah! do it not, dear lady, do it not! That man, I hate him—should he think it was you he would not fail to do you a mischief."

"Nonsense, Alena! He will run away as fast as his legs can carry him. Ha! ha! I think I see him scampering up hill and down dale, and the bear after him. If he ever walks by moonlight again in Conway Park, I will eat him."

"The fellow is a strong, resolute man, my lady, and should you fail to frighten him, you might lose your life in the frolic."

"I shaw! He believes in ghosts; and because I repeat poetry aloud to myself imagines me to be a witch. He must be a desperate coward, as all ignorant people are. Now, dear Alena, do not attempt to persuade me out of my frolic, for go I will."

"Then let me go with you!"

"No, no; Barbara would miss us both. She has not been so kind to me as formerly: I think Master Vincent has set her to watch me. I hate spies. I shall feel more pleasure in cheating her. When she comes to bid me good night, tell her I am in bed and asleep, and do not wish to be disturbed. But sit thou up, and we will have a hearty laugh together when I return."

Monica's hand was upon the latch of the door. Again the woman, who really loved her, laid hold of her arm and detained her.

"Stay at home, dear lady, some evil will befall you. I feel faint and sick, when I think of your going out alone in that strange dress on this wild errand. That man hates you!"

"Mere fancies, Alena," said Monica, shaking her off—"what have I even done to offend him."

"You have abjured your faith, lady Monica, but he retains his. Since you burnt the rood, for which crime may God forgive you! he has spoken bitter things against you!—things I dare not repeat to you! Is it not madness to throw yourself, alone and undefended, in his path?"

"If he entertains these uncharitable feelings towards me, I shall feel more pleasure in tor-