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MONICA; OR, WITCHCRAFT.*

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THE calm and noble demeanour of Monica during her trial, the solemn manner in which she had called upon God to attest her innocence, had produced a strange effect upon Master Vincent. He could not forget the majesty of her look, the simple, unaffected dignity, with which she regarded him, while he gave his cruel evidence. It was true that he thought he was doing an act of severe duty; but when he saw the diabolical scowl which Dorothy cast upon her defenceless victim; and contrasted the expression of the two faces, a horrible doubt flashed across his mind. Yet, in spite of this painful suspicion, his evidence condemned the child of his adoption, of his early love, to the same fiery grave.

Azubah pleaded guilty. Not to being a witch—for she laughed the possibility of the thing to scorn. But having fruitlessly practised charms and incantations for the possessing herself of supernatural powers, she considered herself as guilty of the crime. Her asseveration of such practices having been fruitless was not believed for a moment, as many witnesses rose up against her, to testify and give proof of their potency, and whatever favor might have been shown to her, the evidence of Master Vincent entirely put aside. She was sentenced to perish at the same time and in the same place with Monica Brandon.

"It would be a pity," said one of the bystanders, "for the sentence of the court to divide friends, who in life had been so firmly united."

From the crowded court room, Master Vincent hurried to the condemned cell, the last earthly abode of the beautiful and delicately nurtured Monica Brandon. She had been deprived of her widow's weeds, and was arrayed in the coarse woollen garments provided for felons. Yet how lovely, how peaceful she looked, as seated on the ground close beside the heavily

ironed narrow window, her hand supporting her head, her rich brown hair waving round her lofty brow, she pondered intently over some page in holy writ from which she seemed to derive both hope and consolation! A sweet smile stole over her lips, and letting the book fall from her hand she looked upward in a sort of extacy, and her face appeared like the face of an angel.

A cloud came down upon the heart of Master Vincent, and extinguished the sunshine of his life for ever. Long, long after the ashes of that devoted woman had been scattered abroad upon the winds of heaven, did memory recall that look. It haunted him by day and night, and the world and all its busy cares could never again efface it from his mind.

Yet, anxious to persuade himself that she was indeed guilty, he drew near and said in a faltering voice:

"Monica Brandon, I am come as a friend to urge you to confess your guilt, and to make your peace with God."

"I cannot confess that of which I am not guilty. My peace with God is made. May you enjoy the same in your last moments, Master Vincent, which now sustains and comforts me. I pray you, disturb not this holy peace, with your presence. I freely forgive you the hand you have had in my murder; and I beg you, as a Christian man, to leave me alone, to spend the few hours I have now to reckon here on earth, with my God."

"Will you tell me, Monica, that my senses deceived me. That what I saw at Snell's cottage was a delusion of Satan?"

"You were too credulous to believe, what time will prove to have been an infamous juggler," said Monica. "I leave to God the vindication of my character. Vengeance is His, and He will recompense upon my enemies, these wrongs. As to you, whose judgment has been warped by a

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