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## MONICA; OR, WITCHCRAFT.\*

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### CHAPTER XIX.

"CONGRATULATE me, my lord!" cried Walter Fenwick, bursting suddenly upon his patron's privacy, with the red blood glowing upon his cheek; "I have just received news of the death of my worst enemy."

"Thou art a fortunate man, Wat, an thou can'st so easily get rid of thy foes. Most heartily I wish thee joy, and for once, wish that I stood in thy shoes. But who is this enemy, whose death gives thee such pleasure?"

"The husband of my mistress—the most perverse and beautiful woman upon earth."

"Not comparable to my lady Amy?"

"Comparisons, between gems of equal value, would be odious to their possessors. But I tell you, my lord, that Dame Monica Brandon need not veil her face before the proudest beauty on earth."

"Bravely, entolized, Sir Walter; nor do I blame your zeal. Love is blind, and to the blind the Ethiop may seem fair. But how came it, that a handsome gallant like thee suffered the grave, puritanical son of Brandon to carry off this brilliant jewel?"

"Because, as your lordship has just averred, Love is blind; and the fair maid of Conway preferred the austere anchorite, to her faithful suitor."

"In which she showed her inexperience and lack of taste," said the earl. "But what good will the death of her husband do thee?"

"Is she not free to make a second choice?"

"True; but that choice may not fall on Sir Walter Fenwick. I have ever remarked, that the lover, who proved distasteful to the maid, seldom succeeded with the widow. Is she rich?"

"So, so! Brandon received from her hand a thousand broad acres of freehold land," returned

Fenwick, musing; "and then he had his uncle's patrimony, a pretty estate adjoining the good town of Leicester."

"Out of which, of course, he has jointured his widow," said the earl, laughing. "Well, well, I see that even in a worldly point of view, thy mistress is not to be despised. But how wilt thou contrive to force thyself upon her notice?"

"By paying respect to the dead. Your lordship must allow me to absent myself for a few days, until the funeral is over. I will appear among the chief mourners."

"Not a bad thought that, Wat! Thine may truly be termed the joy of grief. But go, and if thou winnest thy bride, by this novel method of wooing, I will stand the expense of the wedding feast."

"Ah! if this should fail to move her heart, I know of a scheme which must win her to my purpose. Yes!" he cried, exultingly, as he sprang upon his horse, "she is in my power, or Brandon died in vain."

It was late in the evening of that day, when the same strong roadster, covered with foam, stopped at the fence which separated the basket-maker's cottage from the lane. The rider rose up in his stirrups, and looked cautiously over the pales, to see whether the coast was clear. The door of the hut was open; a bright fire was burning upon the hearth, and the being whom he sought was seated beside it, spinning upon the short wheel, and singing as she spun:

"I wish I were a gay lady,  
And clad in silk attire;  
But I must wear the hoddie green,  
And tend the kitchen fire.

"Oh! bravely shines the hall to-night,  
Red glows the taper's ray:—  
I must to bed by dim twilight,  
And rise by break of day.

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