

"The public have already given their opinion," returned Azubah. "and it is against you. Ah! believe me, dear lady, the evil is much greater than you imagine. You must try and save yourself while there is yet time."

"What would you have me do?" said Monica; "though really, I cannot see the least cause for alarm."

"Go to this girl. Show her the cruelty and wickedness of her conduct. Perhaps, she will listen to you. She is avaricious—her silence may be bribed by gold."

"I cannot consent to either of these plans," said Monica. "The more I think about the subject, the more preposterous it appears. Let them say what they please—the nine days wonder will soon be over, and the whole affair will be forgotten. To take any notice of it would be to implicate myself."

"Another plan has struck me," said the Gipsy, quickly. "Go to the Queen. Inform her of the slander that is raised against you, and implore her protection. She is a strong-minded woman and will judge for herself. Secure her good-will, and you may defy your worst enemies."

"When I stand in need of such powerful aid," replied Monica with a smile, "I will seek it. But it amuses me to see a woman of your sense tremble at a mere chimera, which has its existence in the brain of a crazy, ignorant girl, who cannot be an enemy of mine, seeing that I have never injured her."

"Ah! when we think ourselves so strong, then are we most weak," returned Azubah. "You have stood between this girl and her ambition; and she is one of those human fiends, who appear incarnate agents of the power of evil."

"And what is she—who dares thus accuse another," said a stern voice, and Master Vincent entered the arbor. "Monica, I came to seek you on a matter of importance; but did not expect to find you in close conversation with that base woman."

"You must convince me that she deserves that character," said Monica, "before I cease to regard her with Christian benevolence."

"I do deserve it," returned Azubah, folding her arms sadly across her breast. "But I did not deserve it when he thrust me from him. I was innocent then. As innocent of the crime he laid to my charge as the child you hold in your arms. But I am foul and polluted now, and deserve the scorn of all good people. But it is he whom I have to thank, for my far wanderings in the path of evil."

"Agnes," said the minister, "abandon your wicked practices, and meekly receive instruction in the true faith; and I will be your friend still."

"Call me not by that name, which only brings to mind the days of youth and innocence," said Azubah. "You betrayed my friendship once; I can no longer trust you. And your faith can never be mine, while its professors differ so widely in practice from their creed."

"Unhappy being!—you are here for no good," returned Master Vincent. "I tremble lest you should infect my young friend with your sorceries. To save her it will become an act of duty to denounce thee."

"That will put the finishing stroke to your fatherly care," said the poor girl; "but however unjust, it will be an act of mercy. If my death could save one hair of that angel's head from injury, I could forgive you with my last breath."

"Can you hear this, Master Vincent, and believe her guilty?" asked Monica.

"Monica, I do believe her guilty; I know her to be guilty," returned Ifubert with a frown. "Satan, when he seeks to gain his purpose, can transform himself into an angel of light. I have sought to reclaim her, but she scorns our most holy faith, and tramples openly upon the cross of Christ."

"Bear with her yet awhile," said Monica. "My best friend, think how our blessed Lord bore with his enemies. Oh! cast her not away, until you have made another effort to save her. If you once loved her, love her still; and think that the salvation of her soul cannot be purchased at too great a price."

"Agnes," said the minister turning towards her, and extending his hand; but the being he sought had disappeared. "She is irreclaimable," he sighed, as he sank down upon the bench, and covered his face with his hands. Both remained silent for some time—a painful silence which at last was broken by Monica.

"My friend, I think you said that you came hither on business to me?"

"I did so," returned the minister, rousing himself. "An old friend wished much to exchange a few words with you in private. I promised to obtain this interview, and shall feel obliged to you, if you will grant my request."

"Certainly," said Monica rising. "Who is the person?"

"He will speak for himself," returned Master Vincent; "and waits for you in the house."

To the house therefore Monica and her companion bent their steps.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]