

ade through these walls for the Scottish army to enter."

The messenger having intimated the refusal of the governor to surrender to his grace, preparations were instantly made to commence the siege. The besieged, however, did not behold the preparations of their enemies and remain inactive. Every means of defence was got in readiness. The Countess hastened from post to post, inspiring the garrison with words of heroism, and stimulating them with rewards. Even the gentle Madeline shewed that her soul could rise on the occasion worthy of a soldier's love; and she, too, went from man to man, cheering them on, and, with her sweet and silver tones, seemed to rob even death of half its terror. Sir William's heart swelled with delight as he beheld her mild eye lighted up with enthusiasm, and heard her voice, which was as music to his ear, giving courage to the faint-hearted, and heroism to the brave.

"Heaven bless my Madeline!" said he, kissing her hand; "ye have taught me to know what true courage is, and our besiegers shall all feel it. They may raze the walls of the castle with the ground, as they have threatened; but it shall be at a price that Scotland can never forget; and even now, love; as night gathers round, we must again prepare to assume the part of our assailants."

"You must!—I know you must!" she replied; "yet be not to rash—attempt not more than a brave man ought—or all may be lost; you, too, may perish, and who, then, would protect your Madeline?"

He pressed her hand to his breast—again he cried, "Farewell!" and, hastening to a troop of horsemen who only waited his commands to sally from the gate upon the camp of their besiegers, the drawbridge was let down, and, at the head of his followers, he led upon the nearest point of the Scottish army. Deadly was the carnage which, for some time, they spread around; and, as they were again driven back and pursued to the bay, their own dead and their wounded were left behind. Frequently and suddenly were such sallies made, as the falcon watches its opportunity and darteth on its prey; and as frequently were they driven back without leaving proof to the Scottish monarch, at what a desperate price Wark Castle was to be purchased. Frequently, too, as they rushed forth, the Countess eagerly and impatiently beheld them from the turrets; and, as the harvest moon shone upon their armour, she seemed to

watch every flash of their swords, waving her hand with exultation, or raising her voice in a strain of triumph. But, by her side, stood Madeline, gazing not less eagerly, and not less interested in the work of danger and despair; but her eyes were fixed upon one only—the young leader of the chivalrous band who braved death for England and their lady's sake. She also watched the flashing of the swords; but her eyes sought those only which glanced where the brightest helmet gleamed and the proudest plume waved. Often the contest was beneath the very walls of the castle, and she could hear her lover's voice, and beheld him dashing as a thunderbolt into the midst of his enemies.

Obstinate, however, as the resistance of the garrison was, and bloody as the price, indeed, seemed at which the castle was to be purchased, David had too much of the Bruce in his blood to abandon the siege. He began to fill the ditches, and he ordered engines to be prepared to batter down the walls. The ditches were filled, and, before the heavy and ponderous blows of the engines, a breach was made in the outer wall, and with a wild shout a thousand of the Scottish troops rushed into the outer court.

"Joan Plantagenet disdains ye still! cried the dauntless Countess. "Quail not brave hearts," she exclaimed, addressing the garrison, who, with deadly aim continued showering their arrows upon the besiegers; "before I yield, Wark Castle shall be my funeral pile!"

"And mine!" cried Sir William, as an arrow glanced from his hand, and became transfixed in the visor of one of the Scottish leaders.

Madeline glanced towards him, and her eyes, yet beaming with courage, seemed to say, "And mine!"

"And ours!" exclaimed the garrison—"and ours!" they repeated more vehemently; and, waving their swords, "Hurra!" cried they, "for our ladye, St. George and old merry England!"

It was the shout of valiant but despairing men. Yet, as the danger rose, and as hope became less and less, so rose the determination of the Countess. She was present to animate at every place of assault. She distributed gold amongst them; her very jewels she gave in presents to the bravest; but, though they had shed much of the best blood in the Scottish army, their defence was hopeless, and their courage could not save them.