

of Joan Plantagenet, and the orphan daughter of a valiant knight, who had won his golden spurs by the side of the first Edward, and laid down his life in defence of his imbecile son. Madeline was, perhaps, less beautiful than the Countess; but her very looks spoke love—love, ardent, tender and sincere. Hers was the beauty of the summer moon kissing the quiet lake, when the nightingale offers up its song—lovely and serene; Joan's was as the sun flashing upon the gilded sea—receiving the morning worship of the lark, and demanding admiration.

"Wherefore are ye sad, my sweet Madeline?" said Sir William, tenderly, as he drew off his gauntlet, and took her fair hand in his. "Joy ye not that I have returned sound in life and limb?"

"Yes, I joy that my William is safe," answered Madeline; "but will our safety last?" Think ye not that ye have done desperately, and that the Scottish king, with to-morrow's sun will avenge the attack ye have made on his camp to night?"

"St. George! and I pray he may!" added Sir William. "I am the dependant of my brother, with no fortune but my sword; and I should glory, beneath the eyes of my Madeline, to win such renown as would gain a dowry worthy of her hand."

"When that hand is given," added she, "your Madeline will seek no honor but her William's heart."

"Well, sweetest," rejoined he, "I know that ye rejoice not in the tournament, nor delight in the battle-field; yet would ye mourn to see your own true knight vanquished in the one, or turn craven on the other. Let Scotland's king besiege us if he will, and then with this good sword shall I prove my love for Madeline."

"Madeline is an orphan," added she, "and the sword hath made her such. She knows your courage as she knows your love, and she asks no farther proofs. The deed of chivalry may make the ladye proud of her knight, but it cannot win her affection."

"Well, sweet one," said he, playfully, "I should love to see thy pretty face in a monk's cowl, for thou dost preach so sad—what troubles thee?"

"Think you, I fear," she replied. "I know your daring, and I know that danger threatens us; and, oh! Madeline's hands could not deck your bosom for the battle; though, in her own breast, she would receive the stroke of death to shield it. For my sake, be not to rash; for, oh! in the silent hours of

midnight—when the spirits of the dead walk the earth, and the souls of the living mingle with them in dreams—I have seen my father and my mother, and they have seemed to weep over their orphan—they have called me to follow them; and I have thought you, and the shout of the battle, and the clashing of swords have mingled in my ears; and when I would have clasped your hands, a shroud has appeared my bridal garment."

"Come love, 'tis an idle fancy," said he tenderly; "dream no more. But that they have mewed me up in this dull castle, where honour seeks me not, and reward awaits me, and ere now my Madeline had worn her wedding-garment. But cheer up; for ye sake, I will not be rash though for that I brow, I would win a coronet."

"'Tis an honour that I covet not," said she; nor would I risk thy safety for a moment to wear a crown."

Madeline was right in her apprehensions that King David would revenge the attack that had been made upon the rear of his army. When, with the morning sun, he held two hundred of his soldiers lying dead upon the ground—"Now, by my halberd," said he, "and for this outrage, I will leave one stone of Wark Castle upon another, but its ruins shall rise as a cairn over the graves of these men."

Before noon, the entire Scottish host was encamped around the castle; and the young King sent a messenger to the gates demanding the countess and Sir William to surrender.

"Surrender! boasting Scot!" said chivalrous Joan; "doth your boy king think the Plantagenet will yield to a Bruce! Be and tell him that, ere a Scot among ye enters these gates, ye shall tread Joan Plantagenet in the dust; and the bodies of the bravest of your army shall fill the ditches of the Castle, that their comrades may pass over."

"I take not my answer from a woman's tongue," replied the herald; "what say you, Sir Governor? Do ye surrender in peace, or choose ye that we raze Wark Castle with ground?"

"If King David can, he may," was a brief and bold reply of Sir William Montague; "yet it were better for him that he should have tarried in Scotland until his beard was grown, than that he should attempt it."

"Ye speak boldly," answered the herald; "but ye shall not fare the worse, by reason of your free speech, when a passage shall