

old of the Northumbrians; and they were burning, overlaid with spoils, when they passed within two miles of Wark Castle, which was then the property of the Earl of Salisbury. The Earl was absent; but, on the highest turret of the Castle, stood his Countess, the peerless Joan Plantagenet, daughter of the Earl of Kent, and cousin of King Edward. Her fair cheeks glowed, and her bright eyes flashed indignation, as she beheld the long line of the Scottish army pass by, laden with the plunder of her countrymen.

"Am not I a Plantagenet?" she exclaimed, "flows not the blood of England in my veins?—and shall I tamely behold our enemies tamely parade the spoils of my country before mine eyes? Ho! warden!" she continued, in a louder tone, "send hither Sir William Montague."

Sir William was the brother of her husband and the governor of the castle.

"Behold!" said she, sternly, as the governor approached, and pointing towards the Scottish army. "Is it well that we should look like imprisoned doves upon yon rebel host? Or shall ye, Sir Governor, discharge your duty to your sovereign, if ye strike not a blow for England and revenge?"

"Fair sister," returned the knight, "ere an hour after nightfall, and the cry—'For England and the Rose of Wark!' shall burst as the shout of death upon the ears of our enemies. A troop of forty horsemen wait but my word to become the messengers of vengeance."

"Good, my brother," she replied, while her former frown relaxed into a smile; "and each man who hath done his duty, shall on return, drink a cup of wine from the s of Joan Plantagenet."

Darkness began to gather round the turrets of the castle and on the highest the gentle re of the Countess was still indistinctly gle; now walking round with impatient pace, and again gazing eagerly to obtain another glance of the Scottish army or count the fires which sprang up along the lines where it had encamped for the night when William and forty of the garrison, mounted on fleet steeds, sallied from the gate of the castle wall.

"Our ladye speed ye, gallant hearts!" said fair Joan, as she beheld them sweep past a dark cloud on their work of blood.

The Scottish army were encamped a little beyond Carham, carousing around their fires

from flagons filled with the best wine they had found in the cellars of the Northumbrian nobility; over the fires, suspended from poles, were skins of sheep and of bullocks rudely sewed into the form of bags, and filled with water—these served them as pots, and the flesh of the animals was boiled in their own skins. Amongst the revellers were veterans who had fought by the side of Wallace and Bruce; and, while some recounted the deeds of the patriot, and inspired their comrades with accounts of his lion-like courage and prodigious strength, others, with the goblet in hand, fought Bannockburn o'er again. Thus, the song, the jest, the laugh, the tale of war, and the wine cup went round, amidst the bustle of culinary preparations, and each man laid down his arms aside and gave himself up to enjoyment and security.

Suddenly there arose upon their mirth the trampling and the neighing of war-steeds, the clang of shields, and the shouts of armed men, and naked swords gleamed through the fire-light. "For England and the Rose of Wark!" exclaimed Sir William Montague—"For England and our ladye!" echoed his followers. They rushed through the Scottish lines like a whirlwind, trampling the late revellers beneath their horses' feet, and fleshing their swords in the bodies of unarmed men. For a time they left carnage behind them, and spread consternation before them.

The surprise and panic of the Scottish army, however, were of short duration. "To horse!—to horse!" rang through the camp, and they began to enclose the small but desperate band of assailants on every side.

"England is revenged!—to the Castle with our spoils!" cried Sir William; and they retreated towards Wark, carrying with them a hundred and sixty horses laden with plunder, while the Scots pursued them to the very gates. The Countess hastened to the outer gate to meet them; and as, by the torches borne by her attendants, she surveyed the number of horses they had taken, and the rich booty which they bore—"Thanks, Sir William!" cried she—"thanks, my gallant countrymen—ye have done bravely; merry England hath still its chivalrous and stout hearis upon the Borders;—to night shall each man pledge his ladye love in the ruddy wine."

But there was one who welcomed Sir William Montague's return with silent tears—the gentle Madeline Aubrey, the companion