

towards a winding and broken pathway, which seemed to issue from the depths of a thicket or copse at the distance of some hundred perches from where she sat. There was a look of something very like petulance on her smooth brow as she once more withdrew her gaze from the thicket.

"Surely he cannot love as I do!" she at length murmured in a voice half audible. "Could anything on earth detain me from him when I knew that he awaited my coming? Cruel Albert! how little must he know of the wild, the all-potent love, which fills my entire heart, nay, soul!"

She looked around on the scene which had so often witnessed their mutual confessions—it was lovely as ever, but over its soft features there seemed to have fallen on the instant a thick and hazy veil. The sun had just sunk below the horizon, and already on the opposite extremity the broad disc of the full moon was slowly becoming visible. Her light, notwithstanding, fell faintly and dimly on the earth, having but little of the rich mellow radiance which in mid-age it usually displays, and though no cloud was to be seen on the firmament above, yet the stars came forth slowly and reluctantly, and in diminished numbers, peering forth sullenly through the thick haze. It was a melancholy evening, and as Geraldine sat alone brooding over her first disappointment, (trifling though it was, it seemed to her a grievous one,) she became gradually sensible of a sadness, which heretofore had never fallen on her sunny spirit, the effect, doubtless, of the oppressive weight of the atmosphere, acting in conjunction with the jealous apprehension that the love which formed the sum total of her own existence was but faintly (if at all) returned.

Suddenly a step was heard approaching. Eagerly did Geraldine start from her seat, but the next moment dispelled her hope. A servant appeared from behind a huge elm which fronted her seat, and with a low bow presented a large muffing cloak, together with a message from his lady, requesting that the lady Geraldine would not longer protract her ramble, as the dews of night were extremely injurious.

"Pshaw, Henry!" exclaimed the young lady with unwonted petulance—"I am very well here—tell your lady that I thank her for her kind care of my health, but I shall with her good leave tarry here yet a while—the evening air doth refresh me."

The servant departed to deliver his message, and Geraldine was once more alone. Another quick glance towards the coppice—no Albert appeared.

"Now, may my hopes be blighted, as I well

deem they will be ere long, if this is not beyond all endurance!"

The fair speaker was here interrupted by a voice behind; it was that of Albert, who had but just reached the spot in time to hear her last peevish ejaculation.

"Why does my own Geraldine thus complain? has aught occurred to ruffle her gentle mind?"

Could Geraldine resist the matchless tenderness which thrilled in every tone—the living, burning love, which lit up his fine eyes, or the soft yet ardent pressure of her hand, which gave the comment to his words? Assuredly not, and ere Albert had half gone through his brief yet full explanation, she began to reproach herself for the momentary doubt which had so unsettled her mind. This important affair settled, Albert drew the arm of Geraldine within his own, and they bent their steps towards the castle.

"Geraldine," said Albert suddenly, breaking silence, after a pause of some minutes, "what think you, sweet one! of the warfare on which our liege lord is about to enter?" and he turned an eagerly inquiring glance upon the face of his fair companion.

"What think I of it, Albert?" repeated the lady with beautiful enthusiasm; "I think, that if our monarch succeed in his purpose—one of the greatest and most glorious ever formed in the mind of man,—he will deserve to be placed on high amid the few great ones who adorn earth's family. Ah yes!" she added, still more earnestly, "Richard is indeed worthy of his name—men could not have given him a meetter title than that of the Lion-hearted. Were I not the betrothed bride of Albert, my highest aspiration should be that I might one day become the chosen bride of a Red Cross Knight!"

And as she concluded, a scarcely audible sigh escaped her—why did she sigh? Albert knew the secret, it might be, better than she herself did.

"Ha! then, I guessed aright!" he exclaimed in a tone of exultation. "Then, my Geraldine, my peerless one! thou *shalt* yet be a Crusader's bride; for, guessing in part thy sentiments, I have the more willingly given the reins to my own inclination, and have this day engaged to follow the banner of my right noble friend and relative the Lord De Morinville, who is now forming a band in order to join Richard before he leaves England for the Holy Land! But how is this, Geraldine! have I erred in hoping that my purpose would meet your approval? You turn away your head—you sigh—say, dear one! have I grieved thee by my rashness?"

It was some minutes before Geraldine spoke,