

Albert returned she might be dead, or at least dying. At this the fair dreamer took fire.

"Oh! what a fate has your last words suggested,"—she exclaimed with kindling ardor—"what rapture to die in Albert's arms at the very moment my lips had bade him welcome—when mine eyes had drunk in the sight of the many decorations—the various orders which his valor had won while absent from me. And then to murmur that for him I died—oh mother! my own mother! is there—can there be aught on earth to equal the delight of such a moment?"

Almost ashamed of her brief but passionate avowal, Geraldine suddenly ceased, but had not her eyes been demurely cast to the ground, she might have seen that the Earl and Countess exchanged looks of mutual intelligence—she saw not this, however, (for the reason aforesaid) and was, therefore, surprised out of her silence, when the Earl said:

"Such being thy sentiments, sweet daughter, and since death has so little terror for thee, why in God's name, we will e'en oppose thee no farther—speed thee on with thy building as fast as thou wilt, and for its greater advancement, I promise thee men enow to raise it in a very few weeks!"

Geraldine heard this announcement with unqualified satisfaction, and poured forth her gratitude so warmly, that the good old pair thought themselves amply repaid for the consent they had given.

A week from that day, saw the tower already in progress, and as Geraldine noted its erection, almost stone by stone, so even and more rapidly did her hopes arise, until they threatened to overturn all probability. And at times it almost seemed to her heated, and somewhat distorted fancy, as though the arrival of Albert was actually depending on the completion of her edifice. As the spot of its erection was almost two miles distant from the castle, it was but seldom that either the Earl or Countess accompanied her in her visits to the workmen, and when she once found herself amongst them, and superintending their labors, "hours flew quickly by," and Geraldine forgot that there were for her other duties than those of love, and other scenes than her solitary tower. In three weeks the edifice was completed, and one more found Geraldine its daily occupant. Not even would she permit the attendance of any of her women, lest perchance other eyes than her own should catch the first glimpse of Albert's snowy sail. Over the small square apartment which formed the top of the tower (being that wherein honest Betty since became domesticated,) there

was thrown a light awning to protect the fair warder from sun and wind, and its floor was carpeted (I can almost see ye shudder, fair ladies of the nineteenth century!) with straw. Fancy, then, an apartment not more than eighteen feet square, covered only by a thin awning, and carpeted with straw—a low couch was its only furniture, if we except a small table, whereupon were daily deposited the few necessities required by Geraldine. Here, then, through many a long and weary day did the anxious maiden maintain her self appointed post. Holding but little communion with the world without, her life was all interior. Evening after evening she sought the castle, led thither as much by the hope of hearing some news from Palestine, as from the necessity of repose. For many days she was greeted by the tender mother, (who could better than the Earl, sympathize with her romantic love) with the same fruitless question:

"No tidings of Albert, yet, my Geraldine?" and so painfully did the enquiry seem to affect her, that the Countess was fain to desist from asking what was after all somewhat superfluous. With more rational hopes of a satisfactory answer, did Geraldine put her oft-repeated question.

"What news from the Holy Land, my Lord, or have any yet arrived?"

Weeks and months passed away before any certain intelligence arrived, and then it was far from encouraging. True, the soldiers of the cross had wrung from the proud infidel many concessions, but alas! there existed in the very heart of the Christian army, a fell and powerful enemy—disunion had been long making rapid progress amongst the leaders—the moving spirits of the enterprise,—and now it appeared ready to burst into a flame, which might destroy in a moment all—all that unheard of valour, and lofty enthusiasm, had so dearly won.

"So it is, my child," concluded the Earl with a deep sigh—"these ardent spirits who have themselves kindled, and as it were, blown into a flame, the long slumbering passions of Christendom; they who have had power to gather into one focus its widely scattered energies; they, those very men, are those by whose jealous bickering, and hot-headed rivalry, the whole mighty fabric will crumble to atoms. Oh! Richard!—oh Philip!" he exclaimed with fervor, all unusual to him. "How cruelly are ye blighting the hopes, to which ye yourselves gave rise!"

To the old man's passionate phillippic, Geraldine had listened with ill-restrained impatience, and when the good Earl at length paused from sheer want of breath, she exclaimed,