

tre of our lawful kingdom. But what mo-
flower is this that ye deck with your
hard-won diamond?" added he, glancing
towards Madeline; and, without waiting a
reply, he turned to the Countess, saying, "Is
she of thy suite, dear coz? She hath a fair
face, worthy the handmaiden of Beauty's
Queen."

The countess liked not his enquiries; but,
nevertheless, was flattered by the compliment
with which he concluded; and she replied,
that she was the orphan daughter of her fa-
ther's friend, and the worshipful divinity of
Sir William. The other combatant now ap-
proached also; and kneeling in front of the
dais, raised his visor.

'Aubrey!' exclaimed the monarch.

"My brother!" cried Madeline, starting
to his side.

"Your brother?" responded Sir William.

"What! my little Madeline, a woman?"
replied the stranger. "Bless thee, my own
sister!"

"What!" exclaimed the monarch, "the
paragon of our tournament, the sister of bold
Aubrey!—And you, too, the combatant a-
gainst her chosen champion! Had ye spilled
blood on either side, this days sport might
have spoiled a bridal. But whence come ye,
Aubrey, and when?"

"My liege," replied the other, "having
arrived at Knarcsborough on the day after
the departure of your Majesty I hastened hie
ther to inform your grace that France lies
open to our arms, and our troops are eager
to embark."

In a few days, Edward left Wark, leaving
behind him a powerful garrison for the Cas-
tle, but he had left it desolate to poor Made-
line, for he had taken to accompany him, on
his invasion of France, her betrothed hus-
band and her brother. That brother whom
she had met but three days before, she had
not seen from childhood—nor was she certain
that he lived—for he had been a soldier from
his boyhood, and his life had been spent in
the camp and in foreign wars, while she had
been nurtured under the protection of the
Countess of Salisbury.

It was about seven years after the events
we have alluded to had occurred, that Ed-
ward, covered with all the fame of a conquer-
or, if not the advantages of conquest, return-
ed to England. During his victories and the
din of war, however, he had not forgotten the
beauty of his fair cousin, whose glances had
bewildered him at Wark Castle; and now,
when he returned, his admiration was re-
newed, and she appeared as the first favour-

ite of his court. He had provided a re-
banquet for the nobles and the knights who
had distinguished themselves during the
French wars. A thousand lights blazed
the noble hall—martial music pealed
—and hundreds of the brightest eyes in En-
land looked love and delight. The fair
and the noblest in the land thronged the
assembly. Jewels sparkled, and studded
gorgeous apparel of the crowd. In the
of the hall, walked the gay and courtly ma-
arch, with the fair Joan of Salisbury rest-
on his arm. They spoke of their first meet-
ing at Wark, of the siege and the tourname-
and again they whispered, and hands were
pressed, and looks exchanged; and, when
they walked together, a blue garter, decked
with gold, pearls, and precious stones, and
which, with a golden buckle, had fastened
the sandal of the fair Joan round the be-
turned ankle in the hall, became loose and
entangled among her feet. The Countess
blushed; and the monarch, with the ease
unembarrassment and politeness of a prac-
tised gallant, stopped to fasten the unfor-
tunate ribbon. As the nobles beheld the so-
vereign kneel with the foot of the fair Coun-
tess on his knee, a hardly suppressed sigh
ran through the assembly. But observing
the smile upon the face of his nobles, the mo-
narch rose proudly, and, with the garter in
hand, exclaimed, "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*."
—Shame be to him who thinks ill of it!" and
buckling the garter round his left knee, he
added—"Be this the order of St. George,
and the proudest monarchs and the most val-
liant knights in Christendom shall be per-
to be honoured with the emblem of thy gar-
ter, fair coz."

Scarce, however, was the royal banquet dis-
ed when the voice of lamentation was heard
in every house, though the mourners went
about the streets; for the living feared to
follow their dead to the sepulchre. The
angel of death breathed upon the land—
stretched out his wings and covered it—
his breath the land sickened—beneath the
shadow of his wings the people perished.
The green fields became as a wilderness
and death and desolation reigned in the
market places. Along the streets moved
cavalcades of the dead—the hearse of the
noble and the car of the citizen; and the
dead bodies of the poor were picked up upon
the streets! The churchyards rose as hills,
and fields were turned up for the dead—
The husband fled from his dying wife; the
another feared to kiss her own child; and the