

form feats of valor beyond even the bravest warriors of the crusades. I have heard his praise spoken even by royal lips, and Richard, the flower of chivalry, declares that no single soldier of the cross has done more, or better service, than has that youthful knight. Truly he is a youth of rare and wondrous prowess. Lady, if thine be the colours under which he fights, and thine the eyes from whose light he has drawn, and draws his inspiration, I bow before thee—not more for thine own exceeding loveliness, than for the glory it hath won for the knight who proclaims its peerless qualities. Sweet lady! accept my humble homage." And again did the palmer bend his stately form in a lowly obeisance.

"And for me, most courteous palmer," returned Geraldine, with proud condescension—"for me, I would pray thee to receive my warmest thanks, still more for thy most welcome tidings, than for the encomiums (unmerited as they are,) which thou hast heaped so lavishly upon me;—Farewell, I go to impart the glad news thou hast brought, to the parents of Lord Albert—they, too, shall thank thee; till when, I entreat thee, consider thyself at home, and order these varlets to bring whatsoever thou mayest desire to have." And with these words, the now exulting Geraldine flew to communicate what she had just heard to the Earl and Countess.

Pass we over the rejoicing with which the aged parents heard of their son's brilliant career, and the greatness of his renown—let us pause, however, to say, that the palmer was loaded during his week's stay at the castle, with every possible mark of their joint gratitude, and that he, palmer, and pilgrim as he was—learned to envy the absent knight, when he witnessed, day after day, the unwearied fondness with which Geraldine hung on the oft-repeated tale. He departed at length, and the family were again left alone; but not into their old sadness or gloom did they return, for the intelligence they had received, had infused hope, bright hope, into their hearts, and they began to count the days that might pass before Albert's return.

As to Geraldine, never had her spirits been more buoyant, her laugh more gay, her eyes brighter, or her face more radiant in beauty, than when on the day following the departure of the palmer, she resumed her solitary watch in the tower. Nature, too, seemed to the full as joyous, for the world—the gently-undulating sea,—the curving shore—and the over-arching sky—were all bright in the summer sun, and as the happy beauty cast her smiling eyes around, above and below, she felt that indescribable thrill of joy which is never known but in the first years of

youth—that delicious balm which nothing can ever distil from the heart, when once the roses of youth and their dewy freshness have faded away beneath the chill of advancing years and of shattered hopes. Throwing herself, then, on the only seat, a low couch, which the place contained, she murmured as though in a brilliant dream, words expressive of her feelings:

"And thou hast redeemed thy pledges, Albert!—and thy valor has won for thee the approval even of England's glorious Richard. Yes! now indeed art thou worthy of Geraldine's love, and only thy presence is wanting, together with the assurance that thy love is still unchanged,—it lacks but these to make Geraldine happier than was ever mortal maiden! But oh! why come you not, my Albert?—why tarriest thou so long from thy faithful Geraldine!" then her eye turned with a wistful gaze on the far-distant horizon, only to be again disappointed.

"So past the day—the evening fell,—
"Twas near the time of curfew-bell."

Yet though the dews of evening lay heavy on her long hair, and the night wind already chilled her fair form, Geraldine continued to lean over the wall of the tower, with her straining gaze fixed on the sea, even now becoming dark in the advancing gloom. She was recalled to "things present" by the voice of her favorite woman, who, accompanied by the *major domo* of the household, had been sent by the Countess to attend her to the castle.

As Geraldine descended the spiral staircase which led to the shore below, a raven, disturbed from his evening repose, flew past almost close to her face, while his croaking voice broke harshly on the dreamy stillness of the hour. Geraldine started back, alarmed not more by the suddenness of the interruption than the ominous character of the intruder. It was essentially a superstitious age, that in which Geraldine lived—nor was she one whit in advance of the times; this incident, therefore, trifling enough in itself, had power to break up many of the brightest of the visions which had so lately filled her mind with light and joy.

All that night did Geraldine lie awake, fearing and apprehending she knew not what, and occasionally endeavoring to recall the gay images of the last few days, which latter she found no easy task, for the raven ever and anon flitted across her brightest imaginings, and as often as she attempted to anticipate the joy of Albert's return, and the words of thrilling tenderness his lips were again to utter, then did that ill-omened bird croak loudly in her ears, and his croaking sounded ever like wild, mocking laughter. At length, to—