

morny!" said the knight, raising himself in uncontrollable indignation. "Caitiff, proceed to thy duty; and remember, that if my hand can no longer clasp a dagger, I can command a hundred."

"The sight of one drawn and brandished in anger were sufficient," said Dwining, "to consume the vital powers of your surgeon. But who then," he added, in a tone partly insinuating, partly jeering, "who would then relieve the fiery and scorching pain which my patron now suffers, and which renders him exasperated even with his poor servant for quoting the rules of healing, so contemptible, doubtless, compared with the power of inflicting wounds?"

Then, as daring no longer to trifle with the mood of his dangerous patient, the leech addressed himself seriously to salving the wound, and applied a fragrant balm, the odor of which was diffused through the apartment, while it communicated a refreshing coolness, instead of the burning heat; a change so gratifying to the fevered patient, that, as he had before groaned with agony, he could not now help sighing for pleasure, as he sank back on his couch to enjoy the ease which the dressing bestowed.

"Your knightly lordship now knows who is your friend," said Dwining; "had you yielded to a rash impulse, and said, 'Slay me this worthless quack-salver,' where, within the four seas of Britain, would you have found the man to have ministered to you as much comfort?"

"Forget my threats, good leech," said Ramorny, "and beware how you tempt me. Such as I brook not jests upon our agony. See thou keep thy scoffs, to pass upon misers\* in the hospital."

Dwining ventured to say no more, but poured some drops from a phial which he took from his pocket, into a small cup of wine allayed with water.

"This draught," said the man of art, "is medicated to produce a sleep which must not be interrupted."

"For how long will it last?" asked the knight.

"The period of its operation is uncertain—perhaps till morning."

"Perhaps for ever," said the patient. "Sir Mediciner, taste me that liquor presently, else it passes not my lips."

The leech obeyed him with a scornful smile. "I would drink the whole with readiness; but the juice of this Indian gum will bring sleep on the healthy man as well as upon the patient, and the business of the leech requires me to be a watcher."

"I crave your pardon, Sir Leech," said Ramorny, looking downwards, as if ashamed to have manifested suspicion.

"There is no room for pardon where offence must not be taken," answered the mediciner.

\* That is, miserable persons, as used in Spenser, and other writers of his time; though the sense is now restricted to those who are covetous.

"An insect must thank a giant that he does not tread on him. Yet, noble knight, insects have their power of harming as well as physicians. What would it have cost me, save a moment's trouble, so to have drugged that balm, as should have made your arm rot to the shoulder-joint, and your life-blood curdle in your veins to a corrupted jelly? What is there that prevented me to use means yet more subtle, and to taint your room with essences, before which the light of life twinkles more and more dimly, till it expires, like a torch amidst the foul vapors of some subterranean dungeon? You little estimate my power, if you know not that these, and yet deeper modes of destruction, stand at command of my art.\* But a physician slays not the patient by whose generosity he lives, and far less will he, the breath of whose nostrils is the hope of revenge, destroy the vowed ally, who is to favor his pursuit of it.—Yet one word,—should a necessity occur for rousing yourself—for who in Scotland can promise himself eight hours' uninterrupted repose?—then smell at the strong essence contained in this pounce-box.—And now, farewell, Sir Knight; and if you cannot think of me as a man of nice conscience, acknowledge me at least as one of reason and of judgment."

So saying, the mediciner left the room; his usual mean and shuffling gait elevating itself into something more noble, as conscious of a victory over his imperious patient.

Sir John Ramorny remained sunk in unpleasant reflections, until he began to experience the incipient effects of his soporific draught. He then roused himself for an instant, and summoned his page.

"Eviot! what ho! Eviot!—I have done ill to unbosom myself so far to this poisonous quack-salver—Eviot!"

The page entered.

"Is the mediciner gone forth?"

"Yes, so please your knighthood."

"Alone, or accompanied?"

"Bonthron spoke apart with him, and followed him almost immediately—by your lordship's command, as I understood him."

"Lack-a-day, yes!—he goes to seek some medicaments—he will return anon. If he be intoxicated, see he comes not near my chamber, and permit him not to enter into converse with any one. He raves when drink has touched his brain. He was a rare fellow, before a Southron bill laid his brain-pan bare; but since that time he talks gibberish whenever the cup has crossed his lips.—Said the leech aught to you, Eviot?"

\* The extent to which the science of poisoning was carried in the middle ages on the continent, is well known. The hateful practice was more and more refined, and still more generally adopted afterwards; and we are told, among other instances of diabolical cunning, of gloves which could not be put on without inflicting a mortal disease, of letters which, on being opened, diffused a fatal vapor, &c., &c. Voltaire justly and candidly mentions it as a distinguishing characteristic of the British, that political poisonings make little if any figure in their history.

"Nothing, save to reiterate his commands that your honor be not disturbed."

"Which thou must surely obey," said the knight. "I feel the summons to rest, of which I have been deprived since this unhappy wound—at least, if I have slept it has been but for a snatch. Aid me to take off my gown, Eviot."

"May God and the saints send you good rest, my lord," said the page, retiring after he had rendered his wounded master the assistance required.

As Eviot left the room, the knight, whose brain was becoming more and more confused, muttered over the page's departing salutation.

"God—saints—I have slept sound under such a benison. But now—methinks if I awake not to the accomplishment of my proud hopes of power and revenge, the best wish for me is, that the slumbers which now fall around my head, were the forerunners of that sleep which shall return my borrowed powers to their original non-existence—I can argue it no farther."

Thus speaking, he fell into a profound sleep.

#### CHAPTER XVI.

On Fastern's E'en when we war fou.

SCOTS SONG.

THE night which sunk down on the sick-bed of Ramorny, was not doomed to be a quiet one. Two hours had passed since curfew-bell, then rung at seven o'clock at night, and in those primitive times all were retired to rest, excepting such whom devotion, or duty, or debauchery, made watchers; and the evening being that of Shrove-tide, or, as it was called in Scotland, Fastern's E'en,\* the vigils of gaiety were by far the most frequented of the three.

The common people had, throughout the day, toiled and struggled at football; the nobles and gentry had fought cocks, and hearkened to the wanton music of the minstrel; while the citizens had gorged themselves upon pancakes fried in lard, and brose, or brewis—the fat broth, that is, in which salted beef had been boiled, poured upon highly-toasted oatmeal, a dish which even now is not ungrateful to simple old-fashioned Scottish palates. These were all exercises and festive dishes proper to the holyday. It was no less a solemnity of the evening, that the devout Catholic should drink as much good ale and wine as he had means to procure; and, if young and able, that he should dance at the ring, or figure among the morrice-dancers, who, in the city of Perth, as elsewhere, wore a peculiarly fantastic garb, and distinguished themselves by their address and activity. All this gaiety took place under the prudential consideration that the long term of Lent, now approaching, with its fasts and deprivations, rendered it wise for mortals to

\* Fastern's E'en, the evening before the commencement of the fast—*Anglice—Shrove-tide*, the season of being shaven, or of confession and absolution, before beginning the penance of Lent. The cock-fights, &c., still held at this period, are relics of the Catholic carnival that preceded the weeks of abstinence.

cram as much idle and sensual indulgence as they could into the brief space which intervened before its commencement.

The usual revels had taken place, and in most parts of the city were succeeded by the usual pause. A particular degree of care had been taken by the nobility, to prevent any renewal of discord betwixt their followers and the citizens of the town; so that the revels had proceeded with fewer casualties than usual, embracing only three deaths, and certain fractured limbs, which, occurring to individuals of little note, were not accounted worth inquiring into. The Carnival was closing quietly in general, but in some places the sport was still kept up.

One company of revellers, who had been particularly noticed and applauded, seemed unwilling to conclude their frolic. The Entry, as it was called, consisted of thirteen persons, habited in the same manner, having doublets of chamois leather sitting close to their bodies, curiously slashed and laced. They wore green caps with silver tassels, red ribands, and white shoes, had bells hung at their knees and around their ankles, and naked swords in their hands. This gallant party, having exhibited a sword-dance before the King, with much clashing of weapons, and fantastic interchange of postures, went on gallantly to repeat their exhibition before the door of Simon Glover, where having made a fresh exhibition of their agility, they caused wine to be served round to their own company and the bystanders, and with a loud shout drank to the health of the Fair Maid of Perth. This summoned old Simon to the door of his habitation, to acknowledge the courtesy of his countrymen, and in his turn to send the wine around in honor of the "Merry Morrice-dancers of Perth."

"We thank thee, Father Simon," said a voice, which strove to drown in an artificial squeak the pert conceited tone of Oliver Proudfoot. "But a sight of thy lovely daughter had been more sweet to us young bloods, than a whole vintage of Malvoisie."

"I thank you, neighbors, for your good will," replied the Glover. "My daughter is ill at ease, and may not come forth into the cold night-air—but if this gay gallant, whose voice methinks I should know, will go into my poor house, she will charge him with thanks for the rest of you."

"Bring them to us at the hostelry of the Griffin;" cried the rest of the Ballet to their favored companion; "for there will we ring-in Lent, and have another rouse to the health of the lovely Catharine."

"Have with you in half an hour," said Oliver, "and see who will quaff the largest flagon, or sing the loudest glee. Nay, I will be merry in what remains of Fastern's Even, should Lent find me with my mouth closed for ever."

"Farewell, then," cried his mates in the morrice; "farewell, slashing Borne-maker, till we meet again."

The morrice-dancers accordingly set out upon their further progress, dancing and carolling as they went along to the sound of four musicians, who led the joyous band, while Simon Glover drew their Corypheus in. o his house, and placed him in a chair by his parlor fire.

"But where is your daughter?" said Oliver. "She is the bait for us brave blades."

"Why, truly, she keeps her apartment, neighbor Oliver; and, to speak plainly, she keeps her bed."

"Why, then will I up-stairs to see her in her sorrow—you have marred my ramble, Gaffer Glover, and you owe me amends—a roving blade like me—I will not lose both the lass and the glass.—Keeps her bed, does she?"

"My dog and I we have a trick  
To visit maids when they are sick;  
When they are sick and like to die,  
O thither do come my dog and I.  
And when I die, as needs must hap,  
Then bury me under the good ale-tap;  
With folded arms there let me lie  
Cheek for jowl, my dog and I."

"Canst thou not be serious for a moment, neighbor Prondfute?" said the Glover; "I want a word of conversation with you."

"Serious?" answered his visitor; "why, I have been serious all this day—I can hardly open my mouth, but something comes out about death, a burial, or suchlike—the most serious subjects that I wot of."

"St. John, man!" said the Glover, "art thou fey?"

"No, not a whit—it is not my own death which these gloomy fancies foretell—I have a strong horoscope, and shall live for fifty years to come. But it is the case of the poor fellow—the Douglas-man, whom I struck down at the fray of St. Valentine's—he died last night—it is that which weighs on my conscience, and awakens sad fancies. Ah, Father Simon, we martialists that have spilt blood in our choler, have dark thoughts at times—I sometimes wish that my knife had cut nothing but worsted thrums."

"And I wish," said Simon, "that mine had cut nothing but buck's leather, for it has sometimes cut my own fingers. But thou mayst spare thy remorse for this bout; there was but one man dangerously hurt at the affray, and it was he from whom Henry Smith hewed the hand, and he is well recovered. His name is Black Quentin, one of Sir John Ramorny's followers. He has been sent privately back to his own country of Fife."

"What, Black Quentin?—why, that is the very man that Henry and I, as we ever keep close together, struck at in the same moment, only my blow fell somewhat earlier. I fear farther feud will come of it, and so does the Provost—And is he recovered? Why, then, I will be jovial, and since thou wilt not let me see how Kate becomes her night-gear, I will back to the Griffin, to my morrice-dancers."

"Nay, stay but one instant.—Thou art a com-

rade of Henry Wynd, and hast done him the service to own one or two deeds, and this last among others. I would thou couldst clear him of other charges, with which fame hath loaded him."

"Nay, I will swear by the hilt of my sword, they are as false as hell, Father Simon. What—blades and targets I shall not men of the sword stick together?"

"Nay, neighbor Bonnet-maker, be patient; thou mayst do the Smith a kind turn, an thou takest this matter the right way. I have chosen thee to consult with anent this matter—not that I hold thee the wisest head in Perth, for should I say so I should lie."

"Ay, ay," answered the self-satisfied Bonnet-maker: "I know where you think my fault lies—you cool heads think we hot heads are fools—I have heard men call Henry Wynd such a score of times."

"Fool enough and cool enough may rhyme together passing well," said the Glover; "but thou art good-natured, and I think lovest this cmony of thine. It stands awkwardly with us and him just now," continued Simon. "Thou knowest there hath been some talk of marriage between my daughter Catharine and Henry Gow?"

"I have heard some such song since St. Valentine's Morn—Ah! he that shall win the Fair Maid of Perth must be a happy man—and yet marriage spoils many a pretty fellow. I myself somewhat regret—"

"Prithee, truce with thy regrets for the present, man," interrupted the Glover, somewhat peevishly. "You must know, Oliver, that some of these talking women, who, I think, make all the business of the world their own, have accused Henry of keeping light company with glee-women and suchlike. Catharine took it to heart; and I held my child insulted, that he had not waited upon her like a Valentine, but had thrown himself into unseemly society on the very day when, by ancient custom, he might have had an opportunity to press his interest with my daughter. Therefore when he came hither late on the evening of St. Valentine's, I, like a hasty old fool, bid him go home to the company he had left, and denied him admittance. I have not seen him since, and I begin to think that I may have been too rash in the matter. She is my only child, and the grave should have her sooner than a debauchee. But I have hitherto thought I knew Henry Gow as if he were my son. I cannot think he would use us thus, and it may be there are means of explaining what is laid to his charge. I was led to ask Dwining, who is said to have salted the Smith while he was walking with his choice mate—if I am to believe his words, this wench was the Smith's cousin, Joan Letham. But thou knowest that the potter-carrier ever speaks one language with his visage, and another with his tongue—Now, thou, Oliver, hast too little wit—I mean, too much honesty—to belie the truth, and as Dwining hinted that thou also hadst seen her—"

"I see her, Simon Glover! Will Dwining say that I saw her?"

"No, not precisely that—but he says you told him you had met the Smith thus accompanied."

"He lies, and I will pound him into a gallipot!" said Oliver Prondfute.

"How? Did you never tell him then of such a meeting?"

"What an if I did?" said the Bonnet-maker. "Did not he swear that he would never repeat again to living mortal what I communicated to him? and therefore, in telling the occurrent to you he hath made himself a liar."

"Thou didst not meet the Smith, then," said Simon, "with such a loose baggage as fame reports?"

"Lack-a-day, not I—perhaps I did, perhaps I did not. Think, Father Simon—I have been a four-years married man, and can you expect me to remember the turn of a glee-woman's ankle, the trip of her toe, the lace upon her petticoat, and such toys? No, I leave that to unmarried wags, like my gossip Henry."

"The upshot is, then," said the Glover, much vexed, "you did meet him on St. Valentine's day walking the public streets—"

"Not so, neighbor; I met him in the most distant and dark lane in Perth, steering full for his own house, with bag and baggage, which, as a gallant fellow, he carried in his arms, the puppy dog on one, and the jilt herself (and to my thought she was a pretty one) hanging upon the other."

"Now, by good St. John," said the Glover, "this infamy would make a Christian man renounce his faith, and worship Mahound in very anger! But he has seen the last of my daughter. I would rather she went to the wild Highlands with a barelegged cateran, than wed with one who could, at such a season, so broadly forget honor and decency—Out upon him!"

"Tush! tush! Father Simon," said the liberal-minded Bonnet-maker; "you consider not the nature of young blood. Their company was not long, for—to speak truth, I did keep a little watch on him—I met him before sunrise, conducting his errant damsel to the Lady's Stairs, that the wench might embark on the Tay from Perth; and I know for certainty (for I made inquiry), that she sailed in a gabbar for Dundee. So you see it was but a slight escape of youth."

"And he came here," said Simon, bitterly, "beseeching for admittance to my daughter, while he had his harlot awaiting him at home! I had rather he had slain a score of men!—It skills not talking, least of all to thee, Oliver Prondfute, who, if thou art not such a one as himself, would fain be thought so. But—"

"Nay, think not of it so seriously," said Oliver, who began to reflect on the mischief his tattling was likely to occasion to his friend, and on the consequences of Henry Gow's displeasure, when he should learn the disclosure which he had made rather in vanity of heart than in evil intention. "Consider," he continued, "that

there are follies belonging to youth. Occasion provokes men to such frolics, and confession wipes them off. I care not if I tell thee, that though my wife be as goodly a woman as the city has, yet I myself—"

"Peace, silly braggart," said the Glover, in high wrath, "thy loves and thy battles are alike apocryphal. If thou must needs lie, which I think is thy nature, canst thou invent no falsehood that may at least do thee some credit? Do I not see through thee, as I could see the light through the horn of a base lantern? Do I not know, thou filthy weaver of rotten worsted, that thou durst no more cross the threshold of thy own door, if thy wife heard of thy making such a boast, than thou dardest cross naked weapons with a boy of twelve years old, who has drawn a sword for the first time of his life? By St. John, it were paying you for your tale-bearing trouble, to send thy Maudie word of thy gay brags."

The Bonnet-maker, at this threat, started as if a cross-bow bolt had whizzed past his head when least expected. And it was with a trembling voice that he replied, "Nay, good Father Glover, thou takest too much credit for thy gray hairs. Consider, good neighbor, thou art too old for a young martialist to wrangle with. And in the matter of my Maudie, I can trust thee, for I know no one who would be less willing than thou to break the peace of families."

"Trust thy coxcomb no longer with me," said the incensed Glover; "but take thyself, and the thing thou call'st a head, out of my reach, lest I borrow back five minutes of my youth, and break thy pate!"

"You have had a merry Fastern's Even, neighbor," said the Bonnet-maker, "and I wish you a quiet sleep; we shall meet better friends to-morrow."

"Out of my doors to-night!" said the Glover. "I am ashamed so idle a tongue as thine should have power to move me thus.—Idiot—beast—loose-tongued coxcomb!" he exclaimed, throwing himself into a chair, as the Bonnet-maker disappeared; "that a fellow made up of lies should not have had the grace to frame one when it might have covered the shame of a friend! And I—what am I, that I should, in my secret mind, wish that such a gross insult to me and my child had been glossed over? Yet such was my opinion of Henry, that I would have willingly believed the grossest fgment the swaggering ass could have invented. "Well!—it skills not thinking of it. Our honest name must be maintained, though every thing else should go to ruin."

While the Glover thus moralized on the unwelcome confirmation of the tale he wished to think untrue, the expelled morrice-dancer had leisure, in the composing air of a cool and dark February night, to meditate on the consequences of the Glover's unrestrained anger.

"But it is nothing," he bethought himself, "to the wrath of Henry Wynd, who hath killed a

man for much less than placing displeasure betwixt him and Catharine, as well as her fiery old father. Certainly I were better have denied every thing. But the humor of seeming a knowing gallant (as in truth I am) fairly overcame me. Were I best go to finish the revel at the Griffin?—but then Maudie will rampage on my return,—ay, and this being holyday even, I may claim a privilege—I have it—I will not to the Griffin—I will to the Smith's, who must be at home, since no one hath seen him this day amid the revel. I will endeavor to make peace with him, and offer my intercession with the Glover. Harry is a simple downright fellow, and though I think he is my better in a broil, yet in discourse I can turn him my own way. The streets are now quiet—the night, too, is dark, and I may step aside if I meet any rioters. I will to the Smith's, and, securing him for my friend, I care little for old Simon. St. Ringan bear me well through this night, and I will clip my tongue out ere it shall run my head into such peril again. Yonder old fellow, when his blood was up, looked more like a carver of buff-jerkins than a clipper of kid-gloves."

With these reflections, the puissant Oliver walked swiftly, yet with as little noise as possible, towards the wynd, in which the Smith, as our readers are aware, had his habitation. But his evil fortune had not ceased to pursue him. As he turned into the High, or principal street, he heard a burst of music very near him, followed by a loud shout.

"My merry mates, the morrice-dancers," thought he; "I would know old Jeremy's rebeck among a hundred. I will venture across the street ere they pass on—if I am espied, I shall have the renown of some private quest, which may do me honor as a roving blade."

With these longings for distinction among the gay and gallant, combated, however, internally, by more prudential considerations, the Bonnet-maker made an attempt to cross the street. But the revellers, whoever they might be, were accompanied by torches, the flash of which fell upon Oliver, whose light-colored habit made him the more distinctly visible. The general shout of "A prize, a prize," overcame the noise of the minstrel, and before the Bonnet-maker could determine whether it were better to stand or fly, two active young men, clad in fantastic masking habits, resembling wild men, and holding great clubs, seized upon him, saying in a tragical tone, "Yield thee, man of bells and bombast; yield thee, rescue or no rescue, or truly thou art but a dead morrice-dancer."

"To whom shall I yield me?" said the Bonnet-maker, with a faltering voice; for though he saw he had to do with a party of mummers who were a-foot for pleasure, yet he observed, at the same time, that they were far above his class, and he lost the audacity necessary to support his part in a game where the inferior was likely to come by the worst.

"Dost thou parley, slave?" answered one of the maskers; "and must I show thee that thou art a captive, by giving thee incontinently the bastinado?"

"By no means, puissant man of Ind," said the Bonnet-maker; "lo, I am conformable to your pleasure."

"Come, then," said those who had arrested him, "come and do homage to the Emperor of Mimes, King of Capers, and Grand Duke of the Dark Hours, and explain by what right thou art so presumptuous as to prance and jingle, and wear out shoe-leather within his dominions, without paying him tribute. Know'st thou not thou hast incurred the pains of high treason?"

"That were hard, methinks," said poor Oliver, "since I knew not that his Grace exercised the government this evening. But I am willing to redeem the forfeit, if the purse of a poor Bonnet-maker may, by the mulct of a gallon of wine, or some such matter."

"Bring him before the Emperor," was the universal cry; and the morrice-dancer was placed before a slight, but easy and handsome figure of a young man, splendidly attired, having a cincture and tiara of peacock's feathers, then brought from the East as a marvellous rarity; a short jacket and under-dress of leopard's skin fitted closely the rest of his person, which was attired in flesh-colored silk, so as to resemble the ordinary idea of an Indian prince. He wore sandals, fastened on with ribands of scarlet silk, and held in his hand a sort of fan, such as ladies then used, composed of the same feathers, assembled into a plume or tuft.

"What Mister wight have we here," said the Indian chief, "who dares to tie the bells of a morrice on the ankles of a dull ass?—Hark ye, friend, your dress should make you a subject of ours, since our empire extends over all Merryland, including mines and minstrels of every description.—What, tongue-tied? He lacks wine—minister to him our nutshell full of sack."

A huge calabash full of sack was offered to the lips of the supplicant, while this prince of revellers exhorted him,—

"Crack me this nut, and do it handsomely, and without wry faces."

But, however Oliver might have relished a moderate sip of the same good wine, he was terrified at the quantity he was required to deal with. He drank a draught, and then entreated for mercy.

"So please your princedom, I have yet far to go, and if I were to swallow your Grace's bounty, for which accept my dutiful thanks, I should not be able to stride over the next kennel."

"Art thou in case to bear thyself like a galliard? Now, cut me a caper—ha! one—two—three—admirable! again—give him the spur!"—(here a satellite of the Indian gave Oliver a slight touch with his sword)—"Nay, that is best of all—he sprang like a cat in a gutter! Tender him the nut once more—nay, no compulsion, he has paid

forfeit, and deserves not only free dismissal, but reward. Kneel down, kneel, and arise Sir Knight of the Calabash! What is thy name? And one of you lend me a rapier."

"Oliver, may it please your honor—I mean your principality."

"Oliver, man? nay, then thou art one of the Douze peers\* already, and fate has forestalled our intended promotion. Yet rise up, sweet Sir Oliver Thatchpate, Knight of the honorable order of the Pumpkin—Rise up, in the name of Nonsense, and begone about thine own concerns, and the devil go with thee."

So saying, the Prince of the revels bestowed a smart blow with the flat of the weapon across the Bonnet-maker's shoulders, who sprang to his feet with more alacrity of motion than he had hitherto displayed, and, accelerated by the laugh and halloo which arose behind him, arrived at the Smith's house before he stopped, with the same speed with which a hunted fox makes for his den.

It was not till the affrighted Bonnet-maker had struck a blow on the door, that he recollected he ought to have bethought himself beforehand in what manner he was to present himself before Henry, and obtain his forgiveness for his rash communications to Simon Glover. No one answered to his first knock, and, perhaps, as these reflections arose, in the momentary pause of recollection which circumstances permitted, the perplexed Bonnet-maker might have flinched from his purpose, and made his retreat to his own premises, without venturing upon the interview which he had purposed. But a distant strain of minstrelsy revived his apprehensions of falling once more into the hands of the gay maskers from whom he had escaped, and he renewed his summons on the door of the Smith's dwelling, with a hurried, though faltering hand. He was then appalled by the deep, yet not unmusical voice of Henry Gow, who answered from within,— "Who calls at this hour?—and what is it that you want?"

"It is I—Oliver Proudfoot," replied the Bonnet-maker; "I have a merry jest to tell you, gossip Henry."

"Carry thy foolery to some other market. I am in no jesting humor," said Henry. "Go hence—I will see no one to-night."

"But, gossip—good gossip," answered the martialist without, "I am beset with villains, and beg the shelter of your roof!"

"Fool that thou art!" replied Henry; "no dunghill cock, the most recreant that has fought this Fastern's Eve, would ruffle his feathers at such a craven as thou!"

At this moment another strain of minstrelsy, and, as the Bonnet-maker conceived, one which approached much nearer, goaded his apprehensions to the uttermost; and in a voice, the tones of which expressed the undisguised extremity of instant fear, he exclaimed,—

\* The twelve peers of Charlemagne, immortal in romance.

"For the sake of our old gossipred, and for the love of Our blessed Lady, admit me, Henry, if you would not have me found a bloody corpse at thy door, slain by the bloody-minded Douglas-lases!"

"That would be a shame to me," thought the good-natured Smith; "and sooth to say, his peril may be real. There are roving hawks that will strike at a sparrow as soon as a heron."

With these reflections, half-muttered, half-spoken, Henry undid his well-fastened door, proposing to reconnoitre the reality of the danger before he permitted his unwelcome guest to enter the house. But as he looked abroad to ascertain how matters stood, Oliver bolted in like a scared deer into a thicket, and harbored himself by the Smith's kitchen-fire, before Henry could look up and down the lane, and satisfy himself there were no enemies in pursuit of the apprehensive fugitive. He secured his door, therefore, and returned into the kitchen, displeased that he had suffered his gloomy solitude to be intruded upon by sympathizing with apprehensions, which he thought he might have known were so easily excited as those of his timid townsman.

"How now?" he said, coldly enough, when he saw the Bonnet-maker calmly seated by his hearth. "What foolish revel is this, Master Oliver?—I see no one near to harm you."

"Give me a drink, kind gossip," said Oliver; "I am choked with the haste I have made to come hither."

"I have sworn," said Henry, "that this shall be no revel night in this house.—I am in my work-day clothes, as you see, and keep fast, as I have reason, instead of holyday. You have had wassail enough for the holyday evening, for you speak thick already—if you wish more ale or wine, you must go elsewhere."

"I have had over much wassail already," said poor Oliver, "and have been well-nigh drowned in it.—That accursed calabash!—A draught of water, kind gossip—you will not surely let me ask for that in vain? or, if it is your will, a cup of cold small ale."

"Nay, if that be all," said Henry, "it shall not be lacking. But it must have been much which brought thee to the pass of asking for either."

So saying, he filled a quart flagon from a barrel that stood nigh, and presented it to his guest. Oliver eagerly accepted it, raised it to his head with a trembling hand, imbibed the contents with lips which quivered with emotion, and, though the potation was as thin as he had requested, so much was he exhausted with the combined fears of alarm and of former revelry, that when he placed the flagon on the oak table, he uttered a deep sigh of satisfaction, and remained silent.

"Well, now you have had your draught, gossip," said the Smith, "what is it you want

Where are those that threatened you? I could see no one."

"No—but there were twenty chased me into the wynd," said Oliver. "But when they saw us together, you know, they lost the courage that brought all of them upon one of us."

"Nay, do not trifle, friend Oliver," replied his host; "my mood lies not that way."

"I jest not, by St. John of Pertin. I have been stayed and foully outraged" (gliding his hand sensitively over the place affected) "by mad David of Rothsay, roaring Ramorny, and the rest of them. They made me drink a firkin of Malvoisie."

"Thou speakest folly, man—Ramorny is sick nigh to death, as the potter-carrier everywhere reports; they and he cannot surely rise at midnight to do such frolics."

"I cannot tell," replied Oliver; "but I saw the party by torch-light, and I can make bodily oath to the bonnets I made for them since last Innocent's. They are of a quaint device, and I should know my own stitch."

"Well, thou mayst have had wrong," answered Henry. "If thou art in real danger, I will cause them get a bed for thee here. But you must fill it presently, for I am not in the humor of talking."

"Nay, I would thank thee for my quarters for a night, only my Maudie will be angry—that is, not angry, for that I care not for—but the truth is, she is over anxious on a revel night like this, knowing my humor is like thine, for a word and a blow."

"Why, then, go home," said the Smith, "and show her that her treasure is in safety, Master Oliver—the streets are quiet—and, to speak a blunt word, I would be alone."

"Nay, but I have things to speak with thee about of moment," replied Oliver, who, afraid to stay, seemed yet unwilling to go. "There has been a stir in our city council about the affair of St. Valentine's Even. The Provost told me not four hours since, that the Douglas and he had agreed that the feud should be decided by a yeoman on either part, and that our acquaintance, the Devil's Dick, was to waive his gentry, and take up the cause for Douglas and the nobles, and that you or I should fight for the Fair City. Now, though I am the elder burgess, yet I am willing, for the love and kindness we have always borne to each other, to give thee the precedence, and content myself with the humbler office of stickler."\*

Henry Smith, though angry, could scarce forbear a smile.

"If it is that which breaks thy quiet, and keeps thee out of thy bed at midnight, I will make the matter easy. Thou shalt not lose the advantage offered thee. I have fought a score of

\* The seconds in ancient single combats were so called, from the white sticks which they carried, in emblem of their duty, to see fair play between the combatants.

duels—far, far too many. Thou hast, I think, only encountered with thy wooden Soldan—it were unjust—unfair—unkind—in me to abuse thy friendly offer. So go home, good fellow, and let not the fear of losing honor disturb thy slumbers. Rest assured that thou shalt answer the challenge, as good right thou hast, having had injury from this rough-rider."

"Gramercy, and thank thee kindly," said Oliver, much embarrassed by his friend's unexpected deference; "thou art the good friend I have always thought thee. But I have as much friendship for Henry Smith, as he for Oliver Proudfeute. I swear by St. John, I will not fight in this quarrel to thy prejudice. So, having said so, I am beyond the reach of temptation, since thou wouldst not have me mansworn, though it were to fight twenty duels."

"Hark thee," said the Smith, "acknowledge thou art afraid, Oliver; tell the honest truth at once, otherwise I leave thee to make the best of thy quarrel."

"Nay, good gossip," replied the Bonnet-maker, "thou knowest I am never afraid. But, in sooth, this is a desperate ruffian; and as I have a wife—poor Maudie, thou knowest—and a small family, and thou—"

"And I," interrupted Henry, hastily, "have none, and never shall have."

"Why, truly—such being the case—I would rather thou fought'st this combat than I."

"Now, by our hollidame, gossip," answered the Smith, "thou art easily gulled! Know, thou silly fellow, that Sir Patrick Charteris, who is ever a merry man, hath but jested with thee. Dost thou think he would venture the honor of the city on thy head? or that I would yield thee the precedence in which such a matter was to be disputed? Lack-a-day, go home, let Maudie tie a warm nightcap on thy head; get thee a warm breakfast, and a cup of distilled waters, and thou wilt be in case to-morrow to fight thy wooden dromond, or Soldan, as thou call'st him, the only thing thou wilt ever lay down right blow upon."

"Ay, say'st thou so, comrade?" answered Oliver, much relieved, yet deeming it necessary to seem in part offended. "I care not for thy dogged humor; it is well for thee thou canst not wake my patience to the point of falling foul. Enough—we are gossips, and this house is thine. Why should the two best blades in Perth clash with each other? What! I know thy rugged humor, and can forgive it.—But is the feud really soldered up?"

"As completely as ever hammer fixed rivet," said the Smith. "The town hath given the Johnstone a purse of gold, for not ridding them of a troublesome fellow called Oliver Proudfeute, when he had him at his mercy; and this purse of gold buys for the Provost the Sleepless Isle; which the King grants him, for the King pays all in the long run. And thus, Sir Patrick gets the comely Inch, which is opposite to his dwelling, and all honor is saved on both sides, for what is

given to the Provost, is given, you understand, to the town. Besides all this, the Douglas hath left Perth to march against the Southron, who, men say, are called into the Marches by the false Earl of March. So the Fair City is quit of him and his cumber."

"But, in St. John's name, how came all that about," said Oliver, "and no one spoken to about it?"

"Why, look thee, friend Oliver, this I take to have been the case. The fellow whom I cropped of a hand, is now said to have been a servant of Sir John Ramorny's, who hath fled to his motherland of Fife, to which Sir John himself is also to be banished, with full consent of every honest man. Now, anything which brings in Sir John Ramorny, touches a much greater man—I think Simon Glover told as much to Sir Patrick Charteris. If it be as I guess, I have reason to thank Heaven, and all the saints, I stabbed him not upon the ladder when I made him prisoner."

"And I too thank Heaven and all the saints, most devoutly," said Oliver. "I was behind thee, thou knowest, and—"

"No more of that, if thou be'st wise—There are laws against striking princes," said the Smith; "best not handle the horsehoe till it cools. All is hushed up now."

"If this be so," said Oliver, partly discontented, but still more relieved, by the intelligence he received from his better informed friend, "I have reason to complain of Sir Patrick Charteris for jesting with the honor of an honest burgess, being, as he is, Provost of our town."

"Do, Oliver; challenge him to the field, and he will bid his yeomen loose his dogs on thee.—But come, night wears apace, will you be shogging?"

"Nay, I had one more word to say to thee, good gossip. But first, another cup of your cold ale."

"Pest on thee, for a fool! Thou makest me wish thee where cold liquors are a scarce commodity.—There, would the barrelful an thou wilt."

Oliver took the second flagon, but drank, or rather seemed to drink, very slowly, in order to gain time for considering how he should introduce his second subject of conversation, which seemed rather delicate for the Smith's present state of irritability. At length, nothing better occurred to him than to plunge into the subject at once, with, "I have seen Simon Glover to-day, gossip."

"Well," said the Smith, in a low, deep, and stern tone of voice, "and if thou hast, what is that to me?"

"Nothing—nothing," answered the appalled Bonnet-maker. "Only I thought you might like to know that he questioned me close, if I had seen thee on St. Valentine's day, after the uproar at the Dominicans', and in what company thou wert."

"And I warrant thou told'st him thou met'st

me with a glee-woman, in the mirk-loaning yonder?"

"Thou knowest, Henry, I have no gift at lying; but I made it all up with him."

"As how, I pray you?" said the Smith.

"Marry, thus—Father Simon, said I, you are an old man, and know not the quality of us, in whose veins youth is like quicksilver. You think now, he cares about this girl, said I, and, perhaps, that he has her somewhere here in Perth in a corner? No such matter; I know, said I, and I will make oath to it, that she left his house early next morning for Dundee. Ha! have I helped thee at need?"

"Truly, I think thou hast, and if anything could add to my grief and vexation at this moment, it is, that when I am so deep in the mire, an ass like thee should place his clumsy hoof on my head, to sink me entirely. Come, away with thee, and mayst thou have such luck as thy meddling humor deserves, and then, I think, thou wilt be found with a broken neck in the next gutter—Come, get you out, or I will put you to the door with head and shoulders forward."

"Ha, ha!" exclaimed Oliver, laughing, with some constraint; "thou art such a groom! But in sadness, gossip Henry, wilt thou not take a turn with me to my own house, in the Meal Vennal?"

"Curse thee, no," answered the Smith.

"I will bestow the wine on thee, if thou wilt go," said Oliver.

"I will bestow the cudgel on thee, if thou stay'st," said Henry.

"Nay, then, I will don thy buff-coat and cap of steel, and walk with thy swashing step, and whistling thy pibroch of 'Broken Bones at Loncarty;' and if they take me for thee, there dare not four of them come near me."

"Take all, or anything thou wilt, in the fiend's name! only be gone."

"Well, well, Hal, we shall meet when thou art in better humor," said Oliver, who had put on the dress.

"Go—and may I never see thy coxcomb's face again!"

Oliver at last relieved his host by swaggering off, imitating, as well as he could, the sturdy step and outward gesture of his redoubted companion, and whistling a pibroch, composed on the rout of the Danes at Loncarty, which he had picked up from its being a favorite of the Smith's, whom he made a point of imitating as far as he could. But as the innocent, though conceited fellow, stepped out from the entrance of the Wynd, where it communicated with the High Street, he received a blow from behind, against which his head-piece was no defence, and he fell dead upon the spot; an attempt to mutter the name of Henry, to whom he always looked for protection, quivering upon his dying tongue.