

CHAPTER XVII.

Nay, I will fit you for a young prince.

FALSTAFF.

WE return to the revellers, who had, half an hour before, witnessed, with such boisterous applause, Oliver's feat of agility, being the last which the poor Bonnet-maker was ever to exhibit, and at the hasty retreat which had followed it, animated by their wild shout. After they had laughed their fill, they passed on their mirthful path, in frolic and jubilee, stopping and frightening some of the people whom they met; but, it must be owned, without doing them any serious injury, either in their persons or feelings. At length, tired with his rambles, their chief gave a signal to his merry-men to close around him.

"We, my brave hearts and wise counsellors, are," he said, "the real King* over all in Scotland that is worth commanding. We sway the hours when the wine-cup circulates, and when beauty becomes kind, when Frolic is awake, and Gravity snoring upon his pallet. We leave to our vicegerent, King Robert, the weary task of controlling ambitious nobles, gratifying greedy clergymen, subduing wild Highlanders, and composing deadly feuds. And since our empire is one of joy and pleasure, meet it is, that we should haste, with all our forces, to the rescue of such as own our sway, when they chance, by evil fortune, to become the prisoners of care and hypochondriac malady. I speak in relation chiefly to Sir John, whom the vulgar call Ramorny. We have not seen him since the onslaught of Curfew Street; and though we know he was some deal hurt in that matter, we cannot see why he should not do homage in leal and duteous sort.—Here, you, our Calabash King-at-arms, did you legally summon Sir John to his part of this evening's revels?"

"I did, my lord."

"And did you acquaint him that we have for this night suspended his sentence of banishment, that since higher powers have settled that part, we might at least take a mirthful leave of an old friend?"

"I so delivered it, my lord," answered the mimic herald.

"And sent he not a word in writing, he that piques himself upon being so great a clerk?"

"He was in bed, my lord, and I might not see him. So far as I hear, he hath lived very retired, harmed with some bodily bruises, malcontent with your Highness's displeasure, and doubting insult in the streets, he having had a narrow escape from the burgesses, when the churls pursued him and his two servants, into the Domin-

* The Scottish Statute Book affords abundant evidence of the extravagant and often fatal frolics practised among our ancestors under the personages elected to fill the high offices of *Queen of May*, *Prince of Yule* (Christmas), *Abbot of Unreason*, &c., &c., corresponding to the *Boy Bishop* of England and the French *Abbé de Liège*, or *Abbas Lelitia*. Shrove-tide was not less distinguished by such mummery dignities.

ican Convent. The servants, too, have been removed to Fife, lest they should tell tales."

"Why, it was wisely done," said the Prince, who, we need not inform the intelligent reader, had a better title to be so called, than arose from the humors of the evening—"it was prudently done to keep light-tongued companions out of the way. But Sir John's absenting himself from our solemn revels, so long before decreed, is flat mutiny, and disclamation of allegiance. Or, if the knight be really the prisoner of illness and melancholy, we must ourselves grace him with a visit, seeing there can be no better cure for those maladies than our own presence, and a gentle kiss of the calabash.—Forward, ushers, minstrels, guard, and attendants! Bear on high the great emblem of our dignity—Up with the calabash, I say! and let the merry-men who carry these firkins, which are to supply the wine-cup with their life-blood, be chosen with regard to their state of steadiness. Their burden is weighty and precious, and if the fault is not in our eyes, they seem to us to reel and stagger more than were desirable. Now, move on, sirs, and let our minstrels blow their blithest and boldest."

On they went with tipsy mirth and jollity, the numerous torches flashing their red light against the small windows of the narrow streets, from whence nightcapped householders, and sometimes their wives to boot, peeped out by stealth to see what wild wassail disturbed the peaceful streets at that unwanted hour. At length the jolly train halted before the door of Sir John Ramorny's house, which a small court divided from the street.

Here they knocked, thundered, and hollowed, with many denunciations of vengeance against the recusants, who refused to open the gates. The least punishment threatened was imprisonment in an empty hogshead, within the *Massamore** of the Prince of Pastimes' feudal palace, videlicet, the ale-cellar. But Eviot, Ramorny's page, heard and knew well the character of the intruders who knocked so boldly, and thought it better, considering his master's condition, to make no answer at all, in hopes that the revel would pass on, than to attempt to deprecate their proceedings, which he knew would be to no purpose. His master's bed-room looking into a little garden, his page hoped he might not be disturbed by the noise; and he was confident in the strength of the outward gate, upon which he resolved they should beat till they tired themselves, or till the tone of their drunken humor should change. The revellers accordingly seemed likely to exhaust themselves in the noise they made by shouting and beating the door, when their mock Prince (alas! too really such) up-

* The *Massamore*, or *Massy More*, the principal dungeon of the feudal castle, is supposed to have derived its name from our intercourse with the Eastern nations at the time of the Crusades. Dr. Jamieson quotes an old Latin Itinerary: "Proximus est carcer subterraneus, sive, ut *Mauri* appellant, *Massorra*."

braided them as lazy and dull followers of the god of wine and of mirth.

"Bring forward," he said, "our key—yonder it lies, and apply it to this rebellious gate."

The key he pointed at was a large beam of wood, left on one side of the street, with the usual neglect of order characteristic of a Scottish borough of the period.

The shouting men of Ind instantly raised it in their arms, and, supporting it by their united strength, ran against the door with such force, that hasp, hinge, and staple jingled, and gave fair promise of yielding. Eviot did not choose to wait the extremity of this battery; he came forth into the court, and after some momentary questions for form's sake, caused the porter to undo the gate, as if he had for the first time recognized the midnight visitors.

"False slave of an unfaithful master," said the Prince, "where is our disloyal subject, Sir John Ramorny, who has proved recreant to our summons?"

"My lord," said Eviot, bowing at once to the real and to the assumed dignity of the leader; "My master is just now very much indisposed—he has taken an opiate—and—your Highness must excuse me if I do my duty to him in saying, he cannot be spoken with without danger of his life."

"Tush! tell me not of danger, Master Teviot—Cheviot—Eviot—what is it they call thee?—But show me thy master's chamber, or rather undo me the door of his lodging, and I will make a good guess at it myself.—Bear high the calabash, my brave followers, and see that you spill not a drop of the liquor, which Dan Bacchus has sent for the cure of all diseases of the body, and cares of the mind. Advance it, I say, and let us see the holy rind which incloses such precious liquor."

The Prince made his way into the house accordingly, and, acquainted with its interior, ran up-stairs, followed by Eviot, in vain imploring silence, and, with the rest of the rabble rout, burst into the room of the wounded master of the lodging.

He who has experienced the sensation of being compelled to sleep in spite of racking bodily pains, by the administration of a strong opiate, and of having been again startled by noise and violence, out of the unnatural state of insensibility in which he had been plunged by the potency of the medicine, may be able to imagine the confused and alarmed state of Sir John Ramorny's mind, and the agony of his body which acted and reacted upon each other. If we add to these feelings the consciousness of a criminal command, sent forth and in the act of being executed, it may give us some idea of an awakening, to which, in the mind of the party, eternal sleep would be a far preferable doom. The groan which he uttered as the first symptom of returning sensation, had something in it so terrific, that even the revellers were awed into mo-

mentary silence; and as from the half recumbent posture in which he had gone to sleep, he looked around the room, filled with fantastic shapes, rendered still more so by his disturbed intellects, he muttered to himself—

"It is thus then, after all, and the legend is true! These are fiends, and I am condemned for ever! The fire is not external, but I feel it—I feel it at my heart—burning as if the seven times heated furnace were doing its work within!"

While he cast ghastly looks around him, and struggled to recover some share of recollection, Eviot approached the Prince, and falling on his knees, implored him to allow the apartment to be cleared.

"It may," he said, "cost my master his life."

"Never fear, Cheviot," replied the Duke of Rothsay; "were he at the gates of death, here is what should make the fiends relinquish their prey:—Advance the calabash, my masters."

"It is death for him to taste it in his present state," said Eviot; "if he drinks wine he dies."

"Some one must drink it for him, he shall be cured vicariously—and may our great Dan Bacchus deign to Sir John Ramorny the comfort, the elevation of heart, the lubrication of lungs, and lightness of fancy, which are his choicest gifts, while the faithful follower, who quaffs in his stead, shall have the qualms, the sickness, the racking of the nerves, the dimness of the eyes, and the throbbing of the brain, with which our great master qualifies gifts, which would else make us too like the gods—What say you, Eviot? will you be the faithful follower that will quaff in your lord's behalf, and as his representative? Do this, and we will hold ourselves contented to depart, for, methinks, our subject doth look something ghastly."

"I would do anything in my slight power," said Eviot, "to save my master from a draught which may be his death, and your Grace from the sense that you had occasioned it. But here is one who will perform the feat of good-will, and thank your Highness to boot."

"Whom have we here?" said the Prince, "a butcher—and I think fresh from his office. Do butchers ply their craft on Eastern's Eve? Foh, how he smells of blood!"

This was spoken of Bonthron, who, partly surprised at the tumult in the house, where he had expected to find all dark and silent, and partly stupid through the wine which the wretch had drunk in great quantities, stood in the threshold of the door, staring at the scene before him, with his buff-coat splashed with blood, and a bloody axe in his hand, exhibiting a ghastly and disgusting spectacle to the revellers, who felt, though they could not tell why, fear as well as dislike at his presence.

As they approached the calabash to this ungainly and truculent-looking savage, and as he extended a hand soiled, as it seemed, with blood, to grasp it, the Prince called out,—

"Down-stairs with him! let not the wretch

drink in our presence; find him some other vessel than our holy calabash, the emblem of our revels—a swine's trough were best, if it could be come by. Away with him! let him be drenched to purpose, in atonement for his master's sobriety.—Leave me alone with Sir John Ramorny and his page; by my honor I like not your ruffian's looks."

The attendants of the Prince left the apartment, and Eviot alone remained.

"I fear," said the Prince, approaching the bed in different form from that which he had hitherto used—"I fear, my dear Sir John, that this visit has been unwelcome, but it is your own fault. Although you know our old wont, and were yourself participant of our schemes for the evening, you have not come near us since St. Valentine's—it is now Eastern's Even, and the desertion is flat disobedience and treason to our kingdom of mirth, and the statutes of the calabash."

Ramorny raised his head, and fixed a wavering eye upon the Prince; then signed to Eviot to give him something to drink. A large cup of ptisan was presented by the page, which the sick man swallowed with eager and trembling haste. He then repeatedly used the stimulating essence left for the purpose by the leech, and seemed to collect his scattered senses.

"Let me feel your pulse, dear Ramorny," said the Prince; "I know something of that craft.—How? Do you offer me the left hand, Sir John?—that is neither according to the rules of medicine nor of courtesy."

"The right has already done its last act in your Highness's service," muttered the patient, in a low and broken tone.

"How mean you by that?" said the Prince. "I am aware thy follower, Black Quentin, lost a hand; but he can steal with the other as much as will bring him to the gallows, so his fate cannot be much altered."

"It is not that fellow who has had the loss in your Grace's service—it is I—John of Ramorny."

"You?" said the Prince; "you jest with me, or the opiate still masters your reason."

"If the juice of all the poppies in Egypt were blended in one draught," said Ramorny, "it would lose influence over me when I look upon this." He drew his right arm from beneath the cover of the bed-clothes, and extending it towards the Prince, wrapped as it was in dressings, "Were these undone and removed," he said, "your Highness would see that a bloody stump all that remains of a hand ever ready to unsheath the sword at your Grace's slightest bidding."

Rothsay started back in horror. "This," he said, "must be avenged!"

"It is avenged in small part," said Ramorny; "that is, I thought I saw Bonthron but now—or was it that the dream of hell that first arose in my mind when I awakened, summoned up an im-

age so congenial? Eviot, call the m-screant—that is, if he is fit to appear."

Eviot retired, and presently returned with Bonthron, whom he had rescued from the penance, to him no unpleasing infliction, of a second calabash of wine, the brute having gored the first without much apparent alteration in his demeanor.

"Eviot," said the Prince, "let not that beast come nigh me. My soul recoils from him in fear and disgust; there is something in his looks alien from my nature, and which I shudder at as at a loathsome snake, from which my instinct revolts."

"First hear him speak, my lord," answered Ramorny; "unless a wine-skin were to talk, nothing could use fewer words.—Hast thou dealt with him, Bonthron?"

The savage raised the axe which he still held in his hand, and brought it down again edgeways.

"Good. How knew you your man?—the night, I am told, is dark."

"By sight and sound, garb, gait, and whistle."

"Enough, vanish!—and, Eviot, let him have gold and wine to his brutish contentment.—Vanish!—and go thou with him."

"And whose death is achieved?" said the Prince, released from the feelings of disgust and horror under which he suffered while the assassin was in presence. "I trust this is but a jest? Else must I call it a rash and savage deed. Who has had the hard lot to be butchered by that bloody and brutal slave?"

"One little better than himself," said the patient; "a wretched artisan, to whom, however, fate gave the power of reducing Ramorny to a mutilated cripple—a curse go with his base spirit!—his miserable life is but to my revenge what a drop of water would be to a furnace. I must speak briefly, for my ideas again wander; it is only the necessity of the moment which keeps them together, as a thong combines a handful of arrows. You are in danger, my lord—I speak it with certainty—you have braved Douglas and offended your uncle—displeased your father—though that were a trifle, were it not for the rest."

"I am sorry I have displeased my father," said the Prince (entirely diverted from so insignificant a thing as the slaughter of an artisan, by the more important subject touched upon), "if indeed it be so. But if I live, the strength of the Douglas shall be broken, and the craft of Albany shall little avail him!"

"Ay—if—if. My lord," said Ramorny, "with such opposites as you have, you must not rest upon *if* or *but*—you must resolve at once to slay or be slain."

"How mean you, Ramorny? your fever makes you rave," answered the Duke of Rothsay.

"No, my lord," said Ramorny, "were my

frenzy at the highest, the thoughts that pass through my mind at this moment would qualify it. It may be that regret for my own loss has made me desperate; that anxious thoughts for your Highness's safety have made me nourish bold designs; but I have all the judgment with which Heaven has gifted me, when I tell you, that if ever you would brook the Scottish crown, nay, more, if ever you would see another Saint Valentine's day, you must—"

"What is it that I must do, Ramorny?"—said the Prince with an air of dignity; "nothing unworthy of myself, I hope?"

"Nothing, certainly, unworthy or misbecoming a Prince of Scotland, if the blood-stained annals of our country tell the tale truly; but that which may well shock the nerves of a prince of mimes and merry-makers."

"Thou art severe, Sir John Ramorny," said the Duke of Rothsay, with an air of displeasure; "but thou hast dearly bought a right to censure us by what thou hast lost in our cause."

"My Lord of Rothsay," said the knight, "the chirurgeon who dressed this mutilated stump, told me that the more I felt the pain his knife and brand inflicted, the better was my chance of recovery. I shall not, therefore, hesitate to hurt your feelings, while by doing so I may be able to bring you to a sense of what is necessary for your safety. Your Grace has been the pupil of mirthful folly too long; you must now assume manly policy, or be crushed like a butterfly, on the bosom of the flower you are sporting on."

"I think I know your cast of morals, Sir John; you are weary of merry folly—the churchmen call it vice—and long for a little serious crime. A murder, now, or a massacre, would enhance the flavor of debauch, as the taste of the olive gives zest to wine. But my worst acts are but merry malice; I have no relish for the bloody trade, and abhor to see or hear of its being acted even on the meanest caittiff. Should I ever fill the throne, I suppose, like my father before me, I must drop my own name, and be dubbed Robert, in honor of the Bruce—well, an if it be so, every Scots lad shall have his flagon in one hand, and the other around his lass's neck, and manhood shall be tried by kisses and bumpers, not by dirks and dourlachs, and they shall write on my grave, 'Here lies Robert, fourth of his name. He won not battles like Robert the First. He rose not from a count to a king like Robert the Second. He founded not churches like Robert the Third, but was contented to live and die King of good fellows! Of all my two centuries of ancestors, I would only emulate the fame of

'Old King Coal,
Who had a brown bowl.'

"My gracious lord," said Ramorny, "let me remind you, that your joyous revels involve serious evils. If I had lost this hand in fighting to

attain for your Grace some important advantage over your two powerful enemies, the loss would never have grieved me. But to be reduced from helmet and steel-coat, to biggen and gown, in a night brawl—"

"Why, there again now, Sir John"—interrupted the reckless Prince—"How canst thou be so unworthy as to be for ever finzing thy bloody hand in my face, as the ghost of Gaskhall threw his head at Sir William Wallace? * Bethink thee, thou art more unreasonable than Fawdion himself; for wight Wallace had swept his head off in somewhat a hasty humor, whereas, I would gladly stick thy hand on again, were that possible. And, hark thee, since that cannot be, I will get thee such a substitute as the steel hand of the old Knight of Carselogie, with which he greeted his friends, caressed his wife, braved his antagonists, and did all that might be done by a hand of flesh and blood, in offence or defence. Depend on it, John Ramorny, we have much that is superfluous about us. Man can see with one eye, hear with one ear, touch with one hand, smell with one nostril; and why we should have two of each (unless to supply an accidental loss or injury), I, for one, am at a loss to conceive."

Sir John Ramorny turned from the Prince with a low groan.

"Nay, Sir John," said the Duke, "I am quite serious. You know the truth touching the legend of Steelhand of Carselogie better than I, since he was your own neighbor. In his time, that curious engine could only be made in Rome; but I will wager a hundred merks with you, that let the Perth armorer have the use of it for a pattern, Henry of the Wynd will execute as complete an imitation as all the smiths in Rome could accomplish, with all the cardinals to bid a blessing on the work."

"I could venture to accept your wager, my lord," answered Ramorny, bitterly, "but there is no time for foolery.—You have dismissed me from your service, at command of your uncle?"

"At command of my father," answered the Prince.

"Upon whom your uncle's commands are imperative," replied Ramorny. "I am a disgraced man, thrown aside, as I may now fling away my right-hand glove, as a thing useless. Yet my head might help you, though my hand be gone. Is your Grace disposed to listen to me for one word of serious import?—for I am much exhausted, and feel my force sinking under me."

"Speak your pleasure," said the Prince; "thy loss binds me to hear thee; thy bloody stump is a sceptre to control me. Speak then; but be merciful in thy strength of privilege."

"I will be brief, for mine own sake as well as thine;—indeed, I have but little to say. Douglas places himself immediately at the head of his vassals. He will assemble, in the name of King Robert, thirty thousand Borderers, whom he will

* The passage referred to is perhaps the most poetical one in Blind Harry's Wallace. *Book v., v. 180-220.*

shortly after lead into the interior, to demand that the Duke of Rothsay receive, or rather restore, his daughter to the rank and privileges of his Duchess. King Robert will yield to any conditions which may secure peace.—What will the Duke do?”

“The Duke of Rothsay loves peace,” said the Prince, haughtily; “but he never feared war. Ere he takes back yonder proud peat to his table and his bed, at the command of her father, Douglas must be King of Scotland.”

“Be it so—but even this is the less pressing peril, especially as it threatens open violence, for the Douglas works not in secret.”

“What is there which presses, and keeps us awake at this late hour? I am a weary man, thou a wounded one, and the very tapers are blinking as if tired of our conference.”

“Tell me, then, who is it that rules this kingdom of Scotland?” said Ramorny.

“Robert, third of the name,” said the Prince, raising his bonnet as he spoke; “and long may he sway the sceptre!”

“True, and amen,” answered Ramorny; “but who sways King Robert, and dictates almost every measure which the good King pursues?”

“My Lord of Albany, you would say,” replied the Prince. “Yes, it is true my father is guided almost entirely by the counsels of his brother; nor can we blame him in our consciences, Sir John Ramorny, for little help hath he had from his son.”

“Let us help him now, my lord,” said Ramorny. “I am possessor of a dreadful secret—Albany hath been trafficking with me, to join him in taking your Grace’s life! He offers full pardon for the past—high favor for the future.”

“How, man—my life? I trust, though, thou dost only mean my kingdom? It were impious!—he is my father’s brother—they sat on the knees of the same father—lay on the bosom of the same mother.—Out on thee, man! what follies they make thy sick-bed believe!”

“Believe, indeed!” said Ramorny. “It is new to me to be termed credulous. But the man through whom Albany communicated his temptations, is one whom all will believe, so soon as he hints at mischief—even the medicaments which are prepared by his hands have a relish of poison.”

“Tush! such a slave would slander a saint,” replied the Prince. “Thou art duped for once, Ramorny, shrewd as thou art. My uncle of Albany is ambitious, and would secure for himself and for his house, a larger portion of power and wealth than he ought in reason to desire. But to suppose he would dethrone or slay his brother’s son—Fie, Ramorny! put me not to quote the old saw, that evil doers are evil dreads—It is your suspicion, not your knowledge, which speaks.”

“Your Grace is fatally deluded—I will put it to an issue. The Duke of Albany is generally

hated for his greed and covetousness—Your Highness is, it may be, more beloved than—”

Ramorny stopped, the prince calmly filled up the blank—“more beloved than I am honored? It is so I would have it, Ramorny.”

“At least,” said Ramorny, “you are more beloved than you are feared, and that is no safe condition for a prince. But give me your honor and knightly word that you will not resent what good service I shall do in your behalf, and lend me your signet to engage friends in your name, and the Duke of Albany shall not assume authority in this court, till the wasted hand which once terminated this stamp shall be again united to the body, and acting in obedience to the dictates of my mind.”

“You would not venture to dip your hands in royal blood?” said the Prince, sternly.

“Fie, my Lord—at no rate—blood need not be shed; life may, nay will, be extinguished of itself. For want of trimming it with fresh oil, or screening it from a breath of wind, the quivering light will die in the socket. To suffer a man to die is not to kill him.”

“True—I had forgot that policy. Well, then, suppose my uncle Albany does not continue to live—I think that must be the phrase—Who then rules the court of Scotland?”

“Robert the Third, with consent, advice, and authority of the most mighty David, Duke of Rothsay, Lieutenant of the kingdom, and ALTER ego; in whose favor, indeed, the good King, wearied with the fatigues and troubles of sovereignty, will, I guess, be well disposed to abdicate. So long live our brave young monarch, King David the Third!

*Ille manu fortis,
Anglia ludebit in hortis.*”

“And our father and predecessor,” said Rothsay, “will he continue to live to pray for us, as our beadsman, by whose favor he holds the privilege of laying his gray hairs in the grave as soon, and no earlier, than the course of nature permits?—or must he also encounter some of those negligences, in consequence of which men cease to continue to live, and exchange the limits of a prison, or of a convent resembling one, for the dark and tranquil cell, where the priests say that the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest?”

“You speak in jest, my lord,” replied Ramorny; “to harm the good old King were equally unnatural and impolitic.”

“Why shrink from that, man, when thy whole scheme,” answered the Prince, in stern displeasure, “is one lesson of unnatural guilt, mixed with short-sighted ambition?—If the King of Scotland can scarcely make head against his nobles, even now when he can hold up before them an unsullied and honorable banner, who would follow a prince that is blackened with the death of an uncle, and the imprisonment of a father? Why, man, thy policy were enough to revolt a heathen divan, to say nought of the council of a

Christian nation.—Thou wert my tutor, Ramorny, and perhaps I might justly upbraid thy lessons and example, for some follies which men chide in me. Perhaps, if it had not been for thee, I had not been standing at midnight in this fool’s guise” (looking at his dress), “to hear an ambitious profligate propose to me the murder of an uncle, the dethroning of the best of fathers. Since it is my fault, as well as thine, that has sunk me so deep in the gulf of infamy, it were unjust that thou alone shouldst die for it. But dare not to renew this theme to me on peril of thy life! I will proclaim thee to my father—to Albany—to Scotland—throughout its length and breadth! As many market crosses as are in the land, shall have morsels of the traitor’s carcass, who dare counsel such horrors to the heir of Scotland!—Well hope I, indeed, that the fever of thy wound, and the intoxicating influence of the cordials which act on thy infirm brain, have this night operated on thee, rather than any fixed purpose.”

“In sooth, my lord,” said Ramorny, “if I have said anything which could so greatly exasperate your highness, it must have been my excess of zeal, mingled with imbecility of understanding. Surely I, of all men, am least likely to propose ambitious projects with a prospect of advantage to myself! Alas! my only future views must be to exchange lance and saddle for the breviary and the confessional. The convent of Lindores must receive the maimed and impoverished Knight of Ramorny, who will there have ample leisure to meditate upon the text, ‘Put not thy faith in Princes.’”

“It is a goodly purpose,” said the Prince, “and we will not be lacking to promote it. Our separation, I thought, would have been but for a time—it must now be perpetual. Certainly, after such talk as we have held, it were meet that we should live asunder. But the convent of Lindores, or whatever other house receives thee, shall be richly endowed and highly favored by us.—And now, Sir John of Ramorny, sleep—sleep—and forget this evil-omened conversation, in which the fever of disease and of wine has rather, I trust, held colloquy, than your own proper thoughts.—Light to the door, Eviot.”

A call from Eviot summoned the attendants of the Prince, who had been sleeping on the staircase and hall, exhausted by the revels of the evening.

“Is there none amongst you sober?” said the Duke of Rothsay, disgusted by the appearance of his attendants.

“Not a man—not a man,” answered the followers with a drunken shout; “we are none of us traitors to the Emperor of Merry-makers!”

“And are all of you turned into brutes, then?” said the Prince.

“In obedience and imitation of your Grace,” answered one fellow; “or if we are a little behind your Highness, one pull at the pitcher will—”

“Peace, beast!” said the Duke of Rothsay. “Are there none of you sober, I say?”

“Yes, my noble liege,” was the answer, “here is one false brother, Watkins the Englishman.”

“Come hither, then, Watkins, and aid me with a torch—Give me a cloak, too, and another bonnet, and take away this trumpery,” throwing down his coronet of feathers; “I would I could throw off all my follies as easily.—English Wat, attend me alone, and the rest of you end your revelry, and doff your mumming habits. The holy-fide is expended, and the Fast has begun.”

“Our monarch has abdicated sooner than usual this night,” said one of the revel rout; but as the Prince gave no encouragement, such as happened for the time to want the virtue of sobriety, endeavored to assume it as well as they could, and the whole of the late rioters began to adopt the appearance of a set of decent persons, who, having been surprised into intoxication, endeavor to disguise their condition, by assuming a double portion of formality of behavior. In the interim, the Prince, having made a hasty reform in his dress, was lighted to the door by the only sober man of the company, but, in his progress thither, had well-nigh stumbled over the sleeping bulk of the brute Bonthron.

“How now—is that vile beast in our way once more?” he said, in anger and disgust. “Here, some of you, toss this catfif into the horse-trough, that for once in his life he may be washed clean.”

While the train executed his commands, availing themselves of a fountain which was in the outer court, and while Bonthron underwent a discipline which he was incapable of resisting, otherwise than by some inarticulate groans and snorts, like those of a dying boar, the Prince proceeded on his way to his apartments, in a mansion called the Constable’s Lodgings, from the house being the property of the Earls of Errol. On the way, to divert his thoughts from the more displeasing matters, the Prince asked his companion how he came to be sober, when the rest of the party had been so much overcome with liquor.

“So please your honor’s Grace,” replied English Wat, “I confess it was very familiar in me to be sober when it was your Grace’s pleasure that your train should be mad drunk; but in respect they were all Scottishmen but myself, I thought it argued no policy in getting drunken in their company; seeing that they only endure me even when we are all sober, and if the wine were uppermost, I might tell them a piece of my mind, and be paid with as many stabs as there are skenes in the good company.”

“So it is your purpose never to join any of the revels of our household?”

“Under favor, yes; unless it be your Grace’s pleasure that the residue of your train should remain one day sober, to admit Will Watkins to get drunk without terror of his life.”

"Such occasion may arrive.—Where dost thou serve, Watkins?"

"In the stable, so please you."

"Let our chamberlain bring thee into the household, as a yeoman of the night-watch. I like thy favor, and it is something to have one sober fellow in the house, although he is only such through the fear of death. Attend, therefore, near our person, and thou shalt find society a thriving virtue."

Meantime a load of care and fear added to the distress of Sir John Ramorny's sick-chamber. His reflections, disordered as they were by the opiate, fell into great confusion when the Prince, in whose presence he had suppressed its effect by strong resistance, had left the apartment. His consciousness, which he had possessed perfectly during the interview, began to be very much disturbed. He felt a general sense that he had incurred a great danger; that he had rendered the Prince his enemy, and that he had betrayed to him a secret which might affect his own life. In this state of mind and body, it was not strange that he should either dream, or else that his diseased organs should become subject to that species of phantasmagoria which is excited by the use of opium. He thought that the shade of Queen Annabella stood by his bedside, and demanded the youth whom she had placed under his charge, simple, virtuous, gay, and innocent.

"Thou hast rendered him reckless, dissolute, and vicious," said the shade of pallid Majesty. "Yet I thank thee, John of Ramorny, ungrateful to me, false to thy word, and treacherous to my hopes. Thy hate shall counteract the evil which thy friendship has done to him. And well do I hope, that, now thou art no longer his counsellor, a bitter penance on earth may purchase my ill-fated child pardon and acceptance in a better world."

Ramorny stretched out his arms after his benefactress, and endeavored to express contrition and excuse; but the countenance of the apparition became darker and sterner, till it was no longer that of the late Queen, but presented the gloomy and haughty aspect of the Black Douglas—then the timid and sorrowful face of King Robert, who seemed to mourn over the approaching dissolution of his royal house—and then a group of fantastic features, partly hideous, partly ludicrous, which moped, and chattered, and twisted themselves into unnatural and extravagant forms, as if ridiculing his endeavor to obtain an exact idea of their lineaments.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A purple land, where law secures not life.

BYRON.

THE morning of Ash Wednesday arose pale and bleak, as usual at this season in Scotland, where the worst and most inclement weather often occurs in the early spring months. It was a severe day of frost, and the citizens had to

sleep away the consequences of the preceding holyday's debauchery. The sun had therefore risen for an hour above the horizon, before there was any general appearance of life among the inhabitants of Perth, so that it was some time after daybreak, when a citizen, going early to mass, saw the body of the luckless Oliver Proud-fute lying on its face, across the kennel, in the manner in which he had fallen, under the blow, as our readers will easily imagine, of Anthony Bonthron, the "boy of the belt," that is, the executioner of the pleasure of John of Ramorny.

This early citizen was Allan Griffin, so termed because he was master of the Griffin inn; and the alarm which he raised soon brought together, first straggling neighbors, and by and by a concourse of citizens. At first, from the circumstance of the well-known buff-coat, and the crimson feather in the head-piece, the noise arose that it was the stout Smith that lay there slain. This false rumor continued for some time; for the host of the Griffin, who himself had been a magistrate, would not permit the body to be touched or stirred till Bailie Craigdallie arrived, so that the face was not seen.

"This concerns the Fair City, my friends," he said; "and if it is the stout Smith of the Wynd who lies here, the man lives not in Perth, who will not risk land and life to avenge him. Look you, the villains have struck him down behind his back, for there is not a man within ten Scotch miles of Perth, gentle or simple, Highland or Lowland, that would have met him face to face with such evil purpose. Oh, brave men of Perth! the flower of your manhood has been cut down, and that by a base and treacherous hand!"

A wild cry of fury arose from the people, who were fast assembling.

"We will take him on our shoulders," said a strong butcher; "we will carry him to the King's presence at the Dominican Convent."

"Ay, ay," answered a blacksmith, "neither bolt nor bar shall keep us from the King; neither monk nor mass shall break our purpose. A better armorer never laid hammer on anvil!"

"To the Dominicans! to the Dominicans!" shouted the assembled people.

"Bethink you, burghers," said another citizen, "our King is a good King, and loves us like his children. It is the Douglas and the Duke of Albany that will not let good King Robert hear the distresses of his people."

"Are we to be slain in our own streets for the King's softness of heart?" said the butcher. "The Bruce did otherwise. If the King will not keep us, we will keep ourselves. Ring the bells backward, every bell of them that is made of metal. Cry, and spare not, St. Johnston's hunt is up!"*

* This celebrated Slogan, or War Cry, was often accompanied

"Ay," cried another citizen, "and let us to the holds of Albany and the Douglas, and burn them to the ground. Let the fires tell far and near, that Perth knew how to avenge her stout Henry Gow! He has fought a score of times for the Fair City's right—let us show we can fight once to avenge his wrong. Hallo! ho! brave citizens, St. Johnston's hunt is up!"

This cry, the well-known rallying word amongst the inhabitants of Perth, and seldom heard but on occasions of general uproar, was echoed from voice to voice; and one or two neighboring steeples, of which the enraged citizens possessed themselves, either by consent of the priests, or in spite of their opposition, began to ring out the ominous alarm notes, in which, as the ordinary succession of the chimes were reversed, the bells were said to be rung backward.

Still as the crowd thickened, and the roar waxed more universal and louder, Allan Griffin, a burly man, with a deep voice, and well respected among high and low, kept his station as he bestrode the corpse, and called loudly to the multitude to keep back, and wait the arrival of the magistrates.

"We must proceed by order in this matter, my masters; we must have our magistrates at our head. They are duly chosen and elected in our town hall, good men and true every one; we will not be called rioters, or idle perturbators of the king's peace. Stand you still, and make room, for yonder comes Bailie Craigdallie, ay, and honest Simon Glover, to whom the Fair City is so much bounden. Alas, alas, my kind townsmen! his beautiful daughter was a bride yesternight—this morning the Fair Maid of Perth is a widow before she has been a wife!"

This new theme of sympathy increased the rage and sorrow of the crowd the more, as many women now mingled with them, who echoed back the alarm cry to the men.

"Ay, ay, St. Johnston's hunt is up! For the Fair Maid of Perth and the brave Henry Gow! Up, up, every one of you, spare not for your skin-cutting! To the stables!—to the stables!—

by a stirring strain of music, which was of much repute in its day, but which has long eluded the search of musical antiquaries. It is described by the local poet, Mr. Adamson, as a great inspirer of courage.

"Courage to give, was mightily then blown,
Saint Johnston's Hunt is up, since most famous known
By all musicians."

Muses' Threnodie, 5th Muse.

From the description which follows, one might suppose that had it been accompanied by a kind of war-dance:

"O! how they bend their backs and fingers tingle,
Moving their quivering heads, their brains do whirlle
With divers moods; and as with uncount rapture
Transported, so do shake their bodies' structure;
Their eyes do reele, heads, arms, and shoulders move;
Feet, legs, and hands, and all parts approve
That heavenly harmonie; while as they threw
Their brows,—O mighty strain! that's brave!—they show
Great daintie:"

Ibid. Id.

when the horse is gone the man-at-arms is useless—cut off the grooms and yeomen; lame, maim, and stab the horses; kill the base squires and pages. Let these proud knights meet us on their feet if they dare!"

"They dare not—they dare not," answered the men; "their strength is in their horses and armor; and yet the haughty and ungrateful villains have slain a man whose skill as an armorer was never matched in Milan or Venice.—To arms! to arms, brave burghers! St. Johnston's hunt is up!"

Amid this clamor, the magistrates and superior class of inhabitants with difficulty obtained room to examine the body, having with them the town-clerk to take an official protocol, or, as it is still called, a precognition, of the condition in which it was found. To these delays the multitude submitted, with a patience and order which strongly marked the national character of a people, whose resentment has always been the more deeply dangerous, that they will, without relaxing their determination of vengeance, submit with patience to all delays which are necessary to ensure its attainment. The multitude, therefore, received their magistrates with a loud cry, in which the thirst for revenge was announced, together with the deferential welcome to the patrons by whose direction they expected to obtain it in right and legal fashion.

While these accents of welcome still rung above the crowd, who now filled the whole adjacent streets, receiving and circulating a thousand varying reports, the fathers of the city caused the body to be raised and more closely examined; when it was instantly perceived, and then publicly announced, that not the armorer of the burgh so highly, and, according to the esteemed qualities of the times, so justly popular among his fellow-citizens, but a person of far less general estimation, though not without his own value in society, lay murdered before them—the brisk Bonnet-maker, Oliver Proud-fute. The resentment of the people had so much turned upon the general opinion, that their frank and brave champion, Henry Gow, was the slaughtered person, that the contradiction of the report served to cool the general fury, although, if poor Oliver had been recognised at first, there is little doubt that the cry of vengeance would have been as unanimous, though not probably so furious as in the case of Henry Wynd.* The first circu-

* Mr. Morrison says: "The various designations by which Henry, or Hal of the Wynd, the Gow Crom or Bandy-legged Smith of St. Johnston, was known, have left the field open to a great variety of competitors for the honor of being reckoned among his descendants. The want of early registers, and various other circumstances, prevent our venturing to pronounce any verdict on the comparative strength of these claims, but we shall state them all fairly and briefly.

"First, we have the Henry or Hendrie families, who can produce many other instances besides their own, in which a Christian name has become that of a family or tribe, from the celebrity attached to it through the great deeds of some one of their ancestors by whom it was borne. Then follow the Haas

lation of the unexpected intelligence even excited a smile among the crowd, so near are the confines of the ludicrous to those of the terrible.

"The murderers have without doubt taken him for Henry Smith," said Griffin, "which must have been a great comfort to him in the circumstances."

But the arrival of other persons on the scene soon restored its deeply tragic character.

CHAPTER XIX.

Who's that that rings the bell!—Diablos, ho!
The town will rise.—

OTHELLO, Act II. Scene 3.

THE wild rumors which flew through the town, speedily followed by the tolling of the alarm bells, spread general consternation. The nobles and knights, with their followers, gathered in different places of rendezvous, where a defence could best be maintained; and the alarm reached the royal residence, where the young Prince was one of the first to appear to assist, if necessary, in the defence of the old King. The scene of the preceding night ran in his recollection; and, remembering the blood-stained figure of Bonthron, he conceived, though indistinctly, that the ruffian's action had been connected with this uproar. The subsequent and more interesting discourse with Sir John Ramorny had, however, been of such an impressive nature, as to obliterate all traces of what he had vaguely heard of the bloody act of the assassin, excepting a confused recollection that some one or other had been slain. It was chiefly on his father's account that he had assumed arms with his household train, who, clad in bright armor, and bearing lances in their hands, made now a figure very different from that of the preceding night, when they appeared as intoxicated Bacchanalians. The kind old monarch received this mark of filial

Halls, and Halleys, among whom even some of the ancient and honorable race of the Halkets have ranged themselves. All these claims are, however, esteemed very lightly by the Wynds, who to this day pride themselves on their thews and sinews, and consider that their ancestor being styled 'Henrie Winde,' by the metrical historian of the town, is of itself proof sufficient that their claim is more solid than the name would altogether imply.

"It is rather singular, that, in spite of all the ill-will which Henry seems to have borne to the Celts, and the contemptuous terms in which he so often speaks of them in the text, the Gows should be found foremost among the claimants, and that the strife should lie mainly between them and their Saxon name-takes, the Smiths, families whose number, opulence, and respectability will render it an extremely difficult matter to say which of them are in the direct line, even if it should be clearer than it is that the children of the hero were known by their father's occupation, and not by his residence.

"It only remains to notice the pretensions of the Chroms, Crooms, Crumbs, or Crombles, a name which every school-boy will associate, if not with the athletic, at least with the gymnastic exercises for which the Gow Chrom and the grammar school of Perth were equally celebrated. We need scarcely add, that while the Saxon name corresponding with the word Gow has brought a host of competitors into the field, there has not yet started any claimant resting his pretensions on the quality expressed in the epithet *Chron*, i. e., bandy-legged."

attachment with tears of gratitude, and proudly presented his son to his brother Albany, who entered shortly afterwards. He took them each by the hand.

"Now are we three Stewarts," he said, "as inseparable as the holy Trefoil; and, as they say the wearer of that sacred herb mocks at magical delusion, so we, while we are true to each other, may set malice and enmity at defiance."

The brother and son kissed the kind hand which pressed theirs, while Robert III. expressed his confidence in their affection. The kiss of the youth was, for the time, sincere; that of the brother was the salute of the apostate Judas.

In the meantime the bell of St. John's Church alarmed, amongst others, the inhabitants of Curfew Street. In the house of Simon Glover, old Dorothy Glover, as she was called (for she also took name from the trade she practised, under her master's auspices), was the first to catch the sound. Though somewhat deaf upon ordinary occasions, her ear for bad news was as sharp as a kite's scent for carrion; for Dorothy, otherwise an industrious, faithful, and even affectionate creature, had that strong appetite for collecting and retailing sinister intelligence, which is often to be marked in the lower classes. Little accustomed to be listened to, they love the attention which a tragic tale insures to the bearer, and enjoy, perhaps, the temporary equality to which misfortune reduces those who are ordinarily accounted their superiors. Dorothy had no sooner possessed herself of a slight packet of the rumors which were flying abroad, than she bounced into her master's bedroom, who had taken the privilege of age and the holytide to sleep longer than usual.

"There he lies, honest man!" said Dorothy, half in a screeching, and half in a wailing tone of sympathy,— "there he lies; his best friend slain, and he knowing as little about it as the babe new born, that kens not life from death."

"How now!" said the Glover, starting up out of his bed.— "What is the matter, old woman? is my daughter well?"

"Old woman!" said Dorothy, who, having her fish hooked, chose to let him play a little. "I am not so old," said she, flouncing out of the room, "as to bide in the place till a man rises from his naked bed—"

And presently she was heard at a distance in the parlor beneath, melodiously singing to the scrubbing of her own broom.

"Dorothy—screechowl—devil,—say but my daughter is well!"

"I am well, my father," answered the Fair Maid of Perth, speaking from her bedroom, "perfectly well; but what, for Our Lady's Sake, is the matter? The bells ring backward, and there is shrieking and crying in the streets."

"I will presently know the cause.—Here, Conachar, come speedily and tie my points.—I forgot—the Highland loon is far beyond Fortin

gall.—Patience, daughter, I will presently bring you news."

"Ye need not hurry yourself for that, Simon Glover," quoth the obdurate old woman; "the best and the worst of it may be tauld before you could hobble over your doorstane. I ken the hail story abroad; for, thought I, our goodman is so wilful, that he'll be for banging out to the tuilzie, be the cause what it like; and sae I maun e'en stir my shanks, and learn the cause of all this, or he will hae his auld nose in the midst of it, and maybe get it nipped off before he knows what for."

"And what is the news, then, old woman?" said the impatient Glover, still busying himself with the hundred points or latches, which were the means of attaching the doublet to the hose.

Dorothy suffered him to proceed in his task till she conjectured it must be nearly accomplished; and foresaw that if she told not the secret herself, her master would be abroad to seek in person for the cause of the disturbance. She, therefore, hollowed out—"Aweel, aweel, ye canna say it is my fault, if you hear ill news before you have been at the morning mass. I would have kept it from ye till ye had heard the priest's word; but since you must hear it, you have e'en lost the truest friend that ever gave hand to another, and Perth maun mourn for the bravest burgher that ever took a blade in hand!"

"Harry Smith! Harry Smith!" exclaimed the father and the daughter at once.

"Oh, ay, there ye hae it at last," said Dorothy, "and whase fault was it but your ain?—ye made such a piece of work about his companying with a glee-woman, as if he had companied with a Jewess!"

Dorothy would have gone on long enough, but her master exclaimed to his daughter, who was still in her own apartment, "It is nonsense, Catharine—all the dotage of an old fool. No such thing has happened. I will bring you the true tidings in a moment;" and snatching up his staff, the old man hurried out past Dorothy, and into the street, where the throng of people were rushing towards the High Street. Dorothy, in the meantime, kept muttering to herself, "Thy father is a wise man, take his ain word for it. He will come next by some scathe in the hobble-show, and then it will be, Dorothy, get the lint, and, Dorothy, spread the plaster; but now it is nothing but nonsense, and a lie, and impossibility, that can come out of Dorothy's mouth—Impossible! Does auld Simon think that Harry Smith's head was as hard as his stithy, and a hail clan of Highlandmen ding at him?"

Here she was interrupted by a figure like an angel, who came wandering by her with wild eye, cheek deadly pale, hair dishevelled, and an apparent want of consciousness, which terrified the old woman out of her discontented humor.

"Our Lady bless my bairn!" said she. "What look you see wild for?"

"Did you not say some one was dead?" said

Catharine, with a frightful uncertainty of utterance, as if her organs of speech and hearing served her but imperfectly.

"Dead, hinny! Ay, ay, dead enough; ye'll no hae him to gloom at ony mair."

"Dead!" repeated Catharine, still with the same uncertainty of voice and manner. "Dead—slain—and by Highlanders?"

"I see warrant by Highlanders,—the lawless loons. Wha is it else that kills maist of the folk about, unless now and then when the burghers take a tirrvie, and kill ane another, or whiles that the knights and nobles shed blood? But I see uphauld it's been the Highlandmen this bout. The man was no in Perth, laird or loon, durst have faced Henry Smith man to man. There's been sair odds against him; ye'll see that when it's looked into."

"Highlanders!" repeated Catharine, as if haunted by some idea which troubled her senses. "Highlanders!—Oh, Conachar! Conachar!"

"Indeed, and I dare say you have lighted on the very man, Catharine. They quarrelled, as you saw, on the St. Valentine's Even, and had a warstle. A Highlandman has a long memory for the like of that. Gie him a cuff at Martin-mass, and his cheek will be tingling at Whitsunday. But what could have brought down the lang-legged loons to do their bloody wark within burgh?"

"Woe's me, it was I," said Catharine; "it was I brought the Highlanders down—I that sent for Conachar—ay, they have lain in wait—but it was I that brought them within reach of their prey. But I will see with my own eyes—and then—something we will do. Say to my father I will be back anon."

"Are ye distraught, lassie?" shouted Dorothy, as Catharine made past her towards the street door. "You would not gang into the street with the hair hanging down your haffets in that guise, and you kenn'd for the Fair Maid of Perth?—Mass! but she's out in the street, come o't what like, and the auld Glover will be as mad as if I could withhold her, will she nill she, flyte she fling she.—This is a brave morning for an Ash Wednesday!—What's to be done! If I were to seek my master among the multitude, I were like to be crushed beneath their feet, and little moan made for the old woman.—And am I to run after Catharine, who ere this is out of sight and far lighter of foot than I am?—so I will jist down the gate to Nicol Barber's, and tell him a' about it!"

While the trusty Dorothy was putting her prudent resolve into execution, Catharine ran through the streets of Perth in a manner, which at another moment would have brought on her the attention of every one, who saw her hurrying on with a reckless impetuosity, wildly and widely different from the ordinary decency and composure of her step and manner, and without the plaid, scarf, or mantle, which "women of good," of fair character and decent rank univer-