

THE BLYTHSOME BRIDAL.

The Blythsome Bridal is an extraordinary picture of humble life, as presented in a Scotch village in the seventeenth century. Its enumeration of oddly characterised men and women, all with appropriate nicknames, is only to be equalled by its list of the rough viands and dainties with which they were to be regaled. Over all is an air of intense hearty good-humour and love of merriment, that leaves us almost bewildered when we think of the general sombreness of Scottish rustic life, and in particular

the zealous efforts of the clergy, by fines and censures, to prevent all dancing and other joyance at weddings. Nothing could prove more expressively how much of 'tipsy jest and jollity' there has always lurked under the sober exterior of Scottish life, or (to change the expression of the idea) how liable our quiet countrymen are to strange outbursts of vivacious feeling; even to the extent of recklessness and frolic.

Fy let us a' to the brid - al, For
 there 'll be lilt - in' there; For
 Jock's to be mar - ried to Mag - gie, The
 lass wi' the gowd - en hair. And
 there 'll be lang - kale and pot - tage, And
 ban - nocks o' bar - ley meal; And
 there 'll be good saut her - rin', To
 re - lish a cogue o' guid yill.

Fy let us a' to the bridal,
 For there 'll be liltin' there ;
 For Jock 's to be married to Maggie,
 The lass wi' the gowden hair.
 And there 'll be lang-kale and pottage,
 And bannocks o' barley-meal ;
 And there 'll be good saut herrin',
 To relish a cogue o' guid yill.
 Fy let us a', &c.

And there 'll be Sandie the souter,
 And Will wi' the mickle mou' ;
 And there 'll be Tam the plouter,
 And Andrew the tinkler, I trow.
 And there 'll be bow-leggit Robbie,
 Wi' thoomless Katie's guidman ;
 And there 'll be blue-cheekit Dallie,
 And Lawrie, the laird o' the land.

And there 'll be sow-libber Patie,
 And plookie-faced Wat o' the mill ;
 Capper-nosed Gibbie, and Francie,
 That wins in the howe o' the hill.
 And there 'll be Alaster Dougal,
 That splae-fitted Bessie did woo,
 And sniffing Lillie and Tibbie,
 And Kirstie, that belly-god sow !

And there 'll be Geordie M'Lowrie,
 And blinkin' daft Barbara and Meg,
 And there 'll be blencht Gillie-Wimple,
 And pewter-faced fleeching Joug.
 And there 'll be happer-hipped Nancie
 And fairy-faced Jeanie by name,
 Glead Katie and fat-luggit Leesie
 The lass wi' the gowden [kame].

And there'll be Girnagain Gibbie,
And his glaikit wife Jeanie Bell,
And mizly-chinned flytin' Geordie,
The lad that was skipper himsel.
There'll be a' the lads and the lasses,
Set down in the mids o' the ha' ;
Wi' sybows, and reefarts, and carlins,
That are baith sodden and raw.

There'll be tarten, dragen, and brachen,
And fouth o' guid gabbocks o' skate,
Powsoudie, and drammock, and crowdie,
And caller nowt-feet on a plate ;
And there'll be partans and buckies,
And speldins and haddocks enew,
And singit sheep-heads and a haggis,
And scadlips to sup till ye're fou.

There'll be guid lapper-milk kebbucks,
And sowens, and farles, and baps,
Wi' swats and weel-scraped painches,
And brandy in stoups and in caups ;
And there'll be meal-kail and castocks,
Wi' skink to sup till ye rive ;
And roasts to roast on a brander,
Of flouks that were taken alive.

Scraped haddocks, wilks, dulse and tangle,
And a mill o' guid sneeshin' to prie ;
When weary wi' eatin' and drinkin',
We'll rise up and dance till we dee.
Fy let us a' to the bridal,
For there'll be liltin' there ;
For Jock's to be married to Maggie,
The lass wi' the gowden hair.

This singular piece appeared first in Watson's *Collection of*

Scottish Poems, 1709, and from thence was transferred into the *Tea-table Miscellany* and Thomson's *Orpheus Caledonius*, as it has been into nearly every collection of Scotch songs published since. The authorship is to be considered as doubtful. The song used to be commonly ascribed to Francis Sempill of Beltrees, Renfrewshire, who is believed to have written several other popular songs, and who flourished during the reign of Charles II., dying not long before the year 1685. Sempill was a man of lively talents, a keen cavalier or loyalist, even to the persecution of conventiclers,¹ and in his latter days was reduced by suretyship to a poverty befitting his poetical character. We are to regard him as one of a section of society by whom the spirit of mirth and song was maintained during those days of seriousness verging upon gloom—a protestantism of human nature against the asceticism and self-mortification of the puritanic system. It is remarkable that his father and grandfather were both poets. His grandson, Robert Sempill of Beltrees, who died at Kilbarchan in 1789, at the great age of a hundred and two, seems to have been the authority for attributing to him the authorship of *The Blythsome Bridal*.²

Of late years a claim for this honour has been put forward by Mr Mark Napier³ on behalf of Sir William Scott of Thirlstain, direct male ancestor of the present line of the Lords⁷ Napier. It rests on a communication from the late Lord Napier to Mr Mark Napier, of date 15th December 1831, in the following terms: 'Sir William Scott was the author of that well-known Scots song, *Fy, let us a' to the bridal, for there'll be liltings there*—a better thing than Horace ever wrote. My authority was my father, who told me he had it from *his*, and that he had it from *his*, who was Sir William's son.'

¹ In the Privy Council Record, 13th January 1681, is a petition from Francis Sempill of Beltrees for reward for his services in putting down conventicles.

² *The Poems of the Sempills of Beltrees*, edited by James Paterson, Edinburgh, 1849.

³ *Partition of the Lennox*, Edinburgh, 1835, p. 237.

This claim must be allowed to be not without some support in what we know of Sir William Scott from other sources. He was one of a group of wits, composed of Archibald Pitcairne, David Gregory, Thomas Kincaid, Sir William Bennet of Grubbet, &c., who, living at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and cultivating the muse, though chiefly in the Latin language, might be said to mark the *renaissance* of polite literature in Scotland after the long night of the religious troubles. A volume of their Latin verses, edited by Ruddiman in 1727, shews them all to have been intensely Jacobite, and of course confessors in the protestantism above alluded to. On Sir William, who died on the 8th of October 1725, John Ker, professor of Greek at Aberdeen, writes an elegy, in which he speaks of his deceased friend as :

—————Deliciæ novem sororum,
Et Caledoniæ decus Camœncæ ;

a strong hint that Sir William wrote also in Scots verse. Ruddiman adverts to him in highly flattering terms: 'Sir William Scott of Thirlstain, illustrious in his birth, more illustrious by his virtues, an excellent counsellor and philologist, a judge of all polite letters, and a man to be compared with few in regard to integrity of life and suavity and elegance of manners, deserves to be ranked in the next place to Pitcairne. He composed some very neat and pretty Latin poems, which, as he was a man of consummate modesty, he would never shew except to a very few friends ; nor would he ever, while in life, permit them to see the light by way of publication.' Professor Ker's elegy, besides admitting Sir William's learning and sagacity, speaks strongly of his convivial temper, his wit, and many agreeablenesses ; impressing us with the idea of a most delightful person, notwithstanding an escape of candour on the part of the poet—

Solebat
Meas esse aliquid putare nugas.

One of Sir William's pieces of a macaronic character, exhibits a strain of humour that recalls *The Blythsome Bridal*, and shews that he might have been its author.

AD E—M E—M, EQUITEM, M.D. VILLADELPHINUS¹

FRATER.

Qualis in terris fabulatur Orpheus
Natus Irlandis, ubi nulla wivat
Spidera telam, neque fœda spouttat

Tædda venenum ;

Dura, Clarshoo modulante, saxa,
Et viros saxo graviores omni,
Et lacus, et bogs, fluviosque, et altas

Ducere sylvas.

Talis Hiberno similis poetæ
Villadelphinus ego, nec secundus,
Dum mihi possham sonat, aut canoram

Dextera trumpam :

Asinus semper comes est, et anser,
Vocibus partes modulare promti,
Porcus in stayo faciliq̄ue bassum

Murmure grumphat :

Per domum dansant tabulæ, cathedræ,
Fistules, furnæ, simul atque chistæ ;
Rusticam ducit leviterque dansam

Armo-cathedra.

Tum mihi starkam promit anus aillam,
Ipsa quam broustrix veterem botello
Condidit, frater, datus in theatro

Cum tibi plausus ;

Tunc mihi notæ redeunt Camœnæ,
Tunc ego possum atque imitare Sappho,
Blackere et nigrum bcne, winterano

Cortice riftans :

Musa Taiguzæos mea poetastros,
Judice vel te, superabit omnes,
Ipse Pentlandis licet arrivaret

Flecus in agris.

¹ Under this mystic appellative lurks a reference to the simple little village of Dolphinton, in Lanarkshire.