

CHAPTER III.

Benedetto
 Quel claretto
 Che si spilla in Avignone
 Questo vasto Bellicone
 Io ne verso entro 'l mio petto.

Baccho in Toscana.

Since my Phyllis has fall'n to my share,
 In a bumper I'll drink to the fair,
 And the man here who envies me most,
 Let him bid me say more to the toast,
 For a larger I'll soon change my cup,
 To the brim fill the *Constable* up.

Catch, Edinburgh Catch Club.

WHEN Macgillivray entered with the gentlemen, the tumultuous Bacchanalian roar that followed the termination of the catch was hushed, and the strangers were surveyed from all quarters, with half-closed eyes, and twisted-up mouths, betokening the serious scrutiny of men in a state of wise intoxication. To judge of the

plight of the party, it is only necessary to be informed, that this was the second night of their orgies.

Macgillivray having introduced Amherst and Cleaver to Sir Alisander, the good Knight rose to receive them, and the maudlin company got up in imitation of their President, like an ill drilled squad, tardily following the motions of the fugal.—“Chairs,—chairs for the gentlemen!”—cried the Baronet. But besides that on which he sat himself, there was but one rickety chair in the place. That was instantly ceded by the polite FustleCraig of Windlestraw, who placed it for Amherst near Sir Alisander, and went to seat himself on the end of a form lower down the table. Cleaver, whose jovial heart was expanded by the sight of so jolly a party, was so eager to join the revellers, that he immediately placed himself on an empty brandy anker set on end, and proceeded, without loss of time, to attack two huge high-flavoured dishes, one containing hot, broiled, smoked haddocks, and the other, red herrings of most inviting savour, which, with some oaten cakes, and a few pewter platters, were at this moment

put on the board by the bustling Mrs M'Claver, and the bonny Peggy Galravage.

“ I see,” said the good-natured Baronet, who could not resist a pun,—“ I see, Mr Oakenwold, that your friend Captain Cleaver has already brought himself to an anchor, like a good seaman, chee ! he !—he !”—The joke, though it produced the usual spasm of approval in the face of Macflae, and a laugh from such of the rest as were within earshot, was lost upon the subject of it, who was too much occupied with his haddock to hear it.

“ My friend,” said Amherst, “ though long a man-of-war's-man by profession, is now only a navigator for pleasure.”

“ Your present voyage is of that nature ?” said Sir Alisander.

“ It is so,” said Amherst, “ and is occasioned chiefly by our wish to see a little of Scotland.”

“ A very laudable desire,” replied Sir Alisander, “ and I hope our Land of Cakes will not disappoint you.—Since pleasure then, and not business, is your object, you cannot do better than make my house of Sanderson-Mains your

head-quarters for some weeks. I shall be happy to do my best to entertain you, or rather, to see that you are entertained,—for I am but a weak vessel myself, and not much able now to leave the house. I will take you thither as soon as I can get away from these honest people, who must always have me for their preses on such occasions as this—much against my will, I assure you, for such bouts do not by any means agree with my stomach, which has been very ticklish for some years. But they will not have me excused, so I must e'en sacrifice a little to the wishes of my good neighbours, by yielding to their importunity, though it should even be to the curtailing of my life.”

Amherst, whilst he expressed his thanks for so kind an invitation, given to strangers, and assured the worthy Baronet, that his friend and he would be happy to avail themselves of his hospitality, stared with astonishment at the person who gave it, and wondered where the secret sapping disease could lurk, that rendered him a frail vessel, who had so much the outward appearance of good health and a robust constitution, and whose trappings, consisting of all the parapher-

nalía of the sick man, had so whimsical an effect when contrasted with the *embonpoint* of his figure, and the rustic healthfulness of his face.

The prepossessing, and even noble appearance of Amherst, followed by the Baronet's invitation, that sufficiently spoke his good opinion of the strangers, like oil upon the stormy seas, produced a certain lull upon the obstreperous mirth of the company, and it was some time before it again began to swell itself into a roar.—A deep pledge was passed round by the chairman to the health of the new guests, and replied to, of course, by one from each of them, and the claret again began to mount into the brains of the votaries of Bacchus, and again to loosen the shackles of their tongues.

“Maister Oakenwold,” said Bailie Sparrow-pipe, rising and addressing Amherst in a tone of voice, thin, shrill, and sharp, resembling the cutting notes of a fife,—“I drink to you, and to your country, Sir—I rejoice for to see ane Englishman amang us.—I have a high respect for England Sir, and troth, gif I shou'd say otherwise, my verra speech itsell wad betray me, for ye may observe that my dialeck is somewhat polished.

And nae wonder nor it shou'd be sae, for I was nae less than sax weeks in Lunnon itsell about aughteen years syne, whare I gathered the tongue, as likewise thae manners which hae acquired for me the appellation of the feenished man."—A simper of great self-approbation followed this speech.

"I am glad, Bailie," said Macgillivray with an air of gravity, evidently intended to bring him out—"I am very glad that you are here, were it only to show our English guests, that we are not all barbarians in this country."

"Hout fye, hout fye, Maister Macgillivray!—barbarians!—na truly, though we do leeve in the North, we're no just that neither;—there's mony a ane o' us has traivelled,—there's you hae been in Italy—and Maister Macflae in the Wast Indians—and Dr Partenclaw there, forbye mony ither voyages, was aince at the Greenland fishing—no to crack o' mysell being in Lunnon."

"Upon few people, however, are the advantages of travel so apparent as upon the elegant Mr Sparrowpipe," said Macgillivray. "But then nature, Sir,—nature is everything."

"Troth that's true eneugh," replied Sparrowpipe—"I had aye a sort o' genty cast about me

—I mind verra weil that Sally Hopkins, the dancin' master's dochter in Threadneedle Street, used aye to say that o' me; and her father, wha was a verra gude judge o' siccan matters, used to declare, that I could mak as bonny a boo as ony Lord o' the bed-chammer."

"I have no doubt of that, Bailie," said Macgillivray—"you are still remarkable for your talent that way, which indeed has rather improved than otherwise, and is perhaps one of the causes of your being such a terrible fellow among the ladies."

"Hout fye, hout fye, Maister Macgillivray," said the Bailie, stretching his long neck and nose across the table like a goose, with a simper of ineffable delight upon his face; "ye are pleased for to flatter me, Sir,—that is to say—I mean—ye wrang me sair, Sir—I dinna deserve naesiccan character.—But an I do," added he, looking down, or rather inwards upon his yellow waistcoat, with manifest satisfaction,—“ane canna help ane's attraction, ye ken."

"Aye, aye," said the Baronet—"very true, Mr Sparrowpipe,—the rose cannot be blamed for its fragrance."

“ Nor good claret for its seducing flavour,” said Cleaver, who now for the first time had found leisure to speak, and putting a brimming flagon to his head, he tossed it off to wash down the immense mass of dried fish he had swallowed.

“ Come now, Bailie,” cried Sir Alisander—“ give us a toast,—give us one of the many beauties on your list !”

“ I’ll give ye—I’ll give,” said the Bailie, with some hesitation, and looking upwards to the rafters, as if appealing to them for aid in making his selection—“ I’ll give ye—Miss Louisa Matilda Mactavish, a young leddy that maist o’ ye ken verra weil ; she’s a lovely lassie, and I’ll drink a mutchkin stoup till her.”

“ Say more, Bailie !” roared out young Barklay o’ Blutterbog ; “ I can’t consent to yield her to ye so easily,—she’s a particular favourite of mine.”

Blutterbog’s speech was received with a general cheer, resembling that species of applause which runs round an English ring when a brace of bruisers have agreed to pit themselves for a match at milling. The Bailie, however, seemed

now like a snail that draws in its horns on the approach of something from which it apprehends danger ; he felt that he was in a scrape, and he wished to recede if possible. The rule on such occasions of Bacchanalian challenge was, that as the party who proposed the toast drank a bumper, so he who advanced an equal claim to the lady, by the words “ say more ! ”—was obliged to drink a double bumper,—after which the first drank double that, and the other that again doubled, and so on alternately, doubling the quantity of the draught every time, until one or other of the parties gave in, or was fairly floored. To Blutterbog, who had already swallowed gallons, and whose capacious throat was gaping for gallons more, this contest was mere sport. But the bilious Bailie of the Borough, though he had no objections to a long tipple where he was permitted to do as he liked, and where he had listeners to his long love stories, felt that such a deluge of drink as now threatened him would be death to him—He grew doubly pale at the very thought.

“ I’m no just preceesely inclined to gang a’ that length for the lass, Maister Barklay o’ Blutter-

bog," said the Bailie, screwed up by vexation to the highest pitch of his soprano.—“ She’s a bonny lass eneugh I maun confess till ye,—but she’s no just ane that taks my fancy naither.”

“ Fire and fury, Sir, why did you toast her then ?” cried the impetuous bullyboy of a laird.

“ Troth, Blutterbog,” said the Bailie, now alarmed for something more than his stomach, “ I kenna preceesely how it was I happened on her—I’m sure I had fifty mair i’ my head to pick and chuse amang—and I’m far frae wishing to come in your way. But I hae siccan a compassionate heart !—an’ the lassie, puir thing, is aye glowrin frae her windows at me, as I gae by in state till the kirk on Sabbath days, wi’ the town-offishers an’ their red coats and muckle halberts afore me—and she aye giggles for to see me—she canna help fa’in’ in fancy wi’ me ye ken, an’ sae——”

“ Fancy with you, ye damn’d sneaking coil of list !” interrupted Blutterbog, to whom the lady in question was privately affianced at the time—“ Tis false, ye yard of staytape !”

The Bailie glided lengthways under the table

like an eel under a stone, just as his antagonist had sprung on it to get at him. The furious laird's weight and violence together were too much for its frail supports,—and crash,—down went the whole, stoups, claret, haddocks, herrings, boards, and Blutterbog upon the unfortunate Sparrowpipe, who lay sprawling beneath. All was now confusion. Macgillivray and some of those nearest to him laid hold of Blutterbog as he was scrambling over the wrecks of the broken table, to glut his vengeance upon the unlucky magistrate, and dragging him apart, endeavoured to pacify him, whilst others drew Sparrowpipe from under the ruins like a boiled welck from its shell. His body, indeed, seemed as pliant as if it had had no more bones in it than that marine species of snail, and the paleness of death was upon him: his eyes were fixed, and he uttered not a word.

“By Jupiter, gentlemen,” cried Dr Partenclaw, as he bent over him, “this is a serious matter!—the man's gone!—poor Sparrowpipe has piped his last—what will our concert do now for a counter alto?—There wasn't such an one in any opera in Europe!—it was like a piccolo flute,

or a bird organ: his cranium is fractured—a blood-vessel is ruptured—and two or three spoonfuls of the cerebral mass are protruded.”—A dead silence prevailed for some moments.

“ I shall be Bailie myself at the neist election o’ magistrates,” said Deacon M‘Candy with the most stupid indifference.

“ I confess,” continued the Doctor, “ I did think his skull was thick enough to have borne worse shocks than this, bad as it was. Nor, indeed, should I have expected the subject to exhibit even so much brain as we now behold. But bring a light here, and I will soon ascertain the true state of the case, and if, as I suspect, he is fairly gone, then we may open his skull, and have a peep into its interior.”—All this the Doctor pronounced with as much coolness and unconcern, as if he had been talking of opening his snuff-box.

Whilst the rational and less intoxicated part of the company were occupied in endeavouring to pacify the rage of Blutterbog, Partenclaw, who happened to be surrounded by those who had most deeply drenched their senses in the juice of the barrel, now gave various directions

which were hastily and implicitly obeyed. The body was laid at length on a form, and the Doctor's dissecting tools were out in an instant, whilst a group of eight or ten individuals of the party, stimulated by curiosity, hung over him to see what he was going to do. The saw was actually applied to the unfortunate man's head, when, at the very first touch of it, Sparrowpipe suddenly screamed out, with a yell that might almost have been heard a mile off; and at the same time drew his head and feet together with a jerk so violent, as to render the recoil something like that of a twisted up piece of Indian rubber. The effect of it was like the explosion of a bomb, the circle was dispersed, and the persons forming it tumbled in all directions, and Partenclaw was laid on his back like a lobster, with his saw held up in the air. The Doctor, however, though with some difficulty, yet with undiminished *sang froid*, rose again to the charge.

“There is some life in the man yet,” quoth he; “give me a spoon that I may remove his brains, and examine the fracture in his skull.”

Sparrowpipe, with whom the application of

the saw had in some degree served the purpose of the lancet, had begun to regain his senses, as the Doctor uttered these words. They acted upon him like the touching of the spring of an automaton. He started up to the sitting posture, and having clapped both his hands to his head, he exclaimed, in the most doleful voice,

“ Oh, I’m a dead man !—I’m a dead man !—sure enough my skull is crackit, and my brains are a’ out, and some o’ them are scattered on the very floor.”

The sudden relief the spectators experienced from all dread of the Bailie being killed outright upon the spot, coupled with the ludicrous effect produced by his dolorous accents, and highly ridiculous appearance, instantaneously changed their silent breathless anxiety into a burst of unextinguishable laughter, in the midst of which he sat in all the horrors and anguish of mind, inspired by a firm belief of immediate death.

“ You may laugh, gentlemen,” cried he, in yet more woeful strains, as soon as he could be heard—“ ye may laugh, unchristian-like sinners as ye are !—but,” said he, holding out a handful

of the pulpy matter taken from his head, "an ye winna believe me, there's a pickle o' my brains in my ain hand, and there's the rest o' them lying on the floor." The roar of laughter was renewed.

"Bailie," said the Baronet, at the first pause that occurred, "if you are resolved to insist upon being scatter-brained, it is not for any of us to gainsay you."

The renewed shout that followed this observation made Sparrowpipe angry.

"I *have* lost my brains, I tell ye," exclaimed he, in a pet, "and gif ye winna *believe* me, there they are in your face," so saying, he threw the soft mass slap into Partenclaw's eyes, and almost blinded him.

The real state of the case was now discovered, much to the satisfaction of every body. A mass of herring milts, tinged with the streams of claret, had fallen into his hair, and this, added to his temporary stupor, had led to the Doctor's mistake. The drunken company had now leisure to note the figure of Sparrowpipe in detail. Never was mortal in such a pickle. His garments, and above all his yellow waistcoat, the

pride of his very heart, were covered with fish entrails, brine, and claret, and he stank so, that he would have made an excellent drag for a pack of hounds, to which purpose, indeed, any one who beheld him, without doing violence to probability, might have easily imagined that he had been actually applied. All this minor part of his misfortune had been overlooked by him in the dreadful idea of immediate death. But now that all his fears on that score had subsided, he began, in sad strains, to deplore the damage his drapery had sustained.

“ Waes me ! waes me ! siccan a fusome sight as I am. My new kassimer vest is a’thegither ruined !—Fich, fich ! it stinks like a fishwife’s creel—it’s an ill-fared tradin’ voyage to me this. I may buy a bargain o’ lace and silken hose, but my new stand o’ claes, my gude coat and breeks, and aboon a’ my vest, can never gang on again.—Ugh ! I wish I had them aff !—my verra stamick scunners at my verra sell !”

“ Then, Bailie,” said the Baronet quietly, “ I fancy it’s the first time you were ever sickened with your own person, whatever effect it may have had upon others. But come, cheer

up, man!—let Mrs M'Claver do the best she can to cleanse you from the pickle you have been soused in, and then let us endeavour to get things into some sort of order again."