

## SPIRIT OF THE BATTLE FIELD.

BY THE REV. S. C. WILKS.

"Whence come wars and fightings?—James iv: 1.

"There was tumult, and there was din :  
There was Sutan, and there was sin ;  
There were groanings, and there were fears,  
Orphan's sighs and widows' tears ;  
And there was cursing, and piercing cry,  
And despair's last rending agony ;  
And there were vultures, and worse than they,  
Hovering to gorge their human prey.

Where were such sights, I pray thee tell ?  
Where was on earth so fierce a hell ?

There, where yon warriors, armed and steeled,  
Are cheering their troops to the battle field :  
There, where fumed statesmen, and poets I ween,  
Declare 'tis a proud and a glorious scene.

But was there found in that brilliant day  
The heart to feel or the lip to pray ?  
The accents of heaven, or the looks of love,  
The Prince of Peace, or the Holy Dove ?

I say not what passes in secret souls,  
For the dew-drops may fall while the thunder rolls ;  
But I saw them not in the haggard cheek,  
I heard them not in the dying shriek ;  
I marked them not in the frenzied eye ;  
They calmed not the shouts of the victory ;  
They were lost in the yells of the frantic breath ;  
They pealed to the heavens for triumph or death ;  
They echoed not in the cannon's roar ;  
I traced them not in the seas of gore ;  
I marked them not in the battle rush,  
The oath, and the groan, and the life-blood gush ;  
They flashed not bright in the bayonet's gleam,  
Or there where the tattered banner's stream  
To rally the young, and the proud, and the brave,  
To the murderous charge that digs their grave.

I judge not my neighbour's heart or lot ;  
They might be there ; but I saw them not.

Men said : that noble and great was war ;  
That patriot virtues yoke his car ;  
And that nought is so generous and bright to see  
As a hero fresh from his victory.  
I viewed e'en the solemn and sacred tomb  
Emblazoned with sword and battle plume ;  
And in God's own temple flaunting high,  
The captured banner and panoply :  
And all did tell me how pure the flame  
Whence strife, and war, and fightings came.

Yet they came, said a wise and holy page,  
From lawless passions and guilty rage ;  
And, truth, when the field of blood I view,  
Methinks—that such sacred word is true ;  
That the bad was there, and the good forgot ;—  
At least, if 'twere there—I saw it not."

## BLANCHE OF ROSSBERG.

There was no sound but the sigh of the night-wind in the deserted streets of Gottingen ; the cry of the reveller had ceased ; the nightguard had sought shelter in his cot ; nothing disturbed the silence of the hour but the bay of the distant wolf-hound, and the fitful bursts of the blast, as it stirred the sickly flame of many an expiring lamp, or swept with restless moans the gloomy buildings of the city.

" 'Tis a cold and cheerless night, Sir Alwyn ; and, by our Lady ! it were well to have tarried longer in the hostelry. Holy Saint Elfwold, how the wind blows ! "

"Lead on, good father, lead on, for the love of heaven ! Poor, poor Blanche ! In her illness she forgets me not. Count Rossberg's daughter—my patron's child—forgets not on her death-bed the humble Alwyn. But thou saidst not she was dying, father ? "

"I said even so ; but I said but what I heard. St. Bertha, I have neither shriven nor seen the damsel. Sister Ulrica prayed the abbess that you might be brought ; for, sleeping or waking, the maiden, since her illness, has done little else but murmur your name."

Alwyn struck his hand to his forehead ; then suddenly grasping the arm of his companion, again exclaimed, "But thou sayest not she is dying, father ? "

"Shrine of the Virgin ! " cried the monk ; "I have told ye twenty times. Holy St. Peter ! Dost thou think men quit their cells to go fool's errands on such nights as these ? "

Alwyn only replied by quickening his pace ; and after proceeding for some time in silence, they at length reached the outer gate

of the convent, and he was soon conducted by his guide into the entrance hall of the building. Here the youth—having declined the courteous offer of the monk to visit the refectory—after waiting impatiently for some minutes, was approached by a lay-sister, bearing a small silver lamp, who silently conducted him through several narrow but lofty passages, until she came to a small door, which she cautiously opened, and, turning round to the youth, beckoned him to follow her.

Alwyn entered the apartment ; and his companion, making a motion of silence, approached a couch, upon which a young and lovely girl reposed, as if in sleep. Long ringlets of silken auburn fell over her neck and bosom ; one beautiful arm hung from the couch, the small white hand holding a crucifix of ivory ; her face was pale ; her lips, though half apart, were motionless ; and so noiselessly she breathed, that the lay-sister bent for a moment over her, as if to ascertain that the spirit of the sick maiden had not passed away.

The fair sleeper slowly opened her eyes.—"How fares the Lady Blanche ? " inquired the lay-sister.

"Better, kind sister ; the sleep has refreshed me. Thou hast been a kind nurse, Ulrica. But I shall soon trouble thee no longer."

"Say not so, sweetest Blanche. Thine eye has lost much of its restless lustre, and the blue veins on your brow tell no longer of death. Blessed Virgin be praised ! Thou wilt live to be the Countess of Rossberg, and present me with the bridal chaplet."

"Blanche ! dearest Blanche ! " said another voice near the couch ; and young Alwyn, kneeling beside it, pressed her hand to his lips. His long dark locks hid the tears that were starting to his eyelids ; but the maiden felt them fall fast and warm upon her arm.

"Alwyn ! Can it be ? Alwyn, how, in the name of heaven, came ye hither ? Ulrica ! "

"Ulrica is gone, sweet Blanche. 'Twas a kind monk conducted me to the convent. Thou art not sorry I am come, my Blanche ? "

"No, no, no ! I had thought never to have seen thee or my father more. 'Tis a sad thing, Alwyn, to feel approaching death, and think of those that love us."

"Nay, but death approacheth not Blanche of Rossberg. Thou wilt live to gladden thy father's heart, and that of the foundling Alwyn, who, ere he seeks this waxen hand, will win with his sword a name worthy of the daughter of Count Rossberg to share, or die for it. Oh ! how I love you, Blanche ! " continued the youth, as he covered her little hand with kisses.

Here a low and mournful sigh seemed to proceed from a distant part of the chamber, and was instantly followed by a loud burst of the moaning blast.

Alwyn turned to the direction of the sound. "'Twas but the wind," said he, in answer to an inquiring look of the maiden. "'Twas but the wind, sweet Blanche—even now methought it stirred the tapestry. In sooth it is a stormy night ! "

"How palely the taper burns ! Dost thou think, Alwyn, it was but the wind that sighed ? "

"Nay, doubt it not. Thou wilt give me a lock of this golden hair to wear as thy love-token on my crest," said the youth, as he played with the silken ringlets of the maiden. "Dost love me, Blanche ? "

"Dearest Alwyn ! "

Here a sigh, deeper and more sorrowful than the first, was heard in the apartment.

"What see'st thou, Alwyn, that you gaze so fearfully ? "

Alwyn replied not, for a weight of ice was at his heart, and his tongue clove to his mouth. Beside him stood a figure arrayed in the habit of the grave, regarding him with a fixed and mournful look. The features seemed to be familiar to him, as of one whose face he had gazed upon in infancy ; but the cold and sorrowful eye froze the blood in his veins, his limbs trembled under him, and, powerless in mind and body, he sank heavily to the floor.

Loud was the bay of the hound, and merry the ring of the hunting horn, as a noble company of knights and gallants rode in the woods of Rossberg, their fiery steeds champing on the bit, and their boar spears glittering in the morning sun. Two horsemen rode at some distance from the rest of the party, and seemed to be in deep converse—the one a tall and powerful man, somewhat past the meridian of life, and the other a graceful youth, apparently about three or four and twenty. Both were superbly mounted—their habits proclaimed them to be of good degree, and they seemed by their martial air as if they knew right well how to couch the lance and rein the war-horse.

"Now, by mine honour, Count Rossberg," said the younger huntsman, "thy fair Blanche is the only gift I would ask twice of thee. I have won my spurs with her love-token on my crest, and, although my birth is hid in obscurity, yet as a knight of the empire—"

"Sir Alwyn of Eginhart," replied the other, "is fitting mate for the noblest maiden in Germany."

"Nay, that thou hast said before ; and if I knew not the Count Rossberg better, I might think it were but said in mockery. Why then forbid our union ? None will ever love thy Blanche more devotedly than I, and mayhap, Count Rossberg, there are none whom she will love so well."

"Alwyn it may not be. But think not that I deem the less of

thee on that account. In boyhood you watched my sick pillow ; thy sword in manhood has shielded me in strife ; and, by St. Mary ! thy quarrel should be mine. But think no more of Blanche : we will find thee as fair and as noble a bride. Hark ! hark ! Alwyn—they have roused a boar ! " and the Count at the words stuck spurs to his steed, and dashed forward to the chase.

"Ay ! " cried the youth bitterly, as he curbed his chafing steed, that snorted and trembled with eagerness to follow. "Ay ! he says he loves me, but Count Rossberg is too proud to wed his daughter to a foundling, although that foundling took knighthood at a prince's hand, and on a stricken field. But he shall not vaunt it thus. By the laws of chivalry the maiden is mine : and if I resign her, may my spurs be hacked from my heel ! She shall now learn the result of this second appeal she so prayed me to make." So saying, the youth turned from the chase, and rode slowly towards the castle.

Night came on cheerless, and without a star. The wind moaned amid the tall forest trees, blending with the dull roar of the distant Rhine—the cottage light was extinguished in the valley, and the watch-dog was silent on the hill—every object was shrouded in gloom, and every sound was desolate.

"Cheer thee ! fair Blanche. Heed not the rugged pathway, for thy steed is fleet and sure. Ah ! now we can see the lights of the Abbey ! "

"Alwyn, heard you not aught as we rode along ? "

"Nay, nay, Blanche, I heard but the night wind," replied Alwyn, a slight shudder passing over his frame.

"Methought twice that I heard a sigh as we rode in the gloom of the forest."

"On ! on ! sweetest Blanche," cried Alwyn as he urged the steeds towards the Abbey.

Blanche of Rossberg was kneeling before the altar—her hand was in that of Sir Alwyn's—the holy covenant had been made, and the priest was pronouncing his benediction, when the thunder of horse-hoofs was heard in the court-yard, followed by the sound of jingling spurs and clanking arms, as Count Rossberg, attended by a train of men at arms, entered the building. He approached the altar, and stood for a moment gazing on the young couple, who had both started to their feet—Blanche still holding the hand of Sir Alwyn ; but her blue eyes suffused with tears, while he, on the contrary, regarded the intruders with a haughty and determined look.

Count Rossberg looked not on them in anger. His features wore an expression of melancholy, and he continued for some time silent, leaning on his heavy sword, as if the prey to inflating emotions. At length he said—

"Alwyn of Eginhart, I expected not this from you."

"Count Rossberg," replied the other, "this is no time for reproaches—perchance I may have some to make as well as thee—nor is the foot of the altar a fitting place to bandy angry words. Thy daughter, Blanche, is now my wife."

"Rash boy ! " said the Count mournfully—"She is thy sister ! "

A shriek of agony burst from the lips of the maiden—startling the silence of the long cold aisles, and echoing amidst the lofty arches of the building—so thrilling, and full of woe, that the monks stood aghast as if petrified, and the stout limbs of the startled retainers trembled beneath their mail. Count Rossberg caught his fainting daughter in his arms, and Alwyn, covering his face with his hands, leaned against the rails of the altar.

In the forest of Rossberg there is a clear fountain, surrounded by the ruins of an ancient hermitage, at some distance from two green mounds, between which is a cross of rudely-sculptured stone. The fountain springs where once had stood an humble altar, and, regarding it, there are many traditions ; but, as tears for Blanche of Rossberg have often dewed the spot, the waters have long been held sacred of "The Hermit's Well."

A GLIMPSE OF ELIZABETHAN MANNERS.—There is, perhaps, no work which throws more curious and circumstantial light on the manners of Queen Elizabeth's reign, especially at the concluding portion of it, than a rare volume, by Thomas Decker, called "The Guls Horne Book," which appeared in the year 1609. We shall occasionally lay before our readers a few passages, illustrative of a state of manners which cannot but be of the highest interest to every Englishman. And selecting our example at random, we will make our first extract from a chapter, entitled,

"How a Gallant should behave himself in an Ordinary."

"First, having diligently inquired out an ordinary of the largest reckoning, whither most of your courtly gallants do resort, let it be your use to repair thither some half hour after eleven ; for then you shall find most of your fashion-mongers planted in the room waiting for meat. Ride thither upon your Galloway nag, or your Spanish jennet, a swift ambling pace, in your hose and doublet, gilt rapier and poignard bestowed in their places, and your French lackey carrying your cloak, and running before you ; or rather in a coach, for that will both hide you from the basilisk eyes of your creditors, and outrun a whole kennel of bitter mouthed sergeants. Being arrived in the room, salute not any but those of your acquaintance : walk up and down by the rest