

in the Statute of 9, Geo. 1st, commonly styled the Black Act, in which it is, among other things, enacted, "That if any person or persons, being armed with swords, fire-arms, or *other offensive weapons*, and having his or their faces blacked, or being *otherwise disguised*, shall appear in any forest, chase, park, paddock, or other grounds inclosed with any wall, pale or other fence, wherein any deer have been, or shall be usually kept, or in any *high road*, open heath, common or down, &c. every person so offending, being thereof lawfully convicted, shall suffer death, without the benefit of clergy, &c."

That severe act was intended for the preservation of the public peace, and the protection of private individuals. But, not only the statute but the common law also are practically repealed, by the prevailing fashion, countenanced and connived at, as it has been. A person thus attacked may naturally enough conclude that the law of nature, authorising self-defence, at the discretion of the party injured, takes place in these cases; and rather than submit to public derision and disgrace, may protect himself by such means as happen to be within his power.

Under that impression, not long ago, a person who was the object of a Charivari, in one of the Townships of the Midland District, or some of his friends, fired upon the rioters, and several shots took effect, although not fatally. In the district of New-Castle, within two or three years past, one of a party concerned in a Skimmington riot, was mortally wounded, and fell a victim to the mobish custom.

I am far from justifying a resort to such desperate modes of defence; but I entreat every reader of these remarks to consider seriously, that when he joins in an unlawful enterprize against his neighbour, he puts himself out of the protection of the law, and becomes answerable, civilly and criminally, for any consequences, however fatal, that may ensue. A masked rabble, in the night, emboldened by a hope of concealment and impunity, excited by mutual emulation and the applauses of spectators, and, perhaps, stimulated by spirituous liquors, may proceed to excesses, beyond their first intention; and every one of the party is guilty of the whole outrage.