

and to bear me down per force in a slanting direction. There was a foaming rapid just at hand ; and immediately beyond, a deep, dark pool, in which the chafed current whirled around, as if exhausting the wrath aroused by its recent treatment among rocks and stones, ere recovering its ordinary temper ; and had I lost footing, or been carried a little further down, I know not how it might have fared with me in the wild foaming descent that lay between the ford and the pool. Curiously enough, however, the one idea which, in the excitement of the moment, filled my mind, was an intensely ludicrous one. I would, of course, lose not only the lever in the torrent, but my trousers also ; and how was I ever to get home without them ? Where, in the name of wonder, would I get a kilt to borrow ? I have oftener than once experienced this strange sensation of the ludicrous in circumstances with which a different feeling would have harmonized better. Byron represents it as rising in extreme grief : it is, however, I suspect, greatly more common in extreme danger ; and all the instances which the poet himself gives in his note,—Sir Thomas More on the scaffold, Anne Boleyn in the Tower, and those victims of the French Revolution “with whom it became a fashion to leave some *mot* as a legacy,”—were all jokers rather in circumstances of desperate and hopeless peril than of sorrow. It is, however, in danger, as certainly as in grief, a joyless sort of mirth.

“That playfulness of sorrow ne'er beguiles ;
It smiles in bitterness ; but still it smiles,
And sometimes with the wisest and the best,
Till even the scaffold echoes with their jest.”

The feeling, however, though an inharmoniously toned, is not a weakening one. I laughed in the stream, but I did not yield to it ; and, making a violent effort, when just on the edge of the rapid, I got into stiller water, and succeeded in making my way to the opposite bank, drenched to the arm-pits. It was in nearly the same reach of the Conon that my poor friend the maniac of Ord lost her life a few years after.

I found my companion in charge of the cart with our tools,