

THE CYMBALEER'S BRIDE.

("Monseigneur le Duc de Bretagne.")

[VI., October, 1825.]

My lord the Duke of Brittany

Has summoned his barons bold--
Their names make a fearful litany!
Among them you will not meet any
But men of giant mould.

Proud earls, who dwell in donjon keep,

And steel-clad knight and peer,
Whose forts are girt with a moat cut deep--
But none excel in soldiership
My own loved cymbaleer.

Clashing his cymbals, forth he went,

With a bold and gallant bearing;
Sure for a captain he was meant,
To judge his pride with courage blent,
And the cloth of gold he's wearing.

But in my soul since then I feel

A fear in secret creeping;
And to my patron saint I kneel,
That she may recommend his weal
To his guardian-angel's keeping.

I've begged our abbot Bernardine
His prayers not to relax;
And to procure him aid divine
I've burnt upon Saint Gilda's shrine
Three pounds of virgin wax.

Our Lady of Loretto knows
The pilgrimage I've vowed:
"To wear the scallop I propose,
If health and safety from the foes
My lover be allowed."

No letter (fond affection's gage!)
From him could I require,
The pain of absence to assuage--
A vassal-maid can have no page,
A liegeman has no squire.

This day will witness, with the duke's,
My cymbaleer's return:
Gladness and pride beam in my looks,

Delay my heart impatient brooks,
All meaner thoughts I spurn.

Back from the battlefield elate
His banner brings each peer;
Come, let us see, at the ancient gate,
The martial triumph pass in state--
With the princes my cymbaleer.

We'll have from the rampart walls a glance
Of the air his steed assumes;
His proud neck swells, his glad hoofs prance,
And on his head unceasing dance,
In a gorgeous tuft, red plumes!

Be quick, my sisters! dress in haste!
Come, see him bear the bell,
With laurels decked, with true love graced,
While in his bold hands, fitly placed,
The bounding cymbals swell!

Mark well the mantle that he'll wear,
Embroidered by his bride!
Admire his burnished helmet's glare,
O'ershadowed by the dark horsehair
That waves in jet folds wide!

The gypsy (spiteful wench!) foretold,
 With a voice like a viper hissing.
(Though I had crossed her palm with gold),
That from the ranks a spirit bold
 Would be to-day found missing.

But I have prayed so much, I trust
 Her words may prove untrue;
Though in a tomb the hag accurst
Muttered: "Prepare thee for the worst!"
 Whilst the lamp burnt ghastly blue.

My joy her spells shall not prevent.
 Hark! I can hear the drums!
And ladies fair from silken tent
Peep forth, and every eye is bent
 On the cavalcade that comes!

Pikemen, dividing on both flanks,
 Open the pageantry;
Loud, as they tread, their armor clanks,
And silk-robed barons lead the ranks--
 The pink of gallantry!

In scarfs of gold the priests admire;

The heralds on white steeds;
Armorial pride decks their attire,
Worn in remembrance of some sire
Famed for heroic deeds.

Feared by the Paynim's dark divan,
The Templars next advance;
Then the tall halberds of Lausanne,
Foremost to stand in battle van
Against the foes of France.

Now hail the duke, with radiant brow,
Girt with his cavaliers;
Round his triumphant banner bow
Those of his foe. Look, sisters, now!
Here come the cymbaleers!

She spoke--with searching eye surveyed
Their ranks--then, pale, aghast,
Sunk in the crowd! Death came in aid--
'Twas mercy to that loving maid--
The cymbaleers had passed!

"FATHER PROUT" (FRANK S. MAHONY)