

The Trumpeter,

An Old English Tale

By Mrs. Mary Robinson

It was in the days of a gay British King
(In the old fashion'd custom of merry-making)
The Palace of Woodstock with revels did ring,
While they sang and carous'd—one and all:
For the monarch a plentiful treasury had,
And his Courtiers were pleas'd, and no visage was sad,
And the knavish and foolish with drinking were mad,
While they sat in the Banquetting ball.

Some talk'd of their Valour, and some of their Race,
And vaunted, till vaunting was black in the face;
Some bragg'd for a title, and some for a place,
And, like braggarts, they bragg'd one and all!
Some spoke of their scars in the Holy Crusade,
Some boasted the banner of Fame they display'd,
And some sang their Loves in the soft serenade
As they sat in the Banquetting hall.

And here sat a Baron, and there sat a Knight,
And here stood a Page in his habit all bright,
And here a young Soldier in armour bedight
With a Friar carous'd, one and all.
Some play'd on the dulcimer, some on the lute,
And some, who had nothing to talk of, were mute,
Till the Morning, awakened, put on her grey suit—
And the Lark hover'd over the Hall.

It was in a vast gothic Hall that they sate,
And the Tables were cover'd with rich gilded plate,
And the King and his minions were toping in state,
Till their noddles turn'd round, one and all:—
And the Sun through the tall painted windows 'gan peep,
And the Vassals were sleeping, or longing to sleep,
Though the Courtiers, still waking, their revels did keep,
While the minstrels play'd sweet, in the Hall.

And, now in their Cups, the bold topers began
To call for more wine, from the cellar yeoman,
And, while each one replenish'd his goblet or can,
The Monarch thus spake to them all:

“It is fit that the nobles do just what they please,
“That the Great live in idleness, riot, and ease,
“And that those should be favor’d, who mark my decrees,
“And should feast in the Banquetting Hall.

“It is fit,” said the Monarch, “that riches should claim
“A passport to freedom, to honor, and fame,—
“That the poor should be humble, obedient, and tame,
“And, in silence, submit—one and all.
“That the wise and the holy should toil for the Great,
“That the Vassals should tend at the tables of state,
“That the Pilgrim should—pray for our souls at the gate
“While we feast in our Banquetting Hall.

“That the low-lineag’d CARLES should be scantily fed—
“That their drink should be small, and still smaller their bread;
“That their wives and their daughters to ruin be led,
“And submit to our will, one and all!
“It is fit, that whoever I choose to defend—
“Shall be courted, and feasted, and lov’d as a friend,
“While before them the good and enlighten’d shall bend,
“While they sit in the Banquetting Hall.’

Now the Toppers grew bold, and each talk’d of his right,
One would fain be a Baron, another a Knight;
And another, (because, at the Tournament fight
He had vanquished his foes, one and all)
Demanded a track of rich lands; and rich fare;
And of stout serving Vassals a plentiful share;
With a lasting exemption from penance and pray’r
And a throne in the Banquetting Rail.

But ONE, who had neither been valiant nor wise,
With a tone of importance, thus vauntingly cries,
“My Leige he knows how a good subject to prize—
“And I therefore demand—before all—
“I this Castle possess and the right to maintain
“Five hundred stout Bowmen to follow my train,
“And as many strong Vassals to guard my domain
“As the Lord of the Banquetting Hall!

“I have fought with all nations, and bled in the field,
“See my lance is unshiver’d, tho’ batter’d my shield,
“I have combatted legions, yet never would yield
“And the Enemy fled—one and all!
“I have rescued a thousand fair Donnas, in Spain,

“I have left in gay France, every bosom in pain,
“I have conquer’d the Russian, the Prussian, the Dane,
“And will reign in the Banquetting Hall!”

The Monarch now rose, with majestic look,
And his sword from the scabbard of Jewels he took,
And the Castle with laughter and ribaldry shook,
While the braggart accosted thus he:
“I will give thee a place that will suit thy demand,
“What to thee, is more fitting than Vassals or Land—
“I will give thee,—what justice and valour command,
“For a TRUMPETER bold—thou shalt be!”

Now the revellers rose, and began to complain—
While they menanc’d with gestures, and frown’d with disdain,
And declar’d, that the nobles were fitter to reign
Than a Prince so unruly as He.
But the Monarch cried, sternly, they taunted him so,
“From this moment the counsel of fools I forego—
“And on Wisdom and Virtue ‘will honors bestow
“For such, ONLY, are welcome to Me

So saying, he quitted the Banquetting Hall,
And leaving his Courtiers and flatterers all—
Straightway for his Confessor loudly ’gan call
“O! Father! now listen!” said he
“I have feasted the Fool, I have pamper’d the Knave,
“I have scoff’d at the wise, and neglected the brave—
“And here, Holy Man, Absolution I crave—
“For a penitent now I will be.”

From that moment the Monarch grew sober and good,
(And nestled with Birds of a different brood,)
For he found that the pathway which wisdom pursu’d
Was pleasant, safe, quiet, and even!
That by Temperance, Virtue and liberal deeds,
By nursing the flowrets, and crushing the weeds,
The loftiest Traveller always succeeds—
For his journey will lead him to HEAV’N.