VARIOUS

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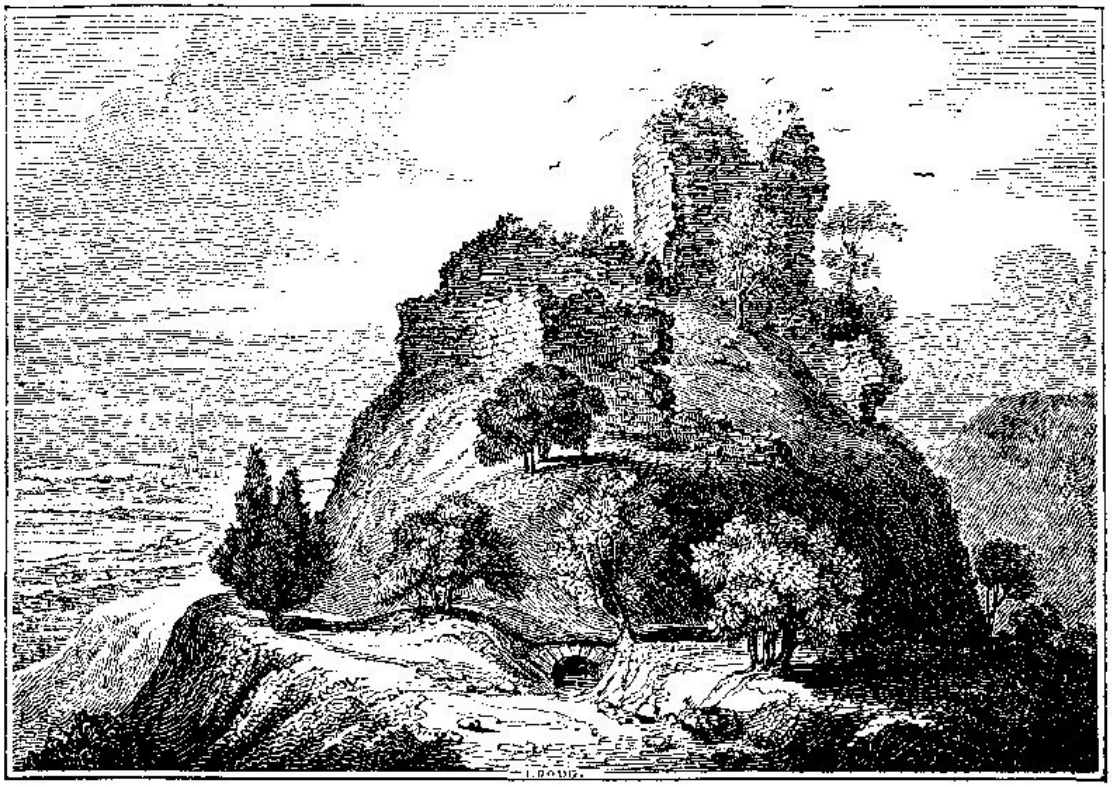
CAVERN OF ROBERT THE DEVIL.



CASTLE OF ROBERT THE DEVIL.

ROBERT THE DEVIL

All the town, and the country too, by paragraph circumstantial, and puff direct, must have learned that every theatre in this Metropolis, and consequently, every stage in the country, is to have its version of the splendid French opera *Robert le Diable*. Its success in Paris has been what the good folks there call *magnifique*, and playing the devil has been the theatrical order of day and night since the Revolution. As we know nothing of its merits, and do not write of what we neither see nor hear, nor believe any report of, we do not put up our hopes for its success. But, as the story of the opera is a pretty piece of Norman romance, some fair penciller has sent us the sketches of the annexed cuts, and our Engraver has thus pitted himself with Grieve, Stanfield, Roberts, and scores of minor scene-painters, who are building canvass castles, and scooping out caverns for the King's Theatre, Covent Garden, and Drury Lane Theatres. Theirs will be but candle-light glories: our scenes will be the same by all lights. But as scenes are of little use without actors, and cuts of less worth without description, we append our fair Correspondent's historical notices of the sites and the *dram. pers.* of "this our tragedy."

CASTLE OF ROBERT LE DIABLE, OR ROBERT THE DEVIL

The founder of this ancient castle bears the name of *Robert the Devil*. It is a wonderful relic of old Norman fortification, being so defended by nature, as to bid defiance to its enemies, and could only have fallen by stratagem. It is situated on the left side of the River Seine and in the province of Normandy. The subterranean caverns by their amazing extent sufficiently attest the ancient importance of this structure; tradition says they extend to the banks of the Seine. Its antiquity is fully proved by some of the architectural fragments bearing the stamp of 912. On arriving at the summit of the mountain, the tourist receives an impression like enchantment: the castle seems to have been conveyed there by fairies; and at the base the eye is charmed by the fine and picturesque forest of Bourgtheroulde: villages elegantly grouped, enrich with their beautiful fabrics each bank of the Seine which majestically traverses a luxurious landscape. Romance, fable, and the tradition of shepherds and peasants describe Robert the Devil as Governor of Neustria, and a descendent of Rollo the celebrated Norman chief, whose name was changed to Robert, Duke of Normandy in 923, on his marriage with the daughter of Charles the simple, King of France. His great and valiant achievements are remembered in that country so renowned by his race, and where his name still awakens every sentiment of superstitious awe. All in the environs of the castle recount his wonderful and warlike exploits; his numerous amours; and his rigid penitence by which he hoped to appease the wrath of offended Heaven. The moans of his victims are said to resound in the Northern subterranean caverns; the peasantry also believe that the spirit of Robert is condemned to haunt the ruins of his castle, and the tombs of his "Ladies Fair." In justice to his memory be it remembered, that his acts of cruelty were alone aimed at the rapacious and guilty, and that in him helpless innocence ever found a protector.

Robert the Devil was cotemporary with our Danish King Harold, 1065; he assisted Henry, the eldest son of Robert of Normandy, in gaining possession of the crown, and accompanied him with a large army into the capital of France, where they ravaged the territory of the rebels, by burning the towns and villages, and putting the inhabitants to the sword: on this account he was called Robert the Devil.

When tranquillity was restored, and Henry freed from his enemies, Robert made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with other powerful potentates. On his return he was taken ill, and appointed an illegitimate son his successor, whose mother was the daughter of a dealer in skins at Falaise, and this son became that celebrated William of Normandy, our renowned conqueror! The Normans instigated the people to reject him, on the plea of his illegitimacy; but Henry I., then King of France, gratefully remembered the good offices of Robert the Devil, William's Father: therefore espoused his cause, and raised an army of three thousand men to invade Normandy; long and obstinate wars continued, which did not terminate till William had accomplished the successful invasion of England; he was the grandson of Rollo, known after his marriage as Robert the 1st., Duke of Normandy, who died 935. Thus from one of his numerous amours sprung our new dynasty of kings, which totally changed the aspect of the times. By some historians he is called Robert the IInd., Duke of Normandy, but the name by which he is generally known, is that dignified one of William the Conqueror.

CAVERN OF ROBERT LE DIABLE

The remains of this cavern (situated in Normandy) command the attention of the lovers of history, not only from its antiquity, but also from its gloomy recesses, having afforded a safe shelter to our weak and cruel King John. Here he bade farewell to this province which he abandoned to the French Knights, and from whom he carefully concealed every trace of his retreat. The entrance is almost obscured, and tradition says it is so artfully managed as to have the appearance of a passage to another. The spot is barren, and it appears as if a thunder-bolt had burnt up the verdure. The spirit of *Robert le Diable* is supposed to haunt the cavern in the form of a wolf, and advances uttering piteous cries, and steadfastly gazing on its place of defence (the caverns extending to the River Seine) reviews his former glory and conquests, and seems bitterly to lament the present decay. In vain the peasants commence the chase; they assert that the wolf though closely pursued always eludes the vigilance of the huntsman. On the death of Richard I. of England, 1199, his Brother John was proclaimed King of Normandy and Aquitaine; the Duchies of Brittany, the Counties of Anjou, Maine, Tours and others, acknowledged Arthur, John's nephew, as their sovereign, and claimed the protection of the King of France, Philip II., surnamed Augustus; but he despairing of being able to retain these provinces against the will of their inhabitants, sacrificed Arthur and his followers to John, who in a skirmish with some of the Norman Lords, carried them all prisoners into Normandy, where Arthur soon disappeared: the Britons assert that he was murdered by his uncle; and the Normans that he was accidentally killed in endeavouring to escape. The death of their favourite Prince stung the Britons to madness, as in him centered their last hope of regaining independence: an ardent imagination led them to believe their future destiny connected with this child, which inspired them with a wild affection for Philip, as being the enemy of his murderer. They accused John before the French King of Arthur's murder, and he was summoned as a Vassal of Normandy to appear and defend himself before the twelve Peers of France. This command being treated with contempt, the lands John held under the French crown were declared forfeit, and an army levied to put it into execution. It was on this emergency that John found a safe place of concealment in the cavern of Robert the Devil.

LACONICS, &c

Continued from page 53.)

Generosity is not the virtue of the multitude, and for this reason: selfishness is often the consequence of ignorance, and it requires a cultivated mind to discern where the rights of others interfere with our own wishes.

If commerce has benefited, it has also injured the human race; and the invention of the compass has brought disease as well as wealth in its train.

The days of joy are as long and perhaps as frequent as those of grief; but either the memory is treacherous or the mind is too morbid to admit this to be the case.

Without occasional seriousness and even melancholy, mirth loses its magic, and pleasure becomes unpalatable.

It is unlucky that experience being our best teacher, we have only learnt its lessons perfectly, when we no longer stand in need of them; and have provided ourselves armour we can never wear.

Chastity in women may be said to arise more from attention to worldly motives than deference to moral obligation: there is not so much continence amongst men, because there is not the same restriction.

A resolution to put up calmly with misfortune, invariably has the effect of lightening the load.

Conceit is usually seen during our first investigations after knowledge; but time and more accurate research teach us that not only is our comprehension limited, but knowledge itself is so imperfect, as not to warrant any vanity upon it at all.

Extravagance is of course merely comparative: a man may be a spendthrift in copper as well as gold.

We had rather be made acquainted at any time with the reality and certainty of distress, than be tortured by the feverish and restless anxiety of doubt.

A too great nicety about diet is being over scrupulous, and is converting moderation into a fault; but on the other hand it is little better than gluttony, if we cannot refrain from what may by possibility be even slightly injurious.

A celebrated traveller who had been twice round the world and visited every remarkable country, declared, that thought he had seen many wonderful things, he had never chanced to see a handsome old woman.

It is difficult enough to persuade a tool, but persuasion is not all the difficulty: obstinacy still remains to be brought under subjection.

A prejudiced person is universally condemned and yet many of our prejudices are excusable, and some of them necessary: if we do not indulge a few of our prejudices, we shall have to go on doubting and inquiring for ever.

Scepticism has ever been the bugbear of youthful vanity, and it is considered knowing to quarrel with existing institutions and established truths; our experienced reflection regrets this inclination and we become weary of distracting ourselves with endless difficulties.

In dreaming, it is remarkable how easily and yet imperceptibly the mind connects events altogether differing in their nature; and if we hear any noise during sleep, how instantaneously the sound is woven in with the events of our dream and as satisfactorily accounted.

The unpleasant sensation that is produced by modesty, is amply compensated by the prepossession it creates in our favour.

Public virtue prospers by the vices of individuals. The spendthrift gives a circulation to the coin of the realm, while the miser is equally useful in gleaning and scraping together what others have

too profusely scattered. Luxury gives a livelihood to thousands, and the numbers supported by vanity are beyond calculation.

There is a distinction to be drawn between self-love and selfishness, though they are usually confounded. Self-love is the effect of instinct, and is necessary for our preservation in common with other animals; but selfishness is a mental defect and is generated by narrowness of soul.

The difference between honour and honesty is this: honour is dictated by a regard to character, honesty arises from a feeling of duty.

It is difficult to avoid envy without laying ourselves open to contempt; for in being too scrupulous not to trespass on others we lay ourselves open to be trifled with and trampled on.

That "familiarity breeds contempt" does not only mean, that he who is too familiar with us incurs our contempt; but also that novelty being indispensably necessary to our happiness we cease to admire what habit has familiarized.

Poverty, like every thing else has its fair side. The poor man has the gratification of knowing that no one can have any interest in his death; and in his intercourse with the world he can be certain that wherever he is welcome, it is exclusively on his own account.

If the poor have but few comforts, they are free from many miseries, mental as well as personal, that their superiors are subjected to: they have no physicians who live by their sufferings, and they never experience the curse of sensibility.

Eloquence, engaging as it is, must always be regarded with suspicion. The great use made of it in the history of literature, has been to mislead the head by an appeal to the heart, and it was for this reason the Athenians forbid their orators the use of it.

Conceit is generally proportionate with high station, and the greatest geniuses have not been entirely free from it: what indeed is ambition but an immoderate love of praise?

When we call to mind the humiliating necessities of human nature as far as the body is concerned, and in our intellectual resolves the meanness or paltriness of many of our motives to action, we may well be surprised that man who has so much cause to be humble should indulge for a moment in pride.

It is not so easy as philosophers tell us to lay aside our prejudices; mere volition cannot enable us to divest ourselves of long established feelings, and even reason is averse to laying aside theories it has once been taught to admire.

A man may start at impending danger or wince at the sensation of pain: and yet he may be a true philosopher and not be afraid of death.

The epicure, the drunkard, and the man of loose morals are equally contemptible: though the brutes obey instinct, they never exceed the bounds of moderation; and besides, it is beneath the dignity of man to place felicity in the service of his senses.

A passionate man should be regarded with the same caution as a loaded blunderbuss, which may unexpectedly go off and do us an injury.

There are many fools in the world and few wise men; at any rate there are more false than sound reasoners; wherefore it would seem more politic to adopt the opinion of the minority on most occasions.

Those who are deficient in any particular accomplishment usually contrive either openly or indirectly to express their contempt for it: thus removing that obstacle which removes them from the same level.

(To be concluded in our next.)

TRANSLATION OF DELLA CASA'S SONNET TO THE CITY OF VENICE

(For the Mirror.)

Where these rich palaces and stately piles
Now rear their marble fronts, in sculptur'd pride,
Stood once a few rude scatter'd huts, beside
The desert shores of some poor clust'ring isles.
Yet here a hardy band, from vices free,
In fragile barks, rode fearless o'er the sea:
Not seeking over provinces to stride,
But here to dwell, afar from slavery.
They knew not fierce ambition's lust of power,
And while their hearts were free from thirst of gold,
Rather than falsehood—death they would behold.
If heaven hath granted thee a mightier dower,
I honour not the fruits that spring from thee
With thy new riches:—Death and Tyranny.

E.L.J.

THE HOUSE OF UNDER

(For the Mirror.)

There are few families more ancient, more generally known, or more widely diffused throughout the known world, than that of Under: indeed, in every nation, though bearing different names, some branch of this family is extant; and there is no doubt that the *Dessous* of France, the *Unters* of Germany, and the *Onders* of the Land-*under*-water, belong to the same ancient and venerable house. The founders of the house, however, were of *low* origin, and generally *down* in the world. *Undergo* was the job of the family, as patient as a lamb: he encouraged the blessed martyrs in times of yore, and is still in existence, though his patience has somewhat diminished. *Underhand* is a far different character to the preceding, a double-dealing rascal, and as sly as a fox; he greets you with a smiling countenance, and while one hand is employed in shaking yours, he is disembarrassing you of the contents of your pocket with the other. *Underline* is a gentleman of some literary attainments, though not entirely divested of quackery; he is particularly noted for the emphasis he gives to certain points in his discourse, and though in some cases, perhaps, he is a little too prodigal of this kind of effect, yet we could not well do without him. *Undermine* is a greater rascal than Underhand, and had it not been for the counter-acting influence of *Underproof*, our house had fallen to the ground; to the ground it might have fallen, but had it gone farther, it would have been only to be revived in the person of *Underground*, a gentleman well known in the kitchens and pantries of the metropolis, the pantries in particular, he being a constant companion to the *Under-butler*. *Understand* is the pride of the house, and by his shining qualities, has raised himself to an eminence never reached by any other member of the family. He is a conspicuous exception to the downcast looks of so many of his relations. *Undertake*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.