

VARIOUS

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Verona



SPIRIT OF THE ANNUALS FOR 1830

Fair and gentle readers, we present you with a kaleidoscopic view of some of these elegant trifles—the very *bijouterie* of art and literature—in picture outmastering each other in gems of ingenuity, and in print, exalting a thousand beautiful fancies into a halo of harmony and happiness for the coming year. We call these "trifles," but in the best sense of the term—ay, the air-plants of literature, whose light flowers and fancies shoot up and entwine with our best affections, and even lend a charm to the loveliest of their objects.

We commence with

The Gem,

almost the "youngling of the flock," which contains the original of the annexed Engraving, by W.J. Cooke, appended to which is the following illustrative sketch:—

VERONA

By Mrs. Maria Callcott

The drawing from which our engraving is made, is one of the relics of the late Mr. Bonington, whose early death has caused such great and just regret to the lovers of painting. It represents one of those ancient towers, and one of those magnificent palaces, (the Maffei Palace), which distinguish the city of Verona, and, by their peculiar character mark it both as the ancient Gothic capital of northern Italy, and as one of the great principalities of the middle ages.

Verona is indebted to nature for part of the charms it possesses for a traveller. It is nearly surrounded by the broad and rapid Adige: the hills towards the Tyrol have a majestic character, which, as they approach the city, is softened by vineyards, and fields, and gardens, between agreeable villas or groves of cypress. The dress of the people is picturesque; their habits are cheerful, and their manners kindly.

Besides all this, there is scarcely a city, even in Italy, to which we attach a more romantic interest than to Verona. Under its ancient Gothic name of Bern, it is the scene of many of the Teutonic tales which are woven into the Book of Heroes, and the song of the Nibelung. The poets and novelists of the middle ages have also laid the scenes of many of their enchanting tales in this beautiful city; and our own Shakspeare has brought Verona so home to every English reader, that we feel almost to have a right of possession in the place.

Originally a city of the Rhetians, Verona became a Roman colony about the time of Julius Caesar, who caused its inhabitants to be enrolled among the number of Roman citizens. Its most flourishing periods under the empire were the reigns of Vaspasian and of Hadrian, when various temples, and other public buildings, of which some fragments still remain, were erected, and the magnificent ampitheatre, which is still used for scenic representations, was built. It was under the reign of Trajan, that Verona received its first Christian Bishop, Euprepus; and in that of Dioclesian, that its martyrs, Fermus and Rusticus, suffered. The conquest of the city by Constantine, and the fearful battle fought in its immediate neighbourhood between Stilicho and Attila, produced little change in the condition of Verona, which continued to partake of the general fortunes of the empire, until the reign of Theodoric the Great.

After the invasion of Italy by the Ostrogoths, under Theodoric, and his victory over Odoacer, which ensured him the sovereignty of the country, from the Alps to Calabria, about the year 493, he fixed his capital at Verona, or, as it was called by the Goths, Bern:¹ there he built a magnificent palace, which communicated, by a continued portico, with principal gate of the city. He renewed the Roman walls and fortifications, repaired the aqueducts, and constructed commodious baths and other public buildings.²

After the death of Theodoric, A.D. 526, in the 37th year of his reign, the disturbed reigns of his daughter Amalasontha and her son Athalaric were an earnest of the distractions that Verona suffered, in common with the rest of Italy, till the taking of the city by Charlemagne, when a short period of tranquillity was enjoyed. Yet there a part of the great family tragedy, which secured his possession of the empire, was acted. He found in the town the widow and children of his brother Carloman, and they were sacrificed to his security. His eldest son, Pepin Hunchback, died at Verona, and was buried in St. Zeno's church, which he had founded. The present magnificent temple stands nearly on the site

¹ See Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," chap. 39, for the general conduct of Theodoric in Italy.

² Tiraboschi, book i.

of Pepin's humbler foundation; and the great stone, now shown in the court, called the tomb of King Pepin, is very possibly that of Charlemagne's son.

During the disastrous period that followed, Verona underwent all the evils that its situation (at the very entrance to Italy from Germany) was so peculiarly calculated to draw upon it. The invasions of the Othos, the wars of the Guelfs and Ghibelines, the struggles of the people against oppression, and between the oppressors for power, from time to time distressed the city and robbed the citizens. Yet the very struggle for freedom and power ensured a portion of the former to the people, who were courted by all parties; and Verona became rich by the visits of her masters, and of such as courted her assistance. But it was in the thirteenth century that she became the queen of northern Italy, under the reign of the Scaligers, or della Scalas, who, from simple citizens, were raised, by their valour, their humanity, and the free choice of the people, to the sovereignty of the state.

During one hundred and twenty-seven years, ten princes of that illustrious house reigned in Verona. The first six were men of extraordinary talent, and, for the time in which they lived, of extraordinary virtue. They not only enlarged the boundaries of the Veronese, but subjected several distant cities. Albert della Scala added Trent and Riva, Parma and Reggio, Belluno and Vicenza, to his dominions; and Can Grande conquered Padua, Treviso, Mantua, and Feltre. It is his body that is laid in the plain sarcophagus over the door of the little church of St. Mary of the Scaligers, only adorned with the figure of a knight on horseback, of nearly the natural size, above it. The other tombs, on which it looks down, are those of his successors: they are gorgeous in ornament, and form a conspicuous group among the picturesque buildings of the city; but they are built over the ashes of men under whom their family and state declined, until the Visconti of Milan, having overcome the princes, built the citadel, and fortified Castello San Pietro.

We must not omit to state that under Bartolomeo, the third of the Scaligers, that tragic end was put to the rivalry of the great families, Capelletti and Montecchi, which served Bandello as the foundation of one of his most popular novels, and Shakspeare as the plot of Romeo and Juliet. The tomb now shown as that of Juliet, is an ancient sarcophagus of red granite: it has suffered from the fire which, burnt down the church where it was originally placed.

The Visconti did not long rule in Verona: about the year 1405, the Veronese placed themselves under the protection of Venice, whose good and ill fortune they partook of, until the period of the French Revolution, when, in 1796, the Venetian Republic ceased to exist. In 1798, the German army occupied Verona, and thought itself secure behind walls which had stood against Catinat, and which had been improved and strengthened by Prince Eugene; but, in 1801, it fell into the hands of the French, and became part of the kingdom of Italy. The events of 1814 placed the Veronese under the dominion of Austria; and, in 1822, this ancient capital of the North of Italy was the scene of a congress, wherein the divisions of Europe were remodelled, and its proportions changed in a manner that it is to be hoped will, in the end, conduce to its prosperity. Never had such a royal meeting taken place since the days of Theodoric, whose companions were princes from every nation on earth.

But they looked on the ruins of Verona. The Roman Amphitheatre is, perhaps, the least injured of all the public buildings. On the walls, the four bridges, the castles, and even the churches, the havoc of mines and the disfiguring effects of bullets are every where visible. The poverty that war leaves behind is to be seen in the neglected state of the public buildings, the substitution of gilded and silvered wood for the sacred golden candlesticks of the altar, and the destruction or disappearance of pictures of great price. Yet enough remains to show that Verona once partook of the riches, the polish, the luxury of Venice. There are relics of her schools, and fragments of her beautiful architecture. From the Gothic times to the present, we may trace, step by step, the improvements and variations of public and private buildings. The majestic San Zeno is at the head of the churches: there is nothing but what is ancient, and nothing new or incongruous offends the eye. The Cathedral still preserves one of Titian's most precious works. In the portico are two figures in high relief, of white marble: on the sword of one is the word *Durindarda*; is this the effigy of Charlemagne's Orlando? The ancient

church of San Fermo, restored in 1319, offers some of the earliest pictures after the first dawn of the revival of painting, by Stefano da Zevio. To the church of St. George, beyond the Adige, one of the great works of Paolo Veronese, which do so much honour to himself and to his native city, has been restored, after having been carried to Paris. Indeed, there is not one of the many churches of Verona which is not interesting on account of its antiquity, the works of art contained in it, or its story; and the public squares and lordly palaces, and the towers that once served as watch-towers to the proud nobles who guarded them, all force the spectator to look back with wonder and admiration to the times when a sentiment of political independence could produce such monuments of glory, even in the midst of war and in a petty state.

The preceding extract has occupied so much space, that we can give little more than an enumeration of the other contents of the *Gem*. Among the prose, we have been most pleased with Walter Errick, a touching tale, by the Hon. Mrs. Norton, (author of Sorrows of Rosalie;) and the Mining Curate, by Mr. Carne; both of which, however, terminate somewhat too gloomily. Next is the Man and the Lioness, by Lord Nugent—not a "Lioness" of Exeter 'Change, but a cook and housekeeper to a country gentleman, by all around called *the Lioness* a name, "in the strictest sense, *de guerre*." Knowing the noble author's *forte* in gastronomy, we are almost induced to think the cook, or *Lioness* a portrait from life. With respect to the name, his lordship observes "it might have had some reference to those ample and bushy ringlets, of a colour which by the friends of the wearer, is generally called bright auburn, and which, on those high days when Mrs. Grace was wont to stalk forth from her solitude, swelled around a sanguine countenance, in volume, in texture, and in hue, not unlike the mane of that awful animal." To our view, Mrs. Grace is a sort of Mrs. Subtle, but who, with better luck than the housekeeper in the play, marries the old gentleman, and after an odd adventure at a masquerade, buries him in the Abbey Church, Bath. It is pleasantly told, and there are in it many genuine touches of humour. Miss Mitford has next Little Miss Wren, a beautiful trifle for old and young; and last is the Count of Trionto, as deep a piece of Italian romance as need accompany one of Mr. Martin's designs.

The poetical pieces, which are numerous, are of a less lugubrious cast than usual. Mr. Kenney, the playwright, has a rustic plaint:

Dear Tom, my brave free-hearted lad,
Where'er you go, God bless you!
You'd better speak than wish you had,
If love for me distress you.
To me they say, your thoughts incline,
And possibly they may so;
Then, once for all, to quiet mine,
Tom, if you love me, say so.

—All this is mighty pleasant for a plaint, and just such as Mr. Kenney would write on one of the garden-seats of the Tuileries, or in the green-room of the little theatre in the Haymarket. The lines on a young collegian and his "dearest Lily," are equally playful:

Farewell to the hound and the cover,
Farewell to the heath and the glen!
But when *Term* and the *Little-go's* over,
He'll be with you, dear Lily again.

—But these are hardly polished enough for the *Gem*. In another vein, Dr. Bowring has some fine stanzas "to GOD," from the Dutch. A few lines by the unfortunate John Keats strongly tell his

frenzied hours. A Legend of the Mirror has too much chivalry to belong to our lists, but is very pretty. The Lone Old Man, by the Hon. Mrs. Norton, has all the pathos of her best compositions. Still, the most striking of the poetry are the Tichborne Dole, a ballad of rare antique beauty, by Lord Nugent—and a Highland Eclogue, by the Ettrick Shepherd—both which are too long for extract.

In its Illustrations, the *Gem* is more than usually fortunate, and their selection and execution is honourable to the taste and talent of R. Cooper, Esq. R.A. The Frontispiece, Rose Malcolm, from his pencil, by C. Rolls, is extremely beautiful. Wilkie's Saturday Night is ably engraved by J. Mitchell; and Tyre, by S. Lacy, from a picture by T. Creswick contended for our choice with Verona, which we have adopted. Three or four of the plates have much fun and humour: the Stolen Interview, after Stephanoff—an old lady being asleep at noonday in an easy chair, her daughter profits by the nap to return the attentions of her devoted admirer at the open door; the girl's expression is admirable. Another, the Coquette, after Chalon, is engraved in a light, sprightly style by Humphreys; a beautiful French flirt, at her toilet, is repelling with her fan—that wand of coquetry—a French Abbe on bended knee, whilst her other hand is rapturously seized by a second suitor, just peeping from behind a screen: if such be

A sample of the *old régime*,
I hope the new one's better.

Another pretty piece of intrigue—a girl stealing an opened love-letter from a fair one dozing on a sofa, and a third advancing on tiptoe from the door of the room, is highly creditable to Mr. Smirke, the painter, and A.W. Warren, the engraver. Among the more elaborate plates is an exquisite creation of Howard's pencil, the Infant Bacchus engraved by J.C. Edwards; and last, though not least in effect, is Trionto, a mountain wild and chaos of storm, from a drawing by Martin; but the engraving hardly approaches the design.

There is much novelty in the present *Gem*: the prints, prose, and poetry sparkle most characteristically, and are just such as the title of the work would lead one to expect to find in it; which is a rare merit among new books.

Friendship's Offering

We believe the editor of the present volume to be Mr. Thomas Pringle, of whose taste and fitness for the task, we spoke in our "Spirit of the Annuals" for 1829. It contains five or six striking prose articles, and, we think, fewer poetical pieces than the former volume. Among the tales entitled to special mention, as evincing considerable talent and more than the ordinary interest of mere sketches—are *Il Vesuviano*, a Neapolitan Story—the *Voyage Out*, by Mrs. Bowdich—the *Lover's Leap*, a Highland Legend, by Leigh Ritchie—a tale of the White Bristol, (30 pages) from the powerful pen of Mr. Banim—the *Fords of Callum*, by the Ettrick Shepherd—*Mourad and Euxabeet*, a Persian Tale, by Mr. Fraser—and *Whatever betide*—for the right, a tale of Old London—the titles of which will give the reader some idea of the rich and varied contents of the prose department. The *Outline of a Life*, by Mr. Kennedy has all the "fitful fancy" of his earlier productions, but the piece selected by us for quotation, is

LUCIFER

By J.A. St. John. ³

In an ancient chronicle of Arezzo, which still remains in manuscript in the church of St. Angelo, in that city,⁴ there is found the very extraordinary story of the painter Spinello Aretino, to which Lanzi alludes briefly, in his History of Painting in Italy. No farther notice has, I believe, been taken of it by any other writer whatever, although it appears to me to be singularly well calculated to gratify or to excite the curiosity of those who love to pry into the mysteries of human nature, and to mark the strange avenues by which mortals sometimes approach the gates of death.

When Spinello first arrived at Arezzo, he took lodgings in the house of an artist, who, although he possessed no great share of genius, had contrived to amass considerable wealth. This artist was no other than Bernardo Daddi, whose son, also named Bernardo, afterwards became the pupil of Spinello, and almost eclipsed his father's reputation. Besides this son, Bernardo had several other children, and among the rest a daughter named Beatrice, then just verging upon womanhood. With this daughter it was to be expected that Spinello would immediately be in love; but our young artist had left behind him, in his native village, a charming girl, to whom he was in a manner betrothed; and he was the last man in the world to look upon another with a wandering heart. He, therefore, lived in the same house, and ate at the same table with Beatrice, without even discovering that she was beautiful; while they who merely caught a glance of her at church, or as she moved, like a vision, along the public walk, pretended to be consumed with passion.

³ We have abridged this tale to suit our limits, though we trust not at the expense of the interest of the author. The style is rich and tender, and well suited to this class of works, although we cannot help thinking some of the details unnecessarily protracted. In the volume it occupies 22 pages.

⁴ Vide Catal Manuscript. Sanct Ang. No. 817. 4to. Rom. 1532.

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