

VARIOUS

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Vicenza



SPIRIT OF THE "ANNUALS," FOR 1829

For some days past our table has been glittering with these caskets of song and tale in their gay attire of silken sheen and burnished gold—till their splendour has fairly put out the light of our *sinumbra*, and the drabs, blues, and yellows of sober, business-like quartos and octavos. Seven out of nine of these elegant little books are in "watered" silk bindings; and an ingenious lady-friend has favoured us with the calculation that the silk used in covering the presumed number sold (70,000) would extend five miles, or from Hyde Park Corner to Turnham Green.

Brilliant as may be their exteriors, their contents are, as Miss Jane Porter says of her heroines, "transcendently beautiful." But of these we shall present our readers with some exquisite specimens. Our only trouble in this task is the *embarras du richesses* with which we are surrounded; otherwise it is to us an exhaustless source of delight, especially when we consider the "gentle feelings and affections" which this annual distribution will cherish, and the innumerable intertwinings of hands and hearts which this shower of *bon-bons* will produce; and such warm friends are we to this social scheme, that our presentation copies are already in the fair hands whither we had destined them.

We begin with the parent-stock,

The Forget-Me-Not

Edited by Frederic Shoberl, Esq

The present volume, in its graphic and literary attractions is decidedly superior to that of last year, an improvement which makes us credit what the Ettrick Shepherd says of the proprietor — "There's no a mair just, nay, generous man in his dealings wi' his authors, in a' the tredd, than Mr. Ackermann."

This beautiful Annual contains the original of our ENGRAVING, from a plate by A. Freebairn, after an admirable picture by S. Prout, of which the following story is illustrative:—

THE MAGICIAN OF VICENZA

In the year 1796, on one of the finest evenings of an Italian autumn, when the whole population of the handsome city of Vicenza were pouring into the streets to enjoy the fresh air, that comes so deliciously along the currents of its three rivers; when the Campo Marzo was crowded with the opulent citizens and Venetian nobles; and the whole ascent, from the gates to the Madonna who sits enthroned on the summit of Monte Berrico, was a line of the gayest pilgrims that ever wandered up the vine-covered side of an Alpine hill; the ears of all were caught by the sound of successive explosions from a boat running down the bright waters of the Bachiglione. Vicenza was at peace, under the wing of the lion of St. Mark, but the French were lying round the ramparts of Mantua. They had not yet moved on Venice; yet her troops were known to be without arms, experience, or a general, and the sound of a cracker would have startled her whole dominions.

The boat itself was of a singular make; and the rapidity with which this little chaloupe, glittering with gilding and hung with streamers, made its way along the sparkling stream, struck the observers as something extraordinary. It flew by every thing on the river, yet no one was visible on board. It had no sail up, no steersman, no rower; yet it plunged and rushed along with the swiftness of a bird. The Vicentine populace are behind none

of their brethren in superstition, and at the sight of the flying chaloupe, the groups came running from the Campo Marzo. The Monte Berrico was speedily left without a pilgrim, and the banks of the Bachiglione were, for the first time since the creation, honoured with the presence of the Venetian authorities, and even of the sublime podesta [the governor, a Venetian noble.] himself.

But it was fortunate for them that the flying phenomenon had reached the open space formed by the conflux of the three rivers, before the crowd became excessive; for, just as it had darted out from the narrow channel, lined on both sides with the whole thirty thousand old, middle-aged, and young, men, maids, and matrons of the city, a thick smoke was seen rising from its poop, its frame quivered, and, with a tremendous explosion, the chaloupe rose into the air in ten thousand fragments of fire.

The multitude were seized with consternation; and the whole fell on their knees, from the sublime podesta himself, to the humblest saffron-gatherer. Never was there such a mixture of devotion. Never was there such a concert of exclamations, sighs, callings on the saints, and rattling of beads. The whole concourse lay for some minutes with their very noses rubbing to the ground, until they were all roused at once by a loud burst of laughter. Thirty thousand pair of eyes were lifted up at the instant, and all fixed in astonishment on a human figure, seen calmly sitting on the water, in the very track of the explosion, and still half hidden in the heavy mass of smoke that curled in a huge globe over the remnants. The laugh had proceeded from him, and the

nearer he approached the multitude, the louder he laughed. At length, stopping in front of the spot where the sublime podesta, a little ashamed of his prostration, was getting the dust shaken out of his gold-embroidered robe of office, and bathing his burning visage in orange-flower water, the stranger began a sort of complimentary song to the famous city of Vicenza.

The stranger found a willing audience; for his first stanza was in honour of the "most magnificent city of Vicenza;" its "twenty palaces by the matchless Palladio;" much more "its sixty churches;" and much more than all "its breed of Dominicans, unrivalled throughout the earth for the fervour of their piety and the capacity of their stomachs." The last touch made the grand-prior of the cathedral wince a little, but it was welcomed with a roar from the multitude. The song proceeded; but if the prior had frowned at the first stanza, the podesta was doubly angry at the second, which sneered at Venetian pomposity in incomparable style. But the prior and podesta were equally outvoted, for the roar of the multitude was twice as loud as before. Then came other touches on the *cavalieri serventi*, the ladies, the nuns, and the husbands, till every class had its share: but the satire was so witty, that, keen as it was, the shouts of the people silenced all disapprobation. He finished by a brilliant stanza, in which he said, that "having been sent by Neptune from the depths of the ocean to visit the earth, he had chosen for his landing-place its most renowned spot, the birthplace of the gayest men and the handsomest women—the exquisite Vicenza." With these words

he ascended from the shore, and was received with thunders of applause.

His figure was tall and elegant. He wore a loose, scarlet cloak thrown over his fine limbs, Greek sandals, and a cap like that of the Italian princes of three centuries before, a kind of low circle of green and vermilion striped silk, clasped by a large rose of topaz. The men universally said, that there was an atrocious expression in his countenance; but the women, the true judges after all, said, without exception, that this was envy in the men, and that the stranger was the most "delightful looking *Diavolo*" they had ever set eyes on.

The stranger, on his landing, desired to be led to the principal hotel; but he had not gone a dozen steps from the water-side, when he exclaimed that he had lost his purse. Such an imputation was never heard before in an Italian city; at least so swore the multitude; and the stranger was on the point of falling several fathoms deep in his popularity. But he answered the murmur by a laugh; and stopping in front of a beggar, who lay at the corner of an hospital roaring out for alms, demanded the instant loan of fifty sequins. The beggar lifted up his hands and eyes in speechless wonder, and then shook out his rags, which, whatever else they might show, certainly showed no sequins, "The sequins, or death!" was the demand, in a tremendous voice. The beggar fell on the ground convulsed, and from his withered hand, which every one had seen empty the moment before, out flew fifty sequins, bright as if they had come that moment from St. Mark's

mint. The stranger took them from the ground, and, with a smile, flung them up in a golden shower through the crowd. The shouts were immense, and the mob insisted on carrying him to the door of his hotel.

But the Venetian vigilance was by this time a little awakened, and a patrol of the troops was ordered to bring this singular stranger before the sublime podesta. The crowd instantly dropped him at the sight of the bayonets, and knowing the value of life in the most delicious climate of the world, took to their heels. The guard took possession of their prisoner, and were leading him rather roughly to the governor's house, when he requested them to stop for a moment beside a convent gate, that he might get a cup of wine. But the Dominicans would not give the satirist of their illustrious order a cup of water.

"If you will not give me refreshment," exclaimed he, in an angry tone, "give me wherewithal to buy it. I demand a hundred sequins."

The prior himself was at the window above his head; and the only answer was a sneer, which was loyally echoed through every cloister.

"Let me have your bayonet for a moment," said the stranger to one of his guard. He received it; and striking away a projecting stone in the wall, out rushed the hundred sequins. The prior clasped his hands in agony, that so much money should have been so near, and yet have escaped his pious purposes. The soldiers took off their caps for the discoverer, and bowed them still lower

when he threw every sequin of it into the shakos of those polite warriors. The officer, to whom he had given a double share, showed his gratitude by a whisper, offering to assist his escape for as much more. But the stranger declined the civility, and walked boldly into the presence-chamber of the sublime podesta.

The Signer Dominico Castello-Grande Tremamondo was a little Venetian noble, descended in a right line from Aeneas, with a palazzo on the Canale Regio of Venice, which he let for a coffee-house; and living in the pomp and pride of a *magnifico* on something more than the wages of an English groom. The intelligence of this extraordinary stranger's discoveries had flown like a spark through a magazine, and the *illustrissimo* longed to be a partaker in the secret. He interrogated the prisoner with official fierceness, but could obtain no other reply than the general declaration, that he was a traveller come to see the captivations of Italy. In the course of the inquiry the podesta dropped a significant hint about money.

"As to money," was the reply, "I seldom carry any about me; it is so likely to tempt *rascals* to dip deeper in roguery. I have it whenever I choose to call for it."

"I should like to see the experiment made, merely for its curiosity," said the governor.

"You shall be obeyed," was the answer; "but I never ask for more than a sum for present expenses. Here, you fellow!" said he, turning to one of the half-naked soldiery, "lend me five hundred sequins!"

The whole guard burst into laughter. The sum would have been a severe demand on the military chest of the army. The handsome stranger advanced to him, and, seizing his musket, said, loftily, "Fellow, if you won't give the money, this must." He struck the butt-end of the musket thrice upon the floor. At the third blow a burst of gold poured out, and sequins ran in every direction. The soldiery and the officers of the court were in utter astonishment. All wondered, many began to cross themselves, and several of the most celebrated swearers in the regiment dropped upon their knees. But their devotions were not long, for the sublime podesta ordered the hall to be cleared, and himself, the stranger, and the sequins, left alone.

For three days nothing more was heard of any of the three, and the Vicenzese scarcely ate, drank, or slept, through anxiety to know what was become of the man in the scarlet cloak, and cap striped green and vermilion. Jealousy, politics, and piety, at length put their heads together, and, by the evening of the third day, the *cavalieri* had agreed that he was some rambling actor, or Alpine thief, the statesmen, that he was a spy; and the Dominicans that he was Satan in person. The women, partly through the contradiction natural to the lovely sex, and partly through the novelty of not having the world in their own way, were silent; a phenomenon which the Italian philosophers still consider the true wonder of the whole affair.

On the evening of the third day a new Venetian governor, with a stately *cortege*, was seen entering at the Water Gate, full gallop,

from Venice: he drove straight to the podesta's house, and, after an audience, was provided with apartments in the town-house, one of the finest in Italy, and looking out upon the *Piazza Grande*, in which are the two famous columns, one then surmounted by the winged lion of St. Mark, as the other still is by a statue of the founder of our faith.

The night was furiously stormy, and the torrents of rain and perpetual roaring of the thunder drove the people out of the streets. But between the tempest and curiosity not an eye was closed that night in the city. Towards morning the tempest lulled, and in the intervals of the wind, strange sounds were heard, like the rushing of horses and rattling of carriages. At length the sounds grew so loud that curiosity could be restrained no longer, and the crowd gathered towards the entrance of the *Piazza*. The night was dark beyond description, and the first knowledge of the hazard that they were incurring was communicated to the shivering mob by the kicks of several platoons of French soldiery, who let them pass within their lines, but prohibited escape. The square was filled with cavalry, escorting wagons loaded with the archives, plate, and pictures, of the government. The old podesta was seen entering a carriage, into which his very handsome daughter, the betrothed of the proudest of the proud Venetian senators, was handed by the stranger. The procession then moved, and last, and most surprising of all, the stranger, mounting a charger, put himself at the head of the cavalry, and, making a profound adieu to the new governor, who stood

shivering at the window in care of a file of grenadiers, dashed forward on the road to Milan.

Day rose, and the multitude rushed out to see what was become of the city. Every thing was as it had been, but the column of the lion: its famous emblem of the Venetian republic was gone, wings and all. They exclaimed that the world had come to an end. But the wheel of fortune is round, let politicians say what they will. In twelve months from that day the old podesta was again sitting in the government-house—yet a podesta no more, but a French prefect; the Signora Maria, his lovely daughter, was sitting beside him, with an infant, the image of her own beauty, and beside her the stranger, no longer the man of magic in the scarlet cloak and green and vermilion striped cap with a topaz clasp, but a French general of division, in blue and silver, her husband, as handsome as ever, and, if not altogether a professed *Diavolo*, quite as successful in finding money whenever he wanted it. His first *entree* into Vicenza had been a little theatrical, for such is the genius of his country. The blowing-up of his little steam-boat, which had nearly furnished his drama with a tragic catastrophe, added to its effect; and his discovery of the sequins was managed by three of his countrymen. As an inquirer into the nakedness of the land, he might have been shot as a spy. As half-charlatan and half-madman, he was sure of national sympathy. During the three days of his stay the old podesta had found himself accessible to reason, the podesta's daughter to the tender passion,

and the treasures of the state to the locomotive skill of the French detachment, that waited in the mountains the result of their officer's diplomacy. The lion of St. Mark, having nothing else to do, probably disdained to remain, and in the same night took wing from the column, to which he has never returned.

As we love to "march in good order," we begin with the plates, the most striking of which is the Frontispiece, *Marcus Curtius*, by Le Keux, from a design by Martin, which we are at a loss to describe. It requires a microscopic eye to fully appreciate all its beauties—yet the thousands of figures and the architectural background, are so clear and intelligible as to make our optic nerve sympathize with the labour of the artist. The next is a *View on the Ganges*, by Finden, after Daniell; *Constancy*, by Portbury, after Stephanoff, in which the female figure is loveliness personified; *Eddystone during a Storm*; the *Proposal*, a beautiful family group; the *Cottage Kitchen*, by Romney, after Witherington; and the *Blind Piper*, from a painting by Clennell, who, from too great anxiety in the pursuit of his profession, was some years since deprived of reason, which he has never recovered.

In the *poetical* department we notice the *Retreat*, some beautiful lines by J. Montgomery; *Ellen Strathallan*, a pathetic legend, by Mrs. Pickersgill; *St. Mary of the Lows*, by the *Ettrick Shepherd*; *Xerxes*, a beautiful composition, by C. Swain, Esq.; the *Banks of the Ganges*, a descriptive poem, by Capt. McNaghten; *Lydford Bridge*, a fearful incident, by the author of

Dartmoor; Alice, a tale of merrie England, by W.H. Harrison;
and two pleasing pieces by the talented editor. Our extract is

LANGSYNE

BY DELTA

Langsyne!—how doth the word come back
With magic meaning to the heart,
As Memory roams the sunny track,
From which Hope's dreams were loath to part!
No joy like by-past joy appears;
For what is gone we peak and pine.
Were life spun out a thousand years,
It could not match Langsyne!

Langsyne!—the days of childhood warm,
When, tottering by a mother's knee,
Each sight and sound had power to charm,
And hope was high, and thought was free.
Langsyne!—the merry schoolboy days—
How sweetly then life's sun did shine!
Oh! for the glorious pranks and plays,
The raptures of Langsyne!

Langsyne!—yes, In the sound, I hear
The rustling of the summer grove,
And view those angel features near,

Which first awoke the heart to love.
How sweet it is, in pensive mood,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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