

# VARIOUS

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Various

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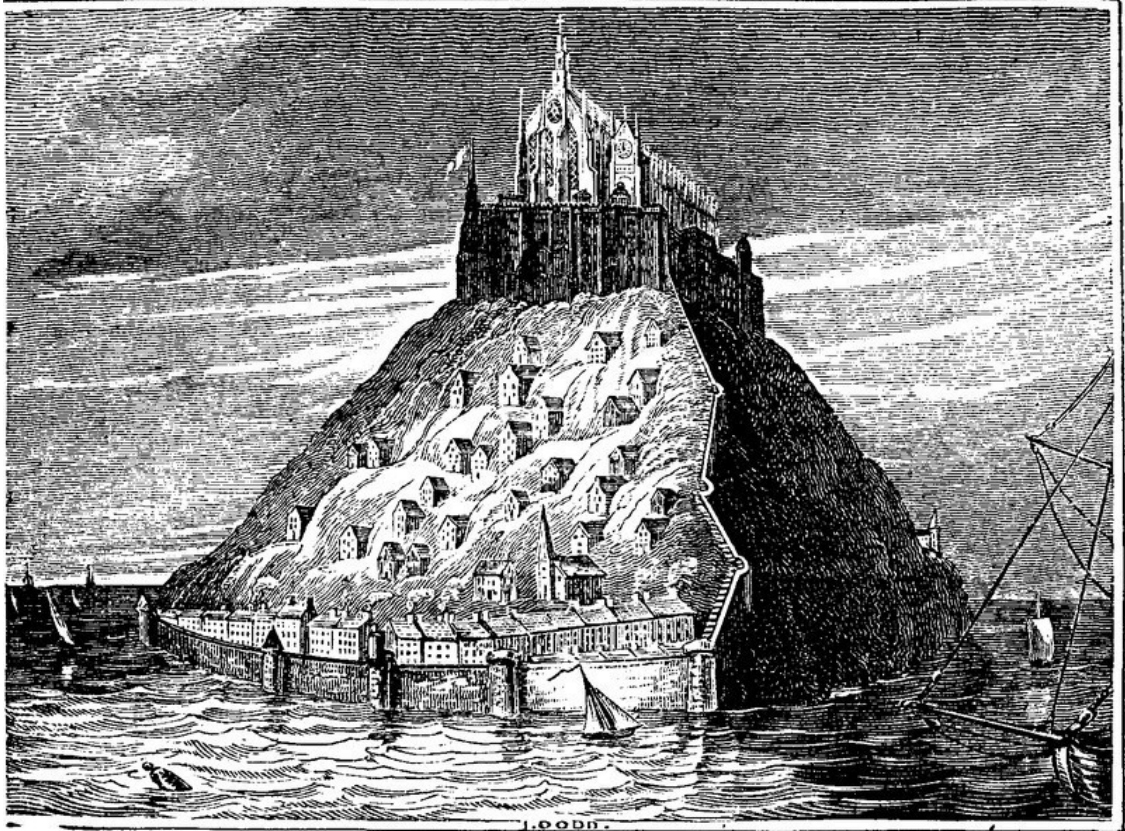
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MOUNT ST. MICHAEL, NORMANDY.

## MOUNT ST. MICHAEL, NORMANDY

The interest attached to this extraordinary place is of so popular a character as fully to justify its introduction to our pages. It is situate at the southern extremity of the ancient province of Normandy, a district of considerable importance in the early histories of France and England. The "Mount" is likewise one of the most stupendous of Nature's *curiosities*, it being *one mass of granite*, and referred to by geologists as a fine specimen of that primary or primitive rock; or, to speak untechnically, of that rock "which is most widely spread over the globe in the lowest relative situation," and which contains no remains of a former world.<sup>1</sup> St. Michael's therefore stands pre-eminently in the sublime philosophy of Nature. It figures also in the page of man's history: its early celebrity is recognised in the chronicles of olden France and England; and it promises note in the history of our own times; since to this monastic spot will the political balance of France, in all probability, exile the person of the ambitious Polignac, ex-minister of France. The reader will perhaps suspect the political concatenation of Lulworth Castle, the Hotel de Ville, and the Palais Royal in our last volume; and the Prison of Vincennes and Mount St. Michael in the present. Instead of catching "the manners living as they rise," we appear to be looking out for crowns and ministers headlong as they *fall*.

St. Michael's is in that portion of Normandy which is not often visited by English tourists. One of its recent visitors was Mrs. Charles Stothard, wife of the distinguished artist, who, in 1820, published a narrative of her journey in, the autumn of 1818. Mrs. Stothard's description of the "Mount" is dated from Avranches, a coast town of some consequence, not far from Caen. Speaking of the delightfully situated town of Avranches, the fair correspondent says,

"Beyond, in the midst of the sea, arises 400 feet above the surface of the water, the majestic rock of Mount St. Michael, and near it another, but smaller rock, called the Tombalaine. In the distant and blue horizon appears the long and extending land of Brittany, mingling with the surrounding atmosphere, from which it is alone distinguished by a faint and uncertain line, that, like the prospect of our future years, impresses the mind with a deeper interest from its distant and impenetrable form. Mount St. Michael is a league in circumference; in some parts of the rock is perpendicular; it is flooded entirely at high water, but when the tide is out, the rock may be approached by the sands; some danger, however, attends the passage to those who are not perfectly well acquainted with the track, as many quicksands intercept, where travellers have frequently been lost.

"There is a small town on Mount St. Michael. The castle, which stands at the top, is accessible by steps cut in the solid rock. In the year 708, St. Aubert, Bishop of Avranches, here first created the chapel dedicated to St. Michael; in 966, Richard the first Duke of Normandy, established a convent of monks of the order of St. Benoit, and in 1024, Richard the second Duke of Normandy, built the church, which still exists. The provisions that supply the fortress, are sent up in a basket drawn by a machine. Tradition says, that there was in this castle an obligatory, or concealed trap-door, where, in feudal times, persons were taken, whom the state directed should be secretly put out of the way. Under pretext, of showing them the castle, they were conducted into a remote chamber, there they soon met their destined fate, for chancing to step upon the concealed door, they were precipitated into the abyss, many hundred feet below. They still exhibit at this fortress the sword and shield of St. Michael, and some cannon left by the English, when they made a fruitless attempt to take possession of the rock. Here it was that in former times, the Kings of France and the Dukes of Brittany made frequent pilgrimages, and performed penance at the shrine of St. Michael."

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<sup>1</sup> Primary rocks are supposed by geologists to constitute the foundation on which rocks of all the other classes are laid; and if we take an enlarged view of the structure of the globe, we may admit this to be the fact,—but the admission requires certain limitations.—Bakewell.

The lofty situation of the church appears to be peculiar to the churches dedicated to St. Michael. In many parts of the world they are built on very lofty eminences, in allusion, it is said, to St. Michael's having been the highest of the heavenly host. St. Michael's, in Cornwall, is another confirmation of this remark.

We have the pleasure of acknowledging the original of our Engraving from an elegant Print Scrap Book, now in course of publication by Mr. H. Dawe. It consists of well executed mezzotinto prints which are worthy of the album of any fair subscriber.

## NIOBE

(For the Mirror.)

Hush'd are the groans of death, heart-piercing sound,  
That mournful rose in peals on peals around;  
Child after child by heav'nly darts expires,  
And frequent corpses feed the gloomy pyres.  
Aghast she stands!—now here in wild amaze—  
Now there the mother casts her madd'ning gaze:  
In fixedness of grief, in dumb despair,  
Her looks, her mien, her inmost soul declare:  
Her looks, her mien, her deep-sunk anguish show  
With all the silent eloquence of woe.

See! from her cheek the rosy lustre flies;  
How dim the beams that sparkled in her eyes.  
No more so softly heaves the throbbing breast;  
The purple currents in their channels rest;—  
No more the Zephyr's balmy breath can wave  
The graceful locks which laughing Hebe gave;—  
And fade those lips where fresh vermilion shone,  
Cold as the clay, or monumental stone;—  
O'er all her limbs an icy numbness spreads,  
And marble death eternal quiet sheds.

Great<sup>2</sup> sculptor hail! whom Nature's self design'd  
To trace the labyrinths of the human mind—  
To read the heart, and give with strong control,  
To stone the silent workings of the soul:  
Thine all-creative hand, thy matchless skill  
Could what unbounded genius plann'd, fulfil.  
Hence sprang that grief-wrung form—the languid eye—  
The bloodless lip, and look of agony—  
That face, where mute contending passions play—  
That life of pain, of anguish, and dismay.

To sink she seems beneath the afflictive weight  
Of gloomy cares portentous of her fate;—  
Yet on her brow still soft Affection beams,  
Tho' Desperation prompts her sombre dreams.  
Parental feelings thrill her tortur'd breast,  
And all the frantic mother stands confest—  
A very Niobe—sad, hapless name!

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<sup>2</sup> Praxiteles.

In figure, features, and in all the same:  
The same in all as Vengeance fierce pursued  
Far to a wild and cheerless solitude.  
For Salmo's bard has sung (by Heaven's decrees)  
In awful pomp she mounted on the breeze—  
Borne by the buoyant wind—a ghostly form—  
She sail'd along the region of the storm.

So oft 'tis said in Lapland's chill domain,  
Where dreary winter holds a lengthen'd reign,  
What time the Runic drum and magic spell  
Evoke the rapt soul from its fragile cell,  
Attendant spirits, won by charms and prayer,  
In gliding motion float upon the air.

*Sydenham.*

**S.S**

## THE RHINE

(To the Editor.)

In looking over the last volume (16) of your interesting miscellany, I was much amused with a humorous legend at page 108, called the Rat's Tower, and according to your reference, having turned to page 68, of vol. xii. was equally entertained with the same laughable and well told story versified. This humorous production is extracted from a work entitled, if I mistake not, "The Rhinish Keepsake," containing many of the most wonderful and spirit-stirring legends connected with old chateaux, &c. on the banks of that majestic river, the Rhine. Amongst other pretty and choice *morceaux*, is a poem under the name of "*L'Envoy*," which may probably interest yourself and the readers of the *Mirror*. In perusing the enclosed, you will observe the infancy, manhood, and old age of "Father Rhine," as he is called, are all brought in succession before our eyes, which happy and ingenious idea is taken from a highly descriptive French publication, and perhaps having named the work, you will pardon my having extracted that portion which refers more particularly to the subject before us. The author says, "Dans son enfance le Rhin joue entre les fleurs des Alpes de la Suisse, il se berce dans le lac de Constance, il en sort avec des forces nouvelles, il devient un adolescent bouillant, fait une chute a Schaffhouse, s'avance vers l'age mur, se plait a remplir sa coupe de vin, court chercher les dangers et les affronte contre les écueils et les rochers: puis parvenu a un age plus avancée il abandonne les illusions, les sites romanesques, et cherche l'utile. Dans sa caducité il desserit et disparaît enfin on ne sait trop comment!"

## L'ENVOY

Cologne! Cologne! Thy walls are won,  
Farewell my bark—be hush'd my song;  
My voyage is o'er—my task is done—  
Too pleasant both to last me long.

Adieu, thou noble Rhine, adieu,  
Thy scenes for ever rich and new,  
Thy cheerful towns, thy Gothic piles,  
Thy rude ravines, thy verdant isles;  
Thy golden hills with garlands bound,  
Thy giant crags with castles crown'd!

I have seen thee by morning's early light,  
I have seen thee by evening gray;  
With the crimson blush of sun-set bright,  
And lit by the moon's pale ray;

Shrouded in mist and darken'd by storm,  
With the countless tints of autumn warm:  
In ev'ry hue that can o'er thee fall;  
And lovely, lovely thou art in all.  
The Rhine!—That little word will be  
For aye a spell of power to me,  
And conjure up, in care's despite,  
A thousand visions of delight.

The Rhine! O where beneath the sun  
Doth that fair river's rival run?  
Where dawns the day upon a stream,  
Can in such changeful beauty shine,  
Outstripping Fancy's wildest dream,  
Like yon green, glancing, glorious Rhine.

Born where blooms the Alpine rose,  
Cradled in the Boden—see,<sup>3</sup>  
Forth the infant river flows,  
Leaping on in childish glee.  
Coming to a riper age,  
He crowns his rocky cup with wine,  
And makes a gallant pilgrimage  
To many a ruin'd tower and shrine.  
Strong and swift, and wild and brave,  
On he speeds with crested wave;

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<sup>3</sup> The Lake of Constance.

And spurning aught like check or stay,  
Fights and foams along his way,  
O'er crag and shoal, until his flood  
Boils like manhood's hasty blood!

Older, broader, deeper grown,  
All romantic follies flown,  
Now the laden Beurtschiff sails  
Slowly o'er his sober tide,  
Which wanders on through fertile vales,  
And looks like Peace by Plenty's side.

Joy and strife, and labour past,  
In his grave he sinks at last!  
Not the common river's tomb—  
Not the ocean's mighty womb;  
Into earth he melts away,  
Like that very thing of clay,  
Man, whose brief and checker'd course  
He hath copied from his source.<sup>4</sup>

Farewell thou "Father Rhine," as they  
Who dwell beside thee fondly say,  
May thy delicious valley long  
Echo the sweet and grateful song.  
Which ever round the goblet rose—  
And well thy minstrel's lay may close.

## Y.O.S

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<sup>4</sup> The Rhine loses itself in the sands of Holland before its waters can mingle with the sea.

## KATERFELTO

(To the Editor.)

In reply to the question of your correspondent—"Who was Katerfelto?" I am enabled to offer the few brief particulars which follow. With regard to his birth, parentage, and education, I am, however, not qualified to convey any information. I know not "to whom he was related, or by whom forgot." I became acquainted with him about the year 1790 or 1791, when he visited the City of Durham, accompanied by his wife and daughter. He then appeared to be about sixty years of age. His travelling equipage consisted of an old rumbling coach, a pair of sorry hacks, and two black servants. They wore green liveries with red collars, but the colours were sadly faded by long use.

Having taken suitable apartments, the black servants were sent round the town, blowing trumpets and delivering bills, announcing their master's astonishing performances, which in the day time consisted in displaying the wonders of the microscope, &c. and in the evening in exhibiting electrical experiments, in the course of which he introduced his two celebrated black cats, generally denominated the Doctor's Devils—for, be it understood, that our hero went under the dignified style and title of *Doctor* Katerfelto. Tricks of legerdemain concluded the evening's entertainments.

The first night of the Doctor's performance was extremely wet, and the writer of this, who was then quite a boy, composed his whole audience. The Doctor's spouse invited me behind the curtains to the fire, on one side of which sat the great conjuror himself, his person being enveloped in an old green, greasy roquelaire, and his head decorated with a black velvet cap. On the other side of the fire-place sat Mrs. Katerfelto and daughter, in a corresponding style of dress—that is to say, equally ancient and uncleanly. The family appeared, indeed, to be in distressed circumstances. The Doctor told me the following odd anecdote:—Some time before he had sent up from a town in Yorkshire a fire-balloon, for the amusement of the country people, and at which they were not a little astonished; but in a few days afterwards the Doctor was himself more astonished on being arrested for having set fire to a hay rick! The balloon, it appeared, had in its descent fallen upon a rick, which it consumed, and the owner, having ascertained by whom the combustible material had been dispatched, arrested the doctor for the damage. As the Doctor was unable to pay the amount, he was obliged to go to prison, thus proving that it is sometimes easier to raise the devil than to "raise the wind." Having been admitted behind the scenes, I had an opportunity of seeing the conjuror's apparatus, but the performance was postponed to another evening.

On the next night of the Doctor's appearance he had a tolerably respectable auditory, and the following incidents may amuse your readers, as they occasioned much laughter at the moment. Among the company was the Rev. Mr. P., a minor canon. The conjuror, in the course of his tricks, desired a card to be drawn from the pack, by one of the company, which was done, the card examined and returned into the pack, in the presence of the audience; but on the company being requested to take the card again from the pack, it could not be found. The Doctor said it must have been taken out by some one present, and civilly begged the reverend gentleman to search his pockets. Indignant at such an insinuation, the inflamed divine for some time refused to comply, but at length being persuaded, he drew forth the identical card, much to his own surprise and the amusement of the spectators. A similar trick was also played with some money, which unaccountably found its way into the reverend gentleman's pocket, a circumstance which put him out of all patience; and he proceeded most sternly to lecture the astounded Doctor for having practised his levity on a gentleman of his cloth, upon which, and threatening the poor conjuror with vengeance, he strode out of the room. Katerfelto declared that, although he was a conjuror, he did not know the gentleman was a divine.

Katerfelto left Durham soon afterwards, and I have heard died at Bristol.

*Pentonville.*

## DUNELM

**(To the Editor.)**

A correspondent having expressed a wish to obtain some knowledge of Dr. Katerfelto, of juggling memory, perhaps the following may be acceptable: Between thirty and forty years ago he travelled through the principal towns of the northern counties with a caravan filled with philosophical apparatus, giving lectures where a sufficient audience could be collected. He appeared to be about five feet ten, rather thin, and towards fifty. He was dressed in a black gown and square cap; his apparatus was in excellent order, and very well managed, he conducted every experiment with great certainty, never failing; and though much knowledge might be gained from his lecture, people seemed more inclined to laugh than to learn; perhaps from his peculiar manner, and partly from his introducing something ludicrous, as on exhibiting the powers of a magnet, by lifting a large box, he observed it was not empty, and on opening the lid, five or six black cats put up their heads, which he instantly put down, saying, "it is not your hour yet." Also when about to prove the truth of what he advanced, by experiment, he had a strange way of calling your attention by saying, "But then look *here*," raising his voice loud at the word "here." The lecture was succeeded by a display of legerdemain, in which I thought him very superior to Breslaw.

It was said then, that he had originally been a soldier in the Prussian service, and had procured his discharge.

**J.G**

**P**

## NOTES OF A READER

### PUBLIC EXECUTIONS

Far better would it be if, in the few cases for which death ought to be inflicted, the execution were to take place within the walls of the prison, none being present except the proper officers, the clergyman, and those persons whom the sufferer might desire to have with him at his departure. The effect might possibly be impressive to some good end, which most certainly it is not now, if there were no other announcement than that of tolling a bell, when all was over, and hoisting a black flag, where it might be seen far and wide; and if the body of a murderer were carried under a pall, with some appropriate solemnity, to the place of dissection. Executions ought never to be made a spectacle for the multitude, who, if they can bear the sight, always regard it as a pastime; nor for the curiosity of those who shudder while they gratify it. Indeed, there are few circumstances in which it is not expedient that a veil should be drawn over the crimes and sufferings of our fellow-creatures; and it is greatly to be wished, that in all cases of turpitude and atrocity, no further publicity were given to the offence than is necessary for the ends of justice. For no one who is conversant with criminal courts, or has obtained any insight into the human mind, can entertain a doubt that such examples are infectious.—*Qry. Review.*

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