

# VARIOUS

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**Various**  
**The Mirror of Literature,**  
**Amusement, and Instruction.**  
**Volume 14, No. 406,**  
**December 26, 1829**

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**VIRGIL'S TOMB**



This consecrated relic of genius stands on the hill of Posilipo, in the environs of Naples. Its recent state is so beautifully described by Eustace, that we shall not, like gipsys do stolen children, disfigure it to prevent recognition.

Proceeding westward along the Chiaia and keeping towards the beach, says Eustace, we came to the quarter called Mergyllina. To ascend the hill of Posilipo we turned to the right, and followed a street winding as a staircase up the steep, and terminating at a garden gate. Having entered, we pursued a path through a vineyard and descending a little, came to a small square building, flat-roofed, placed on a sort of platform on the brow of a precipice on one side, and on the other sheltered by a super-incumbent rock. An aged ilex, spreading from the sides of the rock, and bending over the edifice, covers the roof with its ever verdant foliage. Numberless shrubs spring around, and interwoven with ivy clothe the walls and hang in festoons over the precipice. The edifice before us was an ancient tomb—the tomb of VIRGIL! We entered; a vaulted cell and two modern windows alone presented themselves to view: the poet's name is the only ornament of the place. No sarcophagus, no urn, and even no inscription to feed the devotion of the classical pilgrim. The epitaph which though not genuine is yet ancient, was inscribed by the order of the Duke of Pescolangiano, then proprietor of the place, on a marble slab placed in the side of the rock opposite the entrance of the tomb, where it still remains. Every body is

acquainted with it—

Mantua me genuit, Calabri rapuere, tenet nunc Parthenope,  
cecini  
pascua, rura, duces.

But there are authors who venture to assert, that the tomb of which we are now speaking, is not the sepulchre of Virgil. Of this number are the classic Addison and the laborious and accurate Cluverius. The authority of two such eminent persons, without doubt, carries great weight with it, but that weight is upon this occasion considerably lessened by the weakness of the arguments on which their opinion is grounded. These arguments may be found in Cluverius, and Addison merely expresses his opinion without entering into any discussion. They are drawn from a few verses of Statius.

In opposition to these arguments, or rather conjectures founded upon the vague expressions of a single poet (a poet often censured for his obscurity), we have the constant and uninterrupted tradition of the country supported by the authority of a numerous host of learned and ingenious antiquaries; and upon such grounds we may still continue to cherish the conviction, that we have visited the tomb of Virgil, and hailed his sacred shade on the spot where his ashes long reposed.

The laurel which was once said to have sprung up at its base, and covered it with its luxuriant branches, now flourishes only in the verses of youthful bards, or in the descriptions of early

travellers; myrtle, ivy and ilex, all plants equally agreeable to the genius of the place, and the subjects of the poet, now perform the office of the long-withered bays, and encircle the tomb with verdure and perfume.

The sepulchre of Virgil, it may be imagined, must have long remained an object of interest and veneration, especially as his works had excited universal admiration even in his life-time, and were very soon after his death put into the hands of children, and made a part of the rudiments of early education. Yet Martial declares that it had been neglected in his time, and that Silius Italicus alone restored its long forgotten honours.

The reader will learn with regret that Virgil's tomb, consecrated as it ought to be to genius and meditation, is sometimes converted into the retreat of assassins, or the lurking place of Sbirri. Such at least it was the last time we visited it, when wandering that way about sun-set we found it filled with armed men. We were surprised on both sides, and on ours not very agreeably at the unexpected rencounter; so lonely the place and so threatening the aspects of these strangers. Their manners however were courteous; and on inquiry we were informed that they were Sbirri, and then lying in wait for a murderer, who was supposed to make that spot his nightly asylum. It would be unjust to accuse the Neapolitans of culpable indifference towards this or any other monument of antiquity; but it is incumbent on the proprietor or the public, to secure them against such profanation. On the whole, few places are in themselves more picturesque,

and from the recollection inseparably interwoven with it, no spot is more interesting than the tomb of Virgil.

# LAST CHRISTMAS DAY

(*For the Mirror.*)

"Say, if such blandishments did ever greet  
Thy charmed soul; hast thou not crav'd to die?  
Hast not thine immaterial seem'd but air  
Verging to sigh itself from thee, and share  
Beatitude? hast thou not watch'd thy breath  
In meek, faint hope, that soon 'twould sink in death?"

*MS. Poem.*

Last Christmas Day! my heart leaps with joy at its very memory; it was a mental *Noel*, a Christmas of the soul, (if I may thus express myself.) That which I am about to relate of it is strictly true, and I do relate it because that day is one of the very few in our brief existence which form a moral epoch in, and influence subsequent, life. Last Christmas Day, I well remember, my spirit revelled in an Eden blessedness—a bliss which the unholy world did not, could not, give, and consequently could not take away. Reader! I will hope, I will believe, that thou hast experienced feelings and emotions, like those high and holy ones of which I would endeavour now to preserve a faint transcript. Come then, let us unite our ideas, let us speak together, but let us yet mention as present, those beatific thoughts and imaginings which are indeed past. Let us

ever remember and cherish in our heart of hearts those golden fore-tastes of future eternity, or (according to Platonism) those rapturous reminiscences of past, which prove beyond logical demonstration, the existence of some vital principle in man, godlike in faculties, in essence immaterial, in duration, immortal. It is Christmas Day, a deep, unearthly calm possesses our minds; all passions are slumbering, save the beautiful and holy ones of adoring love, mingled with overwhelming gratitude towards our maker, and philanthropic love, universal benevolence, to man. It is winter, but one of those delicious days in which closing our eyes, so that we behold not sad hosts of bare stems and branches, we may well deem that summer reigns! And a summer indeed reigns in our bosoms! Now nature seems new and fascinating, as it did to Adam when he wakened into life. Now, as for the first time, we discern with unspeakable emotions, that divine affection as well as unlimited power, which actuates and supports creation. Now we comprehend that the universe was designed to minister happiness to myriads of intelligent beings; but that man, by sin, frustrates the gracious intent, and produces misery. Now the glorious golden sun seems in its gladdening lustre, like a smile from its creator; a smile beaming ineffable love, and joy, and peace. Now the sky, the pale, delicate, sapphire sky, the soft, tender, inviting, enfolding, and immeasurable sky, appears to image the mercy of its maker. Let us yet gaze upon the sky, for it also admonishes us of other delightful things; it is silent—it is awful—it is holy; but its silence is beautiful, and with wordless

eloquence it speaks unto our enraptured bosoms of deep, eternal, unimaginable repose! it infuses into our breasts undefinable ideas and sensations; it appears to our enchanted imaginations an emblem meet of the grand dream of eternity, and our spirits seem on the verge of quitting earth, in thrilling contemplations on the islands of that infinite abyss, and their immortal inhabitants! We gaze in hope, adoration, and rapture on the blue expanse, varied by delicate vapours, sailing calmly, wondrously through it; and then occur to our memories spontaneously, the exquisite lines translated from a *morceau*, by Gluck, (a German poet;) and our hearts respond as each of us sighs:

"There's peace and welcome in yon sea  
Of endless blue tranquillity.  
Those clouds are living things!  
I trace their veins of liquid gold,  
I see them solemnly unfold  
Their soft and fleecy wings!

These be the angels that convey  
Us weary children of a day  
Life's tedious nothing o'er,  
Where neither passions come, nor woes  
To vex the genius of repose  
On death's majestic shore!"

Then do our delighted eyes wander downward; then doth earth appear a glorious, though but a temporary palace, the gift

of a gracious God to man! then do we feel an unaccountable assurance that angels visit the beautiful domain; then that (though viewlessly) they rejoice with, they sorrow for, (if angels can sorrow) and they minister unto "the heirs of salvation," as they did in the days of old, and as they will do, to the end of time. Were we not assured of this blessed fact in the book of books, reason would assert, that for a thankless, graceless generation alone, earth should not have been formed so divinely fair; but it is heavenly, that the immortal servitors of man may even here find records of the divinity, and themes for undying thanksgiving. Are we indeed visited, watched, and ministered unto, by beatific essences? Oh, reason and revelation, both loudly proclaim the fact; those beneficent beings may be with us then, when we deem ourselves alone; they may be our society in the solitude of our chambers; they may pass us in the breeze, and they may wander beside us in our loneliest walks. Such meditations are calculated to inspire our bosoms with new life; to brighten all nature around us, and to unite us to the invisible world by ties, of the existence of which we were never previously sensible; ties, at once so sweet and so sacred, that we almost crave the blessing of death, in order more surely to strengthen them! Then doth the beauty of "the vale of tears" confound us; then doth it infuse into our bosoms such unalterable fore-tastes; such mysterious and undefinable sensations of the blessedness of "the isles of joy," that our very souls seem to have become but one prayer, one fervent, wordless, agonizing prayer, for divine

repose, and unimaginable blessedness; and then doth the mere suggestion of final reprobation amount to insufferable torture! Oh, that such heavenly imaginings, such divine intimations of a transcendent futurity, were more frequently vouchsafed to us, and were less evanescent. They are glimpses of everlasting day, shining on wanderers in "the valley of the shadow of death;" they are droppings from the overflowing and ineffable cup of mercy; they are presciences of eternity, inestimable, unutterable! and the pen that would describe indescribable perceptions, droops in shame and sorrow at its own imbecility. Such perceptions have visited, do visit us, on this most rapturous of Christmas Days? Is it not a golden day? does it not remove us for a little space from earth, into the society of the holiest sentient beings, and to the beauty of a celestial, surpassing, world? Does it not bestow on our souls their long-lost ethereal wings? and do not the delighted strangers soar for a little while above the grossest realms of matter? Alas! even but for a little while; now do they drop, for now flag and droop those angelic pinions which are too humid and heavy with that atmosphere, from whence they could not wholly disengage themselves; the golden harps of heaven murmur in their entranced ears no longer; the smiles of the Sons of Peace fade from their enchanted sight; and the clouds of this nether world retain from their enamoured gaze, the treasures of infinity!

Perhaps we have enjoyed a very enthusiastic, a very poetical, Christmas Day! we pretend not to deny it, though steadfastly

believing it was neither an anti-Christian, nor an utterly unprofitable one; nay, we even venture to hope, that the beatitude of spirit just feebly portrayed was not displeasing in His sight, unto whom, for His gift of immortal life, we upon Christmas Day render our peculiar thanksgivings!

M.L.B.

# THE FALL OF ZARAGOZA

*(For the Mirror.)*

Awake, awake, the trumpet hath sung its lay to the sunny sky,  
And the glorious shout from Spanish lips gives forth its wild  
reply.

Awake, awake, how the chargers foam, as to battle they dash  
on,  
Oh, Zaragoza, on this proud day, must thy walls be lost or  
won!

His hand—the hand of the youthful chief was on his flashing  
sword,

And his plume gleam'd white thro' the smoke and flame o'er  
the lofty city pour'd—

And the banners around him darkly swept like the waves of  
a stormy sea,

But Zaragoza, amid this strife, his heart was firm to thee.

"Away, away, tread her walls to dust!"—the Gallic warriors  
cried

"Defend, my bands, your hearth and home," the youthful  
chief replied.

They caught the sound of this spirit-voice as they stay'd their  
foes' career,

And many a thrilling cry was heard, when the bayonet met

the spear

In vain, ye heroes, do you breathe your latest vows to heaven,  
In vain is your devoted blood in the cause of Freedom given,  
For when the morn awakes again, your city shall not be  
The haunt of maids who warbled deep, their sweetest songs  
for ye!

But the story of your hallow'd death shall not remain unsung,  
Oh, its record shall be glorified by many a minstrel tongue  
For Freedom's holy light hath touch'd each ruin'd shrine and  
wall,  
That sadly speak unto the heart of Zaragoza's fall.

*Deal.*

REGINALD AUGUSTINE.

# THE BANQUETTING HOUSE, WHITEHALL. <sup>1</sup>

(For the Mirror.)

Many persons who have visited this chapel may not have noticed or been aware of the splendid painted ceiling by Sir Peter Paul Rubens, which was executed by him when ambassador at the court of James I. This beautiful performance represents the apotheosis of that peaceful monarch, he being seated on his throne, and turning towards the deities of peace and commerce, having rejected the gods of war and discord. It is painted on canvass, and is in excellent preservation; the original painter had £3,000. for his labour; it has been retouched more than once, and the last time was by Cipriani, who had £2,000. for his repairs.

Ralph, in his *Critical Review of Public Buildings*, observes, "that this picture is not so generally known as one could wish, but needs only to be known to be esteemed according to its merits;" and he further adds, "it is but an ill decoration for a place of religious worship, for in the first place, its contents are nowise akin to devotion, and in the next, the workmanship is so very extraordinary that a man must have abundance of zeal or no taste, that can attend to anything besides."

It is almost needless to remark, that it was from a passage

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<sup>1</sup> For a general description of this magnificent edifice, see MIRROR, No. 247.

broken for the occasion through the wall of this building, that the unfortunate Charles was conducted by the regicides to his death; this passage still remains, and now serves as a doorway to an additional building in Scotland Yard: and nearly facing this doorway stood the ingenious Dial, engraved and described in No. 400, of the MIRROR. The next important and public event connected with this building occurred in 1811, when a very different and far more gratifying spectacle took place, being that of the ceremony of placing in the chapel, the eagles and other colours taken by our gallant troops during the war. There were six standards and the like number of regimental colours, which after having been presented at the altar were affixed to the places they now occupy. There is a singular circumstance attached to the history of one of the eagles which may be well introduced in this place; it may be distinguished from the others by its having a wreath placed round its neck, the flag itself being destroyed. It was the usual custom for the eagles to be attached to the staves on which they are borne by a screw, so that in the event of any imminent danger, they might be taken off and secured; but Napoleon on his presenting this standard to his 8th regiment, observed, it was impossible that it should be taken from so brave a body of men as they had always proved themselves to be, and desired it might be rivetted to the staff, which was accordingly done; and probably had it not been for this order the eagle might have escaped our valiant 87th, by whom it was taken on the heights of Barossa.

On Maundy Thursday another gratifying ceremony takes place, *viz*, the distribution of the Maundy Money to as many poor people as the years of his majesty's age. This money consists of the smaller silver coins, being each in value from *1d.* to *4d.*; these are enclosed in a small, white kid bag, which is again enveloped in another of crimson leather.

A.P.D.

# RETROSPECTIVE GLEANINGS

## TOUCHING FOR THE KING'S EVIL

*(To the Editor of the Mirror.)*

Having read an interesting paper from your ingenious correspondent *P. T. W.* in your number of the 14th of November, respecting "Touching for the Cure of the King's Evil," it occurred to me that some farther information relative to the original of that "hereditary miracle," as Mr. Collier is pleased to term it, might not be uninteresting to some of your readers: I therefore send you the following:—

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