

# VARIOUS

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Various

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Petrarch and Arquà; Ariosto, Tasso, and Ferrara;—how delightfully are these names and sites linked in the fervour of Italian poetry. Lord Byron halted at these consecrated spots, in his "Pilgrimage" through the land of song:—

There is a tomb in Arquà;—rear'd in air,  
Pillar'd in their sarcophagus, repose  
The bones of Laura's lover: here repair  
Many familiar with his well-sung woes,  
The pilgrims of his genius. He arose  
To raise a language, and his land reclaim  
From the dull yoke of her barbaric foes:  
Watering the tree which bears his lady's name  
With his melodious tears, he gave himself to fame.

They keep his dust in Arquà, where he died;  
The mountain-village where his latter days  
Went down the vale of years; and 'tis their pride—  
An honest pride—and let it be their praise,  
To offer to the passing stranger's gaze  
His mansion and his sepulchre; both plain  
And venerably simple; such as raise  
A feeling more accordant with his strain  
Than if a pyramid form'd his monumental fane.

And the soft quiet hamlet where he dwelt  
Is one of that complexion which seems made  
For those who their mortality have felt,  
And sought a refuge from their hopes decay'd  
In the deep umbrage of a green hill's shade,  
Which shows a distant prospect far away  
Of busy cities, now in vain display'd,  
For they can lure no further; and the ray  
Of a bright sun can make sufficient holiday,

Developing the mountains, leaves, and flowers,  
And shining in the brawling brook, where-by,  
Clear as a current, glide the sauntering hours  
With a calm languor, which, though to the eye  
Idlesse it seem, hath its morality.  
If from society we learn to live,  
'Tis solitude should teach us how to die;  
It hath no flatterers, vanity can give

No hollow aid; alone—man with his God must strive;

Or, it may be, with demons, who impair  
The strength of better thoughts, and seek their prey  
In melancholy bosoms, such as were  
Of moody texture from their earliest day,  
And loved to dwell in darkness and dismay,  
Deeming themselves predestin'd to a doom  
Which is not of the pangs that pass away;  
Making the sun like blood, the earth a tomb,

The tomb a hell, and hell itself a murkier gloom.<sup>1</sup>

The noble bard, not content with perpetuating Arquà in these soul-breathing stanzas, has appended to them the following note:—

Petrarch retired to Arquà immediately on his return from the unsuccessful attempt to visit Urban V. at Rome, in the year 1370, and, with the exception of his celebrated visit to Venice in company with Francesco Novello da Carrara, he appears to have passed the four last years of his life between that charming solitude and Padua. For four months previous to his death he was in a state of continual languor, and in the morning of July the 19th, in the year 1374, was found dead in his library chair with his head resting upon a book. The chair is still shown amongst the precious relics of Arquà, which, from the uninterrupted veneration that has been attached to every thing relative to this great man from the moment of his death to the present hour, have, it may be hoped, a better chance of authenticity than the Shaksperian memorials of Stratford-upon-Avon.

Arquà (for the last syllable is accented in pronunciation, although the analogy of the English language has been observed in the verse) is twelve miles from Padua, and about three miles on the right of the high road to Rovigo, in the bosom of the Euganean Hills. After a walk of twenty minutes across a flat, well-wooded meadow, you come to a little blue lake, clear, but fathomless, and to the foot of a succession of acclivities and hills, clothed with vineyards and orchards, rich with fir and pomegranate trees, and every sunny fruit shrub. From the banks of the lake the road winds into the hills, and the church of Arquà is soon seen between a cleft where two ridges slope towards each other, and nearly inclose the village. The houses are scattered at intervals on the steep sides of these summits; and that of the poet is on the edge of a little knoll overlooking two descents, and commanding a view not only of the glowing gardens in the dales immediately beneath, but of the wide plains, above whose low woods of mulberry and willow thickened into a dark mass by festoons of vines, tall single cypresses, and the spires of towns are seen in the distance, which stretches to the mouths of the Po and the shores of the Adriatic. The climate of these volcanic hills is warmer, and the vintage begins a week sooner than in the plains of Padua. Petrarch is laid, for he cannot be said to be buried, in a sarcophagus of red marble, raised on four pilasters on an elevated base, and preserved from an association with meaner tombs. It stands conspicuously alone, but will be soon overshadowed by four lately planted laurels. Petrarch's fountain, for here every thing is Petrarch's, springs and expands itself beneath an artificial arch, a little below the church, and abounds plentifully, in the driest season, with that soft water

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<sup>1</sup> Childe Harold, Canto iv.

which was the ancient wealth of the Euganean Hills. It would be more attractive, were it not, in some seasons, beset with hornets and wasps. No other coincidence could assimilate the tombs of Petrarch and Archilochus. The revolutions of centuries have spared these sequestered valleys, and the only violence which has been offered to the ashes of Petrarch was prompted, not by hate, but veneration. An attempt was made to rob the sarcophagus of its treasure, and one of the arms was stolen by a Florentine through a rent which is still visible. The injury is not forgotten, but has served to identify the poet with the country, where he was born, but where he would not live. A peasant boy of Arquà being asked who Petrarch was, replied, "that the people of the parsonage knew all about him, but that he only knew that he was a Florentine."

Every footstep of Laura's lover has been anxiously traced and recorded. The house in which he lodged is shown in Venice. The inhabitants of Arezzo, in order to decide the ancient controversy between their city and the neighbouring Ancisa, where Petrarch was carried when seven months old, and remained until his seventh year, have designated by a long inscription the spot where their great fellow citizen was born. A tablet has been raised to him at Parma, in the chapel of St. Agatha, at the cathedral, because he was archdeacon of that society, and was only snatched from his intended sepulture in their church by a *foreign* death. Another tablet with a bust has been erected to him at Pavia, on account of his having passed the autumn of 1368 in that city, with his son-in-law Brossano. The political condition which has for ages precluded the Italians from the criticism of the living, has concentrated their attention to the illustration of the dead.

Byron's visit was in 1818. Of this we may quote more on the appearance of Mr. Moore's second volume of the Poet's Life. Meanwhile, let us add the following graceful paper from the *Athenæum*, June 12, 1830: the subject harmonizes most happily with the classic title of that journal. It will be perceived that the tourist is familiar with Mr. Prout's drawing, or the original of our Engraving.

At Monselice we took another carriage, and dashed off to the Euganean Hills, to visit Arquà, the last dwelling and the burial-place of Petrarch. The road, in the feeling of M'Adam, is antediluvian, or rather post-diluvian, for it is little better than a water-course; but it passes through a country where I first saw olive-trees in abundance, vines in the luxuriance of nature, and pomegranates growing in hedges. The situation of the little village is perfectly delightful—of Petrarch's villa, beautiful. The apartments he occupied command the finest view, and are so detached from the noise and annoyances of the farm dwelling, though connected under one roof, that I think it not impossible he made the addition. There are four or five rooms altogether, if two little closets of not more than six feet by three may be called rooms; yet one of these is believed to have been his study; and in his study, and at his literary enjoyments, he died. Every thing is preserved with a reverential care that does honour to the people; and his chair, like less holy and less credible relics, is inclosed in a wire-frame, to prevent the dilapidations of the curious. I believe these things to be genuine. I believe in the local traditions that point out his study, and his kitchen, and his dying chamber.—Petrarch was all but idolized in his own time, and his fame has known no diminution; therefore these affectionate recollections of him have always been treasured there for the gratification of his pilgrims, and with a becoming reverence themselves, the people naturally set apart as sacred all that belonged to him. I have noticed the compactness of his few rooms, and their separation from the larger apartments—they have also a separate communication

by a small elegant flight of steps into the garden, as you may see in Prout's drawing. If the rooms were not an addition, and it did not suggest itself at the moment to look attentively, I believe these little architectural and ornamental steps to have been; and as we know he did meddle with brick and mortar, by building a small chapel here, the conjecture is not improbable;—it is but a conjecture, and remains for others to confirm or disprove.

A little wild, irregular walk runs, serpent like, all round the garden, which, situated at the head of the valley, is shut in by the hills—itsself a wilderness of luxuriance and beauty. It was a glorious evening, and every thing in agreement with our quiet feeling. I am not an enthusiast, and to you I need not affect to be other than I am; but I have felt this day sensibly, and shall remember it for ever. Petrarch's fame is worth the noise and nothing of all the men-slayers since Cain! It is fame indeed, holy and lovely, when the name and reputation of a man, remembered only for wisdom and virtue, shall have extended into remote and foreign kingdoms with such a sound and echo, that centuries after a stranger turns aside into these mountains to visit his humble dwelling. It is the verification of the prediction of Boccaccio—"This village, hardly known even at Padua, will become famous through the world." I do not presume to offer a eulogy on Petrarch as a writer, but as a man. In all the relations of son, brother, father, he is deserving all honour; and I know not another instance of such long-continued, sincere, and graceful friendships, through all varieties of fortune, from the Cardinal of Cabasole, to the poor fisherman at Vacluse, as his life offers; including literary friendships, which, after so many years, passed without one discordant feeling of rivalry or jealousy, ended so generously and beautifully, with his bequest to poor Boccaccio of "five hundred florins of the gold of Florence, to buy him a winter habit for his evening studies," and this noble testimony of his ability in addition—"I am ashamed to leave so small a sum to so great a man."

Petrarch, in my opinion, was one of the most amiable men that ever lived;—I know nothing about Laura, or her ten children; I agree with those who believe the whole was a dream or an allegory; and, I half suspect that Shakspeare thought so too, and following a fashion, addressed his own sonnets to some like persons; at any rate, no one knows about either much more than I do;—certainly Petrarch's *real* love had more real consequences. Petrarch was a sincere Christian, without intolerance—a sound patriot, without austerity; who neither wasted his feelings in the idle generalities of philosophy, nor restricted them to the narrow limits of a party or faction;—he was just, generous, affectionate, and gentle. All his sonnets together do not shed a lustre on him equal to the sincere, single-hearted, mild, yet uncompromising spirit that breathes throughout the letters of advice and remonstrance, which, not idly or obtrusively, but under the sanction and authority of his great name, and the affectionate regard professed for him, he addressed to all whom he believed influential either for good or ill; from Popes and Emperors, to the well meaning insane tribune of Rome.

We went after this to see his tomb, which is honourable without being ostentatious: a plain stone sarcophagus, resting on four pillars, and surmounted by a bust; suited to the quiet of his life, his home, and his resting-place. I passed altogether a day that will shine a bright star in memory; and we wandered about there, unwilling to leave it, until long after the ave-maria bell had tolled, and were obliged in consequence to get a guide, and return by another road through the marshes, where I first saw those fairy insects the fire-flies, and thousands of them. For this

we are detained the night at Monselice, and must rise the earlier, for we have written to –, fixing the day of our arrival at Florence.

# THE SILENT ACADEMY, OR THE EMBLEMS

## FROM THE FRENCH

### (For the Mirror.)

There was at Amadan, a celebrated academy, the first statute of which was contained in these terms. "*The Academicians think much, write little, and speak but as little as possible.*" They were called "The Silent Academy," and there was not a man of learning in all Persia but was ambitious of being admitted of their number. Doctor Zeb, author of an excellent little work, entitled "The Gag," understood in his distant province that there was a vacant place in the Silent Academy. He set out immediately, arrived at Amadan, and presenting himself at the door of the hall, where the members were assembled, he desired the doorkeeper to deliver to the president, a billet to this import, "*Doctor Zeb humbly asks the vacant place.*" The doorkeeper immediately acquitted himself of his commission, but, alas! the doctor and his billet were too late, the place had been already filled.

The whole academy were affected at this *contretems*; they had received a little before, as member, a court wit, whose eloquence, light and lively, was the admiration of the populace, and saw themselves obliged to refuse Doctor Zeb, who was the very scourge of chatterers, and with a head so well formed and furnished.

The president, whose place it was to announce to the doctor the disagreeable news, knew not what to resolve on. After having thought a little he filled a large cup with water, and that so very full, that one drop more would have made it spill over. Then he made the sign that they might introduce the candidate. He appeared with that modest and simple air which always accompanies true merit. The president rose, and without saying a word, he pointed out to him with an afflicted air, the emblematic cup, the cup so exactly full. The doctor apprehended the meaning that there was no room for him in the academy; but taking courage, he thought to make them understand that an academician supernumerary would derange nothing. Therefore, seeing at his feet a rose leaf, he picked it up and laid it delicately on the surface of the water, and that so gently, that not a single drop escaped.

At this ingenious answer they were all full of admiration, and in spite of rules, Doctor Zeb was admitted with acclamation.

They directly presented to him the register of the academy in which they inscribed their names on their admission, and the doctor having done so, nothing more remained than to thank them in a few words according to custom. But Doctor Zeb, as a truly *silent* academician, thanked them without saying a word. He wrote on the margin the number 100, which was the number of his new brethren, and then placing a cipher before the figure (0100) he wrote beneath "*Their worth is neither less nor more.*" The president answered the modest doctor with as much politeness as presence of mind: he put the figure 1 before the number 100, and wrote (1100) "*They are ten times what they were before.*"

Dorset

COLBOURNE

## The Topographer

### TRAVELLING NOTES IN SOUTH WALES

*Vale of Tawy—Copper Works, &c.—Coal Trade.*—In our former paper<sup>2</sup> we gave a description of the Vale of Tawy, as it appears by night; we will now again revisit it. The stranger who explores this vale must expect to return with a bad headache. We have described it as a desolate looking place, when seen at night, but the darkness only throws a veil over its barrenness. The face of the country, which would otherwise have been beautiful, is literally scorched by the desolating effects of the copper smoke; and when it is considered that a multitude of flues are constantly emitting smoke and flames strongly impregnated with sulphur, arsenic, &c., it is not to be wondered at. A canal runs up the vale into the country for sixteen miles, to an elevation of 372 feet: it is flanked near the copper-works by many millions of tons of copper slag; and there are no less than thirty-six locks on the line. It is a fact, that in spite of the infernal atmosphere, a great many of the people employed in these works attain old age. Every evil effect about Swansea, however, is ascribed to the copper smoke. The houses in this district are remarkable for clean exterior: the custom of whitewashing the roofs, as well as the walls, produces a pleasing effect, and is a relief to the eye in such a desert. There are eight large copper smelting establishments, besides several rolling-mills, now at work; the whole country is covered with tram-roads and coal-pits, many of which vomit forth their mineral treasures close to the road side. At Landore, about two miles from Swansea, is a large steam-engine, made by Bolton and Watt, which was formerly the lion of the neighbourhood. This pumping engine draws the water from all the collieries in the vale, throwing up one hundred gallons of water at each stroke: it makes twelve strokes in a minute, and consequently discharges 72,000 gallons an hour. This engine, however, is very inferior in construction and finish to the pumping engines of Cornwall, some of which are nearly three hundred horsepower. At the consols mines, there are two engines, each with cylinders of ninety inches in diameter, and everything about them kept as clean as a drawing-room. What an extraordinary triumph of the ingenuity of man, when it is considered that one of these gigantic engines can be stopped in an instant, by the mere application of the fingers and thumb of the engineer to a screw! The quantity of coals consumed by the copper-works is enormous. We have heard that Messrs. Vivians, who have the largest works on the river, alone consume 40,000 tons annually: this coal is all small, and not fit for exportation. The copper trade may be considered as comparatively of modern date. The first smelting works were erected at Swansea, about a century ago; but now it is calculated that they support, including the collieries and shipping dependant on them, 10,000 persons, and that 3,000*l.* is circulated weekly by their means in this district. Till within the last few years, there were considerable copper smelting establishments at Hayle, in Cornwall; but that county possessing no coals, they were obliged to be abandoned, as it was found to be much cheaper to bring the ore to the coal than the latter to the ore. Formerly, from the want of machinery to drain the water from the workings (copper being generally found at a much greater depth than tin), the miners were compelled to relinquish the metallic vein before reaching the copper: indeed, when it was first discovered, and even so late as 1735, they were so ignorant of its value, that a Mr. Coster, a mineralogist in Bristol, observing large quantities of it lying amongst the heaps of rubbish round the tin mines, contracted to purchase as much of it as could be supplied, and continued to gain by Cornish ignorance for a considerable time. The first discoverer of the ore was called Poder (it long went by his name), who actually abandoned the mine in consequence; and we find that it was for

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<sup>2</sup> See Mirror, vol. xvi.

some time considered that "*the ore came in and spoilt the tin.*" In the year 1822 the produce of the Cornish copper mines amounted to 106,723 tons of ore, which produced 9,331 tons of copper, and 676,285*l.* in money. In the same year, the quantity of tin ore raised was only 20,000 tons. The Irish and Welsh ores are generally much richer than those of Cornwall; but occasionally they strike on a very rich *lode* (or vein) in that county. Last spring, some ore from the Penstruthal mine was ticketed at Truro, at the enormous price of 54*l.* 14*s.* per ton; and a short time previous, in the Great St. George Mine, near St. Agnes, a lode was struck five feet thick, which was worth 20*l.*

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