

VARIOUS

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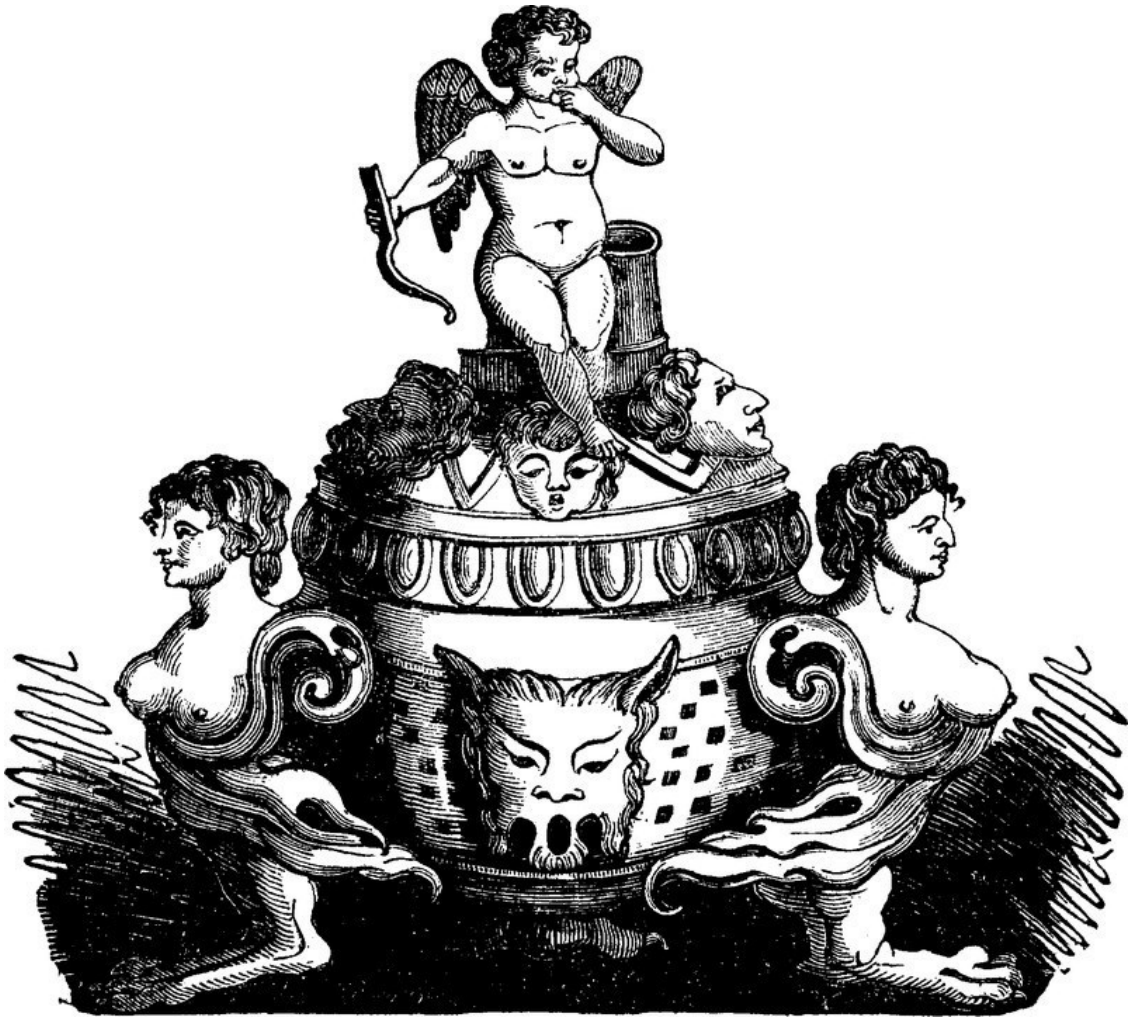
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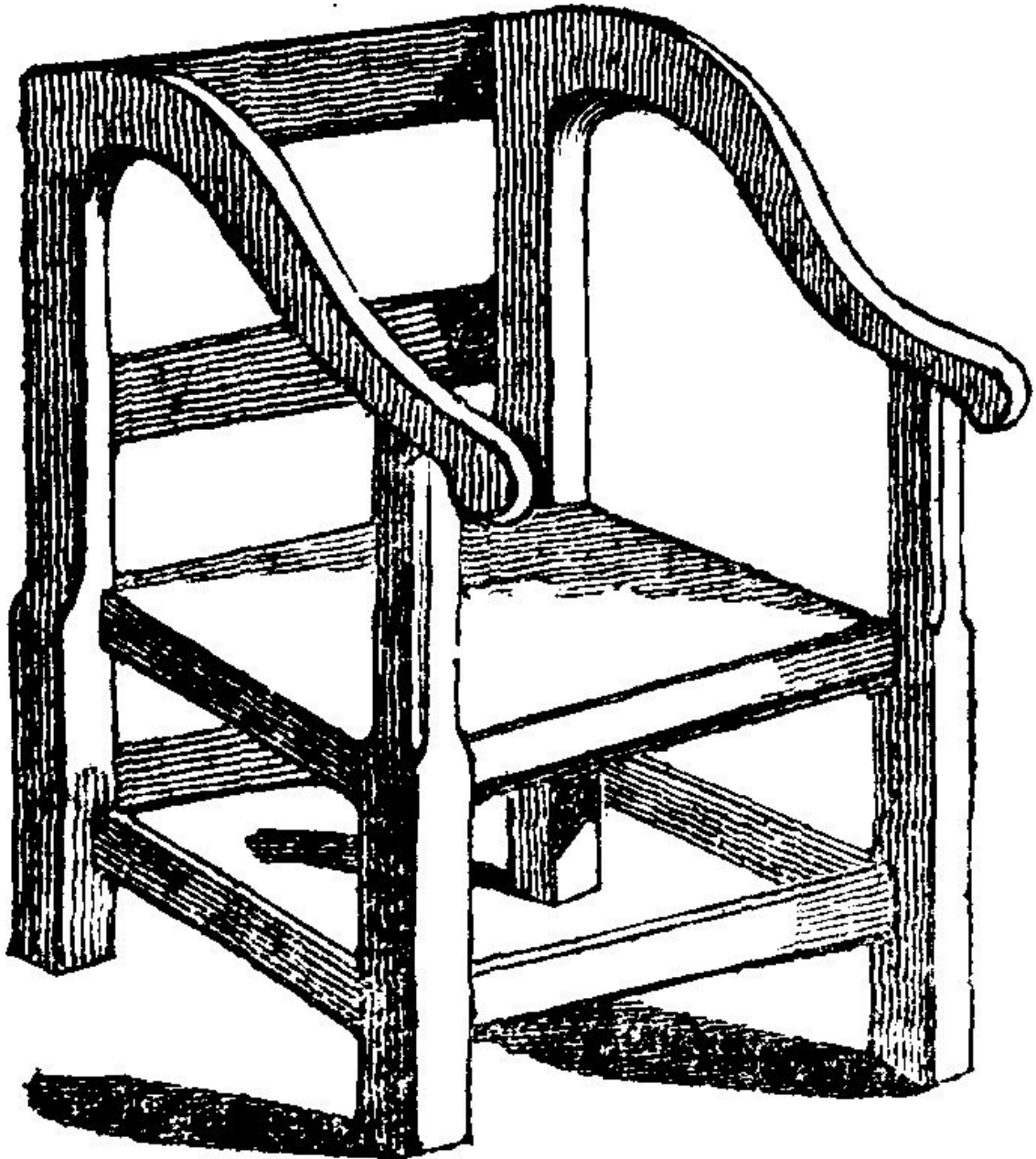
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RELIQS OF ARIOSTO



INKSTAND.



CHAIR.

We need not bespeak the reader's interest in these "trivial fond" relics—these consecrated memorials—of one of the most celebrated poets of Italy. They are preserved with reverential care at Ferrara, the poet's favourite residence, though not his birthplace. The Ferrarese, however, claim him "exclusively as their own" Lord Byron, in the Notes¹ to *Childe Harold*, canto 4, says, "the author of the Orlando is jealously claimed as the Homer, not of Italy, but Ferrara. The mother of Ariosto was of Reggio, and the house in which he was born is carefully distinguished by a tablet with these words:—'*Qui nacque Ludovico Ariosto il giorno 8 di Settembre dell' anno 1474.*' But the Ferrarese make light of the accident by which their poet was born abroad, and claim him exclusively for their own. *They possess his bones, they show his ARM-CHAIR, and his INKSTAND, and his autographs.* The house where he lived, the room where he died, are designated by his own replaced memorial, and by a recent inscription."

¹ For these Lord B. acknowledges his obligation to his excellent friend J.C. Hobbouse, Esq. M.P.

Ferrara, we should here mention, is a fortified town, and a day's journey, *en voiturier*, from Florence to Vienna. The Tomb, as well as the above relics, a bronze Medallion of the great Poet, and an account of his last illness and death—the two latter found in his tomb—are in the public library at Ferrara. This library also contains the original MSS. of *Tasso's Gerusalemme Liberata*, and Guarini's *Pastor Fido*; and in the Hospital of St. Anne, at Ferrara, travellers are shown the cell where Tasso was confined.

The INKSTAND is of bronze, and its singular device is said to refer to the Poet's amorous caution. In his *Life*,² we are told that "The amours of Ariosto are a difficult theme for both his eulogists and his biographers. He has alluded in his Poems to several ladies with whose charms he was captivated, but, with the exception of Alessandra and Genevra, the names under which they are mentioned are fictitious. His caution in this respect is thought to have been hinted at in the device placed on his favourite inkstand, and which consisted of *a little Cupid having his forefinger on his lip in token of secrecy*." The evidence in proof of Alessandra's being his wife is little short of unanswerable.

Reverting to the early life of the Poet—he studied at Ferrara, but losing his tutor, who was called from thence, and appointed preceptor to the son of Isabella of Naples, Ariosto was left without the present means of gaining instruction in Greek. To this period Mr. Stebbing thus alludes:—

"To the regret he experienced at losing his master, was added that of hearing soon after of his decease; but scarcely had he recovered from the distress he felt at this circumstance, when the death of his father put an end for some time to all his literary thoughts and pursuits. He has pathetically described his situation at this period in his sixth Satire, which contains several allusions both to the present and previous circumstances of his life.

"My father dies; thenceforth with care oppressed
New thoughts and feelings fill my harass'd breast;
Homer gives way to lawyers and their deeds,
And all a brother's love within me pleads;
Fit suitors found, two sisters soon are wed,
And to the altar without portions led.
With all the wants and wishes of their age
My little brothers next my thoughts engage,
And in their father's place I strive untired
To do whate'er that father's love inspired.
Thus watching how their several wills incline
In courts, in study, or in arms to shine;
No toil I shun their fair pursuits to aid,
Still of the snares that strew their path afraid.
Nor this alone—though press we quick to land,
The bark's not safe till anchor'd on the strand."

Passing over the commencement of the *Orlando Furioso*, which soon followed the above melancholy event—"To be the freer from interruptions, and at the same time render his moderate income equal to his support, he left Ferrara, and took up his residence on an estate belonging to his kinsman Malaguzzo, between Reggio and Rubiera. He has described this retreat, and the pleasant manner in which he spent his time during his short residence there, in his fifth Satire; but it is disputed whether the account alludes to this or an earlier period of his life:

"Time was when by sweet solitude inclines

² In "Lives of the Italian Poets." By the Rev. Henry Stebbing, vol. ii.

The storied page I fill'd with, ready mind;
Those gentle scenes of Reggio's fair domain,
Our own dear nest, where peace and nature reign;
The lovely villa and the neighbouring Rhone,
Whose banks the Naiads haunt serene and lone;
The lucid pool whence small fresh streams distil
That glad the garden round and turn the mill;
Still memory loves upon these scenes to dwell,
Still sees the vines with fruit delicious swell,
Luxurious meadows blooming spread around,
Low winding vales and hills with turrets crown'd.'

"The Duke Alphonso, seeing him left without a patron, and provided with so small an income, invited him to return to Ferrara, which he did, and found no reason, it is said, to regret that he had once more put himself under the protection of the house of Este. Alphonso, knowing his love of retirement and the peculiarity of his habits, promised to leave him at perfect liberty to pursue his studies and live in the way that most suited his wishes. He kept his promise, and there is reason to believe that the presents he bestowed on the poet enabled him to build the cottage in which he resided, with few interruptions, till his death. This favourite house of Ariosto's was situated near the church of S. Benedetto, and stood in the midst of a spacious garden which formed both his pride and delight. Here he continued to compose additional cantos to the 'Orlando Furioso,' and occasionally, to relax his mind with lighter species of poetry, sometimes writing a satire, and at others reverting to the comedies composed in his younger years, and which he subsequently made fit for the stage."

He again quitted Ferrara, on an appointment "by Alphonso, but again soon returned:—

"On his return he established himself, with his two unmarried sisters, in the house he had built near the church of Saint Benedict, and resumed his former occupations. Of his lighter amusements, gardening was that in which he took most pleasure; and it is curious to know that he was as fond of altering the plan of both his house and grounds, as he was of remodelling the stanzas of the Orlando. His son, Virginio proposed writing an account of his illustrious father's life; but unfortunately, he never pursued his design beyond the commencement, and a few memorandums are all that have come down to us. From these, however, we learn the singular fastidiousness of Ariosto in his horticultural amusements, and some other traits of his character, which render him not the less an object of our veneration, by showing us the simplicity as well as power of his mind. 'In gardening,' says Virginio, 'he pursued the same plan as with his verses, never leaving any thing he had planted more than three months in the same place: and, if he set a fruit-tree, or sowed seed of any kind, he would go so often to examine it, and see if it were growing, that he generally ended with spoiling or breaking off the bud.'

"We learn, from the same interesting document, that he had at first no intention of building a house for constant residence in this garden, but that, having raised a mere cottage for temporary shelter, he grew so fond of the spot, that he wished never to leave it. The structure, after all, was not fully suited to his taste, and he felt as great an inclination to improve it by continual alterations as his garden. His constant lamentation was, that he could not change the arrangement of his house as he could that of his verses: and a person having asked him one day, how it happened that he who could describe castles and palaces so magnificently, had built such a cottage, he replied, that he made his verses without the aid of money.

"In his favourite garden he passed many hours of the day, deriving new inspiration from its green and refreshing solitudes. The Orlando was still in progress, and still under correction, his confidence in himself, it seems, having been little increased either by years or practice. In speaking, however, on this subject, he was accustomed to say, that poetry might be compared to a laurel, which sprung up of itself, and which might be greatly improved by cultivation, but would lose all its natural beauty

if too much meddled with:—this is the case, he would continue, with stanzas, which come into the mind, we know not how, and which may be improved by the correction of a little original roughness, but are deprived of all their grace and freshness by too nice a handling."—(*Stebbing's Life*.)

The life-time of Ariosto was shortened by the intensity with which he applied himself to the production of his works. One of his last labours was a corrected and enlarged edition of his splendid *Orlando Furioso*. The printing was, however, so badly executed, as to cause him to say "he had been assassinated by his printer." Mr. Stebbing observes, "it is probable that this circumstance, combined with the fatigue attending his close application while preparing the edition for the press, had a serious effect on his health, which now began to exhibit signs of rapid decline."³ In the spring of 1533 he was seriously attacked with indigestion. The constant application of medicine to remove this complaint brought on a consumption, and on the night of June 6, in the same year, he breathed his last, "his death, it is worthy of mention, having been preceded only a few hours by the total destruction of Alphonso's splendid theatre by fire;" which theatre, it should be added, the poet had designed for his noble patron a few years before: "so superb and convenient was the structure, when finished, that it was the admiration of all Italy."

"Ferrara, all Italy, and even Europe, lamented Ariosto as the first poet of the age, and as worthy of being enrolled in the same chart of fame with the greatest that had ever lived. His funeral was rendered remarkable by the attendance of a large body of monks, who to honour his memory, followed him, contrary to the rules of their order, to the grave. His son, Virginio, shortly after built a small chapel in his garden, and formed a mausoleum to which he intended to remove his remains, but the same monks prohibited it, and the body was left in the humble tomb in which it was originally deposited, till the new church of S. Benedetto was built, when Agostino Mosti, a gentleman of Ferrara, raised above it a monument more worthy of the poet. In 1612 his great grandson, Ludovico, erected a still nobler one, and removed the ashes of his ancestor from the tomb of Agostino, as the latter had done from the one in which they were originally deposited. This monument of Ludovico, which still exists, is built of the most costly marble, and adorned with two statues representing Glory and Poetry, together with an effigy of the poet in alabaster."

Lord Byron illustrates a singular circumstance respecting the tomb of Ariosto. "Before the remains were removed from the Benedictine Church to the Library of Ferrara, his bust, which surmounted the tomb, was struck by lightning, and a crown of iron laurels melted away:—

""The lightning rent from Ariosto's bust
The iron crown of laurels' mimic'd leaves;
Nor was the ominous element unjust,
For the true laurel-wreath which glory weaves
Is of the tree no bolt of thunder cleaves,
And the false semblance but disgraced his brow;
Yet still, if fondly Superstition grieves,
Know, that the lightning sanctifies below
Whate'er it strikes;—yon head is doubly sacred now.""⁴

The transfer of these sacred ashes on the 6th of June, 1801, was one of the most brilliant spectacles of the short-lived Italian republic, and to consecrate the memory of the ceremony, the once

³ Few persons will be disposed to question this extreme sensitiveness, since instances of similar effects on men of genius are by no means rare. Whoever has read Mr. Moore's *Life of Byron* must have remarked the asperity with which he inveighs against blundering printers in the Letters to Mr. Murray, his publisher.

⁴ "Childe Harold," canto 4, st. xli.

famous fallen *Intrepidi* were revived, and re-formed into the Ariostean academy. The large public place through which the procession paraded, was then for the first time called Ariosto Square.⁵

We must return to Mr. Stebbing's delightful *Lives of the Italian Poets*, which work has so frequently aided us in the previous columns.

⁵ Notes to lines 1 and 2 of the preceding stanza.

FANNY

(For the Mirror.)

"I saw thy form in youthful prime,
Nor thought that pale decay
Would steal before the steps of time,
And waste thy bloom away."—MOORE.

Her place of rest is mantled o'er
With dews of early morning;
She heeds not now the winter's roar,
Nor flowery spring's adorning.

Alike to her, when summer's heat
Glowes on her verdant bed,
Or when the snows of winter beat,
And a fleecy covering shed.

And rarely do they mention *her*,
Who most her fate should mourn;
And little did they weep for her,
Who never can return.

But back to memory let me bring
Her laughing eyes of blue:
She was, on earth, as fair a thing
As fancy ever drew.

She lov'd and was belov'd again!
And quickly flew the winged hours;
Love seem to wreath his fairy chain
Of blooming amaranthine flow'rs.

She deem'd not time could ever blight
That whisper'd tale she lov'd to hear;
Alas! there came a gloomy night,
That threw its shadows on her bier.

He told her time should never see
The hour he would forget her—
That future years should only be
Fresh links to bind him to her;

That distant lands his steps might trace,
And lovely forms he'd see,

But Fanny's dear, remembered face,
His polar-star should be.

"O! ever shall I be the same,
Whatever may betide me,—
Remembrance whispers Fanny's name,
And brings her form beside me.

"Believe, believe, when far away,
Distance but closer draws the chain;
When twilight veils the 'garish day,'
Remembrance turns to thee again."

He's gone!—but Fancy in her ear
Still murmurs on his last farewell,
While Hope dries in her eye the tear,
And bids her on each promise dwell.

And long she hop'd—from day to day,—
From early morn to dusky eve
Her thoughts were wand'ring far away,
Nor deem'd that he could e'er deceive.

Fond maid'—he thinks no more on thee—
He mocks at thy enduring faith;
While the foul tongue of calumny
Accelerates thy early death.

This world to her a desert grew,
The sunny heavens no more were fair;
Fast gathering tears obscured her view,
And only night's dark clouds were there.

Faded and chang'd the glorious dream,
The vision bright that floated round her;
And death was in the ghastly gleam
That gave her eyes unearthly splendour.

She lingered not, to feel that earth
Is rife with Disappointment's thorn—
That vows of faith are little worth,
And fleeting as the hues of morn.

Farewell! farewell! pale lilies drooping
On her low bed as emblems wave;—
And see!—the angel Pity stooping
To shed her tear on Fanny's grave!

ANNE R

THE "HALCYON" BIRD

(To the Editor.)

The Halcyon is now only known by the name of the King Fisher (*ispida*, the *alcedo ispida* of Linnaeus), a very beautiful bird, frequenting waters, and feeding on fish. It builds in deep holes in the banks of rivers, and lays five, or, according to some, nine eggs. It much approaches to the Picus, or Woodpecker, in many points; but wants its great character, which is, the having two toes behind. The legs of this bird are very short, and are black before and red behind; its colours, particularly its green and blue, which are its general ones, are extremely bright and beautiful. It takes its prey after the manner of the Osprey, balancing itself at a certain distance over the water for a considerable space, and then darting below the surface, brings up the prey in its feet. While it remains suspended in the air, on a bright day, the plumage exhibits a most beautiful variety of very dazzling and brilliant colours.

This bird was called Halcyon by the ancients. Aristotle has described the bird and its nest; which, according to him, resembled those concretions that are formed by the sea water, and fashioned in the shape of a long necked gourd, hollow within, but so narrow at the entrance, that if it overset the water could not enter. This nest was called Halcyoneum, and had medical virtues ascribed to it: it was also a floating one; and therefore it was necessary for the poets who have described it to place it on a tranquil sea, and to supply the bird with charms to allay the fury of a turbulent element during its incubation, for it had at that season power over the seas and winds. During the days of this bird's incubation, in the depth of winter, the mariner might sail in full security; and therefore they were called "Halcyon Days."

Lambeth.

WALTER E.C

(From another Correspondent.)

In the agreeable communications of your correspondents, they seem in their quotations to have overlooked the following, from Dryden:—

"Secure as when the halcyon breeds, with these
He that was born to drown might cross the seas."

Astraea Redux.

And again, in his stanzas on the death of Oliver Cromwell—

"And wars have that respect for his repose
As winds for halcyons when they breed at sea."

Cowley likewise, in his preface to his Miscellanies, says, talking of his mind, "It must, like the halcyon, have fair weather to breed in."

The story of Ceyx and Alcyone is beautifully told in Ovid, Met. 11. fab. 10.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

(For the Mirror.)

In the vale of Evesham, was fought the most memorable battle recorded in the annals of English history, between Simon de Mountfort, the powerful Earl of Leicester, and Prince Edward, afterwards King Edward the First; in which the earl was completely defeated, and the refractory barons, with most of their adherents taken or slain. This important battle restored Henry the Third to his throne and liberty. When he had ascended the throne, he determined to still further curtail the enormous power of the barons; and by his writs summoned together, as his advisers, representatives from numerous cities and boroughs, as well as counties; the battle of Evesham therefore may be considered, says a modern writer, "*as the origin of our present House of Commons*"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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