

## MOSAIC RELICS.

In the very name of Italy there is a poetic attraction, to which, all acquainted with the history of its ancient glories, readily yield: but that of the disintegrated city of Pompeii, is decidedly superior to any other which that land of beauty possesses. Seventeen centuries have passed since Vesuvius buried the city of Pompeii beneath its eruption; and covered it from human observation. About eighty years ago, some labourers, who were employed on a vineyard over it, accidentally discovered it, and by the active operations, which, from time to time, have since been applied, about one third of the city has been redeemed from its sepulchre. The acquaintance thus furnished with the habitations, architecture, private luxuries, and other data, from which we may judge of the manners and customs of the ancients, is highly interesting: and is more authentic than all the volumes which mere speculation may dictate. The growth of the architectural taste of Italy seems to have been rather slow until the latter period of the existence of the Republic, when the Grecian architecture came into fashion at Rome. Lucius Cassius is mentioned as the first who introduced columns built of foreign marble: he was soon rivalled by Scaurus, and, as to interior structure, by Mamurra, whose rooms were lined with marble: and it is recorded that, to so great an extent did this architectural luxury proceed, \$232,500 were offered, by Domitius Ahenobarbus, for the house of Crassus, and refused. This extravagance was so great, that the economical example set by Augustus, failed to produce the desired result; and while to this indulgence in luxury, Rome may ascribe her early "decline and fall," we are indebted to it for those specimens of art which have never been surpassed, and in all probability will still continue to astonish the civilized world. A variety of these have been discovered, but Pompeii has furnished the most beautiful yet brought to light. In April 1762, a mosaic picture was found in the house called the Villa of Cicero, which was considered by those who were able to appreciate its merits, as one of the most splendid specimens of mosaic execution ever yet beheld. Of this, an engraving accompanies this number of the *Lady's Book*, and represents four masked figures; each playing upon a separate instrument; and finished in the most masterly manner. The drapery, it will be perceived is a beautiful performance of art, and the whole derives additional interest from the name of the artist being worked in it at top, and described in the engraving just alluded to.

It is executed in black letters and reads ΔΙΟΣΚΟΤΡΙΑΔΗΣ ΣΑΜΙΟΣ ΕΠΟΙΗΣΕ. Dioscorides of Samos worked this. The next engraving represents a female in the act of painting a representation of the bearded Bacchus. She appears dressed in a light tunic, in which the observer will see the same beautiful arrangement to which his attention was drawn in the folds of the other drapery. A small box stands beside her, such as Varro says was used by painters, and which was divided into compartments where the brush was dipped, and in her left hand she holds a palette upon which she mixes her colours. These relics are pronounced as the most beautiful and perfect which have yet been restored from the ruined city. Day after day exhibits some new testimonial of the magnificence of Pompeii, which after an interment nearly as long as the existence of Christianity, now rises as it were from the dead; a splendid but silent evidence of the imbecility of man's work, when stricken by the powerful and victorious hand of Nature.

These discoveries are evidences of the perfection which long-buried generations had attained in the fine arts; and, while they serve as models for the ambitious artist of our own day, are equally serviceable to the moralist, to whom they are voiceless but powerful admonitors.

## THE FIRST TRANSLATOR OF HOMER.

EUROPE is indebted to Leontius Pylatus, who lived in the fourteenth century, for the first translation of the works of Homer; and nobody seems to know much about him. If it had not been for Boccace, who assisted him in this translation into Latin, we should not have been enabled to trace even the name of a man to whom the literary world owes so much. He was a Greek—a native of Thessalonica, who taught his own language at Florence, and of whom the author of the *Decameron*, has given the following portrait.

"His look was frightful; his countenance hideous; he had an immensely long beard, and black hair, which was seldom disturbed by a comb. Absorbed in constant meditation, he neglected the decent forms of society; he was rude, churlish, without urbanity, without morals; but to make some amends for this, he was profoundly skilled in the Greek language and Greek literature. Of the Latin his knowledge was but superficial. Aware that "a prophet hath no honour in his own country," he called himself a Greek in Italy, and an Italian in Greece. He had passed several years among the ruins of the Labyrinth of Crete."

Notwithstanding all the endeavours of Boccace and of Petrarch to retain this wandering character in Italy, he persisted in his resolution to return to Greece; but, scarcely had he set his foot in that country, when he wrote a letter to Petrarch, longer and more filthy than his beard and hair, as that author expresses himself; in which he extolled Italy to the skies; and spoke in the bitterest terms of Constantinople. Not receiving any answer, he embarked in a vessel bound for Venice. The ship safely arrived in the Adriatic, when suddenly a terrible storm arose. Whilst all on board were in motion to do what was necessary for the vessel in this predicament, the terrified Greek clung to a mast, which was struck by a thunderbolt. He died on the spot. The mariners and others were in the greatest consternation, but no other person sustained any injury.

The body of the unfortunate Leontius, shapeless, and half-burnt, was thrown into the sea; and Petrarch in relating this catastrophe to Boccace, says, among other things, "This unhappy man has left the world in a more miserable manner than he came into it. I do not believe he experienced in it a single happy day. His physiognomy seemed to indicate his fate. I know not how any sparks of poetic genius found their way into so gloomy a soul."

Petrarch was gloomy and low-spirited, except while he was reading or writing. To avoid the loss of time during his travels, he constantly wrote at every Inn where he stopped for refreshment. One of his friends, the Bishop of Cavillon, being alarmed lest the intense application with which he read and wrote, when at Vaucluse, should entirely destroy his health, which was already greatly impaired, desired him one day to give him the key of his library. Petrarch gave it to him immediately, without suspecting the motive of his request; when the good Bishop instantly locking up his books and writing desk, said, "I interdict you from pen, ink, and paper, and books, for the space of ten days."

Petrarch felt the severity of the sentence, but suppressed his feelings, and obeyed. The first day of exile from his favourite pleasure was tedious: the second, accompanied with an incessant head-ache; and the third with a fever. The Bishop, affected by his condition, returned him the key, and restored him to health.

We are sure to be losers when we quarrel with ourselves; it is a civil war, and in all such contentions, triumphs are defeats.