

## POMPEIAN PAINTINGS.

THE last number of the *Lady's Book* contained some specimens of the mosaics with which the excavations at Pompeii have thus far rewarded the operators. The profusion with which this description of ornament was produced is very remarkable: the dwellings of an inferior town abounded with specimens valuable enough to be placed in the palaces of Naples, and considered as their most precious collections; while, now, the expense of such works is so great that it is but seldom they are found even in a palace; in excellence, however, those recently executed at the Vatican are fully equal to those of the best Italian artist. With the present number of the *Lady's Book* is presented an accurate representation of a splendid painting executed on the walls of the Pantheon. It will give some idea of the magnificence and luxury indulged in by the people of that day; and the highly ornamental character of the entrance will show that their architectural taste was at once perfect and dignified. This custom of decorating walls with paintings is of very remote antiquity. The Egyptians claim its discovery six thousand years before the Greeks; but however this be, it has been proved by recent discoveries, especially those of Belzoni, among the royal tombs, that the custom existed in that nation, many centuries before the birth of Christ. Nor was the art unknown to the Jews, as we may infer from the 23d chapter and 14th verse of Ezekiel.

The second grotesque specimen represents an artist of antiquity in his studio, with his pencil in his hand, and a subject sitting before him. The various apparatus of his art lies around him. Although it represents pigmies, it is still one of those pictures which are valuable as faithful representations of domestic and every-day business. The pigmy painter appears in a tunic remarkably scant in length behind, while the person who sits for him, although of the same bodily defect, seems from his costume to stand in relation to the painter, pretty much as the *Mæcenas*es of the present day to their artists; the awkward position in which the painter plies at his work, would lead us to infer that the performance was not likely to possess all the perfection for which a steady hand, as well as head, is necessary. The picture stands upon an easel which differs but little from that used at present; at the right side of the artist is his palette, which is a little table supported by four feet; and close by it is a pot to wash his pencils in. The latter would indicate that he was then engaged with gum or water-colours; while the presence of his colour-grinder on the right, satisfies us that his genius was not confined to this branch of the art. The grinder appears to be preparing colours mixed with wax and oil, in a vessel placed on hot coals. Two amateurs, who have just entered the studio, appear to be conversing with respect to the painting, and a student, who has been disturbed by their entrance, turns round on his distant seat to look at them. As to the bird, nothing very decisive can be ascertained. It is supposed to typify some singer or musician, such as might have been introduced for the pleasure of the visitors. The picture originally contained a second bird, and a child playing with a dog, but these had perished before Mazois could perfect his copy. From the entire character of this grotesque production, it would seem to have been intended as a burlesque upon the studio of some inferior artist. The appearance of the apartment, unfurnished with a solitary model for study, would favour this opinion as well as the *one* scholar who seems to consider a model unnecessary to the triumph of his ambition. On this subject, several opinions have been advanced; but they are all contradictory and insufficient. The one above offered is, probably, less likely to be of a similar character, although it is not more authentic.

## SPANISH THEATRE.

At Madrid there was but one theatre for plays; no opera, and a most unsocial gloomy style of living seemed to characterise the whole body of nobles and *grandees*. I was not often tempted to the theatre, which was small, dark, ill-furnished, and ill-attended; yet, when the celebrated tragic actress, known by the title of the *Tiranna*, played, it was a treat, which I should suppose no other stage, then in Europe, could compare with. That extraordinary woman, whose real name I do not remember, and whose real origin cannot be traced, till it is settled from what particular nation or people we are to derive the outcast race of gypsies; was not less formed to strike beholders with the beauty and commanding majesty of her person, than to astonish all that heard her, by the powers that nature and art had combined to give her. My friend, Count *Pietra Santa*, who was acquainted with her, intimated to her the very high expectation I had formed of her performances, and the eager desire I had to see her in one of her capital characters, telling her, at the same time, that I had been a writer for the stage in my own country. In consequence of this intimation, she sent me word that I should have notice from her when she wished me to come to the theatre; till when, she desired, I would not present myself in my box upon any night, though her name might be in the bills, for it was only when she liked her part, and was in the humour to play well, that she wished me to be present.

In obedience to her message, I waited several days, and at last received the looked-for summons. I had not been many minutes in the theatre before she sent a mandate to me to go home, for that she was in no disposition that evening for playing well, and should neither do justice to her own talents, nor to my expectations. I instantly obeyed this whimsical injunction, knowing it to be so perfectly in character with the capricious humour of her tribe. When something more than a week had passed, I was again invited to the theatre, and permitted to sit out the whole representation. I did not then know enough of the language to understand much more than the incidents and action of the play, which was one of the deepest cast of tragedy, for in the course of the plot she murdered her infant children, and exhibited them dead, lying on each side of her, whilst she, sitting on the bare floor between them (her attitude, action, features, tones, defying all description,) presented such a high wrought picture of hysteric phrenzy as placed her, in my judgment, at the very summit of her art: in fact, I have no conception that the powers of acting can be carried higher; and such was the effect upon the audience, that whilst the spectators in the pit, having caught a kind of sympathetic phrenzy from the scene, were rising up in a tumultuous manner, the word was given out by authority for letting fall the curtain, and a catastrophe, probably too strong for exhibition, was not allowed to be completed. A few minutes had passed, when this wonderful creature, led in by *Pietra Santa*, entered my box; the artificial paleness of her cheeks, her eyes, which she had dyed of a bright vermilion round the edges of the lids; her fine arms, bare to the shoulders; the wild magnificence of her attire, and the profusion of her dishevelled locks, black as the plumage of the raven, gave her the appearance of something so more than human, such a *Sybil*; such an imaginary being; so awful, so impressive; that my blood chilled as she approached me, not to ask, but to claim my applause. She demanded of me, if I had ever seen any actress, that could be compared with her, in my own, or any other country.

"I was determined," she said, "to exert myself for you this night; and if the sensibility of the audience would have suffered me to have concluded the scene, I should have convinced you that I do not boast of my own performances without reason."—*Cumberland's Memoirs*.

# POMPEIAN PAINTINGS.

