

RUINS OF THE TEMPLE OF MINERVA, AT ROME.

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HOWEVER dark may be the condition of the human mind, it is never without some dim conception of

a great unseen Power, directing the processes of nature and the fortunes of man. When the intellect becomes cultivated without the light of revelation, these ideas assume definiteness and shape,

were also erected at Rome; and the ruins of one of these, still in existence, have been selected as the subject of our engraving.

The Emperor Domitian, one of the most cruel of

though only to exhibit more clearly the hopelessness of any effort on the part of man himself to find out God. So the cultured imaginations of the ancient Greeks peopled their woods and groves, with innumerable divinities, each of which was supposed to have its peculiar office, and to exercise a certain influence over the affairs of mankind.

One of the chief among the goddesses of ancient Greece was Pallas Athene, known to the Romans as Minerva. She was the goddess of wisdom, of arts, sciences, and industry. More than one divinity of that name appears to have been known to the Greeks, but the most famous is that worshipped by the Athenians, and said to have come from Egypt, whence Greece and Rome drew so much of their learning.

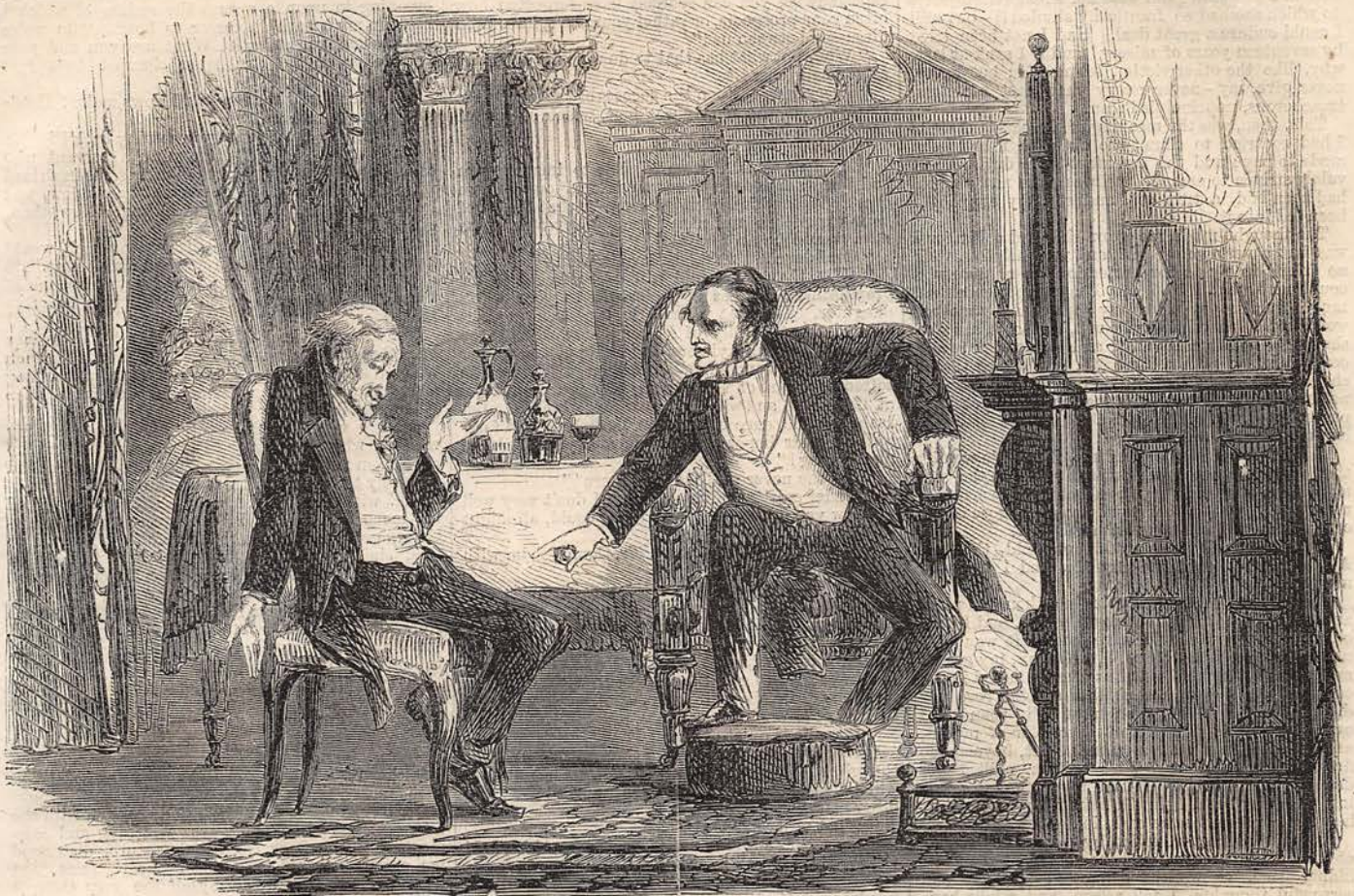
Minerva was described as the daughter of Jupiter; but the fable which says that she sprang completely armed from the head of the Thunderer, is of comparatively recent date, and is not mentioned by Homer. She was one of the three goddesses who submitted their beauty to the decision of Paris, who was a mere mortal—so strange is the jumble of ideas in the heathen mythology—and was pronounced inferior to Venus. As exercising an influence over the intellectual powers, the statue of Minerva was usually placed in schools; and it was the custom for the scholars to present their masters annually with a sort of testimonial or present, called a Minerval.

Intellectual as the character of Minerva was supposed to be, the festivals held in her honour were as gross in their character as those which were instituted in honour of the other divinities; and gladiatorial combats were a prominent feature in the proceedings. It is to be regretted that a relic of heathendom, in the shape of the fights of the prize ring—which are only another form of these gladiatorial combats—should still be suffered to exist in a Christian land.

The origin of the Latin name Minerva is doubtful; but it is considered probable that it was shortened from Meminerva, signifying that she was the goddess of memory. This divinity was also said to preside over the healing art.

Numerous temples were erected in honour of Minerva. The most splendid of these was at Athens, erected in the time of Pericles, about B.C. 448, and called the Parthenon. This temple originally contained an ivory statue of the goddess, of colossal size, the work of the famous sculptor, Phidias. Several temples of Minerva





ISABEL OVERHEARS A CONVERSATION THAT DEEPLY CONCERNS HERSELF.

the tyrants who disgraced the imperial purple, was, nevertheless, a devotee of the goddess of wisdom. He determined to build, in her name, a grand temple on a new forum, and partially carried out his design; but being assassinated at the age of forty-five, by direction of his wife, he did not see it completed. This, however, was done by Nerva, his successor, who also undertook the embellishment of the forum.

The shape of this forum, called by different writers Forum Palladium, Forum of Nerva, or Forum Pervium or Transitorium, was a long square. Three of its sides terminated in arcades, and the façade of the temple of Minerva adorned the fourth. Opposite, but entirely separated from the other buildings, rose a little temple dedicated to Janus. At intervals the open space was covered with statues of emperors on horseback and on foot. This description, aided by the engraving, may serve to afford our readers a glimpse of the grandeur of old Rome.

But the period of general decay and ruin was at hand; and in the middle ages the poorer classes of the inhabitants of Rome built their small, irregular houses upon the site of the Forum, and with its costly materials. At the present day, all that remains of the temple of Minerva is that small portion which we have delineated. The two marble columns of the Corinthian order, partially buried in the earth, support a very rich and highly-ornamented entablature. The little figures sculptured in bas-relief on the frieze, represent the various arts of which Minerva was the patroness. Above the entablature is a figure of the goddess, also in bas-relief. The wall is composed of great blocks of volcanic stone. The façade and six other columns were still in existence in the time of Pope Paul V. (from 1605 to 1621), who, however, ordered them to be destroyed, and used the marble of which they were composed to decorate the great fountain which still bears his name.

Among the other temples of Minerva which once existed at Rome, was that erected by Pompey, near to the Pantheon, and one much smaller, of which some remains were discovered in the inclosure of the Roman college.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN HEIRESS;

OR,

The Old Feud.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "FRENCH HAY," ETC.

CHAPTER XVII.

What fire is in my ears? Can this be true?—SHAKESPEARE.  
Oh, God defend me! How I am beset!  
What kind of catechising call you this?—*Ibid.*

HALF-AN-HOUR after this, I was sitting alone in the deep recess of a window in the ante-room, hidden by the drapery, when two persons entered the chamber, and, pouring out goblets of wine from the bottles on the sideboard, began to talk.

Believing that the refreshment over, they would immediately depart, I made no attempt to withdraw; but, to my vexation, I found that they appreciated the solitude as much as I did, and drew their chairs within the influence of the glowing fire, as if to enjoy it at their ease.

My position now became extremely unpleasant. I could not escape without passing directly in front of the strangers, and yet to remain where I was, and so become an unwilling listener to their conversation, was very disagreeable.

The last, however, was certainly the worst alternative; and I had just made up my mind to rise boldly and go forth, when the sound of my stepfather's name deterred me.

"Capital wine!" said one, holding his glass to the light. "Cunningham seems to have dropped in for a good thing here."

"Ay, hasn't he? He's a lucky fellow!"

"Uncommonly fortunate thing, too, the birth of this boy. They say he's safe to inherit the Yorkshire property."

"Well, I don't quite see that. There are two others, you know."

"Yes, but one is a girl, and the other a cripple; neither very likely to be a dangerous rival, especially the first, who is the daughter of a man whom the old Don hates worse than a fiend."

"Did hate. Never calculate upon anything being everlasting in this life. Besides, if the girl marries Meredith, he will take care of her, or rather his interests. He's not the man to let a stepfather-in-law walk over the course for such a fortune. I rather wonder Cunningham should be so ready to place him in a position so dangerous to himself."

"Perhaps he can't help it."

"True, there's something in that."

"I think he'll have some difficulty, though, with the lady. She doesn't look like one of the submissive sort, and, certainly, does not seem to take to the paternal choice very kindly."

"Ah, well, she will find it better not to be restive. Neither Cunningham nor Meredith are to be defied with impunity; and, against the will of two such fellows, what can any girl do? They may have some bother, but, if they have set their minds upon it, they will succeed. By-the-bye, what became of that handsome gipsy girl Cunningham had with him in London, just before I went abroad?"

"I don't know. She died, I think, broken-hearted, or something of the kind. Didn't know he was married."

"Oh!"—with a contemptuous whistle—"the old story."

"Yes, but she was a splendid creature, and certainly had a grand passion for the Scotchman. It was a pity she died."

"So it was. Beauty should be immortal; and now suppose we go and take another peep at that in the next room."

"With all my heart."

And, after once more re-filling their glasses, both speakers left the room; while I, disgusted, enraged, and alarmed beyond measure, remained almost bewildered in the concealment which less than ever I desired to leave.

Married to Mr. Meredith! The very idea made my blood boil. I was very helpless, it is true, and my stepfather was unscrupulous and shameless, without pity or remorse, capable of any wickedness, as the story of the poor gipsy girl, which I had just heard, proved—(gipsy girl!—ah, who was she? Could it be—Could she be connected with the