

# The Ladies' Garland.

VOL. 3.

HARPERS-FERRY, VIRGINIA, DECEMBER 16, 1826.

NO. 45.

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY EVENING,

BY JOHN S. GALLAHER,

At the Office of the Virginia Free Press.

TERMS.—One dollar and fifty cents per annum, payable quarterly in advance; or one dollar and twenty-five cents, to be paid at the time of subscribing. Payment in advance, from distant subscribers, who are not known to the publisher, will invariably be expected. Should payment be deferred to the end of the year, \$2 will be required.

\* Postage on all letters MUST be paid.

## THE TRAVELLER.

FROM CARTER'S LETTERS.

### THE VALE OF VAUCLUSE.

The 8th of February is entered in my calendar as one of the happiest days of my life; for it was passed in visiting the Vale of Vaucluse, a retreat rendered interesting by whatever is beautiful in nature, elegant in letters, and romantic in love. Petrarch used to say, that he was almost angry to find any thing so enchanting out of Italy; since it had a tendency to weaken his attachment to his native country. I can so far unite in the sentiment as to say, that could the charms of any foreign scenery shake the constancy of my affection for my native shores, the rocks, solitudes, and waters, the bloom and verdure, the seclusion and rural quiet of this little valley, scarcely surpassed by that which the imagination of Johnson has created in the pages of Rasselas, would present the strongest temptations. Here, if any where on earth, might a restless spirit lay down the burden of its cares and be at peace, finding a retirement so tranquil, that there would be but a slight transition from the repose of a cottage to that of the grave. But the experiment has once been tried with so little success, as to offer few inducements to a repetition; and my enjoyment of such an elysium will probably be confined to a short and single visit.

Vaucluse is hidden among the hills, fourteen or fifteen miles in a north-eastern direction from Avignon. Having made our arrangements the evening previous, we left in a post chaise at the dawn of day, while the stars were yet bright in a cloudless and transparent firmament. The gradual advances of morning, from the gray twilight of the horizon to skies of the softest and richest hues, were delightful. At length the sun rose in all its splendor, and poured a golden flood of light upon the landscape and the battlements of the ancient city, now seen in the distance and receding from our view. From a green eminence, crowned with orchards of olives, the eye catches a wide and enchanting prospect of the vale of the Rhone on one side, and on the other, of a fertile plain, opening between the hills towards Vaucluse.

Passing the little white village of Moliere, seated upon the brow of a hill of the same name; and those of Fare and Gardan, occupying the bosom of a rich valley beyond, we reached the banks of the Sorgia at L'Alle, a pretty town standing upon both sides of a clear stream, which leads the traveller to anticipate the purity and copiousness of the fountain whence it emanates. Its noisy and limpid waters bathe the very thresholds of some of the villagers, who from their windows may see the trout playing

upon the pebbly bottom. On either bank groves of trees have been planted, and avenues for public walks opened, embellished with a degree of taste seldom found united with rustic simplicity.

Beyond L'Alle, the country becomes more solitary. The path winds through unfenced fields, bordering upon the right hand of the Sorgia, which for some miles is lost sight of, till it again suddenly bursts upon the eye of the visitor, in a beautiful cascade at the entrance of the vale of Vaucluse. On one side of the falls, the rocks are high, broken, and precipitous; and on the other, there is but just room enough for a path between the base of a ridge of hills and the margin of the stream. The gorge opens in such a manner, that the valley and the fountain are entirely secluded from the rest of the world, and cannot be discovered, till the traveller finds himself in the bosom of the glen, enclosed on every side, by lofty, bald, and craggy mountains.

From the pass to the head of the valley is perhaps a mile and a half. Along both sides of the Sorgia are narrow belts of alluvion, clothed in the liveliest green, and bordered by trees, among which was the almond already in full bloom. Its flower is delicious in complexion as well as in fragrance; and was doubly grateful from being found in this sequestered retreat, as also for affording the first indications of the return of spring. Vegetation was here several weeks in advance of the adjacent country, owing to a southern exposure, to constant irrigation, and above all, to a security against the icy winds from the north. On the day of our visit, the air possessed the temperature of May, and the softest gales breathed around us. The same causes must operate the whole year, and it may be doubted whether the frosts of winter are severe in this sunny vale, embosomed in the form of a crescent among the hills.

Leaving our carriage at the small inn, which bears the name of "The Two Lauras," and taking the landlord for a guide, we traced up the silver stream of the Sorgia to its fountain. Nothing can be more exquisitely beautiful. The water is as clear as crystal, being as perfectly transparent as air itself, and of such depth as to exhibit all the hues of the rocky bed reflected from the surface of the current. We counted six or seven distinct colors, such as green, purple, blue, and white, blending by the most delicate shades, and forming the most splendid piece of liquid mosaic imaginable. This is a striking peculiarity, which distinguishes the Sorgia from all other streams.

From the cascade already mentioned, at the outlet of the valley, to the fountain, the current is the whole way so rapid as frequently to break over the rocks; and in several places are falls of considerable height, the murmurs of which fill the glen and die away in echoes among the hills. The confused and perpetual uproar sent back upon the ear in hollow reverberations from the cliffs, has an indescribable effect in soothing the mind, and in hiling the feelings into a pleasing melancholy. Sauntering along the green margin of the stream, we often paused to read Petrarch, and to think how often he had watched the descent and listened to the music of the same bright waters! So vivid are the impressions produced by the enchanting scene, that

the hills seem scarcely to have forgotten the name of Laura—

"Je redemandaïs Laure a Pecho du vallou,  
Et Pecho n'avoit point oublie ce doux nom."

But I have not yet conducted the reader to the fountain itself. Let him approach with me, and gaze at the glassy, dark, and fathomless abyss of waters, sleeping at the base of an impending cliff, which rises to the height of about six hundred feet, and strikes the spectator with awe. The semi-circular basin, the chord of which is formed by the shelving base of the mountain, is perhaps twenty feet in diameter. Its bottom has never been reached by the longest lines. Not a wave, nor a ripple, nor a bubble, is seen upon the unbroken surface—nothing save the reflecting image of the crags overhanging the mirror, and of shrubs of evergreen lodged in the crevices. The outlet of the fountain is double—sometimes subterranean, and sometimes pouring over a bed of rocks at the surface of the ground, covered with long green moss. At the time of our visit, the upper channel was perfectly dry, being several feet above the level of the water. Our guide assured us, that the channel often alternates in the course of a single night. The subterranean current gushes out several rods below the fountain, and all at once forms a river sufficiently large to be navigable with boats. A literary society, manifesting more zeal than taste or judgment, have been at the expence of erecting a shapeless column near the margin of the fountain, to perpetuate the names of Petrarch and Laura; as if the fame of the poet needed such a monument!

Crossing the stream at its source, curiosity prompted us to climb the mountains which overhang the fountain and vale. But the effort cost us dear. We were obliged to creep the greater part of the way upon our hands and knees; and so great was the fatigue, that one of the party fainted on reaching the top of the hill, compelling the guide to go in pursuit of water. The prospect was worth much, but would hardly repay an adventure of this description. On the summit of the rock impending over the Sorgia, are the ruins of a castle or chateau, said by some to have been the house of Laura, and by others, a palace built by the bishop of Cayillon. The latter opinion seems to have the fairest claim to authenticity. Nothing now remains but the shattered walls, perched upon the precipice, and forming a picturesque object when seen from below.

Descending from the mountain by a route less arduous than the one pursued in reaching the top, we visited the site of Petrarch's cottage, at the base of a stupendous cliff, within a few paces of the river, and directly under the mountain on the brow of which the prouder mansion of Laura is said to have stood. A humble habitation covers the ruins of the poet's residence. An old lady conducted us to a crystal spring, gushing from beneath the rocks, and touching with a wand the moss growing upon the side, several beautiful trout shot from the covert, and seemed to play in the fountain at the command of their mistress for our amusement. These waters are said to have been followed by the visitations of the muses, and the cool grotto to have been a favorite haunt of their solitary and impassioned votary. The spring is shaded by shades of laurel, branches