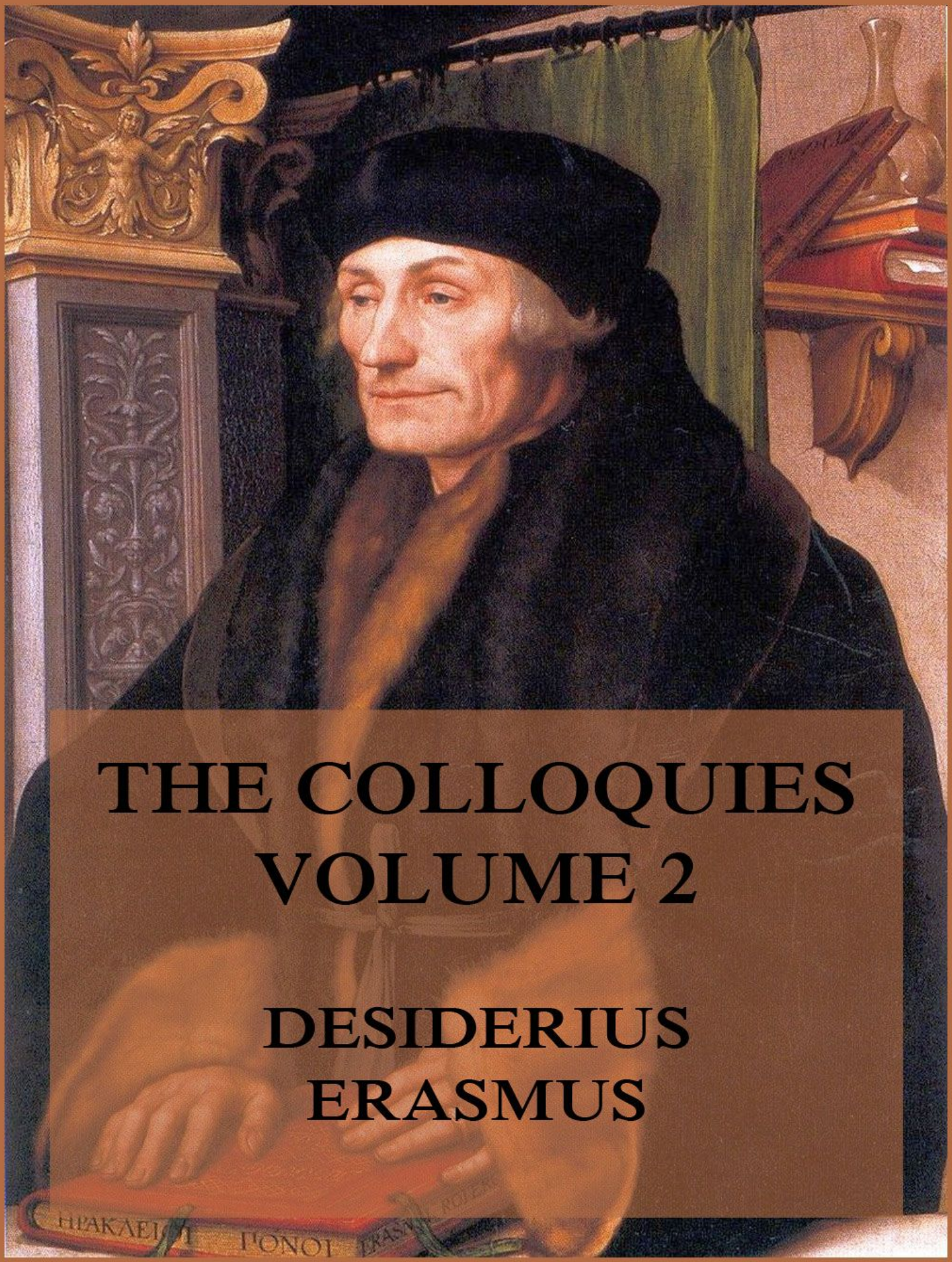

THE COLLOQUIES VOLUME 2

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS

The Colloquies
Volume 2

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The Colloquies 2, D. Erasmus
Jazzybee Verlag Jürgen Beck
86450 Altenmünster, Loschberg 9
Deutschland

ISBN: 9783849653804

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The RELIGIOUS PILGRIMAGE.

The Argument.

Ogygius going a Pilgrimage for the Sake of Religion, returns Home full of Superstition. He had paid a Visit to St. James at Compostella, his Wife and Mother-in-Law having obliged him to make a Vow so to do. At that Time People began to be more cold, as to the Worshipping of Saints: For which Cause the Virgin Mary writes an Epistle full of Complaints, of their Worship being neglected. A Miracle of a Knight that was saved by the Help of the Virgin Mary, by opening a little Wicket through which he entred. Of the Virgin's Milk. St. Bernard is feign'd to have suck'd the same Pap of the Virgin Mary, that the Child Jesus did. A new Sort of Jewel call'd the Toad-Stone: The various Natures of Jewels. The Tomb of Thomas Becket at Canterbury. He falls foul on the prodigious Magnificence, Luxury and Wealth of Churches; and reprehends the Manners and Impieties of Sailors. The Absurdity of Kissing the Reliques of Saints, as Shoes, Slippers, &c. Saints are compared to Sheep.

MENEDEMUS, OGYGIUS.

MEN. What Novelty is this? Don't I see my old Neighbour *Ogygius,* that no Body has set their Eyes on this six Months? There was a Report he was dead. It is he, or I'm mightily mistaken. I'll go up to him, and give him his Welcome. Welcome *Ogygius.*

Ogy. And well met, *Menedemus.*

Men. From what Part of the World came you? For here was a melancholy Report that you had taken a Voyage to the *Stygian* Shades.

Ogy. Nay, I thank God, I never was better in all my Life, than I have been ever since I saw you last.

Men. And may you live always to confute such vain Reports: But what strange Dress is this? It is all over set off with Shells scollop'd, full of Images of Lead and Tin, and Chains of Straw-Work, and the Cuffs are adorned with Snakes Eggs instead of Bracelets.

Ogy. I have been to pay a Visit to St. *James* at *Compostella,* and after that to the famous Virgin on the other Side the Water in *England;* and this was rather a Revisit; for I had been to see her three Years before.

Men. What! out of Curiosity, I suppose?

Ogy. Nay, upon the Score of Religion.

Men. That Religion, I suppose, the *Greek* Tongue taught you.

Ogy. My Wife's Mother had bound herself by a Vow, that if her Daughter should be delivered of a live Male Child, I should go to present my Respects to St. *James* in Person, and thank him for it.

Men. And did you salute the Saint only in your own and your Mother-in-Law's Name?

Ogy. Nay, in the Name of the whole Family.

Men. Truly I am persuaded your Family would have been every Whit as well, if you had never complimented him at all. But prithee, what Answer did he make you when you thanked him?

Ogy. None at all; but upon tendring my Present, he seemed to smile, and gave me a gentle Nod, with this same Scollop Shell.

Men. But why does he rather give those than any Thing else?

Ogy. Because he has plenty of them, the neighbouring Sea furnishing him with them.

Men. O gracious Saint, that is both a Midwife to Women in Labour, and hospitable to Travellers too! But what new Fashion of making Vows is this, that one who does nothing himself, shall make a Vow that another Man shall work? Put the Case that you should tie yourself up by a Vow that I should fast twice a Week, if you should succeed in such and such an Affair, do you think I'd perform what you had vowed?

Ogy. I believe you would not, altho' you had made the Vow yourself: For you made a Joke of Fobbing the Saints off. But it was my Mother-in-Law that made the Vow, and it was my Duty to be obedient: You know the Temper of Women, and also my own Interest lay at Stake.

Men. If you had not performed the Vow, what Risque had you run?

Ogy. I don't believe the Saint could have laid an Action at Law against me; but he might for the future have stopp'd his Ears at my Petitions, or slily have brought some Mischief or other upon my Family: You know the Humour of great Persons.

Men. Prithee tell me, how does the good Man St. *James* do? and what was he doing?

Ogy. Why truly, not so well by far as he used to be.

Men. What's the Matter, is he grown old?

Ogy. Trifler! You know Saints never grow old. No, but it is this new Opinion that has been spread abroad thro' the World, is the Occasion, that he has not so many Visits made to him as he used to have; and those that do come, give him a bare Salute, and either nothing at all, or little or nothing else; they say they can bestow their Money to better Purpose upon those that want it.

Men. An impious Opinion.

Ogy. And this is the Cause, that this great Apostle, that used to glitter with Gold and Jewels, now is brought to the

very Block that he is made of, and has scarce a Tallow Candle.

Men. If this be true, the rest of the Saints are in Danger of coming to the same Pass.

Ogy. Nay, I can assure you, that there is a Letter handed about, which the Virgin *Mary* herself has written about this Matter.

Men. What *Mary*?

Ogy. She that is called *Maria a Lapide.*

Men. That's up towards *Basil,* if I am not mistaken?

Ogy. The very same.

Men. You talk of a very stony Saint. But who did she write it to?

Ogy. The Letter tells you the Name.

Men. Who did she send it by?

Ogy. An Angel, no Doubt, who laid it down in the Pulpit, where the Preacher, to whom it was sent, took it up. And to put the Matter out of all Doubt, you shall see the original Letter.

Men. Do you know the Angel's Hand, that is Secretary to the Virgin *Mary*?

Ogy. Well enough.

Men. By what Token?

Ogy. I have read St. *Bede*'s Epitaph, that was engraven by the same Angel, and the Shape of the Letters are exactly the same; and I have read the Discharge sent to St. *Ægidius,* and they agree exactly. Do not these prove the Matter plain enough?

Men. May a Body see it?

Ogy. You may, if you'll damn your Soul to the Pit of Hell, if ever you speak on't.

Men. 'Tis as safe as if you spoke it to a Stone.

Ogy. But there are some Stones that are infamous for this, that they can't keep a Secret.

Men. If you can't trust to a Stone, speak to a Mute then.

Ogy. Upon that Condition I'll recite it to you; but prick up both your Ears.

Men. I have done so.

Ogy. Mary the Mother of Jesus to Glaucoplutus sendeth Greeting. This is to let you know, that I take it in good Part, and you have much obliged me, in that you have so strenuously followed Luther, and convinced the World, that it is a Thing altogether needless to invoke Saints: For, before this Time, I was e'en wearied out of my Life with the wicked Importunities of Mortals. Every Thing was asked of me, as if my Son was always a Child, because he is painted so, and at my Breast, and therefore they take it for granted I have him still at my Beck, and that he dares not deny me any Thing I ask of him, for Fear I should deny him the Bubby when he is thirsty. Nay, and they ask such Things from me a Virgin, that a modest young Man would scarce dare to ask of a Bawd, and which I am ashamed to commit to Writing. A Merchant that is going a Voyage to Spain to get Pelf, recommends to me the Chastity of his kept Mistress; and a professed Nun, having thrown away her Veil, in Order to make her Escape, recommends to me the Care of her Reputation, which she at the same Time intends to prostitute. The wicked Soldier, who butchers Men for Money, bawls out to me with these Words, O Blessed Virgin, send me rich Plunder. The Gamester calls out to me to give him good Luck, and promises I shall go Snips with him in what he shall win; and if the Dice don't favour, I am rail'd at and curs'd, because I would not be a Confederate in his Wickedness. The Usurer prays, Help me to large Interest for my Money; and if I deny 'em any Thing, they cry out, I am no Mother of Mercy. And there is another Sort of People, whose Prayers are not properly so wicked, as they are foolish: The Maid prays, Mary, give me a handsome, rich Husband; the Wife cries, Give me fine Children; and the Woman with Child, Give me a good Delivery; the old

Woman prays to live long without a Cough and Thirst; and the doting old Man, Send that I may grow young again; the Philosopher says, Give me the Faculty of starting Difficulties never to be resolv'd; the Priest says, Give me a fat Benefice; the Bishop cries out for the Saving of his Diocese; and the Mariner for a prosperous Voyage; the Magistrate cries out, Shew me thy Son before I die; the Courtier, That he may make an effectual Confession, when at the Point of Death; the Husbandman calls on me for seasonable Rain; and a Farmer's Wife, to preserve her Sheep and Cattle. If I refuse them any Thing, then presently I am hard-hearted. If I refer them to my Son, they cry, If you'll but say the Word, I'm sure he'll do it. How is it possible for me a lone Body, a Woman, and a Virgin, to assist Sailors, Soldiers, Merchants, Gamesters, Brides and Bridegrooms, Women in Travail, Princes, Kings, and Peasants? And what I have mentioned is the least Part of what I suffer. But I am much less troubled with these Concerns now than I have been, for which I would give you my hearty Thanks, if this Conveniency did not bring a greater Inconveniency along with it. I have indeed more Leisure, but less Honour, and less Money. Before, I was saluted Queen of the Heavens, and Lady of the World; but now there are very few, from whom I hear an Ave-Mary. Formerly I was adorned with Jewels and Gold, and had Abundance of Changes of Apparel; I had Presents made me of Gold and Jewels; but now I have scarce Half a Vest to cover me, and that is Mouse-eaten too: And my yearly Revenue is scarce enough to keep alive my poor Sexton, who lights me up a little Wax or Tallow Candle. But all these Things might be born with, if you did not tell us, that there were greater Things going forward. They say, you aim at this, to strip the Altars and Temples of the Saints every where. I advise you again and again to have a Care what you do: For other Saints don't want Power to avenge themselves for the Wrong done to

them. Peter, being turn'd out of his Church, can shut the Gate of the Kingdom of Heaven against you. Paul has a Sword. And St. Bartholomew a Knife. The Monk William has a Coat of Mail under his Habit, and a heavy Lance too. And how will you encounter St. George on Horseback, in his Cuirassiers Arms, his Sword, and his Whinyard? Nor is Anthony without his Weapon, he has his sacred Fire: And the rest of them have either their Arms, or their Mischiefs, that they can send out against whom they please: And as for myself, although I wear no Weapons, you shall not turn me out, unless you turn my Son out too, whom I hold in my Arms. I won't be pulled away from him: You shall either throw us both out, or leave us both, unless you have a Mind to have a Church without a Christ. These Things I would have you know, and consider what Answer to give me; for I have the Matter much at Heart. From our Stone House, the Calends of August, the Year of my Son's Passion 1524. I the Stony Virgin have subscribed this with my own Hand. Men. In Truth this is a very terrible threatning Letter, and I believe *Glaucoplutus* will take Care what he does.

Ogy. He will, if he is wise.

Men. But why did not honest *James* write to him about this Matter?

Ogy. Truly I can't tell, except it is because he is a great Way off, and now-a-Days all Letters are intercepted.

Men. But what God carried you to *England*?

Ogy. A very favourable Wind; and I had made half a Promise to the beyond-Sea She-Saint, to pay her another Visit within two or three Years.

Men. What did you go to ask for of her?

Ogy. Nothing new; but those common Matters, the Health of my Family, the Increase of my Fortune, a long and a happy Life in this World, and eternal Happiness in the next.

Men. But could not our Virgin *Mary* have done as much for you here? She has at *Antwerp* a Temple, much more

magnificent than that beyond Sea.

Ogy. I won't deny that she is able, but one Thing is bestowed in one Place, and another Thing in another: whether this be her Pleasure merely, or whether she being of a kind Disposition, accommodates herself in this to our Affections.

Men. I have often heard of *James,* but prithee give me some Account of that beyond-Sea Lady.

Ogy. I will do it as briefly as I can: Her Name is very famous all over *England;* and you shall scarce find any Body in that Island, who thinks his Affairs can be prosperous, unless he every Year makes some Present to that Lady,greater or smaller, according as his Circumstances are in the World.

Men. Where-abouts does she dwell?

Ogy. Near the Coast, upon the furthest Part between the West and the North, about three Miles from the Sea; it is a Town that depends chiefly upon the Resort of Strangers: There is a College of *Canons* there, to which the *Latins* have added the Name of *Regulars,* which are of a middle Sort between Monks, and those *Canons* that are called *Seculars.*

Men. You tell me of amphibious Creatures, such as the Beavers are.

Ogy. Nay, so are Crocodiles too. But Trifling apart, I'll tell you in three Words: In odious Cases they are *Canons,* in favourable Cases they are *Monks.*

Men. You have hitherto been telling me Riddles.

Ogy. Why then I will give you a Mathematical Demonstration. If the Pope of *Rome* shall throw a Thunderbolt at all Monks, then they'll be all Canons; and if he will allow all Monks to marry, then they'll be all Monks.

Men. These are new Favours, I wish they would take mine for one.

Ogy. But to return to the Matter in Hand. This College has little else to maintain it, but the Liberality of the Virgin;

for all Presents of Value are laid up; but as for any Thing of Money, or lesser Value, that goes to the Support of the Flock and the Head of it, which they call the Prior.

Men. Are they Men of good Lives?

Ogy. Not much amiss. They are richer in Piety than in Revenue: There is a clever neat Church, but the Virgin does not dwell in it herself; but upon Point of Honour has given it to her Son. Her Church is on the Right-Hand of her Son's.

Men. Upon his Right-Hand! which Way then does her Son look?

Ogy. That's well taken Notice of. When he looks toward the West he has his Mother on the Right, and when he looks toward the East, she is on his Left-Hand. And she does not dwell there neither, for the Building is not finish'd; the Doors and Windows are all open, and the Wind blows thro' it; and not far off is a Place, where *Oceanus* the Father of the Winds resides.

Men. That's a hard Case, where does she dwell then?

Ogy. In that unfinish'd Church, that I spoke of, there is a little boarded Chapel, with a little Door on each Side to receive Visitors. There's but a little Light to it, but what comes from the Tapers; but the Scent is very grateful.

Men. All these Things conduce to Religion.

Ogy. Nay, *Menedemus,* if you saw the Inside of it, you would say it was the Seat of the Saints, it is all so glittering with Jewels, Gold and Silver.

Men. You set me agog to go thither too.

Ogy. If you do, you will never repent of your Journey.

Men. Is there any holy Oil there?

Ogy. Simpleton, that Oil is only the Sweat of Saints in their Sepulchres, as of *Andrew, Catherine,* &c. *Mary* was never buried.

Men. I confess I was under a Mistake; but make an End of your Story.

Ogy. That Religion may spread itself the more widely, some Things are shewn at one Place, and some at another.

Men. And it may be, that the Donations may be larger, according to the old Saying, *Fit cito per multas praeda petita manus. Many Hands will carry off much Plunder.*

Ogy. And there are always some at Hand, to shew you what you have a Mind to see.

Men. What, of the Canons?

Ogy. No, no, they are not permitted, lest under the Colour of Religion they should prove irreligious, and while they are serving the Virgin, lose their own Virginity. Only in the inner Chapel, which I call the Chamber of the holy Virgin, a certain Canon stands at the Altar.

Men. What does he stand there for?

Ogy. To receive and keep that which is given.

Men. Must People give whether they will or no?

Ogy. No: but a certain religious Modesty makes some give, when any Body stands by, which would not give a Farthing, if there were no Witness of it; or give more than otherwise they would give.

Men. You set forth human Nature, as I have experienc'd in myself.

Ogy. There are some so devoted to the Holy Virgin, that while they pretend to lay one Gift on the Altar, by a wonderful Sleight of Hand, they steal what another has laid down.

Men. But put the Case no Body were by, would the Virgin thunder at them?

Ogy. Why should the Virgin do that, any more than God himself does, whom they are not afraid to strip of his Ornaments, and to break thro' the Walls of the Church to come at them?

Men. I can't well tell which I admire at most, the impious Confidence of those Wretches, or God's Patience.

Ogy. At the north Side there is a certain Gate, not of a Church, don't mistake me, but of the Wall that incloses the Church-Yard, that has a very little Wicket, as in the great Gates of Noblemen, that he that has a Mind to get in, must

first venture the breaking of his Shins, and afterwards stoop his Head too.

Men. In Truth, it would not be safe for a Man to enter in against an Enemy at such a little Door.

Ogy. You’re in the Right on’t. But yet the Verger told me, that some Time since a Knight on Horse-Back, having escaped out of the Hands of his Enemy, who follow’d him at the Heels, got in thro’ this Wicket. The poor Man at the last Pinch, by a sudden Turn of Thought, recommended himself to the holy Virgin, that was the nearest to him. For he resolv’d to take Sanctuary at her Altar, if the Gate had been open. When behold, which is such a Thing as was never heard of, both Man and Horse were on a sudden taken into the Church-Yard, and his Enemy left on the out-Side of it, stark mad at his Disappointment.

Men. And did he give you Reason to believe so wonderful a Relation?

Ogy. Without Doubt.

Men. That was no easy Matter to a Man of your Philosophy.

Ogy. He shew’d me a Plate of Copper nail’d on the Door, that had the very Image of this Knight, that was thus sav’d; and in the very Habit, which was then in Fashion among the *English,* which is the same we see in old Pictures, which, if they are drawn truly, the Barbers, and Dyers, and Weavers in those Days, had but a bad Time on’t.

Men. Why so?

Ogy. Why, he had a Beard like a Goat; and there was not a Wrinkle in any of his Cloaths, they were made so strait to his Body, that the very Straitness of them made his Body the more slender. There was also another Plate that was an exact Description of the Chapel, and the Size of it.

Men. Then there was no Doubt to be made on’t.

Ogy. Under the little Wicket there was an iron Grate, no bigger than what a Man on Foot could just get in at. For it was not fit that any Horse afterwards should tread upon

that Place, which the former Knight had consecrated to the Virgin.

Men. And very good Reason.

Ogy. From hence towards the East, there is another Chapel full of Wonders; thither I went. Another Verger received me. There we pray'd a little; and there was shewn us the middle Joint of a Man's Finger; I kiss'd it, and ask'd whose Relick it was. He told me it was St. *Peter*'s; what, said I, the Apostle? He said it was. I then took Notice of the Bigness of the Joint, which was large enough to be taken for that of a Giant. Upon which, said I, *Peter* must Needs have been a very lusty Man. At this one of the Company fell a laughing; I was very much vext at it, for if he had held his Tongue, the Verger would have shewn us all the Relicks. However, we pacified him pretty well, by giving him a few Groats. Before this little Chapel stood a House, which he told us, in the Winter-Time when all Things were buried in Snow, was brought there on a sudden, from some Place a great Way off. Under this House there were two Pits Brim-full, that were fed by a Fountain consecrated to the holy Virgin. The Water was wonderful cold, and of great Virtue in curing Pains in the Head and Stomach.

Men. If cold Water will cure Pains in the Head and Stomach, in Time Oil will quench Fire.

Ogy. But, my good Friend, you are hearing that which is miraculous; for what Miracle is there in cold Water quenching Thirst?

Men. That Shift goes a great Way in this Story.

Ogy. It was positively affirmed, that this Spring burst out of the Ground on a sudden, at the Command of the holy Virgin. I observing everything very diligently, ask'd him how many Years it was since that little House was brought thither? He said it had been there for some Ages. But, said I, methinks the Walls don't seem to carry any Marks of Antiquity in them: He did not much deny it. Nor these Pillars, said I: He did not deny but those had been set up

lately; and the Thing shew'd itself plainly. Then, said I, that Straw and Reeds, the whole Thatch of it seems not to have been so long laid. He allow'd it. Nor do these cross Beams and Rafters, that bear up the Roof, seem to have been laid many Years ago. He confest they were not. And there being no Part of that Cottage remaining, said I to him, how then does it appear, that this is the very Cottage that was brought so far thro' the Air?

Men. Prithee, how did the Sexton extricate himself out of this Difficulty?

Ogy. He presently shew'd us an old Bear's Skin, tackt there to a Piece of Timber, and almost laught at us to our very Faces, for not having Eyes to perceive a Thing that was so plain. Therefore seeming to be satisfied, and excusing our Dulness of Apprehension, we turned ourselves to the Heavenly Milk of the blessed Virgin.

Men. O Mother like her Son! for as he has left us so much of his Blood upon Earth, so she has left us so much of her Milk, that it is scarce credible, that a Woman who never had but one Child, should have so much, altho' her Child had never suck'd a Drop.

Ogy. And they tell us the same Stories about our Lord's Cross, that is shewn up and down, both publickly and privately, in so many Places, that if all the Fragments were gathered together, they would seem to be sufficient Loading for a good large Ship; and yet our Lord himself carried the whole Cross upon his Shoulders.

Men. And don't you think this is wonderful?

Ogy. It may be said to be an extraordinary Thing, but not a wonderful one, since the Lord who encreases these Things according to his own Pleasure is Omnipotent.

Men. You put a very pious Construction upon it, but I am afraid that a great many such Things are forged for the Sake of getting Money.

Ogy. I cannot think God would suffer any one to put these Mockeries upon him.

Men. Nay, when both the Mother and Son, Father and Spirit are robb'd by sacrilegious Persons, they don't seem to be mov'd the least in the World, so as to deter wicked Persons, so much as by a Nod or a Stamp; so great is the Lenity of the Divine Being.

Ogy. This is true, but hear me out: That Milk is kept upon the high Altar, in which Christ is in the Middle, and his Mother, for Respect Sake, at his right Hand; for the Milk represents the Mother.

Men. Why, is it plain to be seen then?

Ogy. It is preserv'd in a Crystal Glass.

Men. Is it liquid then?

Ogy. What do you talk of being liquid, when it has been put in above 1500 Years ago. It is so concreted, you would take it for beaten Chalk, temper'd with the White of an Egg.

Men. But why don't they shew it open?

Ogy. Lest the Milk of the Virgin should be defil'd by the Kisses of Men.

Men. You say very well, for I believe there are some who put Lips to it, that are neither pure nor Virgin ones.

Ogy. As soon as the Officer sees us, he runs presently and puts on a Surplice, and a Stole about his Neck, and falls down very devoutly and worships, and by and by gives us the holy Milk to kiss. Then we prostrated ourselves at the lowest Step of the Altar, and having first paid our Adoration to Christ, we apply'd ourselves to the Virgin in the following Prayer, which we had fram'd before-Hand for this very Purpose.

Virgin Mother, who hast merited to give Suck to the Lord of Heaven and Earth, thy Son Jesus, from thy Virgin Breasts; we desire that being purified by his Blood, we may arrive at that happy Infant State of Dove-like Innocence, which being void of Malice, Fraud, and Deceit, we may continually desire the Milk of the Evangelical Doctrine, until it grows up to a perfect Man, and to the Measure of

the Fulness of Christ, whose blessed Society thou wilt enjoy for evermore, with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Men. Truly, a devout Prayer. But what Answer did she make?

Ogy. If my Eyes did not deceive me, they were both pleased: For the holy Milk seem'd to give a Leap, and the Eucharist seem'd to look somewhat brighter than usual. In the mean Time the Shewer of the Relicks came to us, without speaking a Word, holding out such a Kind of Table, as they in *Germany* that take Toll on the Bridges hold out to you.

Men. In Truth, I have oftentimes cursed those craving Tables, when I travelled in *Germany.*

Ogy. We laid down some Pieces of Money, which he presented to the Virgin. After this, by our Interpreter, (If I remember right) one *Robert Aldridge,* a well spoken young Man, and a great Master of the *English* Tongue, I enquired, as civilly as I could, what Assurance he had, that this was really the Virgin's Milk. And truly, I desired to be satisfied of this with a pious Intention, that I might stop the Mouths of some impious Persons, who are us'd to scoff at all these Things. The Officer first contracted his Brow without speaking a Word; thereupon I prest the Interpreter to put the same Question to him again, but in the fairest Manner that could be; and he did it in so obliging a Manner, that if he had address'd himself to the Mother herself in these Terms, when she had but newly lain in, she would not have taken it amiss. But the Officer, as if he had been inspired with some Enthusiasm, looking upon us with astonished Eyes, and with a Sort of Horror, cursing our blasphemous Expression, said, *What Need is there for your putting this Question, when you have an Authentick Record?* And had turn'd us out of Doors for Hereticks, had not a few Pence pacified his Rage.

Men. But how did you behave yourselves in the Interim?

Ogy. Just as if we had been stunned with a Cudgel, or struck with Thunder; we sneak'd away, humbly begging his Pardon for our Boldness: For so a Man ought to do in holy Matters. Thence we went to the little Chapel, the Dwelling of the Virgin Saint. In our Way thither, an Expounder of sacred Things, one of the *Minors,* offers himself; he stares upon us as if he had a Mind to draw our Pictures; and having gone a little further, another meets us, staring upon us after the same Manner; and after him a third.

Men. It may be they had a Mind to have drawn your Picture.

Ogy. But I suspected far otherwise.

Men. What did you imagine then?

Ogy. That some sacrilegious Person had stolen some of the Virgin's Vestments, and that I was suspected as the Thief. Therefore, having entred the Chapel, I address'd myself to the Virgin-Mother with this short Prayer.

O thou who only of all Women art a Mother and a Virgin, the most happy of Mothers, and the purest of Virgins, we that are impure do now come to visit and address ourselves to thee that are pure, and reverence thee with our poor Offerings, such as they are. O that thy Son would enable us to imitate thy most holy Life, that we may deserve, by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, to conceive the Lord Jesus in the most inward Bowels of our Minds, and having once conceiv'd him, never to lose him. Amen. So I kiss'd the Altar, laid down some Money, and withdrew.

Men. What, did the Virgin hear? Did she give you no Nod as a Token that she had heard your Prayer?

Ogy. As I told you before, it was but an uncertain Light, and she stood in the Dark at the right Side of the Altar: And the Check of the former Officer had made me so dejected, that I did not dare to lift up my Eyes again.

Men. Then this Adventure had not a very happy Conclusion?

Ogy. Nay, the happiest of all.

Men. Nay, now you put me in Courage again; for, as your *Homer* says, *my Heart was e'en sunk into my Breeches.*

Ogy. After Dinner we go to Church again.

Men. How did you dare to do that, being suspected of Sacrilege?

Ogy. It may be I was: but I did not suspect myself. A clear Conscience fears nothing. I had a great Mind to see the Record that the Shewer of the Reliques had referr'd us to. Having hunted a great While for it, we found it at last; but it was hung up so high, that he must have good Eyes that could read it: And mine are none of the best, nor none of the worst. Therefore, not being willing wholly to trust to him in a Matter of such Moment, I went along with *Aldrisius* as he read it.

Men. Well! and were all your Doubts remov'd?

Ogy. I was asham'd of myself, that I should doubt of a Matter, that there was made so plain before one's Eyes, the Name, the Place, the Order of the Proceeding, in one Word, there was nothing omitted. There was one *William* of *Paris,* a Man of general Piety, but more especially religious in getting together the Relicks of Saints all over the Earth. He having travelled over a great many Countries, and having every where diligently search'd Monasteries and Churches, at last arriv'd at *Constantinople;* (for this *William*'s Brother was a Bishop there). When he was preparing to return Home, the Bishop acquainted him, that there was a certain Nun that had the Virgin's Milk; and that he would be the happiest Man in the World, if he could possibly get any of it, either for Love or Money, or by any other Means; for that all the Relicks he had hitherto collected, were nothing, compared to that sacred Milk. Upon this, *William*never was at rest, till he had obtain'd one Half of this Milk; and having gotten this Treasure, thought himself richer than *Crœsus.*

Men. And very well he might, ’twas a Thing so unexpected too.

Ogy. He goes strait homeward, but falls sick by the Way.

Men. O how little Trust is to be put in human Felicity, that it shall be either perfect or long-liv’d!

Ogy. Finding himself in Danger, he sends for a *Frenchman,* a faithful Fellow-Traveller, and makes him swear Secrecy; and then delivers the Milk to him upon this Condition, That if he got Home safe, he should deposit that Treasure on the Altar of the holy Virgin that is worshipped at *Paris,* in that noble Church that has the River *Sein* on each Side of it, as if itself gave Place in Reverence to the Divinity of the Virgin. To sum up the Matter in few Words, *William* was buried; the other rides Post, but he falls sick by the Way, and thinking himself past Recovery, he delivers the Milk to an *Englishman* that was his Fellow-Traveller, making him take a solemn Oath that he would perform that which he himself was to have done. The one dies, the other takes it, and puts it upon the Altar, in the Presence of all the Canons of the Place, those that at that Time were call’d Regulars, as they are yet at St. *Genoveve:* He obtain’d Half this Milk of them, and carried it into *England,* and made a Present of it to this beyond-Sea Place, his Mind being moved thereunto by a Divine Impulse.

Men. Truly this Story hangs very handsomly together.

Ogy. Nay farther, that there might not be left the least Room to doubt, the very Names of the Bishops were set down, that were authorized to grant Releases and Indulgences to such as should come to see the Milk, according to the Power to them given, but not without some Donation or another.

Men. And how far did that Power extend?

Ogy. To forty Days.

Men. But are there Days in Purgatory?

Ogy. For certain there is Time there.

Men. But when they have dispos'd of this Stock of forty Days, have they no more to bestow?

Ogy. No: For there ever and anon arises something for them to bestow, and 'tis in this quite otherwise than it is with the Tub of the *Danaides.* For tho' that is continually filling, is always empty; but in this, tho' you are continually drawing out, there is never the less in the Vessel.

Men. But if the Remission of forty Days were given to a hundred thousand Men, would every one have so much?

Ogy. Yes, so much.

Men. And suppose that they that have received forty Days in the Morning, should ask for forty Days more at Night, Would they have wherewithal to give them?

Ogy. Yes, ten Times over in an Hour.

Men. I wish I had such a Cabinet at Home; I would not wish for above three Groats, if they might be doubled and tripled after that Manner.

Ogy. You might as well have wish'd to be all turn'd into Gold yourself, and as soon have had what you wish'd for. But to return to my Story, there was one Argument added, by a Man of great Piety and Candour, which is, that tho' the Virgin's Milk, which is shewn in many other Places, is indeed venerable enough, in that it was scrap'd off from Stones, yet this was more venerable than all the rest, because this was sav'd as it flow'd from the Virgin's Breast, without touching the Ground.

Men. But how does that appear?

Ogy. O! the Nun at *Constantinople* that gave it, said so.

Men. It may be she had it of St. *Bernard.*

Ogy. I believe she had.

Men. He, when he was very old, had the Happiness to taste Milk from the same Nipple which the Child *Jesus* sucked. Whence I wonder he was not rather called *Lactifluous* than *Mellifluous.* But how is that called the Virgin's Milk that did not flow from her Breasts?

Ogy. That did flow from her Breasts, but dropping upon the Stone she sat upon, while she was giving suck, it concreted, and was afterwards, by Providence, so multiplied.

Men. Right. Go on.

Ogy. These Things being over, we were just upon the Point of going away; but walking about, and looking round us to see if there was any Thing worth taking Notice of, the Chapel-Officers come to us again, leering at us, pointing at us with their Fingers, they advance to us, retreat, run backward and forward, nod, as if they would fain have said something to us, if they had had Courage enough to have done it.

Men. And was not you afraid then?

Ogy. No, not at all; but I looked them full in the Face very chearfully, as who should say, Speak and welcome. At length one of them comes up to me, and asked my Name. I told it him. He asked me if I was the Person that a Matter of two Years ago set up a Votive Table in *Hebrew* Letters? I told him I was.

Men. Can you write *Hebrew* then?

Ogy. No, but they call every Thing *Hebrew* that they can't understand. But by and by (upon calling, as I suppose) came the πρωˆτος ὕστερος of the College.

Men. What Title of Dignity is that? Have they not an Abbot?

Ogy. No.

Men. Why so?

Ogy. Because they don't understand *Hebrew.*

Men. Have they no Bishop?

Ogy. None at all.

Men. Why so?

Ogy. Because the Virgin is so poor, that she has not wherewith to buy a Staff and a Mitre.

Men. Ha'n't they so much as a President?

Ogy. No, nor that neither.

Men. What hinders?

Ogy. Because a President is a Name of Dignity, and not of Holiness, and therefore the Colleges of Canons reject the Name of an Abbot, but they willingly allow the Name of a President.

Men. But this πρωˆτος ὕστερος is what I never heard of before.

Ogy. In Truth you are but an indifferent Grammarian then.

Men. I know what ὑστερόπρωτον is in Rhetoric.

Ogy. Why that's it. He that is next the *Prior* is *Posterior Prior.*

Men. You mean a *Sub-Prior.*

Ogy. He saluted me very courteously. He told me what great Pains had been taken to read those Verses; what wiping of Spectacles there had been to no Purpose; how often one grave Doctor of Divinity, and another of Law, had been brought thither to expound the Table. One said the Letters were *Arabick,* another said they were fictitious ones; but at last they found one that made a Shift to read the Title. It was written in *Latin* Words, and *Latin* Capitals. The Verses were *Greek,* in *Greek* Capitals, which at first Sight look'd like *Roman* Capitals. Being requested, I turn'd the Verses into *Latin,* Word for Word. They would have given me a Reward for this small Service, but I positively refused it, affirming that there was nothing so difficult that I would not, with all the Readiness in the World, undertake for the Sake of the Holy Virgin, even if she should command me to carry a Letter for her from thence to *Jerusalem.*

Men. What Occasion can she have for you to be her Letter-Carrier, that has so many Angels for her Secretaries and Pages?

Ogy. He pulled out of his Pouch a little Piece of Wood, cut off from the Beam on which the Virgin-Mother stood. The admirable Fragrancy of it, shewed it to be a Thing that was

highly sacred. I having received this Present in the lowest Posture of Humility, and bare-headed, and having kiss'd it over and over, put it in my Pocket.

Men. May a Body see it?

Ogy. I'll let you see it if you will. But if you have eaten or drank to Day, or have had to do with your Wife last Night, I would not advise you to look upon it.

Men. Let me see it, there is no Danger.

Ogy. Here 'tis for you.

Men. O happy Man art thou that hast such a Present!

Ogy. Whether you know it or no, I would not exchange this little Fragment for all the Gold in *Tagus.* I'll set it in Gold, and put it in a Crystal Case, so that it may be seen through it. When this *Hysteroprotos* saw me so religiously transported with that small Present, thinking I deserved to have Things of greater Moment imparted to me, he asked me, if I had seen the Virgin's Secrets. That Word startled me a little, but I durst not ask him what he meant by the Virgin's Secrets; for in Matters so sacred there is Danger in a Slip of the Tongue. I told him I had not seen them; but I had a very great Desire to see them. Then I am conducted in as one in an Ecstacy. A Wax Taper or two was lighted, and a little Image was shewn me, that made no extraordinary Figure, neither for Magnitude, Matter, nor Workmanship, but of extraordinary Virtue.

Men. Bulk has no great Matter in it, as to the doing of Miracles. I have seen St. *Christopher* at *Paris,* not him of a Cart-Load, or of the Size of a *Colossus,* but rather of a large Mountain; but I never heard he was famous for doing Miracles.

Ogy. At the Feet of the Virgin there is a Jewel, that neither the *Latins* nor *Greeks* have yet given a Name to. The *French*have given it a Name from a Toad, because it has the Resemblance of a Toad in it so lively, that no Artcan match it. And that which is the more miraculous, is, that it is a very small Stone; and the Image does not stand out of

it, but is included in the very Body of the Stone, and may be seen thro' it.

Men. Perhaps they may fancy they see the Likeness of a Toad cut in it, as some fancy they see that of an Eagle in the Stalk of a Brake or Fern; and as Boys, who see every Thing in the Clouds, as Dragons breathing out Fire, burning Mountains and armed Men fighting.

Ogy. Nay, that you may be thoroughly satisfied in the Matter, no living Toad ever shewed itself more plainly, than that is expressed there.

Men. I have been hearing your Stories all this While; but I would have you find out some Body else to give Credit to your Story of the Toad.

Ogy. I don't at all wonder, *Menedemus,* that you are so incredulous; I should not have believ'd it myself, if the whole Tribe of Divines had asserted it, unless I had seen it with these Eyes, I say, beheld with these very Eyes, and had experienced the Truth of it. But, methinks you seem not to be curious enough upon these natural Rarities.

Men. Why so? what, because I won't believe that Asses fly.

Ogy. But do you not observe how Nature sports herself in imitating the Shapes and Colours of every Thing, in other Things, but especially in precious Stones? And also, what admirable Virtues it has planted in them, which are altogether incredible, if common Experience did not force us to a Belief of them? Prithee tell me, would you ever have believed without seeing it with your Eyes, that Steel could have been drawn by the Load-Stone, without touching it, or be driven away from it without being touch'd by it?

Men. No, indeed I never should, although ten *Aristotles* had taken their Oaths of the Truth of it.

Ogy. Well then, don't say every Thing's a Fable that has not fallen within the Compass of your Experience. We find the Figure of a *Bolt* in a *Thunder-Stone; Fire* in the *Carbuncle;* the Figure of *Hail,* and the *Coldness* of it in

the *Hail-Stone,* nay, even tho' you throw it into the Midst of the Fire; the deep and transparent *Waves* of the Sea in the *Emerald;* the *Carcinias* imitates the Figure of a *Sea-Crab;* the *Echites* of a *Viper;* the *Scarites* of a *Gilt-Head;* the *Theracites* of a *Hawk;* the *Geranites* shews you the figur'd *Neck of a Crane;* the *Ægophthalmus* shews the *Eye of a Goat;* and some shew that of a *Hog,* and another *three Human Eyes* together; The *Lycophthalmus* paints you out the *Eye of a Wolf* in four Colours, fiery and bloody, and in the Middle, black encompassed with white; if you open the black *Cyamea,* you will find a *Bean* in the Middle; the *Dryites* represents the *Trunk of a Tree,* and burns like *Wood;*The *Cissites* and *Narcissites* represent *Ivy;* the *A strapias* darts forth *Rays of Lightning* out of the Midst of white or blue; the *Phlegontites* shews a *Flame* within, that does not come out; in the *Anthracitis* you may see certain Sparks running too and fro; the *Crocias* represents the *Colour of Saffron;* the *Rhodites* that of a *Rose;* the *Chalcites* of *Brass;*the *Aetites* the Figure of an *Eagle,* with a white Tail; the *Taos* represents a *Peacock;* the *Chelidonia* an *Asp;* the *Mermecites* has the Image of a *creeping Pismire* growing within it; the *Cantharias* shews a perfect *Beetle;* and the *Scorpites* admirably decyphers a *Scorpion.* But why should I proceed to recount that which is innumerable, when there is no Part of Nature, either in Elements, Animals, or Plants, which Nature, as it were to sport herself, does not give us some Resemblance of in Stones? And do you then admire that the Form of a Toad is represented in the *Bufonites*?

Men. I wonder that Nature has so much spare Time, as to divert herself in drawing the Pictures of every Thing.

Ogy. It has a Mind to exercise the Curiosity of Mankind, and by that Means to keep us from being idle. And yet as

tho’ we were at a Loss to know how to pass away our Time, we run a madding after Buffoons, Dice, and Jugglers.

Men. You say true.

Ogy. And some Persons of Credit add, that if you put this Toad-Stone into Vinegar, it will move its Legs and swim.

Men. But why is this dedicated to the Virgin?

Ogy. Because she has overcome, trampled upon, and extinguished all Uncleanness, Malice, Pride, Avarice, and all Manner of earthly Desires.

Men. Woe to us then who carry so much of the Toad still in our Hearts!

Ogy. But we shall be pure if we worship the Virgin as we ought.

Men. How would she have us worship her?

Ogy. You will perform most acceptable Service to her if you imitate her.

Men. That’s soon said, but not so easily performed.

Ogy. It is hard, indeed; but then it is very well worth the Pains.

Men. Come on, go forwards in what you have begun.

Ogy. Afterwards he shewed me Statues of Gold and Silver: This, says he, is solid Gold; and this is only Silver gilt; he told me the Weight of every one, the Price, and the Name of the Donor. I being full of Admiration at every Thing, and congratulating the Virgin being Mistress of so much Wealth, says the Officer to me, Inasmuch as I perceive you are so pious a Spectator, I think I should not do fairly by you, if I should conceal any Thing from you; therefore you shall see the greatest Privacies the Virgin has: And presently he takes out of a Drawer from under the Altar a World of admirable Things, the Particulars of which, if I should proceed to mention, the Day would not be long enough; so that thus far the Journey succeeded to my Wish. I satisfied my Curiosity abundantly with fine Sights, and brought Home with me this inestimable Present, a Pledge of the Virgin’s Love, given me by herself.