

The living statue.

Contributors

Royal College of Surgeons of England

Publication/Creation

[London] : [Charles Knight], 1833.

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/acrc54gf>

Provider

Royal College of Surgeons

License and attribution

This material has been provided by This material has been provided by The Royal College of Surgeons of England. The original may be consulted at The Royal College of Surgeons of England. where the originals may be consulted. This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.



Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

about 200,000 inhabitants. It is paved with large flat pieces of lava, with the addition of side-walks, upon which the tradespeople, such as shoemakers, tailors, &c. carry on their respective trades out of doors. There is a beautiful public garden in the town, with a fine view of the sea on one side, and on the other of the mountains which enclose the nook of level land, called the *Conca d'Oro*, or Golden Shell, in which Palermo is situated; and the fore-ground of which is occupied by fragrant groves of acacias and of orange-trees. It is overspread with villages and farms, and country houses, where people of fortune reside during the month of May, and again during part of September and October, when the rainy season is over. There is a school, the *scuola normale*, at Palermo, composed of no fewer than nine hundred and forty boys, from the age of six to that of fourteen. The mode of life of the higher ranks differs little from that of the Neapolitans. They rise very late, take a walk, dine between three and four, drive or walk about the sea-side every evening; then to the opera; then to the card-table at night; then to bed at day-break. They take no pleasure in agriculture, and never visit their landed estates in the provinces. The country houses, where they spend a few weeks in spring and autumn, being all in the neighbourhood, they live there exactly as in town. Their *conversazioni* are just the same as in Italy; people meet to play cards and eat ice, but converse very little. A man-servant at Palermo receives three *carlini* a day (thirteen pence sterling), with his board and livery; a labourer from three to four *carlini* a day, and finds his own food: but provisions are very cheap. Female servants are procured with difficulty. Land in this neighbourhood is let at about four per cent. on its estimated value. The farmers are said to be very ignorant, and to keep their accounts by means of marks or tallies. The paternal lands of noble families are entailed, and cannot be sold without special leave of the king, but purchased land may.

Messina has suffered severely from earthquakes, and was completely demolished in 1783, since which it has had the advantage of new and regular buildings. Its population is now about 70,000. Its fine quay extends more than a mile along the port, and a rocky and sandy head-land, projecting circularly, forms a deep, spacious, and tranquil harbour, accessible nearly at all times, notwithstanding the proximity of Seylla and Charybdis. Education is said to be much neglected at Messina; and the nobility do not in general reside there. It is, in short, neither fashionable, nor learned, nor rich.

Among the other towns are Syracuse, abounding with antiquities, the remains of the ancient city of that name, and Catania, in the immediate neighbourhood of Mount Etna, which has very frequently overwhelmed it by eruptions. At every such convulsion Catania has been more or less injured; but it has thrice been completely overturned or burnt down, and its inhabitants wholly or in part swallowed up, viz. once in the twelfth century, and twice in the seventeenth. Of Mount Etna, we must give an account on another occasion. Those who wish for a more circumstantial description of Sicily, should consult Brydone and Lukie's *Tours*, and especially Simond's *Travels in Italy and Sicily*, from which this account is chiefly compiled.

THE LIVING STATUE.

It often happens that motion is permanently lost in one or more joints, a disease to which surgeons have given the name of *Anchylosis*, but in the following remarkable case, which we take from the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales*, every joint in the body became ankylosed, so that, as M. Percy observes, the brazen skeleton offered by Hippocrates in the Temple of Delphos could not be more inflexible.

The patient, whose name was Simorre, was born at Mirepoix, in the department of Arriège, on the 28th of October, 1752; he entered the army at the age of fifteen, and served for twenty-one years in the regiment of Berry, where he reached the rank of captain. He was in the three Corsican campaigns, and during the war contracted the seeds of his disease by bivouacking on a cold and marshy soil. He first suffered from shooting pains in the great toes and ankles, alternating with inflammation of the eyes; and in 1785 he could no longer walk without assistance. In the following year all his joints were affected at once, and the *anchylosis* made most alarming progress. He was obliged to quit the service, and retired to Metz. He long struggled with fortitude against his disease; his limbs were growing stiff, and in spite of his sufferings he forcibly endeavoured to move them. His arms and his head underwent the lot of his feet and knees; the whole body became inflexible; even the lower jaw, which in other persons has remained moveable, became fixed like the other joints. Simorre, to use his own expression, was then no more than a living corpse. He might, indeed, says M. Percy, have been considered comparatively happy in this unfortunate situation, had he had the insensibility of a real corpse. But far from enjoying this melancholy repose he suffered the most excruciating pain. He passed four months in an easy-chair, as it was not possible to get him into bed. His posture in the chair is that of his skeleton, which is still preserved at Paris, for it was at this period that his joints became entirely useless. He was then placed in his bed, where he passed two years without sleeping, for as soon as he closed his eyes his limbs were agitated by the most violent startings. Opium did not relieve him. In 1792 the joints, which had been swelled, began to sink; and the pain, which Simorre had borne with the dignity of a stoic, was lessened in the same proportion. He could now be moved without causing him much pain, and he was lifted up in one solid piece when it was necessary to make his bed; this, however, was only done once a month, and care was taken not to efface the hollow in which his body lay, as it would have been so painful to him to make another.

By examining the skeleton it will be seen that the right elbow was below the level of the trunk, that the spine was rather curved, and the pelvis raised in front; and that many precautions were requisite to prevent the weight of the body from resting on one part more than another. The legs formed an acute angle with the thighs, and the arms were nearly at right angles to the trunk. The fore-arms were bent upon the chest, and the wrists continually pressed upon it. The right hand was closed, and the left open. The fingers were separated, and ankylosed in that position; they were terminated by a nail or rather a horn about four inches long, and the same breadth; this was also the case in the toes. As he could not move his jaw he was obliged to suck in wine and soup through his teeth. Two of his upper incisors were drawn, which enabled him to swallow more solid food, and to speak with greater ease. He was fed with minced meat, broths, and steeped bread; a reed was used to enable him to drink.

Though his condition was now improved, Simorre was yet in a state of continual suffering; he could not sleep for more than a quarter of an hour at once; but he was contented with his lot, and consoled himself with joyous sallies and humorous songs: for several successive years he printed an almanac of songs written at his dictation; and his indigence was alleviated by the sale of this little work. His songs breathed the soul of gaiety; and he painted his condition in them in such a manner as at once to excite compassion and laughter. The muscles of his face had acquired an extraordinary degree of mobility, being unceasingly in action, partly in order to supply the want of gestures in his conversation, and partly to

sonages of that era, who was then bishop of the diocese. Bishop Grostete is one of those cultivators of physical science in the dark ages to whom is ascribed the fabrication of a brazen head, which is said to have been able to speak as if it had had life. A similar fable is related of Albertus Magnus and our other illustrious countryman Roger Bacon. To the tower rebuilt by Grostete, Bishop D'Alderly, who governed the see from 1300 to 1319, added a lofty spire of wood, which remained till it was blown down by a tempest in 1547. The same prelate is supposed to have built the two western towers, which he also surmounted with wooden spires. They were taken down by the Dean and Chapter in 1808. The person by whom the remaining parts of the fabric were principally erected, was John Welbourne, who was treasurer of the cathedral from 1351 to 1381. The upper part of the south end of the great transept, the stalls of the choir, and the statues and windows above the western entrances, are ascribed to him. Since his time no considerable additions have been made to the building; but it has frequently undergone extensive repairs. Like many of our other cathedrals, the Minster, as it is commonly called, of Lincoln was subjected, during the civil wars, and the existence of the commonwealth, to the most wanton desecration and injury.

The Cathedral of Lincoln stands upon ground of considerable elevation, and, overlooking a flat country, may be seen from the distance of twenty miles. Fuller remarks that its floor is higher than the roofs of most other churches. It is built in the usual form of a cross, with this peculiarity however, that besides the great transept in the centre, it has also shorter transepts both at the east and the west end. A building, called the cloisters, issues from the north wall, and to the extremity of this is attached the chapter-house, a circular structure, surrounded by deep buttresses, and surmounted by a pyramidal roof. The dimensions of the cathedral are very great, the whole length of the interior being 470 feet. The western front is 174 feet wide, and the length of the great transept is 220 feet in the interior. Its width is 63 feet, and its height 74. The chapter-house is above 60 feet in diameter, the roof being supported by a single cluster of columns in the centre. The circumference of this room is divided into ten compartments, or sides, one of which is occupied by the door, and the other nine by windows.

The most imposing exterior part of the cathedral is the west front. It has been preferred by some eminent judges to any thing in York Minster. The centre of the under portion of it is occupied by a large and deep door-way, leading into the nave, on both sides of which are humbler entrances into the aisles. Above these is a façade, richly ornamented with windows, niches, and statues. Groups of turrets crown the extremities, and two towers, rising to the height of 206 feet, surmount the whole. The great central tower is 262 feet in height; and pinnacles shoot from each corner both of it and of the western towers. Similar ornaments rise above each buttress along the whole extent of the nave and choir.

The Cathedral of Lincoln was in old times celebrated for the extraordinary splendour of its shrines, and other decorations; but the reformation stripped it of all this wealth. Down to a much later period, however, it was crowded with ancient tombs, many of them curious for their rich sculpture, others highly interesting on account of those whose remains they contained, and of whom they were memorials. They were, however, nearly all destroyed in the time of the commonwealth. When the storm of the civil wars was felt to be approaching, Sir William Dugdale, in 1641, proceeded to copy all the epitaphs he could find in Lincoln and other cathedrals, "to the end," as he says in his Life, "that the memory of them, in case of that destruction then imminent,

might be preserved for future and better times;" and in the second volume of Peck's *Desiderata Curiosa* is given an account of one hundred and sixty-three monumental inscriptions, as they stood in this cathedral in the year mentioned ("most of which," it is affirmed, "were soon after torn up, or otherwise defaced"), collected by Robert Sanderson, who afterwards became bishop of this see, and corrected by Dugdale's Survey.

DESCRIPTION OF SICILY.

THE beautiful and fertile island of Sicily, in the Mediterranean, occupies a surface of about 10,642 British square miles, and has a population of 1,787,771 inhabitants; being in the proportion of 168 to each square mile. Its population is said to have been much greater in ancient times, but it is now considerably more than it was fifty years ago, having been 1,123,163 in the year 1770; and 1,619,305 in the year 1798.

Sicily was formerly the granary of ancient Rome, and it has still capabilities of feeding a population very far exceeding its own, if its agriculture were not depressed and shackled by bad husbandry and erroneous regulations. Artificial meadows are unknown; so are potatoes, turnips, beets, and other green crops; unless when planted with beans or peas, the ground is constantly cropped with corn, with intervals of one or two years' fallow or wild pasture. The soil, though badly cleaned and manured, yields upon an average eight for one, in some districts sixteen for one, and in some few, even thirty-two for one. The land is let in large tracts to companies of farmers, or rather shepherds, some of them proprietors of ten or twelve thousand sheep. The different flocks feed together, and once a year an account is taken of them, the result of which is afterwards entered in a book, where each of the proprietors is debited and credited with his share of the proceeds and expenses, in proportion to his number of sheep, and credited with the proceeds of the milk converted into cheese, of the butter-milk, of the wool, and of the rent of a portion of the land let to under-tenants.

There are in Sicily many well cultivated vineyards; and the wine of Milazzo, of Syracuse, of Avola, and Vittoria go to Italy. That of Marsala is exported to all parts of the world, and is largely consumed in England. Hemp is also grown; but corn is the main produce of the island, and it is received in certain public magazines free of charge, which in some parts of the island are rather excavations into calcareous rocks, or holes in the ground, shaped like a bottle, walled up and made waterproof, containing each about 1600 English bushels of corn. The receipt of the *caricatore*, or keeper of the magazine, being a transferable stock, is the object of some gambling on the public exchanges of Palermo, Messina, and Catania, the speculations being grounded on the expected rise or fall of corn. So long has corn been preserved by these means, that it has been found perfectly good after the lapse of a century. The olive grows to a larger size in Sicily than on the continent of Italy, and attains a greater age, there being evidence of trees having reached the age of seven or eight centuries. The peasants respect the olive, and cannot bear that they should be destroyed, yet they take no care of them, and the oil they make is, in general, only fit for soap-boilers. The pistachio nut is cultivated here, as well as a large sort of beans, which answer the purpose of potatoes, and forming a considerable part of the food of both men and animals. The Sicilian honey is in much estimation, and owing to the great consumption of wax in churches, the proceeds of bee-hives form a valuable item in husbandry. Some cotton is grown about Terranova and Catania; and these are the principal natural resources of the country.

The chief town in Sicily is Palermo, containing

drive away insects by wrinkling up his skin. Simorre had a fine face, and a physiognomy full of hilarity and expression; his rich black hair covered a broad forehead which was bounded by his thick and arched eyebrows; he had an aquiline nose, and handsome eyes. He terminated his painful career in 1802, at the age of fifty. The approach of death did not shake the fortitude of which he had given so many proofs for twelve years; the serenity of his soul remained untroubled. The cheerfulness of this man under such a severe affliction offers an encouraging example both to those who suffer disease and pain, and those who are comparatively free from the heavier evils of mortality. There is no evil which cannot be made lighter by fortitude and resignation;—and too often imaginary calamities, or false apprehensions, produce more disquietude in the gloomy and impatient mind than even poor Simorre endured under his extraordinary deprivation.

Rational Amusement.—The love of literature has prevailed from very early times among the inhabitants of the remote island of Iceland. There, the way in which the evenings of their long winter are spent, furnishes a most agreeable contrast to the miserable pot-house debauchery which fills up the leisure of too many uncultivated Englishmen, and proves the value of well-regulated knowledge, as an auxiliary to virtue. A distinguished traveller, who spent a winter in Iceland, has described "a winter evening in an Icelandic family, as rendered instructive and pleasing in the highest degree, by the prevailing love of useful knowledge among all ranks. As soon as the evening shuts in, the family assemble, master and mistress, children and servants. They all take their work in their hands, except one who acts as reader. Though they have very few printed books, numbers write excellently and copy out the numerous histories of their own island. The reader is frequently interrupted by the head of the family, or some of the more intelligent members, who make remarks and propose questions to exercise the ingenuity of the children or the servants. In this way the minds of all are improved in such a degree, "that," says my informant, "I have frequently been astonished at the familiarity with which many of these self-taught peasants have discoursed on subjects, which, in other countries, we should expect to hear discussed by those only who have devoted their lives to the study of science." Let me not omit to add, that the evening thus rationally and virtuously begun, is, by these well-instructed people, closed with an act of family devotion.

[From an excellent little work just published, 'Bullar's Hints and Cautions in the Pursuit of General Knowledge.']

The Capelin.—The shell-fish shops of London have lately exhibited an article of food which was previously little known in England—the dried capelin. As a relish for the breakfast-table, this production of the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador is likely to become extensively used. A correspondent sends us the following notice of the fish, extracted from a 'Voyage in H. M. S. ship Rosamond to Newfoundland, by Lieut. E. Chappell, R. N. 1818.' "The cod are taken by hooks, baited either with *capelin* or *herrings*. The latter is a kind of fish well known in Europe; but the capelin seems to be peculiar to the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador. As they are equally plentiful with the cod in those countries, and are, as a bait, so essentially necessary towards obtaining the latter, a short account of them may not be unacceptable to the reader, particularly as these fish have been strangely overlooked by the most distinguished naturalists.

"The capelin is a small and delicate species of fish, greatly resembling the smelt. It visits the shores we are describing about the months of August and September, for the evident purpose of depositing its spawn upon the sandy beaches. At such times, the swarms of these fish are so numerous that they darken the surface of the sea for miles in extent, whilst the cod prey upon them with the utmost voracity. The manner of the capelin's depositing its spawn is one of the most curious circumstances attending its natural history. The male fishes are somewhat larger than the female, and are provided also with a sort of *ridge*, projecting on each side of the back-bones, similar to

the eaves of a house, in which the female capelin is deficient. The latter, on approaching the beach to deposit its spawn, is attended by two male fishes, who huddle the female between them, until her whole body is concealed under the projecting ridges before mentioned, and only her head is visible. In this state they run, all three together, with great swiftness upon the sands; when the males, by some imperceptible inherent power, compress the body of the female betwixt their own, so as to expel the spawn from an orifice near the tail. Having thus accomplished its delivery, the three capelin separate; and paddling with their whole force through the shallow surf of the beach, generally succeed in regaining, once more, the bosom of the deep.

"It is an entertaining sight, while standing upon the shore, to observe myriads of these fishes, forsaking their own element, and running their bodies on the sand in all directions. Many of them find it totally impossible to return to the water, and thus the beaches of Labrador are frequently covered with dead capelin. They have so little timidity, that when the author has waded into the sea, amidst a shoal of them, he has taken two or three at a time in his hands. Upon these occasions, he was enabled to ascertain beyond a doubt, that the evacuation of the spawn is caused by a compression on the part of the male; as, when thus taken in the hand, the female capelin invariably yielded up its spawn the instant that it received the slightest pressure from the fingers. The capelin are sometimes salted and dried by the fishermen, and afterwards toasted with butter for their breakfasts."

Quackery.—Dr. F—, a physician of Montpellier, was in the habit of employing a very ingenious artifice. When he came to a town where he was not known, he pretended to have lost his dog, and ordered the public crier to offer, with beat of drum, a reward of twenty-five louis to whoever should bring it to him. The crier took care to mention all the titles and academic honours of the doctor, as well as his place of residence. He soon became the talk of the town. "Do you know," says one, "that a famous physician has come here, a very clever fellow; he must be very rich, for he offers twenty-five louis for finding his dog." The dog was not found, but patients were.

New Way to get Practice.—A poor physician, with plenty of knowledge and no practice, imparted his troubles to one of his friends. "Listen to my advice," says the other, "and follow it. The *Café de la Régence* is in fashion; I play at chess there every day at two o'clock, when the crowd is thickest; come there too; do not recognise me, and do not speak a word, but seem in a reverie; take your coffee, and always give the waiter the money in a piece of rose-coloured paper—leave the rest to me." The physician followed his advice, and his oddity was soon remarked. His kind friend said to the customers of the coffee-house, "Gentlemen, do not think ill of this man because he seems an oddity; he is a profound practitioner; I have known him these fifteen years, and I could tell you of some wonderful cures that he has performed; but he thinks of nothing but his books, and never speaks except to his patients, which has prevented me from becoming intimate with him; but if ever I am obliged to keep my bed, he is the doctor for me." The friend went on in this way, varying the style of his panegyric from time to time, till by degrees all his auditors consulted the doctor with the rose-coloured paper.

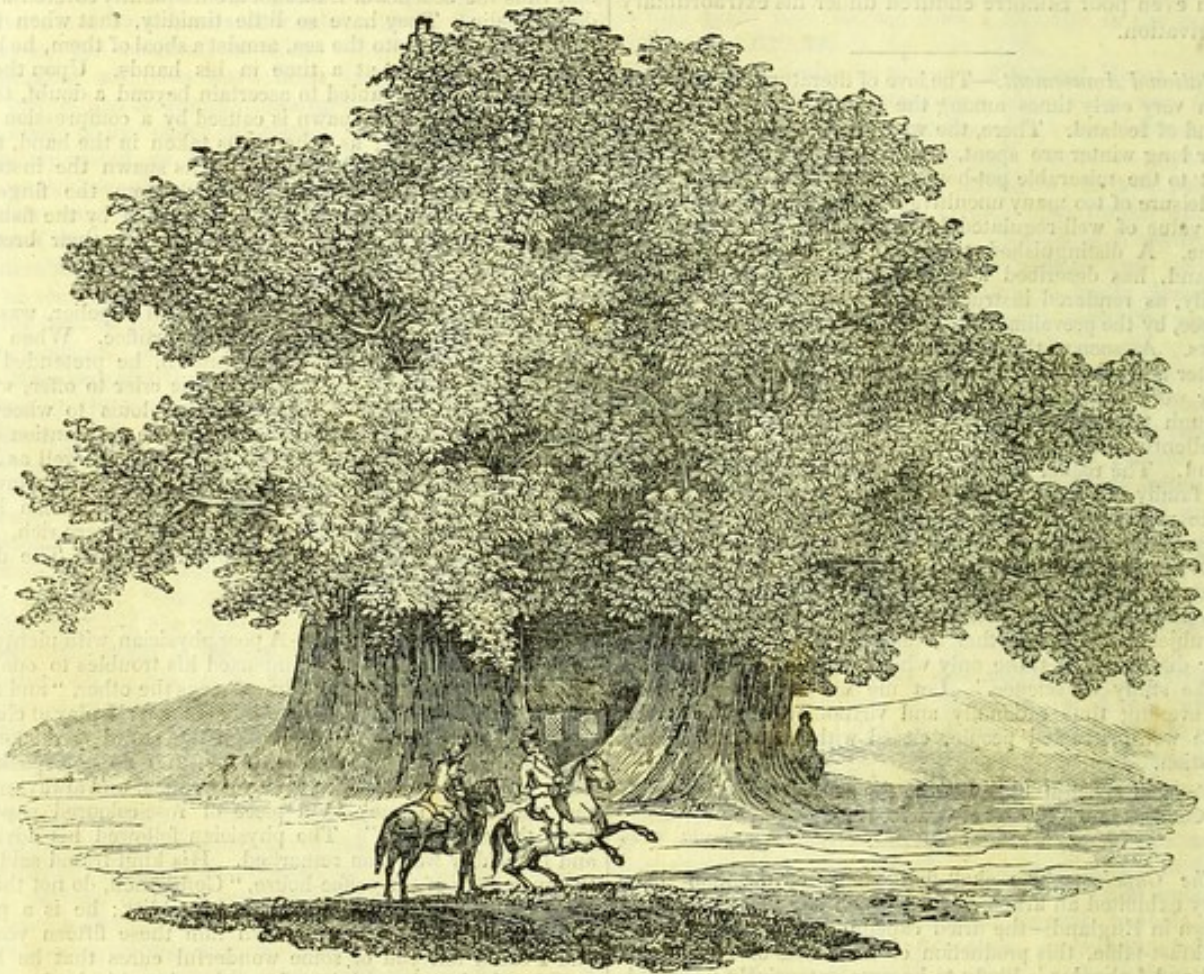
THE GIGANTIC CHESNUT TREE OF MOUNT ÆTNA.

ONE of the most celebrated trees in the world is the great chesnut tree of Mount Ætna, of which the following wood-cut is a representation, as it existed in 1784; it is known by the name of the *Castagno de cento cavalli* (the Chesnut tree of a hundred horses). A tradition says, that Jane, queen of Arragon, on her voyage from Spain to Naples, landed in Sicily, for the purpose of visiting Mount Ætna; and that being overtaken by a storm, she and her hundred attendants on horseback found shelter within the enormous trunk of this celebrated tree. At any rate the name which it bears, whether the story be true or not, is expressive enough of its prodigious size.

We extract the following passage, descriptive of this tree, from the article "*Ætna*," in the Penny Cyclopædia:—

"It appears to consist of five large and two smaller trees, which, from the circumstance of the barks and boughs being all outside, are considered to have been one trunk originally. The largest trunk is thirty-eight feet in circumference, and the circuit of the whole five, measured just above the ground, is one hundred and sixty-three feet; it still bears rich foliage, and much small fruit, though the heart of the trunk is decayed, and a public road leads through it wide enough for two coaches to drive abreast. In the middle cavity a hut is built for the accommodation of those who collect and preserve the chesnuts.

"This is said, by the natives, to be 'the oldest of trees.' From the state of decay, it is impossible to have recourse to the usual mode of estimating the age of trees by counting the concentric rings of annual growth, and therefore no exact numerical expression can be assigned to the antiquity of this individual. That it may be some thousand years old is by no means improbable. Adanson examined in this manner a Baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*) in Senegal, and inferred that it had attained the age of five thousand one hundred and fifty years; and De Candolle considers it not improbable that the celebrated Taxodium of Chapultepec, in Mexico (*Cupressus disticha*, Linn.), which is one hundred and seventeen feet in circumference, may be still more aged."



[Great Chesnut Tree of Mount Ætna.]

It is evident that if the great chesnut tree were in reality a collection of trees, as it appears to be, the wonder of its size would at once be at an end. Brydone, who visited it in 1770, says—

"I own I was by no means struck with its appearance, as it does not seem to be one tree, but a bush of five large trees growing together. We complained to our guides of the imposition; when they unanimously assured us, that by the universal tradition, and even testimony of the country, all these were once united in one stem; that their grandfathers remembered this, when it was looked upon as the glory of the forest, and visited from all quarters; that for many years past it had been reduced to the venerable ruin we beheld. We began to examine it with more attention, and found that there was indeed an appearance as if these five trees had really been once united in one. The opening in the middle is at present prodigious; and it does indeed require faith to believe, that so vast a space was once occupied by solid timber. But there is no appearance of bark on the

inside of any of the stumps, nor on the sides that are opposite to one another. I have since been told by the Canonico Recupero, an ingenious ecclesiastic of this place, that he was at the expense of carrying up peasants with tools to dig round the Castagno de' cento cavalli, and he assures me, upon his honour, that he found all these stems united below ground in one root."

Houel, in his '*Voyage Pittoresque des Isles de Sicile*, tome ii. p. 79, 1784, has given a plate of this tree, from which the above cut is copied. He appears to have taken great pains to ascertain the fact of there being only one trunk, and to have completely satisfied himself that the apparent divisions have been produced, partly by the decay of time, and partly by the peasants continually cutting out portions of the wood and bark for fuel.

•• The Office of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge is at 59, Lincoln's Inn Fields.

LONDON:—CHARLES KNIGHT, PAUL-MALL EAST.

Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES, Stamford Street.