

The Poetical Garland of Julia

HUET has given a charming description of a present made by a lover to his mistress; a gift which romance has seldom equalled for its gallantry, ingenuity, and novelty. It was called the Garland of Julia. To understand the nature of this gift, it will be necessary to give the history of the parties.

The beautiful Julia d'Angennes was in the flower of her youth and fame, when the celebrated Gustavus, king of Sweden, was making war in Germany with the most splendid success. Julia expressed her warm admiration of this hero. She had his portrait placed on her toilette, and took pleasure in declaring that she would have no other lover than Gustavus. The Duke de Montausier was, however, her avowed and ardent admirer. A short time after the death of Gustavus, he sent her, as a new-year's gift, the POETICAL GARLAND, of which the following is a description.

The most beautiful flowers were painted in miniature by an eminent artist, one Robert, on pieces of vellum, all of an equal size. Under every flower a sufficient space was left open for a madrigal on the subject of that flower there painted. The duke solicited the wits of the time to assist in the composition of these little poems, reserving a considerable number for the effusions of his own

amorous muse. Under every flower he had its madrigal written by a penman, N. du Jarry, who was celebrated for beautiful writing. It is decorated by a frontispiece, which represents a splendid garland composed of these twenty-nine flowers; and on turning the page a Cupid is painted. These were magnificently bound, and inclosed in a bag of rich Spanish leather. This gift, when Julia awoke on new-year's day, she found lying on her toilette; it was one quite to her taste, and successful to the donor's hopes.

Of this Poetical Garland, thus formed by the hands of Wit and Love, Huet says, "As I had long heard of it, I frequently expressed a wish to see it: at length the Duchess of Uzez gratified me with a sight. She locked me in her cabinet one afternoon with this garland; she then went to the queen, and at the close of the evening, liberated me. I never passed a more agreeable afternoon."

One of the prettiest inscriptions of these flowers is the following, composed for

THE VIOLET.

Modeste en ma couleur, modeste en mon sejour,
 Franche d'ambition, je me cache sous l'herbe;
 Mais, si sur votre fronte je puis me voir un jour,
 La plus humble des fleurs, sera la plus superbe.

Modest my colour, modest is my place,
Pleased in the grass my lowly form to hide;
But mid your tresses might I wind with grace,
The humblest flower would feel the loftiest pride.

The following is some additional information respecting “the Poetical Garland of Julia.”

At the sale of the library of the Duke de la Vallière, in 1784, among its numerous literary curiosities this garland appeared. It was actually sold for the extravagant sum of 14,510 livres! though in 1770 at Gaignat’s sale, it only cost 780 livres. It is described, “a manuscript on vellum, composed of twenty-nine flowers painted by one Robert, under which are inserted madrigals by various authors.” But the Abbé Rive, the superintendent of the Vallière library, published in 1779 an inflammatory notice of this garland; and as he and the duke had the art of appreciating, and it has been said *making* spurious literary curiosities, this notice was no doubt the occasion of the maniacal price.

In the revolution of France, this literary curiosity found its passage into this country. A bookseller offered it for sale at the enormous price of 500*l.* sterling! No curious collector has been discovered to have purchased this unique; which is most remarkable for the extreme folly of the purchaser who gave the 14,510 livres for po-

etry and painting not always exquisite. The history of the garland of Julia is a child’s lesson for certain rash and inexperienced collectors, who may here

“Learn to do well by others’ harm.”