

THE SENTINEL OF POMPEII.

WHAT MIRACLES OF DUTY OUGHT NOT CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS
PERFORM.

(*General Ambert in L'Univers.*)

While visiting the Bourbon Museum at Naples, in company with some of my friends, on proceeding into the Hall No. 2, my left arm touched by chance a complete suit of armor, placed near the entrance. There immediately issued from the figure sounds similar to those produced by a rigid body striking against the metal. Taken by surprise, and seeking to comprehend the cause of this phenomenon, my companions stopped before the armor, which appeared not much worthy of notice, except from its antiquity. Heavy and without ornament, it had evidently belonged to a simple soldier. The point of the lance remained resting near the shoulder, but the wood had been eaten away by time. After a few moments' hesitation, a Neapolitan approached us, and said, "Messieurs, it is the sentinel of Pompeii." These words excited our curiosity: we proceeded to interrogate our informant, who stated that the suit of armor in question enclosed the skeleton of a soldier who was on sentry before the body-guard of the Roman centurion at Pompeii, in the 79th year of the Christian era. At the least shock, the bones, of the skeleton are put in motion, and strike against the metal—hence proceeded the noise that had arrested our attention.

Regarding now with interest that old suit of armor, we thought of the soldier whose bones it contained. Without doubt he had been placed at his post the 23rd November, 79, the first year of the reign of Titus. The weather was magnificent, the sun glowing in a cloudless heaven, and the inhabitants, joyous and tranquil, were occupied with the affairs of commerce or of pleasure. The sun had passed the meridian, when suddenly fearful subterranean noises were heard in the direction of Vesuvius. Torrents of flame and enormous masses of rock leaped high into the air, and the crater commenced to belch forth from its horrid mouth dense clouds of ashes and burning lava, which in a short time buried the neighboring towns.