At the same time, to prove the high regard and esteem the Emperor of China entertained for the King of Great Britain, his Imperial Majesty delivered, from his own hand, into that of the Ambassador, a very valuable box, containing the miniature pictures of all the preceding emperors; to which is annexed, a description in verse by each emperor, descriptive of himself and the principal features of his government, as well as a line of conduct recommended to their several successors.

The Emperor, on presenting this gift to the Ambassador, spoke to the following purport:

“Deliver this casket to the King your master, with your own hand, and tell him; though the present may appear to be small, it is, in my estimation, the most valuable that I can give, or my empire can furnish; for it has been transmitted to me through a long line of my predecessors, and is the last token of affection which I had reserved to bequeath to my son and successor; as a tablet of the virtues of his ancestors, which he had only to peruse, as I should hope, to inspire him with the noble resolution to follow such bright examples; and, as they had done, to make it the grand object of his life to exalt the honour of the Imperial throne, and advance the happiness and prosperity of his people.”

Such were the words delivered by the Emperor on the occasion, as communicated by Mr. Plumb, the interpreter, and which occasioned, as may be imagined, no small degree of speculation among the gentlemen of the retinue.

The Ambassador returned to dinner, and soon after repaired to the Imperial palace, with his whole suite and attendants, to see a play which was expressly performed as a particular mark of respect to the embassy.

This dramatic entertainment was represented in one of the inner courts of the palace, on a temporary stage erected for the purpose. It was decorated with a profusion of silk, ribbons, and streamers, and illuminated with great splendour and elegance.

The performance consisted of a great variety of mock battles and military engagements; lofty tumbling, as it is expressed with us, and dancing both on the tight and slack ropes ; and in all these exercises that agility was displayed, which would have done no discredit to the gymnastic amusements of Sadler’s Wells or Astley’s amphitheatre: but the skill of the performers was more particularly astonishing in the art of balancing, in which they excelled any thing of the kind I had ever seen. By an imperceptible motion, as it appeared, of the joints of their arms and legs, they gave to basons, jugs, glasses, &c. an apparent power of loco-motion, and produced a progressive equilibrium, by which these vessels changed their portions from one part to another of the bodies of the balancers, in a manner so extraordinary, that I almost suspected the correctness of my own senses.

The succession of entertainments was concluded by a variety of curious deceptions by slight of hand, which the almost magical activity of Breslaw or Comus has never exceeded: and, as a proof of assertion, I shall mention one of them, which, I must own, astonished me, and seemed to have an equal effect on the rest of the spectators.

The performer began by exhibiting a large bason in every possible position, when he suddenly placed it on the stage with the hollow part downwards, and instantly taking it up again, discovered a large rabbit, which escaped from the performer, who attempted to catch it, by taking refuge among the spectators. This deception was perfectly unaccountable to me, as there were no visible means whatever of communication, by which it was possible to convey so large an animal to the spot: the stage was also covered with matting, so that it could not be conveyed through the floor, which if that had been the case, must have been discovered by those, and there were many of them, who were within three yards of the spot; besides, the whole display of the trick occupied a few seconds. Several other deceptions of a similar kind prolonged our amusement. The whole of the entertainment was accompanied by a band of musicians, placed on the stage.

The theatre was filled with persons of distinction, and formed a very splendid appearance. The Ambassador and his suite returned about nine o’clock, having been very much gratified by the entertainment of the evening.