

ARTICLE VII.

REFLECTIONS IN ROME.

BY THE REVEREND JAMES LINDSAY, D.D., KILMARNOCK,
SCOTLAND.

No city ministers so much to thought and meditation, to instruction and veneration, as does Rome. To every people and nation, indeed, the history and monuments of *Urbs Roma* minister in unique and signal ways. The associations of Rome are overpowering in character, as well as in number. They crowd upon the mind at every turn and step: here are colossal ruins of wrecked perfection; there are basilicas, palaces, and towers, that teem with suggestions of suffering, pathos, and heroism, beyond the power of words to describe: everywhere indelible traces of a past, peerless and unparalleled. The origin of Rome—the date of her foundation—is shrouded in mythological haze, which archæologists and historians alike have in vain sought to penetrate. The life of the Eternal City has, historically, been one of change, from the time when the brooding East overcame the militant West, and that *imperium Romanum*, which to a Nietzsche is still type of all that is admirable, was broken, up to this day; its position, geologically, has been in the center of a volcanic region, the extinction of whose fires is comparatively recent. But no city could have been more fortunate in her site than Rome, with her seven Pliocene hills, suited as it preëminently was to the races that dwelt in and around her. Rome, city of cypress and palm, of pine and acanthus, of orange and oleander, of odoriferous blossom

and juicy vine, of pillared dome and silvery fountain, of portico and column and nymph and triton, of graceful arch, discrowned mausoleum, and colossal aqueduct, teems with life in the present no less than with glories of the past.

From the Janiculum Hill, the panoramic view is magnificent, reaching, as it does, over not only the Eternal City itself, but also over the broad undulating plain of the deserted Campagna, with the Etruscan Hills and Mount Soracte on the left, the Sabine Mountains in front, and the Alban Hills on the right. The ascent to the Janiculum is made by the Via Garibaldi, which, with the monument to Garibaldi, testifies to the honor in which this national hero is held, as does the Via Cavour to the city's appreciation of Cavour's genius. These twain, but not without Mazzini, were the regenerators of Italy. The Capitol, with its temples, carries abounding fascinating associations with the government and institutions of ancient Rome. The sacred buildings on the Capitoline Horace calls the *sacras arces*.¹ Capitol, Palatine, and Forum, where varied civilizations were cradled, and power, pomp, and pleasure bore sway, have all perished, leaving thought and memory to muse and learn from their decline and fall. The statue of Marcus Aurelius in the square of the Capitol, and the pillar of Aurelius in the Piazza Colonna, are pleasing memorials in Rome of the great and virtuous Emperor. The Capitoline Museum contains the notable statue termed the Dying Gaul, formerly called the Dying Gladiator; also, the Capitoline Venus, with the statues of orators, philosophers, and emperors, in rich profusion. The statues of the philosophers suggest how little philosophy ever lacked friends in Rome, albeit the Roman philosophisers gave themselves over mainly to spread the doctrines of the Greek philosophers in the Roman tongue. When Freeman visited

¹ Odes, l. 2, 3.

Rome, he wrote, "It is something indeed to see the Forum and Capitol"; but soon added, "I am most struck by the prodigious gap between old and new Rome; there is nothing like it elsewhere. Bating the walls and gates, which seem to be of all dates from Romulus to Pius IX., there is next to nothing for the whole time from Constantine to Nicholas V."¹ There is certainly some truth behind such reflections, and modern Rome is too modern, preserves or presents too little of antique stages that are not yet the most ancient. In this same spirit of "barbarian complacency," we find Mrs. Browning writing from Rome: "It's a palimpsest Rome, a watering-place over the antique, and I haven't taken to it as a poet should, I suppose."²

The Forum, where Cæsar ruled, Cicero spoke, and Horace reflected, where patrician and plebeian fought, still stands as symbol, even in its ruined splendor, of the greatest center of the political, religious, and social life of Rome. Heart of the city, the Forum remained until her fall. Of all that the Forum suggests, nothing perhaps is more inspiring than what is recalled by the honored legend of Quintus Curtius. With what feelings one may to-day contemplate the Forum, we find Car-ducci setting forth in his poem on Rome:—

"Salve, dea Roma! Chinato a i ruderi
del Fòro, io seguo con dolci lacrime
e adoro i tuoi sparsi vestigi,
patria, diva, santa genitrice."

Of which Maud Holland's version may be taken:—

"Hail, Rome divine! bowed low to the rudiments
Here where the Forum slumbers, I, following
Thy scattered stones, bend o'er them weeping,
Country and goddess and holy mother."

Most characteristic and most imposing of all Rome's ruins is

¹ *Life and Letters*, vol. II. p. 76.

² *Life and Letters*, by Mrs. Sutherland Orr, p. 200.

the Colosseum. Roman in origin, the Colosseum is Greek in its triple style of architecture, and Jewish in the labor that carried it to completion. Its eighty-seven thousand spectators were accommodated in a building which, says Merivale, is of "the rich and warm travertine stone or encrusted with marble," and whose "most conspicuous parts shone with precious gems and metals." Here the pulses of the heart of Rome found fullest vent in incomparable horrors. The Colosseum remains to us, as the Forum does not. On this latter, the hand of time has not pressed lightly. The Colosseum has survived the *domus aurea*, or "Golden House," of Nero, and the Palaces of the Cæsars, and stands impressive and beautiful even in its measure of decay. Of Nero himself one thinks, in words of Renan, as "a painstaking stage hero, an operatic Emperor, music-mad, trembling before the pit, and making the pit tremble too." Mad enough he certainly was in his love of sensation. If the Forum recalls the courage of a Curtius, the Colosseum suggests the nobler sacrifice of the Syrian monk Telemachus, which led the Emperor Honorius to abolish the gladiatorial contests. Hard by is the Arch of Constantine, where, after his victory over Maxentius in 312, that Emperor declared in favor of Christianity. It was at least something to have a Constantine where had been a Galerius, for not even Gibbon, and still less Lecky, have been able to hide the suffering of those dread times. Mommsen truly says that "nowhere, perhaps, has the essential maxim of the slave state, that the rich man, who lives by the exertion of his slaves, is necessarily respectable, and the poor man, who lives by the labor of his hands, is necessarily vulgar, been recognised with so terrible a precision as the undoubted principle underlying all public and private intercourse." The harshness of the ruling conceptions had to be softened by Christianity ere the relations of slavery could be

mitigated, and finally abolished. Draper, in his "Intellectual Development of Europe," rightly enough remarks on the ruin of Rome being insured by her slave system ere yet the barbarians touched her, and certainly Rome knew nothing of Christianity's care for the individual, whom she treated, not as individual, but as thing. The view of Julia Wedgwood, in "The Moral Ideal," is not without an element of truth, that "obedience to steady systematic power" brings out valuable qualities in human nature, so that "when Virgil wrote, the virtues even of the slave were emerging into a development which Christianity was shortly to recognise and adopt."

Ancient nucleus and center of Rome was the famous Palatine Hill, with its Palaces of the Cæsars, signaling the pomp and luxury of the rulers of Rome. It was here, indeed, that Romulus founded the city of Rome in 753 B.C. What a city she was to become, in virtue of her aspiring genius, which led her to make merit and virtue her own, as Gibbon says, wherever she found them! What an absolute despotism was her government! What varied characters her Emperors bore, from the "exalted perfection" of an Augustus or a Hadrian down to "the dark, unrelenting Tiberius, the furious Caligula, the feeble Claudius, the profligate and cruel Nero, the beastly Vitellius, and the timid, inhuman Domitian"! At the foot of the Palatine rises the Triumphal Arch of Titus, commemorative of the defeat of the Jews in A.D. 70. In a hollow outside the Palatine stands the Arch of Janus, within what is known as the Forum Boarium, or cattle market. But it is impossible to speak in detail of a city whose every street seems to preserve some fragment, be it bronze or marble, of those ancient times. By a mighty leap we pass up to the Rome of to-day, wherein education, sanitation, pauperism, and such like matters have been improved or remedied to a degree that would have sur-

prised Sismondi, Macaulay, and Trollope, with other writers upon the remissness of Rome.

What a living part of Rome's history has been the massive mausoleum, now known as Castel S. Angelo, carrying thought back to the time when it served as tomb of Hadrian! It was here Gavazzi and others entered the dungeons of the Inquisition after the taking of Rome in 1870. Fronting this mausoleum is what Horace calls the *fluvium Tiberim*, the "tawny Tiber," of which Quevedo, as translated by Mrs. Hemans, says with regard to Rome, "Tiber alone survives" :—

"Rome! of thine ancient grandeur all is past,
That seemed for years eternal framed to last,
Naught but the wave—a fugitive—remains."

But this poetic feeling, in a sense true, is not the whole truth, for Rome has a grandeur, in her antiquity, that is unique, and which *does* rather shadow forth

"The triumphs won by Latium, than by Time."

This, although Rome has grown too much a modern city, with fewer antique attractions than leisured people might wish.

The Pantheon, in its wondrously perfect state of preservation, was founded in the days of Augustus, and bears us back to the times of Trajan and of Hadrian, by the latter of whom it was restored and used as a Court of Justice. Dedicated it originally was to Mars and Venus, the ancestral gods of the Julian family. Theodosius the Great closed it in 315 as a Pagan temple, but in 606 the Emperor Phocas gave it to Boniface IV., who consecrated it in honor of the Virgin and the martyrs. Raphael and other great artists are buried in the Pantheon, and it has been used since 1879 as the mausoleum of the Italian kings, among whose remains are those of Victor Emmanuel as first king of Italy. This mention of the Pantheon recalls what Gibbon says about all forms of worship being considered by the people of ancient Rome as "equally

true," by the philosophers as "equally false," and by the magistrates as "equally useful." While we are speaking of worship, St. Peter's may be noted as altogether deserving Gibbon's description of it as "the most glorious structure that ever has been applied to the use of religion."¹ Its grandeur and magnificence almost baffle description. It stands not far from the base of the Janiculum. The piazza, with its Egyptian obelisk and fountains, and the basilica, are on splendid scale. The statue of Charlemagne at the vestibule's close, the glorious dome of Angelo in the interior, the canopies, the statues, the mosaics, the monuments, the paintings, all combine to make the structure the most imposing religious edifice in the world. But this magnificence is largely shared by many more of the chief churches in Rome.

The Forum of Trajan, designed by the Greek architect Apollodorus, lies magnificent in its ruins, its edifices having been wonderful, according to Ammianus. Trajan's column, composed solely of marble, rises on the north side of the basilica, and is covered with reliefs commemorating the Dacian wars of Trajan. Of the palaces of Rome, the Quirinal Palace, begun by Pope Gregory XIII. in 1574 on the top of the Quirinal Hill, is the only one of which we shall speak, as it has since 1870 been used as seat of the Italian court. Fronting the Palace, and in the center of the piazza, are the two statues of Castor and Pollux, standing by their horses. The inscriptions on their bases ascribe these statues to Phidias and Praxiteles. The high and sunny Pincio, formerly covered with vineyards and gardens, but now a delightful promenade, affords not only a fine prospect of the city, but also a favoring view of the fashion of Rome to-day. Here, also, one sees the splendid monument to Goethe presented by the German emperor Wilhelm II.,

¹ *Decline and Fall*, vol. vii. p. 469.

its finely sculptured figures representing scenes from (1) "Wilhelm Meister," (2) from "Iphigenia," and (3) from "Faust." The monument repays, in part, the debt which the genius of Goethe owed to Rome. "I reckon a second birthday," wrote Goethe, "a true new birth from the day that I entered Rome." Not the same man was the Goethe who left Rome in 1788 as the Goethe who entered it in 1786. "In Rome," he wrote, "I have for the first time found myself, for the first time come into harmony with myself and grown happy and rational." This obviously means that the reflective side of his being had come into happy and harmonious relation with the emotional and imaginative side of his nature. When speaking of his last month in Rome, he tells of the illuminated contemplation which he had learned in these terms: "In Rome, where we are constantly in the presence of the plastic art-works of the ancients, we feel, as in the presence of Nature, that we are compassed about by the Infinite, the Unsearchable."

Little wonder that Goethe so felt, for where shall one find so much concentrated beauty as in Rome? What though the beauty be so largely borrowed from Athens—from Greece—so long as the beauty is not only there, but absorbed and assimilated, adapted and appropriated, so that it has become, in various senses, all her own? Where else could one so fitly say, of all that savors of the vulgar—

"Odi profanum vulgus et arceo"?

Ideal art, but art subject to law and never fantastic, art in which imagination is controlled by intellectual sanity—such is the art of Rome. What grandeur of design marks the frescoes of Angelo, and the work of the superb colorist of Urbino! Angelo's grand fresco, "The Last Judgment," in the Sistine Chapel, with Christ sitting in the center as Judge of humanity, sur-

rounded by no fewer than three hundred figures—angels, saints, and demons—is a vast and peerless work—*monumentum perennius aere* of the artist. Angelo's powerful statue of Moses, the mighty lawgiver, stands in the Church of St. Peter in Chains, as a memorial of the great artist's conception of the mingled impetuosity, strength, and divine nobility of Israel's leader. Inharmonious and disproportionate as are the separate parts of the statue, the general effect is yet impressive. In the Picture Gallery of the Vatican one sees the world-famous work of Raphael entitled "The Transfiguration"; also, Raphael's "Madonna di Foligno," Domenichino's "Last Communion of St. Jerome," etc. Included among the Vatican art treasures are the famous Laocoön and his sons, the great Apollo Belvedere, considered the finest statue in the world, the statue of Meleager, with Etruscan and Egyptian antiquities in peerless variety and abundance. The Barberini Gallery, a small but good collection of paintings, contains the celebrated but unauthenticated "Beatrice Cenci" of Guido Reni, also Andrea del Sarto's "Madonna," etc. The large Borghese Gallery has many fine sculptures and paintings: among the former, Bernini's "David with the Sling," and his "Apollo and Daphne," Canova's Pauline Borghese, sister of Napoleon I., as Venus: among the latter, Raphael's "Entombment," Titian's "Sacred and Profane [or rather, Artless and Sated] Love," Guercino's "Return of the Prodigal Son," and the same subject by Bonifazio; also Correggio's "Danaë," S. Botticelli's "Madonna," etc. One cannot forget that it was in the surroundings of the Borghese Gardens that Goethe wrote the most wildly fantastic scene in "Faust"—that which describes the mad humors of the witch's kitchen. In Rome, too, his "Iphigenia" was rehandled. The Casino Rospigliosi contains Guido Reni's masterpiece, the "Aurora," on its ceiling, together with paintings

by Domenichino, Poussin, etc. Of the indebtedness of Rome to Greek art and ideal we have already spoken, but this indebtedness must not be exaggerated in the manner of certain recent writers, nor must it be forgotten how much Greece, in her turn, owed to the East. But, if Greece set her own stamp on all she borrowed from the East, so, too, did Rome set her own seal on all she inherited from Greece. The wonders of the East came to Hellas alike by land and by sea. But Greek genius asserted itself, and Greece at length came to her own, thanks to her instinctive yearnings for reason and beauty combined. It is necessary to remember in this connection what Finlay has said, in his "Greece under the Romans," that "the Romans were never very deeply imbued with a passionate admiration for Grecian art," notwithstanding that "the most celebrated works of art" were often transported to Rome, "as much on account of their celebrity as their merit." Fortunate for Greece was the inferior enthusiasm of the Romans for art, as she was less despoiled of her paintings and statues—was, in fact, saved from what might well have been a general confiscation of her art-treasures. As it was, Rome, even when most victorious, had enough to learn from her.

Passing out of Rome, on the Appian Way, or queen of roads, are seen the Tomb of the Scipios, the *Columbaria* or tombs of freedmen, and the Arch of Drusus, with the city walls built by Aurelianus on the course of the octroi. So, too, on the right (driving from Rome) are the imposing Baths of Caracalla, unequalled as a pleasure resort for the works of Art they contained. The Via Appia affords a splendid view of the Campagna, and of the ruins of the ancient tombs and the aqueducts built by the Emperor Claudius, with the beautiful blue Alban Hills as background. Of that rich, antique world, Matthew Arnold has yet said—

“On that hard Pagan world disgust
 And secret loathing fell:
 Deep weariness and sated lust
 Made human life a hell.

“In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,
 The Roman noble lay;
 He drove abroad, in furious guise,
 Along the Appian way;

“He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,
 And crown'd his hair with flowers—
 No easier nor no quicker pass'd
 The impracticable hours.”

On the Via Appia, and shaded by cypresses, are the Catacombs of St. Callixtus, perhaps the most interesting and remarkable of all the Catacombs. They contain, among other interesting relics, the Tomb of St. Cecilia, and two sarcophagi with the remains of the deceased still in them. These early burial-places have made “Roma Sotteranea” a source of great interest, and even fascination, to a long line of scholars and explorers. Many valuable inscriptions, paintings, and symbols have been discovered in the Catacombs within the last half-century. Tacitus tells of the “huge multitude” (*ingens multitudo*), as his “Annals” term it, of those whom Nero sent down to death, to divert odium from himself. It is not easy to reconcile the simplicity of early faith and practice, as evidenced in the Catacombs, with the complexity and splendor of ecclesiastical Rome to-day. This, even though we may admire what Bryce, in his “Holy Roman Empire,” calls “the warmth of tone, the repose, the stateliness of the churches of modern Rome.” Earlier in the Appian Way, but on the left, one sees the “Domine, Quo Vadis” Church, with its legend of St. Peter, which Michael Angelo took for the subject of his Christ in the Santa Maria sopra Minerva.

The varied magnificence of Rome lies in no material great-

ness, but in such superb manifestations of will and intellect as we have described. The nobility, vastness, and culture of Rome make her no less a training-school for the world to-day than she was in the days of Winckelmann and of Goethe. But from Rome to-day it is a far cry to that antique Rome in which we find those first developments of personality, which are, in truth, the ultimate foundation of Art. The triumph of Christianity over the old Roman Empire—so astonishing in the eyes of a Rousseau, no less than of a Lamennais or a Pascal—was made possible by the cruelty and the corruption of the ancient Roman civilization. Classic polytheism had become as the baseless fabric of a vision, for the old Paganism was as good as dead. The Stoicism of an Aurelius, an Epictetus, or a Seneca, was utterly incapable, in its impotent disdain, of ameliorating the existing condition of mankind. The rude art of the Catacombs was already radiant with higher hopes and more glorious happiness than had entered the mind or imagination of pagan Rome. A religion that could deify a Caligula, a Nero, a Domitian, a Commodus, could hardly fail to fall into contempt, but Rome traced her own decline to Christianity. as a religion of peace, inimical to the existing government of the Roman Empire. The weight of wealth, wisdom, pride, and prejudice was against Christianity, making her steady and triumphant progress a truly marvelous phenomenon. But Christianity which, in breaking the power of the *imperium Romanum*, broke the power of the strongest, triumphed over Paganism just because of its inherent and limitless capacity for growth and self-renewal, and because it was the religion of strength that had arisen out of weakness and helplessness.