

**SKETCHES OF
EUROPEAN
CAPITALS**

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Sketches of European Capitals by William Ware

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WILLIAM WARE

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BY
WILLIAM WARE,

AUTHOR OF
'ZENOBIA, OR LETTERS FROM PALMYRA,' 'AURELIAN,' ETC.

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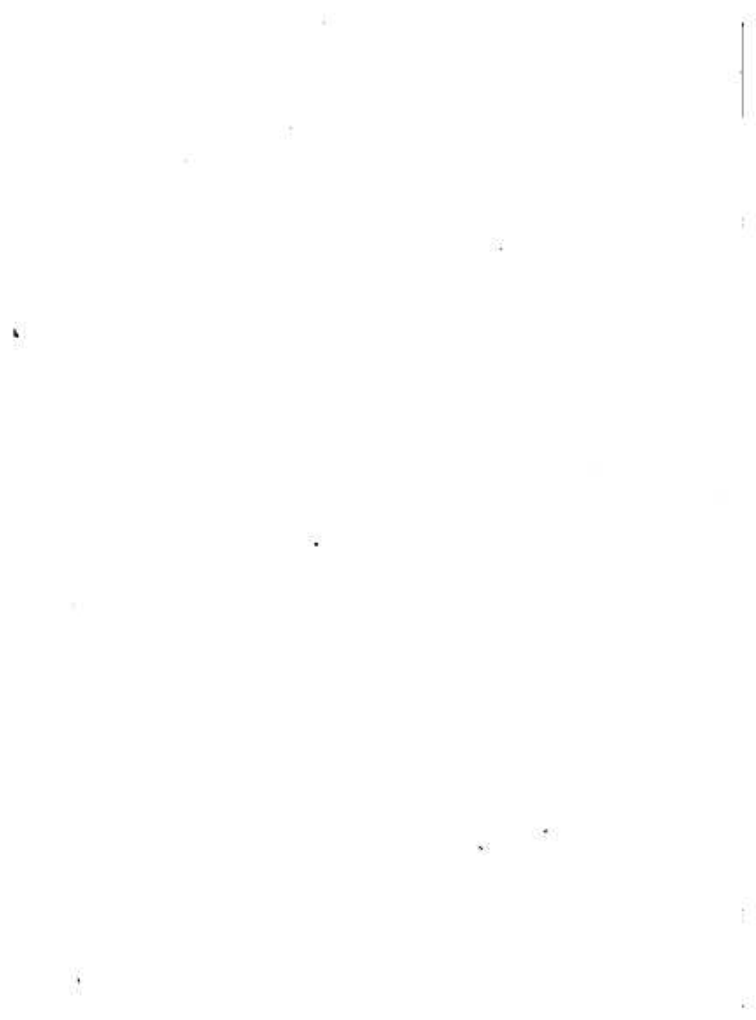
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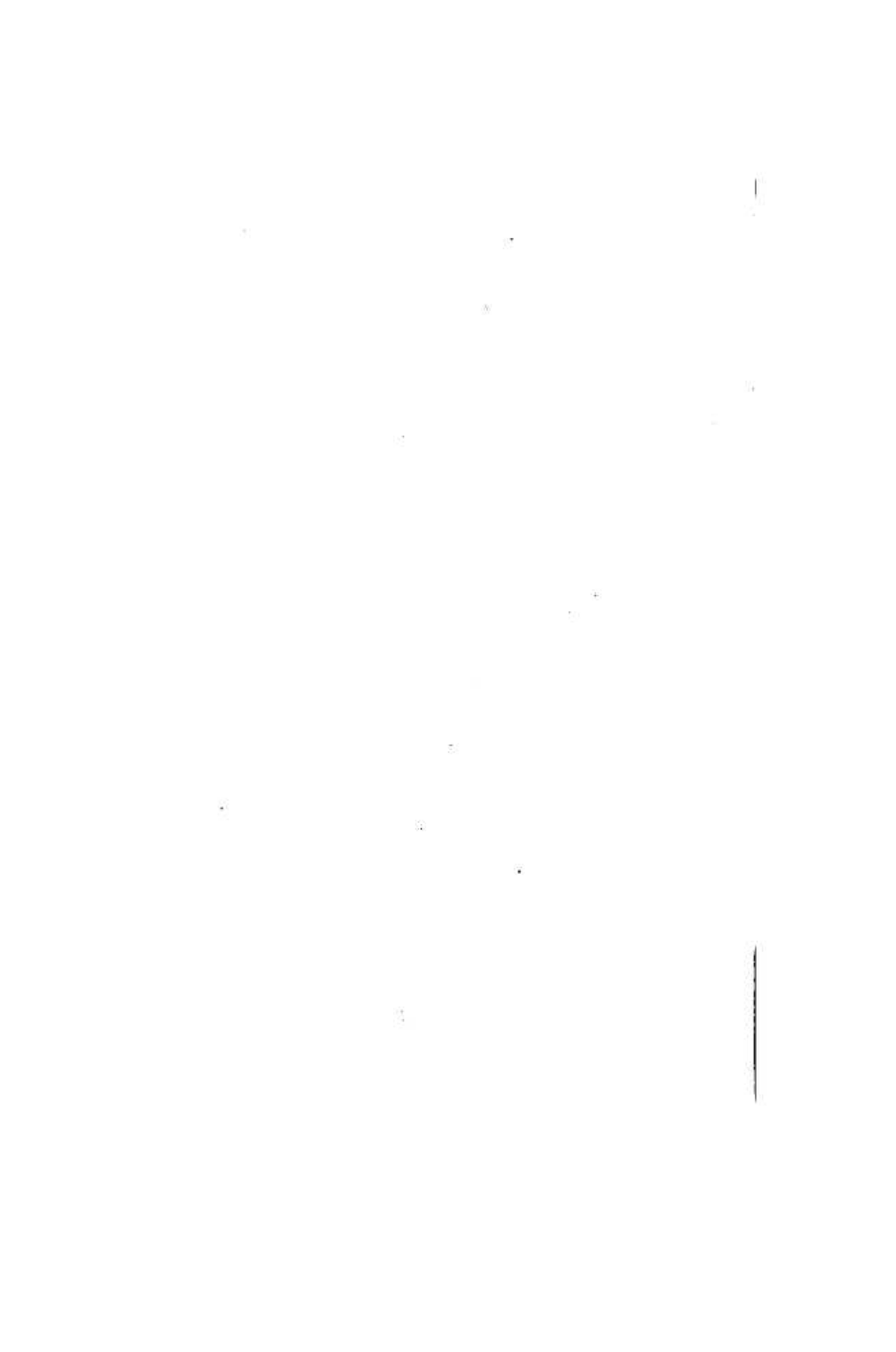
THIS small volume comes into existence, like so many others now-a-days, as a convenient way of disposing of matter previously used in the form of Lectures. They are the sketches of a traveller, and aim to give the first rapid impressions, with as little error and exaggeration as possible, of places visited in the course of a year's absence. I only hope they may not prove more incorrect in fact, or false in inference, than the majority of writings of the class. It is a volume of light reading for the summer road-side; and though, like the flowers of that season, perishing with them, one may be permitted to hope that, like some of them, at least, it may exhale a not unpleasing fragrance while it lasts.

CAMBRIDGE, JUNE 1851.



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ANCIENT ROME.

THE approach to Rome on any side, and in any direction, is signified to the stranger by his entrance upon the Campagna, that vast level tract which extends in all directions, almost an equal distance from the walls of the city to the Mediterranean on the south, and to the roots of the Apennines on the other sides. It is commonly spoken of and loosely described as a plain, an absolute plain; and, seen from a distance, such it appears. Seen from any of the neighbouring heights, Tivoli for instance, with its blue mist hanging over it, and it looks more like an ocean, than any territory with its hills and valleys, its forests and ruins. Still as you cross it from any one point to any other, it is found to present a very uneven surface. It might be called more appropriately perhaps, in our American phraseology, a sort of rolling prairie. It is, at any rate, only for a very short distance, whichever road you take, that you are on such a formation that you can see for more than a few miles around. You find, as your carriage proceeds, that you sink and rise again like a vessel at sea, now below the horizon, so that for a time all neighbouring objects are cut off, then mounting upon elevations which command a view far and near of the dreary and desolate region you are traversing, and carry the eye so far as just to catch a glimpse of the highest of the Alban Hills, and of the dome and ball of St. Peter's. The lower portions of the plain seem more like ravines, old dried up water-courses, or hollows which in the rainy season might fill with water and form small lakes, than any thing else. Very little vegetation any where shows itself, except the grasses, which are heavy and abundant, indicating a fertile soil. Indeed this is one of the unexpected aspects of the Campagna, that all over this uninhabited desert there are the most unmistakable evidences of a soil which, with good cultivation, would

support a dense population. Wherever the face of the country shows a broken bank, the earth is of that dark brown colour, almost black, which gives assurance of mines of wealth below.

Scarce a tree is to be seen over its whole extent; or, if some low groups of forest trees are met with here and there, they are in the deep hollows, and hardly lift their heads above the general level of the plain. Shrubs of various kinds skirt the roads and climb up the sides of the ravines, and in the summer season wild flowers and roses of a thousand kinds contend with a luxuriant growth of brambles and weeds for the supremacy, and sometimes one and sometimes the other obtains the mastery, and gives its character to the scene.

Although the Campagna is rightly described as a wild and desert region, it is not without the occasional variety of a human face and form, and even a group of low half-ruined cottages, appearing never, however, as if built or intended for the humble uses of domestic residences to which they are now devoted, but the crumbled remains of palace or castle of former days. About these melancholy ghost-like ruins are sometimes seen a few of the inhabitants, men, women, children,—the men clothed in sheep-skin in the form just stripped from the slaughtered animal—all pallid with the fearful disease of the plain, fever and ague, the true malaria of Rome. You see them crouching down among their sheep and pigs in the sheltered nooks of brick walls where the sun beats down hottest, in the hope to supply in that manner the heat which the northern breezes from the distant mountains carry away, and prolong for a few days a miserable existence, which, for their own sakes, one would think, could not terminate too soon.

This now long deserted and sterile region was once thriving and populous, as we know from history, and as must be inferred from the masses of ruin which lie everywhere scattered around; ruin of no imposing character, but the crumbled walls and foundations of crowds of buildings, all the particular and intelligible forms of which have long ago disappeared. It was from these now idle and barren wastes that the mighty Capital once drew its supplies for its daily markets. Over these plains was once spread, also, a large proportion of the five or six millions that once, according to some, constituted the population of Ancient Rome, not more than a quarter of which could ever have been contained within Aurelian's walls. Successive revolutions and the violence of war, at first compelled the frightened inhabitants to take shelter within the walls of the city, and then the lands being gradually deserted by them and left without cultivation, the exhalations