

**THE LAST DAYS OF
POMPEII. IN THREE
VOLUMES. VOL. I**

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The Last Days of Pompeii. In Three Volumes. Vol. I by Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON

**THE LAST DAYS OF
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VOLUMES. VOL. I**

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THE
LAST DAYS
OF
POMPEII.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "PELHAM,"
"EUGENE ARAM," "ENGLAND, AND THE ENGLISH."
&c. &c.

"Such is Vesuvius! and these things take place in it every year. But all eruptions which have happened since would be trifling, even if all summed into one, compared to what occurred at the period we refer to. * * * * *

"Day was turned into night, and night into darkness—an inexpressible quantity of dust and ashes was poured out, deluging land, sea, and air, and burying two entire cities, Herculaneum and Pompeii, while the people were sitting in the theatre."
DION CASSIUS, lib. lxxvi.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET:
SUCCESSOR TO HENRY COLBURN.

1834.

DEDICATION

TO SIR WILLIAM GELL,

&c. &c.

DEAR SIR,

IN publishing a work, of which Pompeii furnishes the subject, I can think of no one to whom it can so fitly be dedicated as yourself. Your charming volumes upon the Antiquities of that City have indissolubly connected your name with its earlier—(as your residence in the vicinity has identified you with its more recent)—associations.

I trust that these pages will find you in better health than when we parted at Naples; and that, whatever example your friends may derive from your philosophy, will be drawn from an industry in intellectual acquisitions, never to be wearied, rather than from a patience under suffering, never to be excelled.

Ere you receive these volumes, I hope to be deep in the perusal of your forthcoming work upon “the Topography of Rome and its Vicinity.”

DEDICATION.

The glance at its contents which you permitted me at Naples, sufficed to convince me of its interest and value; and as an Englishman, and as one who has loitered under the portico, I rejoice to think, that in adding largely to your own reputation, you will also renovate our Country's claim to eminence in those departments of learning, in which of late years we have but feebly supported our ancient reputation. Venturing thus a prediction of the success of your work, it would be a little superfluous to express a wish for the accomplishment of the prophecy! But I may add a more general hope, that you will long have leisure and inclination for those literary pursuits, to which you bring an erudition so extensive;—and that they may continue, as now, sometimes to beguile you from yourself, and never to divert you from your friends.

I have the honour to be,

Dear Sir,

Very faithfully yours,

THE AUTHOR.

Leamington, September 21, 1834.

PREFACE.

ON visiting those disinterred remains of an ancient City, which, more perhaps than either the delicious breeze or the cloudless sun, the violet valleys and orange groves, of the South, attract the traveller to the neighbourhood of Naples; on viewing, still fresh and vivid, the houses, the streets, the temples, the theatres of a place existing in the haughtiest age of the Roman empire,—it was not unnatural, perhaps, that a writer who had before laboured, however unworthily, in the art to revive and to create, should feel a keen desire to people once more those deserted streets, to repair those graceful ruins, to reanimate the bones which were yet spared to his survey; to traverse the gulph of eighteen centuries, and to wake to a second existence—the City of the Dead!

And the reader will easily imagine how sensibly this desire grew upon one who felt he could per-

form his undertaking, with Pompeii itself at the distance of a few miles—the sea that once bore her commerce, and received her fugitives, at his feet—and the fatal mountain of Vesuvius, still breathing forth smoke and fire, constantly before his eyes!*

I was aware, however, from the first, of the great difficulties with which I had to contend. To paint the manners and exhibit the life of the middle ages, required the hand of a master genius; yet, perhaps, the task is slight and easy, in comparison with that which aspires to portray a far earlier and more unfamiliar period. With the men and customs of the feudal time we have a natural sympathy and bond of alliance; those men were our own ancestors—from those customs we received our own—the creed of our chivalric fathers is still ours—their tombs yet consecrate our churches—the ruins of their castles yet frown over our val-

* Nearly the whole of this work was written at Naples last winter. On my return to England, I was indeed too much occupied with political matters, to have a great deal of superfluous leisure for works purely literary, except in those, not unwelcome, intervals when the Parliament going to sleep allows the other objects of life to awake—dismissing its wearied legislators, some to hunt, some to shoot, some to fatten oxen, and others—to cultivate literature!

leys. We trace in their struggles for liberty and for justice, our present institutions; and in the elements of their social state we behold the origin of our own.

But with the classical age we have no household and familiar associations. The creed of that departed religion, the customs of that past civilization, present little that is sacred or attractive to our northern imagination; they are rendered yet more trite to us by the scholastic pedantries which first acquainted us with their nature, and are linked with the recollection of studies, which were imposed as a labour, and not cultivated as a delight.

Yet the task, though arduous, seemed to me worth attempting; and in the time and the scene I have chosen, much may be found to arouse the curiosity of the reader, and enlist his interest in the descriptions of the author. It was the first century of our religion — it was the most civilized period of Rome — the conduct of the story lies amidst places whose relics we yet trace — the catastrophe is among the most awful which the tragedies of Ancient History present to our survey.

From the ample materials before me, my endeavour has been to select those which would be most

attractive to a modern reader;—the customs and superstitions least unfamiliar to him—the shadows that, when reanimated, would present to him such images as, while they represented the past, might be least uninteresting to the speculations of the present. It did, indeed, require a greater self-control than the reader may at first imagine, to reject much that was most inviting in itself; but which, while it might have added attraction to parts of the work, would have been injurious to the symmetry of the whole. Thus, for instance, the date of my story is that of the short reign of Titus, when Rome was at its proudest and most gigantic eminence of unbridled luxury and unrivalled power. It was, therefore, a most inviting temptation to the author, to conduct the characters of his tale, during the progress of its incidents, from Pompeii to Rome. What could afford such materials for description, or such field for the vanity of display, as that gorgeous City of the world, whose grandeur could lend so bright an inspiration to fancy,—so favourable and so solemn a dignity to research? But, in choosing for my subject — my catastrophe, *The Destruction of Pompeii*, it required but little insight into the