

**ROBA DI ROMA. IN  
TWO  
VOLUMES, - VOL. II**

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Roba Di Roma. In Two Volumes, - Vol. II by William W. Story

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**WILLIAM W. STORY**

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WILLIAM W. STORY.

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## CONTENTS TO VOL. II.

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	CHAPTER XIII.	PAGE
THE CAMPAGNA . . . . .		1
	CHAPTER XIV.	
MARKETS . . . . .		38
	CHAPTER XV.	
THE GHETTO IN ROME . . . . .		53
	CHAPTER XVI.	
FIELD SPORTS AND RACES . . . . .		88
	CHAPTER XVII.	
FOUNTAINS AND AQUEDUCTS . . . . .		104
	CHAPTER XVIII.	
BIRTHS, BAPTISMS, MARRIAGES, AND BURIALS . . . . .		120
	CHAPTER XIX.	
SUMMER IN THE CITY . . . . .		153
	CHAPTER XX.	
THE GOOD OLD TIMES . . . . .		165
<b>Y.</b>		
APPENDIX . . . . .		183







## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE CAMPAGNA.

**T**HE Roman Campagna is a vast undulating plain stretching along the coast from Civita Vecchia to Terracina, a distance of about 100 miles, and extending in diameter from the sea across to the mountains which girdle it on the east about 40 miles. Along this plain, pursuing an irregular course from north to south, and marking the ancient boundaries between Latium and Etruria, hurry the yellow and turbulent waves of the Tiber; and nearly equidistant from Civita Vecchia, Terracina, and the mountains, perched on its seven hills, is the city of Rome. Looking from the lofty tower of the Capitol, you see on the east the long low shore of the Mediterranean stretching for miles, with here and there the little towns of Pratica, Ostia, and Ardea, darkly *silhouetted* above its line against the faint band of the flashing sea. Towards the south, swelling from the flat level in long and beautiful sweeps, rises the varied outline of Monte Albano, culminating in the cone of Monte Cavi, and then again sweeping gracefully into the plain. Along its lower slopes gleam the towns of Albano, Marino, Castel Gandolfo, and Frascati, with villas, gardens, and olive orchards stretching up the hill. Still higher, and resting on a little jutting ledge, like a rock-slide which has been caught and stopped in its descent, is the little grey town of Rocca di Papa. Green forests and groves girdle its waist and soften the volcanic hollows around the Alban lake; and high up on its summit, where once towered the temple of Jupiter Latiaris, built by Tarquin, rising above the trees may be seen the shining walls of the Passionist convent of Monte Cavi, built by Cardinal York on the ruins of the ancient temple. Here on the spot whence Virgil tells us that Juno surveyed the ranks of the contending armies, "*Lau rentum Troumque,*" and gazed upon the city of the Latins, you may stand and overlook the Roman world from Civita Vecchia to Naples

—and not disdain a stout coat to protect you in the evenings of summer. Where the Alban Hill again drops into the plain on the western side is a wide gap of distance, through which you look far away down towards Naples, and see the faint misty height of Ischia just visible on the horizon—and then rising abruptly with sheer limestone cliffs and *crevasses*, where transparent purple shadows sleep all day long, towers the grand range of the Sabine mountains, whose lofty peaks surround the Campagna to the east and north like a curved amphitheatre. Down through the gap, and skirting the Pontine marshes on the east, are the Volscian mountains, closing up the Campagna at Terracina, where they overhang the road and affront the sea with their great barrier. Following along the Sabine hills, you will see at intervals the towns of Palestrina and Tivoli, where the Anio tumbles in foam, and other little mountain towns nestled here and there among the soft airy hollows, or perched on the cliffs. At their feet, on three little hills that stand like advanced posts before the lofty mountains, are the half-ruined villages of Colonna, Zagarola, and Galliciano, which give their names to princely Roman families of to-day. Further along towers the dark and lofty peak of Monte Gennaro, that wears its ermine of snow almost into the summer, and the longer line of the Leonessa, where rose-coloured snow lies softly glowing against the sky as late as April. Beyond these, alone and isolated, in the north, rises out of the turbulent waves of the Campagna the striking and picturesque height of Soracte, swelling from the plain in form “like a long swept wave about to break, that on the crest hangs pausing.” Sweeping now round by Rieti, Civita Castellana, and the mountains of Viterbo, we come back to the sea at Civita Vecchia.

Within this magnificent amphitheatre lies the Campagna of Rome, and nothing can be more rich and varied, with every kind of beauty—sometimes, as around Ostia, flat as an American prairie, with miles of *cannæ* and reeds rustling in the wind, fields of exquisite feathery grasses waving to and fro, and forests of tall golden-trunked stone-pines poising their spreading umbrellas of rich green high in the air, and weaving a murmurous roof against the sun; sometimes drear, mysterious, and melancholy, as in the desolate stretches between Civita Vecchia and Rome, with lonely hollows and hills without a habitation, where sheep and oxen feed, and the wind roams over treeless and deserted slopes, and silence makes its home; sometimes rolling like an inland sea whose waves have suddenly been checked and stiffened, green with grass, golden with grain, and gracious with myriads of wild flowers, where scarlet poppies blaze over acres and acres, and pink-frilled daisies cover the vast meadows,

and pendent vines around the picturesque ruins of antique villas, aqueducts and tombs, or droop from mediæval towers and fortresses.

Such is the aspect of the Agro Romano, or southern portion of the Campagna extending between Rome and Albano. It is pictures wherever you go. The land, which is of deep rich loam that repays a hundred-fold the least toil of the farmer, does not wait for the help of man, but bursts into spontaneous vegetation and everywhere laughs into flowers. Here is pasturage for millions of cattle, and grain fields for a continent, that now in wild untutored beauty bask in the Italian sun, crying shame on their neglectful owners. Over these long unfenced slopes one may gallop on horseback for miles without let or hindrance, through meadows of green smoothness on fire with scarlet poppies—over hills crowned with ruins that insist on being painted, so exquisite are they in form and colour, with their background of purple mountains—down valleys of pastoral quiet, where great *tufa* caves open into subterranean galleries leading beyond human ken; or one may linger in lovely secluded groves of ilexes and pines, or track the course of swift streams overhung by dipping willows, and swerving here and there through broken arches of antique bridges smothered in green; or wander through hedges heaped and toppling over with rich, luxuriant foliage, twined together by wild vetches, honeysuckles, morning glories, and every species of flowering vine; or sit beneath the sun-looped shadows of ivy-covered aqueducts, listening to the song of hundreds of larks far up in the air, and gazing through the lofty arches into wondrous deeps of violet-hued distances, or lazily watching flocks of white sheep as they crop the smooth slopes guarded by the faithful watch-dog. Everywhere are deep-brown banks of *pozzolano* earth which makes the strong Roman cement, and quarries of tufa and travertine with unexplored galleries and catacombs honey-combing for miles the whole Campagna. Dead generations lie under your feet wherever you tread. The place is haunted by ghosts that outnumber by myriads the living, and the air is filled with a tender sentiment of sadness which makes the beauty of the world about you more touching. You pick up among the ruins on every slope fragments of rich marbles that once encased the walls of luxurious villas. The *contadino* or shepherd offers you an old worn coin, on which you read the name of Cæsar; or a *scarabeus* which once adorned the finger of an Etruscan king, in whose dust he now grows his beans; or the broken head of an ancient jar in marble or terra-cotta, or a lacrymatory of a martyred Christian, or a vase with the Etrurian red that now is lost, or an *istaglio* that perhaps has