

ROME, PAGAN AND PAPAL

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649695393

Rome, Pagan and Papal by Henry Wreford

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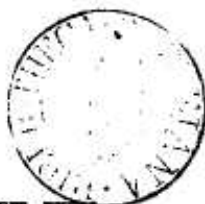
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HENRY WREFORD

**ROME, PAGAN
AND PAPAL**

R O M E,
P A G A N A N D P A P A L;

BY
AN ENGLISH RESIDENT IN THAT
CITY.



— ROMAN, SEU FORS ITA JUSSEKIT, EXSUD,
QUISQUE ERIT VITAE, SCRIBAM, COLOR."

Hoz.

LONDON:
HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.
1846.

1428.

HUGH C. EVANS, PRINTER, CLARE-STREET, BRISTOL.

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ROME, PAGAN AND PAPAL.

LETTER I.

Rome, Jan., 184—.

THERE is something startling, is there not? in the act of dating a letter from Rome. Indeed, so much have I been accustomed to regard the Eternal City with a vague species of awe, that it is rather difficult to realize the fact of my sitting down in a comfortable apartment, *al terzo*, and performing so commonplace an act as that of writing a letter. Yet here I am by the side of a bright, crackling wood-fire, within a ten minutes' walk of the Forum and Colosseum, preparing to inflict upon you more annoyance than you, I dare say, will care to acknowledge. This is the third visit that I have paid to this grand and sacred city, yet the interest which I feel, so far from being in any degree less, is, if any thing, more intense than when I first entered it. It was then altogether of a dreamy, imaginative character. I have since beheld the glorious realities of the place. I have felt the influence of the *genius loci*; and in returning to it, feel perhaps in a degree the pleasure which one feels

after repeated surveys of a grand work of art,—his enjoyment of it higher, because his power of appreciating its beauties is greater, and his imagination chastened, rather than checked, in his pursuit and developement of new forms of beauty, by the perfection of those that he has already seen and admired. It is said of Winkelmann, that after a residence of thirteen years in Rome, he determined to re-visit his native country. In passing through the Tyrol, he was quite insensible to the grandeur of the scenery; on entering Germany, his taste was every where offended by rude specimens of architecture, so unlike the beautiful remains of antiquity he had been so long studying: "Excuse me," he said to an Italian friend who accompanied him, "that I make so bad a companion, but I cannot see any thing beautiful out of Rome;" and so, leaving his friend at Vienna, he retraced his steps to the great city, where, or shortly before he arrived, he was assassinated. Now, do not imagine that by this anecdote I mean to insinuate that my love for dear old England is any thing less devoted than it has ever been. I only wish to shew you how it is that the grandeur of Rome grows upon the mind, and the interest which one feels in it increases rather than diminishes by a more intimate acquaintance with its wonders. I am not, however, going to trouble you with oft-repeated impressions on visiting a city which almost overwhelms one by its remains of former grandeur, but to fulfil a promise which I made to you shortly before leaving England.

You expressed a wish that from time to time I would send you my thoughts on any subject that most interested me, connected with this lovely land; and it

was in the course of my journey here that a comparative trifle determined my choice. I had just left gay, thoughtless Paris, where the *material* of life is better understood, and the sentiment less, than in any other place; and on a bright December morning was toiling up on foot the mountains which form the southern extremity of the Jura Chain. At the top of the range I descried on the road-side a plain wooden cross, placed there for devotion, or else to record some deed of blood,—and on the other side, a Madonna, with the usual benevolence of her sex, addressing the traveller in accents of tender compassion, and promising I forget now how many years of indulgence for every act of devotion paid to her. I was touched, as who would not be? at meeting with these symbols of our holy religion in so solitary a spot; they seemed to tell me of the presence of the God and Father of us all in every portion of his universe, and that He, who bringeth men together and bindeth them in families, dwells also amidst the most secluded retirements of nature, and with equal care watches over the flower which blooms by the mountain side, and the bird which cleaves his pathless course through the desert air, as he does over the countless millions who swarm over the face of the earth. They told me not merely this truth, but one peculiar to the countries through which I was travelling. The Cross and a Madonna are new features in the aspect of the country,—one never sees them in England,—rarely, comparatively speaking, in France. They must be types of a new state of religious thought, in which Imagination is called in to the aid of Devotion; another people, other associations, are about me;