

grims came here from all lands, some to climb the Santa Scala, some to gaze on the chapel of the Sancta Sanctorum, some for the sake of Constantine, others for that of Luther. But all alike stood on the steps at the west end of the basilica and looked out on the sunny terraces where the mediæval Popes took their daily walks, and Francis of Assisi, the German hero, threw himself at the feet of Pope Innocent III. The view from these steps was simply the grandest in Rome, and always beautiful, in the dim blueness of early morning and in the rich glow of evening light. Generations of poets and painters have celebrated its charms and looked out from this point—on these plains "spiritualized," wrote Sterling, "by endless recollections." Now the avenue of ilex trees is cut down, the roses and cypresses are gone. A block of factory-looking houses shuts out the mountain and the Campagna, and that perfect view is for ever ruined.

The "improvements" of the municipality in this neighborhood did not end there. Two years ago saw the destruction of the Ghetto, that curious mediæval quarter which had been the home of the Jews for the last three hundred years. The names of the Via e Piazza del Pianto bore witness to the walling of this unhappy people on the day when they were driven from their homes by command of Paul the Fourth, and forced to take up their abode in the limits of this narrow district. Every Sunday for centuries they were compelled to hear a sermon in the Church of Saint Angelo in Pescheria. Pio Nono was the first Pope to abolish this custom, and to remove the barred gates of the Ghetto, which before his time had been closed every night. And yet, in spite of its crowded population, in spite, too, of the filth and squalor of many of its narrow lanes, the Jews' quarter was the healthiest of the city, and the death-rate of this district was lower than that of any other. A walk through the Ghetto was a unique experience. Artists were attracted by the quaint character of many of these old houses, their round-headed archways, steep flights of stairs and Gothic windows. The courts and alleys teemed with life. Black-eyed boys with curly heads and shining teeth pursued the stranger, clamoring for *quattrini*, Jewish-faced women sat on the doorsteps darning bits of silk and lace from the rag heaps at their feet, and vendors of old clo' carried on a brisk bargain. There was always the chance of finding some lovely bit of Oriental bric à brac or rich damask, some gem or cameo of rare workmanship, under these piles of rubbish. And as you treaded your way through some dark lane you might see the figure of a seven-branched candlestick carved on the wall, a relic of the departed glories of Jerusalem, and of the old faith to which the exiles clung through ages of persecution and misery.

On the outskirts of the Ghetto a street led to the Portico of Octavio, where Titus celebrated his triumph,

and Syrian captives bore the spoils of the Temple in his train. The sight was strikingly picturesque. The many storied houses of the narrow street almost shut out the blue sky overhead, and the sunshine streamed through the meeting roofs, on the glittering scales of fish and the worn marble slabs which had been in use since the days of the Cæsars. A few steps further on was the theatre which Augustus built in honor of the young Marcellus. Here we are met by another of those strange contrasts over which Ampère loved to moralize. Under the Doric arches of the lowest tier artesians had their shops, and the ruddy light of the forge glowed upon piles of green vegetables and water-melons and joints of meat which dangled from the travertine blocks of the Augustan age. Above the Ionic arches of the upper story rose the grim walls of the Savelli palace, built in the Middle Ages on a lofty heap of debris within the theatre. This was the home of Niebuhr when he lived in Rome as Prussian ambassador. From these windows he looked down on the fountains, the orange-trees, and flowering jessamine of his little garden, and far away across the Tiber to St. Peter's and Mento Mario. This district has undergone a thorough cleansing. The ancient fish-market and the shops have been removed, and the Ghetto levelled to the ground. Whole streets were carted away during the last three years amid clouds of white dust and mortar. Only the fortress-looking walls of the Cenci palace, the Portico of Octavio, and the Theatre of Marcellus remain, isolated and stripped of their surroundings. In short, the whole of this remarkable quarter has disappeared to make room for boulevards and "jerry built" houses.

There is no saying where the work of destruction will end. Three or four years ago Villa d'Este, up at Tivoli, was on the point of being sold and turned into a foundry, and Villa Borghese narrowly escaped the same fate. Even the apathetic Romans were stirred when they heard Prince Borghese announce his intention of selling his villa, the oldest and most famous in Rome, founded three hundred years ago by Cardinal Scipio Borghese. This time the municipality protested, the case was taken into court, and the sale stopped by judicial decree. For the present, at least, Villa Borghese has been saved. For a little while longer the Romans may roam through these gardens where once Raphael had his home, and see the scarlet anemones and blue violets come out in the grass under the trees. For a little while the tall stone pines of Villa Doria may lift their heads against the golden sky, where the waters of the Fonte Paoline flash in the sun-set; but who can tell for how long? The breath of the destroying angel is in the air, and at any moment he may pause in his flight over these fair scenes and turn all this beauty to dust and ashes.

It seems strange and almost in-

credible that the Romans should sit quietly by and see these things happen and not one inclined to stand up and speak a word for the Lateran view or the Ludovisi gardens. Here and there a voice has been lifted, a protest raised, an article or two has appeared in the papers, there has been a little stir, a good deal of talk, then the subject has been allowed to drop, and the work of spoliation has continued. It is idle to ask whether the guilt rests on the head of the government or the municipality. In most cases, I am inclined to think, the blame may be very evenly divided between the two. But, in point of fact, it is the Italian nation that is responsible for the ruin of Rome.

The same thing is happening in Florence at this moment. There, too, the oldest parts of the city, the cradle of her liberties, the home of Dante, is about to be destroyed to gratify the greed of speculators and the hankering of the Florentines after broad streets and empty squares.

Once more we are reminded that "history repeats itself." Rome, it is said, has always lived at the expense of the past. One age has invariably risen on the ruins of its predecessor. So in the Middle Ages a new Rome rose out of the ashes of the imperial city, and the Temples of the Forum and the Colosseum became the quarries which supplied marbles for the churches and palaces of the Renaissance. And now modern Rome is but following their example, and making her future of the debris of the past. But at least the middle ages and the Renaissance left us monuments worthy of admiration in the place of the city they destroyed; and we of the nineteenth century, what shall we have to show which can justify our acts of vandalism in the eyes of posterity? The Via Nazionale and the Piazza d'Indipendenza or the Ponte Garibaldi will compare but ill with St. Peter's or the Sistine, and the greatest admirers of the new quarters will hardly put them on a level with the Farnese palace or the Borghese gardens. And when we ask, of what profit has all this been to the Roman people—are they happier or better off than they were before? this is the answer we receive: At the present time there is more distress, more crime, more abomination and greater poverty in Rome than ever before. Taxes are high, food is dear, failures are frequent, while last winter the discontent of the working classes led to riots which at one time threatened to assume very serious proportions.

May we hope that our loved city on the beautiful Lake, Rome notwithstanding, will by its growth and "improvements" do better?

DR. ED. ISAACSON.

Princess Militza, of Montenegro, received 1,000,000 roubles as a wedding present from the Czar of Russia. Immediately after the wedding she bestowed the whole gift to be divided among needy inhabitants of Montenegro.