

## RUINED CITIES.

WHEN in the paling of the western skies  
The roseate hues are flitting far and near,  
And restful sounds from all the earth arise  
With soothing influence on each listening ear,  
I view in sweet content the gathering night,  
As o'er me steal the thoughts of life long past;  
Of hopes on hopes, which whirled in quickening flight  
To sundown lands, and shadows only cast.

Cast shadows all, some bright, some Stygian dark;  
Some lingering long upon the youthful sky;  
Some pleased as doth the warbling of a lark,  
And some there were begat the withering sigh.  
I dwelt me then in Idumean lands,  
And built strong cities from the rocks of Seir.  
They quickly crumbled into wafting sands—  
My Petra proved a waste of ruins drear.

Each city that I built in turn fell low  
And crumbled to the earth beneath my eyes;  
Each marble hall was burst; each brilliant glow  
From gilded turret paled 'neath darkened skies.  
I now recall a Thebes, Luxor grand,  
And thickly populous Pompeian streets;  
An Athens, bright, by Ægean breezes fanned—  
All, all decay which now my vision meets.

And childhood's cities, cities built in youth,  
Yet dashed in ruin ere the adult years,  
Still lie on yonder sands, in mounds uncouth,  
And scorching sun their struggling verdure sears.  
I would not bid them rise upon their dust,  
Nor wear again the splendours which they wore:  
Let them decay; let swords and scabbards rust,  
And battles which they fought be fought no more.

Toronto.

W. H. THURSTON.

## TO MUSIC.

ETERNAL VOICE  
Of Passion's dross divest,  
That bids our souls rejoice  
In language of the blest.

That softly soothes our sorrow,  
Whilst Hope in brilliant key  
Foretells the bright to-morrow,  
When joy will ever be.

That shows our souls the way,  
By happiness and mirth,  
To burst the film of clay  
That binds them to dull earth.

Then soaring earth above,  
That bears us on its wings,  
Into the realms of love,  
To God: the King of kings.

## LA CHAUMIERE.

(A sketch in Normandy.)

A DIP in the Channel, a few whiffs of the salt breeze, and the fatigue of a night journey from Paris was forgotten. We buckled on our knapsacks, and in a few minutes Granville, with its monotonous stone houses and sentinel fortress, was behind us. We intended, with all the independence afforded by the possession of our own means of locomotion, to tramp through Normandy in the direction of St. Malo, to live among the people, and thus to obtain a genuine picture of the country and its inhabitants, such as is only revealed to the lounging lover of the beautiful, and must ever escape the momentary glance of the railway tourist.

Normandy has been for ages the song and vision of French poets and painters; and worthily deserves to continue to be. Along our route were always the magnificent hedges, grand masses of flowering shrubs, rising from grassy mounds, sending forth even in hot summer the sweetest perfume; the ditches thick with hollyhocks, poppies, and marguerites. On a level, the hedges interposed a green wall to our view of the fields; but coming soon to the brow of a hill we could look down over a smiling country. All the verdure is suffused with a fresh, deep green, such as with us is only seen in early summer. No one generation, I suppose, has done much to beautify the country, but each has done something; and the accumulation through long centuries is therefore considerable. Trees

line every field. Here and there a little hut nestles in the midst of its clump of green. We see our road winding along, down into the valleys, up the hills, lost from sight for a while, then reappearing in the distance like a slender silver belt on the mantle of earth. To our right is one of those *petits chemins* which branch off every mile or so, little roads overhung and shaded with shrubs and trees, in the calm twilight of which there is always

A bower quiet for us, and a sle  
Full of sweet dreams.

As we come to the foot of the hill, where a little stream meanders, we hear the sound of voices, and a turn in the road reveals a curious scene. A score of women were gathered together, with the sociability everywhere characteristic of the French, busily washing clothes on the banks. Some stand knee-deep in the water; most, however, kneel beside the brook. As they pound the clothes with their wooden bats, the monotonous clap, clap, uniting with the melody of a simple Norman ballad, gives a singular effect to the scene.

A little further on the quiet aspect of a *chaumière* attracted us, and we determined to investigate the interior. From an artistic distance the Norman huts are most beautiful. The picturesque absence of architecture, the rough-hewn limestone walls, weather-worn and tinted, the rich colour of the thatch, with a harmony in rose-colour growing out of it, and all in a setting of delicious green, make up a charming landscape. But as one draws near, the poverty, ignorance, misery of the inhabitants throw a ghastly shadow on the picture.

Passing down a little lane we find ourselves in the courtyard. On two sides run the low, irregularly-built stone houses, pierced here and there with small windows, mostly without glass. To our right is an open shed with rude implements; to our left a well with curious hood-shaped top of moss-covered stone. Before the huts is a pool of stagnant water. On account of it we know that one part of the building is a stable, but cannot by external evidence determine which. However, the appearance of a woman relieves our embarrassment. We consider the universal demand of something to eat our best excuse; muster our best French; make known our wants. Considerable hesitation; deliberation inside the house: finally an invitation to enter. Over the door was a little crucifix set in the wall. On entering we could distinguish nothing except where the light was streaming through a narrow window, making a picture like the Rembrandts on the walls of the Louvre. But little by little the details of the scene come out. The floor is of beaten earth. A pool of water, here and there, tells of the leakiness of the thatch above. Some little chickens run about hunting for a stray morsel. Above us the rafters disappear in the darkness. There are three beds in the room, mountainous to ascend, crowned with V-shaped curtains. At one end of the room rises a huge chimney, which the little fire of twigs does nothing more than illuminate. On each side of the chimney is a low bench. A pan simmers on the fire, which a dog comes up now and again to sniff.

We had seated ourselves on a bench by a broken pine table. Our hostess produces some milk, a fortress loaf, and a clasp-knife, and seats herself by the fire. Her dress is the usual Norman dress of blue, with white muslin cap and wooden shoes. She talks to us in a language the echo of the tongue of our Canadian-French brothers. We gather from her remarks a conception of her narrow life, of the ceaseless struggle for existence, of the hopelessness of its condition, into which happy thoughts enter only like the light into the hut.

A groan attracts our attention to one of the beds. Peering down from the darkness is the face of a sick woman. Her head is bound up with a handkerchief; her face has that horrible harshness that misery alone can produce. She is sitting up, bending eagerly to gaze on us, whose appearance and accent was so foreign, listening anxiously to the broken conversation we were carrying on. Finally she falls back with a groan of pain. We can bear it no longer. Our bill was five cents. We give more, and hurry into the open air.

The sun shines brightly, the fields are still smiling, and the delicious green of the hedges and pastures rejoices the eye. But there is a shadow over everything, the shadow of those Normandy huts, the abiding-place of poverty and misery in a country beautiful beyond compare.

F. H. SYKES.

AFTER Curran's elevation to the bench as Master of the Rolls, a gloom seems to have fallen upon his spirits. He disliked his position, for which he felt himself unqualified. As he said, "When the party with which I had acted so fairly had after long proscription come at last to their natural place, I did not expect to have been *stuck into a window*, a spectator of the procession."