

LINES WRITTEN IN A ROMAN CAMP IN BAVARIA.

THERE is a cloud before the sun,
The wind is hushed and still,
And silently the waters run,
Beneath the sombre hill;
The sky is dark in every place,
As is the earth below—
Methinks it wore the self-same face
Two thousand years ago.

No light is on the ancient wall,
No light upon the mound,
The very trees so thick and tall
Cast little shade around;
So silent is the place and cold,
So far from human ken,
It had a look that makes me old,
And spectres time again.

I listen half in thought to hear
The Roman trumpet blow,
I search for glint of helm and spear
Amidst the forest bough;
And armor rings and voices swell—
I hear the legions tramp,
And see the lonely sentinel
Who guards the lonely camp.

Methinks I have no other home—
No other heart to find,
For nothing but the thought of Rome
Is stirring in my mind.
And all that I have heard or dreamed,
And all I had forgot,
Are rising up as though they seemed
The household of the spot.

And all the names which Romans knew Seem just as known to me, As if I were a Roman too,
A Roman born and free,
And I could rise at Cæsar's name,
As if it were a charm
To draw sharp lightning from the tame,
And nerve the coward's arm!

And yet, if yonder sky were blue,
And earth were sunny gay,
If nature wore the summer hue
That decked her yesterday;
The mound, the trench, the rampart's space
Would move me nothing more
Than many a well-remembered place
That I have marked before.

I could not feel the breezes bring
Rich odors from the trees,
I could not hear the linnets sing,
And think on themes like these:
The painted insects as they pass
In swift and motley strife,
The very lizard in the grass
Would start me back to life,

Then, is the past so gloomy now
That it may never bear
The open smile of Nature's brow,
Or meet the sunny air ?
I know not that—but joy is power,
However short it last,
And joy befits the present hour,
But sadness fits the past.
W. E. A.