

## Book Notices.

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*Roba de Roma.* By WILLIAM WETMORE STORY. New edition. 2 vols. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. Toronto: William Briggs. Price \$2.50.

This book long since achieved quite a classical reputation, and has now reached its eighth edition—a striking proof of its sterling merit. Mr. Story, the celebrated sculptor and poet, has lived for many years in Italy, chiefly in Rome. He loves the country and the people. He understands their language and literature like a native. He enters thoroughly into their spirit and sympathizes keenly with their social and political aspirations. His book is unquestionably the best in the language upon the subject it treats. It is absolutely necessary to him who would gain an insight into the every-day life of the people, their peculiar institutions, their quaint customs—often survivals from mediæval times—which, like their queer costumes, are fast becoming obsolete; and the historic and religious associations which make Rome like no other city on earth. The rapid tourist who spends his week or month in Rome, and thinks he knows it, is egregiously mistaken. Except under the guidance of one like our author, whom years of residence have made at home in this "City of the Soul," "the land of all men's past," he cannot, except in the most superficial sense, be said to know it at all.

The method of this book is much more attractive than that of Hare's "Walks about Rome," admirable as that is in many respects. Story's volumes have a literary charm, a genial sense of humour, that lures one on from chapter to chapter with a continued fascination. Hare has a good deal of learned lumber that many readers will skip. Story, while not neglecting the classic and mediæval associations of the place, enters thoroughly into the living present and the recent past. For one of the valuable features of the book is its

vivid photography of phases of life which are fast passing away.

This is how our author discourses of the imperishable spell that haunts the very ruins of the past: "This is one great charm of Rome, that it animates the dead figures of its history. On the spot where they lived and acted, the Cæsars change from the manikins of books to living men; and Virgil and Horace and Cicero grow to be realities when we walk down the Sacred Way and over the very pavement they may once have trod. The ghosts of history haunt their ancient habitations. Invisible companions walk with us through the streets. Vague voices call to us from the shattered tombs along the Via Appia. The past hovers like a subtle aura round the present. Haunted by its crimes, oppressed and debilitated by the fierce excesses of its empire, Rome, silent, grave and meditative, sighs over its past, wrapped in the penitent robes of the Church. Truly, as Walpole says, 'Our memory sees more than our eyes in this country.'"

Our author sees with the eye of an artist, and describes with the pen of a poet, the picturesque aspects of Roman life, and recalls and portrays with a cultured historic imagination its storied past. While no bigot, he does not hesitate to criticise the religious institutions of the country. For this his book was long placed under the ban of the "Index Expurgatorius," now happily ineffective. His account of the lottery system, which cuts the nerve of honest industry and excites a feverish gambling spirit, is a chapter full of admonition. We have only space left to briefly indicate some of the topics treated. Among these are: Street music in Rome, full of romantic interest; beggars, including the sturdy monks and friars; Christmas holidays and the Lenten season, describing many quaint customs; games, mimes, masques and puppets, full of humour; May in Rome, a richly poetical