

THE DESERTED CITY

By Louis Kasatkin

mythic streets evaporate at dawn,
leaving only complacent memory
to recall imperfectly those scraps
and oddities of ephemera that
defy rational explanation;
a pristine franked letter posted
in Folkestone 1841; several ornate
glass marbles that were a birthday
present to some Rhineland princeling;
the signature of Thomas Alva Edison
on a page awkwardly torn from a
Hotel register omitting its name,
the building itself demolished long ago;
a skeletal frame of a Penny Farthing
half buried amid the inconsequential
detritus of the communal refuse tip;
a yellowing poster of a once well known
brand of cough syrup, the discernible lines
of a now defunct city tram route;
And somewhere, the presence of an
inveterate aesthete and poet of civic
renown struggling to evoke a nostalgia
amongst those who had not read Borges
nor knew of his blindness.

LAMENTATIONS

lemonade on the verandah after supper,
discussing Rousseau and Voltaire
before retiring to the soft embrace
of an easy langour;
expecting tomorrow and its harvest
of promise, the lush savannah
the tall sheaves and sturdy horses;
and yet that tomorrow never came,
no matter how much we believed
and what we believed was enough,
but what they believed was much more;
so we recall with wounding monotony
the men of honour whose sabres broke
too soon, the chivalric figures whose
steeds wearied in the long campaign;
we recall shards of splendour smashed
held captive in museum-cased aspic,
marble, ballroom, chandelier, satin, lace, and
a haunting echo of terpsichorean melody
vanished and gone into The Wilderness;
“menemenetekelupharsin” those heirs
of promise, weighted in the balance those
inheritors of substance and found wanting;
the vision of Daniel, the words of Ezekiel,
prophetic and predestined, and...
lemonade on the verandah after supper,
discussing Rousseau and Voltaire
before awakening to the dawn of
a day resplendent,

Confederate
and grey.

PORTRAIT OF GENERAL AFTER BATTLE

Smoke wreathed distant battlements,
skies flecked with iridescent amber,
fluttering banners and icons held aloft;
in the foreground
clad in burnished breastplate,
circumferenced by a scarlet sash
a warrior's imposing stature unfeigned,
lacking the air of braggadocio
conveyed in earlier portraits,
pensive eyes glower from
the bearded visage
its contours grown greyer;
his right hand grasps the
ostentatiously plumed helmet,
in his gauntless left hand a
crumpled map torn at one corner,
overhead crows circle,
to his right riderless horses
are being led away,
his own steed lost amidst
the onslaught that some would
of necessity deem glorious,
lest they unlike the artist
cause posterity to question.

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