

An Exert from, *The Early Christians in Rome*, by the very  
Reverend, H.D.M. Spence-Jones, MCMXI

## THE ROMAN CATACOMBS

### INTRODUCTORY

An absolutely reliable source of information respecting the secret of the inner life of the Church in the early Christian centuries is the faithful record of the thoughts, the hopes, the aspirations of the congregations of the Church of the metropolis of the Empire, carved and painted on the countless graves of the subterranean corridors and chambers of the Catacombs of Rome.

“The popular, the actual belief of a generation or society of men cannot always be ascertained from the contemporary writers, who belong for the most part to another stratum. The belief of a people is something separate from the books or the watchwords of parties. It is in the air. It is in their intimate conversation. We must hear, especially in the case of the simple and unlearned, what they talk of to each other. We must sit by their bedsides, get at what gives them most consolation, what most occupies their last moments. This, whatever it be, is the belief of the people, right or wrong; this and this only, is their real religion.... Now, is it possible to ascertain this concerning the early Christians?

“The books of that period are few and far between, and those books are for the most part the works of learned scholars rather than of popular writers. Can we, apart from these books, discover what was their most real and constant representation of their dearest hopes here and hereafter? Strange to say, after all this lapse of time (getting on for some two thousand years) it is possible; the answer, at any rate, for that large mass of Christians from all parts of the Empire that was collected in the capital, the answer is to be found in the Roman Catacombs,” great city of the dead which lies beneath the soil of the immediate suburbs of imperial Rome. This city of the dead certainly contains several hundred miles of streets of tombs, and the tombs at least contain three or more millions of silent dwellers!

In this resting-place of the dead the community of Rome, by far the greatest of the Christian churches who professed the faith of Jesus, for some two centuries and a half reverently laid their dear ones as they passed from the stir of busy restless Roman life into the unseen world. There in these Catacombs they used to pray often, very often in the years of persecution; there they used to hear the teaching of Duty, of Hope and Faith from the lips of some chosen master, and it is from the words written or graven upon the innumerable tombs in the Catacombs that we gather what was the real belief of these early congregations-what their sure hopes and aspirations. In these silent streets, on the walls of the countless sepulchral chambers, they loved to pictures and to grave short

epitaphs telling of these same cherished hopes. Some of these pictures and epitaphs, often dim and discoloured, often are with us still. Not a few of the artists who worked there were evidently men of no mean power in their noble craft.

Ruined, desecrated, spoiled though it now is, with only comparatively small portions accessible a tall-what a treasure house for the scholar is the silent group of cemeteries.

A careful study of the more recent discoveries in the Catacombs throws much light on the opinions and thoughts of the Christians of the first and second centuries, showing us that the current of early Christian thought not unfrequently ran in a somewhat different channel to the stream of thoughts presented to us by the contemporary writers of that very early period. It must, however, be insisted on that the cardinal doctrines of the Faith taught by the weightiest of the first Christian writers were absolutely identical with the belief of the Christians of the Roman Catacombs. If anything, the supreme divinity of the Son of God-His love for, His care for men, is emphasised more emphatically, if it be possible, in the silent teaching than in the fervid dogmatism of the great Catholic writers.

## INTRODUCTORY

To enable the reader fairly to grasp something of the vast Extent, the nature, and importance of these Catacombs of Rome, whose silent witness to the "Inner Life" of the early Church is invoked, this Fourth Book will give: (1) a brief description of the way in which the investigations into this wonderful "City of the Dead" in later years has been carried out by careful scholars and experts; (2) a general and somewhat detailed account of the situation and features of the several Catacombs, dwelling especially on the more important of these cemeteries; (3) the teaching contained in the inscriptions, carvings, and paintings on the graves in the Catacomb corridors.

## PART I

Since the date of what may be termed the rediscovery of the Catacombs in the vineyard on the Via Salaria in 1578 the work of excavation and research in the streets of the City of the Dead which lies beneath the suburbs of Rome has been slowly and somewhat fitfully carried on, exciting generally but little public interest, and until the last fifty years, roughly speaking, has been most mischievous and destructive.

It is probable that more destruction and havoc have been wrought by the well-meaning but ill-directed efforts of the explorer than were occasioned by the raids of the barbarians in the sixth and two following centuries and by the slow wear and sap of time.

Among these, Bosio, A.D. 1593-1629, the pioneer of the Catacomb explorers, occupies one of the few honourable places; his method of working was in many respects scientific. He was no mere explorer, working haphazard, but he guided his labours by carefully sifting all the information he could procure of the past history of the vast subterranean necropolis. But, after all, the materials of this history which he could get together were scanty when compared with the materials possessed by scholars of our day and time, and

in consequence many of the conclusions to which this pioneer of Catacomb research came to were erroneous.

But in his manner of working Bosio had no successors. As a rule, since that really illustrious scholar and searcher has passed away, alas! a very different method has been with rare exceptions followed by explorers of the Catacombs, and owing to the careless and ill-regulated excavations which have been fitfully carried on during some 200 and more years, irreparable damage has been done, and the losses to this deeply important branch of early Christian history are simply incalculable.

The general results of this unfortunate exploration work in the past have been summarised as follows:

During this long period—roughly from A.D. 1629 to about the middle of the nineteenth century, some 220 years — *the chief object and aim of Catacomb exploration were to procure relics*; when these were once carried away, no heed was paid to the crypts, or to the streets of graves. The records of the excavations kept were scanty and utterly and each Catacomb from which the relics were taken was left in a state of utter ruin and deplorable confusion. The result of these searchings of 220 years has been that few discoveries were made of any real importance to early Christian history or archaeology. At last De Rossi, in the middle years of the nineteenth century, took in hand seriously the study and scientific exploration of the vast Christian necropolis of Rome.

De Rossi was the friend and pupil of Father Marchi, an indefatigable student of the Catacombs who was really impressed with the possibilities of a more careful exploration than had hitherto been undertaken. Marchi's real title to honour will ever be that he imbued his pupil with a passionate love of the work to which he has devoted a long and strenuous life.

The great City of the Dead, largely thanks to De Rossi's lifelong labours, is to us something far more than a vast museum of inscriptions and memorials, the work of the Christian congregations in Rome during the first two and a half centuries which followed the preaching and martyrdom of SS. Peter and Paul. It is true that most important is the testimony of these precious relics to the earliest popular estimate of Christianity: we shall dwell later on the wonderful witness which the numberless inscriptions and strange emblems painted and graven on the tombs bear to the faith and belief of the early Church; but the eminent Roman scholar of whom we are speaking has taught us that there was more than even the witness of these precious inscriptions and emblems to be gathered from a patient study of the Catacomb secret.

De Rossi believed, and the splendid results of his long toil have strikingly verified his belief, that amidst the ruined and desolated streets of graves the historic crypts of the more and illustrious martyrs of Christ, of the men and women who during the first two centuries and a half through pain and agony passed to their rest and won their crowns, could be found and identified, and that thus a new and striking proof would be furnished of the truth of much of the martyr story of the early Church.

The official records of well-nigh all the Roman martyrdoms of the age of persecution, we know, were destroyed by the imperial government in the days of Diocletian. The martyrologies or histories of these heroes and heroines of the faith of Jesus which have come down to us, it is well known, were with a few notable exceptions for the most part largely composed some two or even more centuries after the events they relate had happened, and have in consequence been treated by careful Christian scholars as not dependable sources of early Christian history; this has been conceded by the most scholarly of the devout Christian students.

De Rossi's great work, however, strange to say, has curiously rehabilitated very many of these long-discredited martyr stories,! and has clearly shown us that not a few of the more important of these have been absolutely founded on fact; of course, some of the various details as recounted in these martyrologies are more or less legendary, but the great cardinal fact of the existence, of the life-work and suffering, and noble testimony to the faith sealed with their life-blood, of these true servants of the adored Master, is positively established by what has been found in the last fifty years in the Roman city of the Christian dead.

De Rossi and his companions have indeed given us a perfectly new and most striking page in the history of this early Christian Church.

## II

It will be of special interest briefly to glance over the principal portion of the materials which De Rossi made use of as his guide during his long forty years' labours in the exploration of the Catacombs. First in order must be taken what may be termed the literature bearing on the City of the Dead.

The most important of these pieces are

1. *The Acts of the Martyrs*. These have already been alluded to as possessing, save in a few instances, little historic authority, as they were mostly composed two centuries or even more after the events which they purported to relate happened. But they were not without their value to the Catacomb explorers, for it must be remembered that when these Acts" were put together in the form we now possess them, in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, the Catacombs were still an object of eager pilgrimage from all lands, and many of the details in these Acts" evidently were based on an historical tradition, such as the place exactly where the martyr of the .. Acts" was buried; such a detail, for instance, served as a guide to the explorer.

2. The Martyrology of S. Jerome - a compilation dating from about the middle of the sixth century, but certainly containing memoranda of an earlier date.

3. The (so-called) *Liber Pontificalis*-a generally reliable and most interesting work, the earlier portion of which has been largely used throughout Western Christendom, certainly

since the sixth century. The first part of this work contains biographical notices of the Bishops of Rome from the days of S. Peter to the times of Pope Nicholas, A.D. 807. The earliest redaction of the first Papal notices in the *Liber Pontificalis* which has come down to us was made towards the end of the fifth century, or in the first years of the sixth. But it is evidently based on records of a much older date preserved in the Roman Church.

4. But what De Rossi found most valuable for the purposes of his great work was a group of writings known as *Itineraries of Pilgrims*. These were founded on hand-books composed for the use of devout pilgrims from Britain, Gaul, Spain, Germany, and Switzerland,-men and women who were desirous to see and to pay their devotions at the celebrated shrines of Rome.

Some five at least of these precious Pilgrim Itineraries or Guide-Books to the more celebrated shrines or places where martyrs were interred in the vast Roman City of the Dead have come down to us. They have proved of the highest value to De Rossi in his exploration work. The first perhaps in value of these is contained in the works of William of Malmesbury, which treat of the doings of the Crusaders in Rome. William of Malmesbury wrote in the year of grace 1095. But the Itinerary section in question speaks of the martyr saints as though they were *still resting* in their Catacomb graves, although we know that they had been translated into churches in the city about three centuries earlier. This clearly shows that the "Itinerary" section had been written several centuries before the writer William of Malmesbury lived and copied it into his work.

Other Pilgrim Itineraries have been found in famous monastic libraries, such as in the libraries of Einsiedeln and Salzburg. These may be roughly dated about the middle of the seventh century,-that is, before the days of the Pontificate of Paul I, A.D. 757, and Paschal I, A.D. 817, when the wholesale translation of the remains of the martyrs from the Catacombs to the securer shelter of the city churches took place. These were therefore written in a period when the traditions connected with the historic crypts and their venerated contents were all comparatively fresh and vivid.

In the same category with the Pilgrim Itineraries which the great Roman scholar has found so helpful in his Catacomb researches must be placed the celebrated papyrus preserved in the Cathedral of Monza.. This is a contemporary catalogue or list of the sacred oils sent by Pope Gregory the Great (A.D. 590-604) to Theodelinda, Queen of the Lombards. The Lombard Queen sent a special messenger, one Abbot John, to Pope Gregory the Great asking him for relics of the saints buried in the Catacombs. At that period no portions of the sacred bodies were allowed to be removed, even at the request of so powerful a petitioner as Theodelinda; but as a substitute the Pope sent a little of the oil which fed the lamps which were ever kept burning before the tombs or shrines of the saints in question.

Each phial containing the oil was carefully ticketed or labelled, and a list of these tickets or labels was written on this Monza. papyrus. Some sixty or seventy saints' shrines are specially enumerated, besides about eight places mentioned before which oils were kept burning, before tombs which contained a crowd of unnamed saints and martyrs.

This Monza catalogue of the sacred oils De Rossi carefully compared with the topographical notices in the Itineraries above referred to. It was of great service to the scholar explorer in discovering and identifying many of the principal sanctuaries of the Catacombs.

Another and quite a different material for his investigations De Rossi found amidst the desolate Catacombs themselves: he noticed that certain unmistakable indications ever marked the near neighbourhood of some historic crypt.

1. The existence above ground of more or less ruined basilicas of various dimensions, in some cases showing the remains of a considerable building, in others of a comparatively small edifice as of a chapel or oratory. Such a ruined building evidently pointed to there being beneath the soil, at times deep down, an historic crypt of importance. Such a small basilica or oratory had no doubt been built after the Peace of the Church in the middle or latter years of the fourth or in the fifth century, when pilgrimage to the shrines of the saints and martyrs had become the fashion. It was intended to accommodate the ever-growing crowds who came often from distant countries to pray near and to venerate the saints and martyrs whose remains lay buried in the crypt immediately beneath”.

2. The remains, more or less perfect, of a staircase or staircases leading down to the sacred crypt containing a tomb of some great confessor known and honoured in the tradition of the Church.

3. The presence of a “luminare” or shaft, sometimes of considerable size, which was constructed to give light and air to a subterranean chamber in the Catacombs, indicated that in the immediate neighbourhood of the “luminare .. an historic crypt had once existed. These openings or shafts were mostly the work of Pope Damasus and his successors in the latter years of the fourth and in the earlier years of the fifth centuries.

4. Below in some of the ruined corridors of tombs and in certain of the cubicula or separate chambers leading out of the corridors on the walls a number of “graffiti” or inscriptions, often very rudely graved or painted, are visible, some of the inscriptions or questions being simply a name, others containing a brief prayer for the writer or for one dear to the writer. It was evident that the presence of such inscriptions indicated the immediate neighbourhood of an historic crypt which once contained the remains of a revered “great one,” - not unfrequently the name of the “great one” was included in some of the graffiti.

Such “graffiti” were clearly the work of the many pilgrims to the Catacombs in the fifth and following centuries.

5. In certain of the cubicula or separate chambers leading out of the corridors, remains of paintings, evidently of a period much later than the original Catacomb work, are discernible - paintings which belong to the Byzantine rather than to any classical school of art, and which cannot be dated earlier than the sixth or seventh centuries. The existence of such later decorative work clearly indicated that the spot so adorned was one of

traditional sanctity, and no doubt had been the resting-place of a venerated saint and martyr.

6. In his "materials" for the identification of the historic crypts De Rossi found the inscriptions of Pope Damasus, who died A.D. 384, of the greatest assistance.

Damasus' love for and work in the Catacombs is well known. He was a considerable poet, and precious fragments of poetical inscriptions composed by him have been found in many of the more important Catacombs which have been explored. These inscriptions were engraved on marble tablets by his friend and skilful artist Furius Dionysius Filocalus in clear beautiful characters. These fragments have been in many cases put together, and where the broken pieces were wanting have been wonderfully restored with the aid of "syllogæ" or collections of early Christian inscriptions gathered mostly in the ninth century by the industry of the monks. These "syllogæ" or collections have preserved for us some forty of the inscriptions of Pope Damasus in honour of martyrs and confessors buried in the Catacombs. With perhaps one solitary exception, they are all written in hexameter verse.

Such collections of early Christian inscriptions have been preserved in the libraries of such monasteries as Einsiedeln, S. Riquier, S. Gall, etc.

The result of the forty years of De Rossi's researches and work in the Catacombs, based on the above-mentioned historical documents and on the evidence derived from what he found in the ruined corridors of tombs and the chambers leading out of them, has been that, whereas before his time at most three important historical crypts were known, now already more than fifteen 1 of these have been clearly identified, a wonderful and striking proof of the reality of the sufferings and constancy of the heroes and heroines of the faith in the first two hundred and fifty years of the existence of the religion of Jesus-sufferings and constancy which resulted in the final triumph of Christianity.

Briefly to enumerate just a very few of the more prominent later historical discoveries which have lifted much of the early history and inner life of the great Church of the Roman congregations from the domain of tradition into the realm of scientific history-

In the first century - the discoveries in the cemeteries of Domitilla and Priscilla. The long-disputed story of Nereus and Achilles; the existence and fate of the two Domitillas, kinswomen of the imperial house; the Christianity and martyrdom of the patrician Acilius Glabrio the Consul, have been largely authenticated.

In the second century - the discovery of the tombs of SS. Felicitas and Cecilia, of the grave of S. Januarius, the eldest son of Felicitas, substantiate the existence and death of the famous martyrs, whose very existence has been doubted even by earnest Christian students, and whose life-story has been generally relegated to the sphere of religious romance.

In the early years of the third century-the wonderful “find” of the Papal Crypt in the Callistus Cemetery, and the ruined remains of the tombs of several of the Bishops of Rome, confessors and martyrs, bear irrefragable testimony to the truth of records of early Christian history, and set a seal upon tradition hitherto only held with but a half-hearted confidence. In the middle years of the same century the identification of the tombs of Agnes and her foster-sister Emerentiana re-placed in the pages of serious history scenes often quoted in early martyrology, but which competent Christian critics had long relegated to the region of the merely legendary. The exploration and labours of De Rossi and his band of fellow-workers and pupils have also thrown a flood of light on the days of the fierce continuous persecution of the Emperor Diocletian, and have opened out to publicity a number of tombs of nameless martyrs who suffered under the iron hand of imperial Rome in the bloody times of that last and fiercest of attacks on Christianity. And besides the many nameless graves of a great multitude of martyrs and confessors who suffered under Diocletian, these explorations have identified the tombs of not a few of the more famous Christian leaders who witnessed a good confession at that same dread epoch, notably the resting-places of Peter and Marcellinus, of the Roman bishops Caius and Eusebius, of Marcus and Marcellinus. very glorious group of monuments-a group, too, which we may well expect to become larger and more far-reaching in its teaching, for *innumerable crypts are still waiting to be explored and searched out*. Each of the ancient roads leading from the immemorial capital of Italy, and once of the world; each historic cemetery or catacomb contains such a crypt with its central shrine of some once well-known martyr or illustrious confessor of the Name.”

So writes Marucchi, one of the foremost of the living Roman scholars in Catacomb lore, the disciple and successor of De Rossi. (These words were written in the year of grace 1903.)

Following closely upon the notices contained in the Pilgrim Itineraries of the seventh and eighth centuries, De Rossi, in a catalogue carefully composed, enumerates thirty-seven cemeteries or Catacombs. Several, however, of these have not been clearly identified. One or two of them are very small; while others, apparently extending over a wide area, communicate with one another; and some are very imperfectly known, others as yet quite unexplored.

### III

It will be an assistance to the student wishing to grasp something of the vast extent of the great subterranean City of the Dead, and desirous to arrive at some idea of the present knowledge of the mighty Christian necropolis of the first days, if a brief sketch of the known cemeteries and their more important crypts is presented.

The sketch will deal with each of the “Viæ” or public roads leading out of Rome, in the immediate neighbourhood of which the different cemeteries or Catacombs have been excavated,-each public road having its own special group of cemeteries, lying hard by beneath the vineyards or gardens abutting on the road.

## THE VATICAN HILL

Naturally, the cemetery on the Vatican Hill, which includes the tomb of S. Peter, must be mentioned first. The whole district of the Vatican in the days of Nero (middle years of the first century of the Christian era) was covered with gardens and villas; it communicated directly with the city by means of the Pons Triumphalis, afterwards tenned the Pons Neronianus, and was traversed by the Via Triumphalis and the Via Cornelia. Between these two roads the Apostle S. Peter was buried. The Pilgrim Itineraries describe the sacred tomb now as “juxta viam Corneliam” -now as “juxta viam Triumphalem.” Directly over the apostle's tomb 1 Anacletus, the Bishop of Rome, third in succession, erected a “Memoria” or little chapel. This “Memoria” or Chapel of Anacletus grew into the lordly basilica known subsequently as S. Peter's at Rome.

The tomb in question is situated close by the spot where without doubt the apostle suffered martyrdom in the year of grace 67. Around the tomb of S. Peter, as we shall see, were buried the nine or ten first Bishops or Popes of Rome; as well as other nameless saints once famous in the early years of the story of the Roman congregations.

It is doubtful if there was ever a Catacomb, as we understand the tenn, on the Vatican Hill. No trace of subterranean corridors, or of chambers leading out of the corridors, have been found; only, it must be remembered that the neighbourhood of the tomb of S. Peter and the early Bishops of Rome has been completely changed owing to the excavations necessary for the foundations of the great basilica erected over the little Memoria of Anacletus by Constantine the Great in the first half of the fourth century.

## THE VIA AURELIA

The Via Aurelia Vetus was probably originally laid out by C. Aurelius, Censor in the year of grace 512. It started from the Janiculum (the modem Gate of S. Pancras) and led directly towards the sea-board. It was the road from Rome to Centumcellre (Civita Vecchia).

The cemeteries along the Via Aurelia have been as yet very imperfectly explored. The ancient Pilgrim Itineraries mention four distinct cemeteries here. (1) That of SS. Processus and Martinianus, first century. (2) S. Calepodius or S. Callistus, third century. (3) S. Pancratius, fourth century. (4) The two Felixes, fourth century.

*Cemetery of SS. Processus and Marinianus.* – (Apostolic age.) Tradition relates that these saints were the gaolers of S. Peter, and owed their conversion to their prisoner. They suffered martyrdom shortly after S. Peter's death, being decapitated on the Via Aurelia; Lucina, a wealthy Roman matron, buried them in her garden near the place of their martyrdom. This Lucina was probably the same who gave her name to the ancient cemetery on the Via Appia, and which now forms part of the great network of cemeteries known generally as S. Callistus' Catacomb.

Very little is known of this Catacomb. Among the network of sepulchral corridors on this portion of the Via Aurelia this special cemetery has not as yet been clearly identified.

These cemeteries are in a sadly ruined condition. The loculi which have been examined are evidently of a very early period. Maricchi, in pleading for a more detailed exploration here, suggests the probability of some "Memories" of S. Peter being eventually discovered.

*Cemetery of S. Calepodius.* - This saint appears to have been a priest who suffered martyrdom, probably in a popular rising, in the reign of Alexander Severus (A.D. 222-35). This cemetery is principally famous as being the resting-place of Pope Callistus, who also suffered in a popular rising, A.D. 222, and was laid to rest in this cemetery, perhaps as being nearer to the scene of his martyrdom than the official Papal Crypt on the Via Appia to which he gave his name. The exploration work here, as far as it has gone, has been carried out with difficulty owing to the ruinous state of the corridors.

*Cemetery of S. Pancratius.* - S. Pancras was a boy-martyr twelve, or as some accounts give fourteen years of age when in A.D. 304 he suffered for his faith in the Diocletian persecution.

This cemetery was in the first instance known under the name of Octavilla, a Christian matron who buried the young confessor in her garden on the Aurelian Way. It had probably been a cemetery before the deposition of the remains of the famous boy-martyr gave it a new name and not a little celebrity.

The story of S. Pancras has ever been an attractive one, and a certain number of churches named in his honour are scattered over many lands. A small basilica was built over the crypt containing his grave. Pope Siricius (end of fourth century) restored and adorned it. Honorius I, A.D. 620, rebuilt it. In the present Church of S. Pancras there are scarcely any traces of the original basilica. The remains of the martyr have disappeared. Strange to say, in the great translation of the ashes of saints and by Pope Paul I and Paschal I, S. Pancras was left undisturbed in his tomb. The corridors, however, have been completely wrecked, and have been very partially explored.

The site of the cemeteries mentioned in the Pilgrim Itineraries, named after two saints each bearing the name of Felix, has not been discovered.

## THE VIA PORTUENSIS

This road leads from the old Porta Navalis in the Trastevere, the city "across the Tiber," direct to Portus the port of Rome, a construction of Claudius when Ostia was unable to cope with commerce of the capital. Three cemeteries, according to the ancient Itineraries, were excavated on the Via Portuensis. That of Pontianus, the best known of the three, where lie the remains of SS. Abdon and Sennen; and a second, nearly five miles from the city, the Catacomb of Generosa. There is a third, the Cemetery of S. Felix, the position of which has not yet been discovered.

*The Cemetery of Pontianus.* – Pontianus was a wealthy Christian of the Trastevere quarter, who used in the second century-probably in the latter years of the century-to gather his fellow-Christians to prayer and teaching in his house. The cemetery which bears his name was originally excavated in one of his gardens. The old Pilgrim Itineraries speak of there being a vast number of martyrs in this Catacomb-” innumerabilis multitudo Martyrum.” Several of these are named; the most notable, however, are the two noble Persians, Abdon and Sennen, who, visiting Rome at the time of the persecution of Decius, suffered for their faith.

In this Catacomb there is a well-known ancient baptistery of considerable size, which was richly decorated in the sixth century. Such baptisteries have been found in other Catacombs, notably in that of S. Priscilla, a very ancient and vast cemetery which will be described with some detail later.

The remains of the more famous martyrs were removed into the city at the period of the great translation of sacred bodies in the ninth century, after which date this cemetery ceased to be visited. It has only been partially explored.

*The Cemetery of S. Felix* mentioned in the Itineraries is completely unknown as yet.

*The Cemetery of Generosa*, on the road to Porta, is not alluded to in the Pilgrim Guides, no doubt owing to its distance five miles-from the city. Lanciani gives a vivid description of its story and of its discovery in 1867. It is of small extent, and apparently was excavated in the persecution of Diocletian, circa A.D. 303, in what was once a sacred grove belonging to the College of the Arval Brothers, but which had been abandoned, probably after the dissolution of the Brotherhood, which is supposed to have taken place about the middle of the third century.

#### IV

#### THE VIA OSTIENSIS

*The Via Ostiensis*, on the city side of the Tiber, one of the principal roads of the Empire, begins at the ancient Porta Ostiensis, known from the sixth century onwards as the Porta S. Pauli, and leads to the old harbour of Ostia. The Pilgrim Itineraries enumerate three cemeteries as situated hard by this road-the tomb of the Apostle S. Paul with the little Cemetery of Lucina, the Cemetery of Commodilla, and that of S. Thekla.

(1) According to a very general tradition, S. Paul suffered martyrdom, A.D. and his body was laid in a tomb on the Ostian Way in a garden belonging to a Christian lady named Lucina,-some identify her with the Lucina “ of the Cemetery of Callistus on the Appian Way. There it rested, according to the most recent investigations, until the persecution and confiscation of the cemeteries in A.D. 258, when for security's sake it was secretly removed at the same time as the body of S. Peter was brought from the grave on the Vatican Hill. The sacred remains of the two apostles were laid in the “Platonia .. Crypt, in

what was subsequently known as the Catacomb of S. Sebastian, on the Via Appia ; and probably after an interval of some two years, when the cemeteries were restored to the Christian congregations by the Emperor Gallerius, the bodies of the two apostles were brought back again to their original resting-places.

Anacletus, the third in succession of the Roman bishops, erected in the first century a small "Memoria" or chapel over the tomb of S. Paul, like the one he built over the tomb of S. Peter on the Vatican Hill.

In the year 324-5 the first Christian Emperor, Constantine, over the apostle's tomb and little "Memoria," caused the first important basilica, known as S. Paul's, to be erected; the Emperor treated the loculus or sarcophagus of S. Paul in the same manner as he had treated the sarcophagus of S. Peter, enclosing it in a solid bronze coffin, on which he laid a cross of gold. When the basilica was rebuilt, after the fire of A.D. 1813, a marble slab, which apparently was a part of the vaulted roof of the original sepulchral chamber of the apostle, came to light. On this slab, or rather slabs of marble, which now lie directly under the altar, are engraved the simple words Pavlo Apostolo Mart: the inscription evidently dating from the days of Constantine (A.D. 324-5). No further investigation of the tomb was permitted. It is believed that the bronze sarcophagus with its sacred contents, with the golden cross, lie immediately under the solid masonry upon which the slab of marble we have been speaking of rests.

On the slab of marble in question, besides the simple inscription above quoted, are three apertures: the most important of these is circular; it is, in fact, a little well, and is 23 ½ inches in depth, and was no doubt originally what is termed the "billicum confessionis," through which handkerchiefs and other objects were lowered, so as to be hallowed by resting for a brief space on the sarcophagus when access to the vault itself was not permitted. The other two apertures or little wells are only 12 and 8 inches deep respectively. It is not known for what purpose these two were intended.

The history of the famous basilica is as follows. Lanciani writes how "wonder has been manifested at the behaviour of Constantine the Great towards S. Paul, whose basilica at the second milestone of the Via Ostiensis appears like a pigmy structure in comparison with that which he erected over the tomb of S. Peter. Constantine had no intention of placing S. Paul in an inferior rank, or of showing less honour to his memory." In his original design which he carried out, the high road to Ostia ran close by the grave; thus the space at his disposal was limited. But before the fourth century had run out it was imperatively felt that the Church of S. Paul ought to be equal in size and beauty to that on the Vatican Hill: so, in rebuilding the basilica the original plan was changed by the Emperor Valentinian II., in A.D. 386. The tomb and the altar above it were left undisturbed, a great arch was raised above the altar, and westwards from that point, in the direction of the Tiber, a vast church was built. The great work was continued by Theodosius and completed by Honorius, and the splendid decorative work finally carried out by Honorius' sister, the famous Placidia, who died in A.D. 450. Certain Popes, notably Gregory the Great, and later Honorius III, in A.D. 1226, added to the decorations of Placidia.

There was evidently in very early times a cemetery around the crypt which contained the body of S. Paul; this was the original Cemetery of Lucina. But it has been disturbed by the subsequent erection of Basilica of Constantine, and later by the far larger church begun under Valentinian II. It is hoped that a future careful exploration of the cemetery will bring to light much that is at present unknown.

(2) *Cemetery of Commodilla* - is situated on the left of the Via Ostiensis on the road of the Seven Churches. Commodilla was evidently a wealthy Roman lady who, like many other Christians of position and means, gave up her garden to the Christian dead. Nothing, however, is known of her history.

Two martyrs, SS. Felix and Adauctus, once well known in Christian story, were interred here. They belong to the time of Diocletian. This Catacomb, apparently of considerable extent, is only very imperfectly known. The Martyrologies mention other "confessors" buried here, but the corridors are either earthed up or are in a state of ruin and confusion, and any thorough investigation would be a costly and difficult piece of work.

(3) *Cemetery of S. Thekla*. - Nothing is known of the martyr who has given her name to this Catacomb; who must not, however, be confounded with the celebrated saint of the same name who belongs to Lycaonia, and is traditionally connected with S. Paul. This cemetery has been but imperfectly examined as yet; its extent is unknown.

#### THE VIA ARDEATINA

The Via Ardeatina lies a little distance to the right of the Via Appia, from which it branches off close to the Church of "Domine quo vadis," the traditional scene of the appearance of the Lord to S. Peter. In the immediate neighbourhood of the Via Ardeatina and Via Appia lie, roughly speaking scarcely two miles from the city, the wonderful group of cemeteries generally known under the names of Domitilla and Callistus. These include the Cemetery of Lucina—really an area of Callistus, the Cemeteries of SS. Marcus and Balbinus and also that of S. Soteris. This enormous network of subterranean corridors, chambers, and chapels are all more or less united by passages and corridors (though this is not quite certain); but much is as yet unexplored, and the lines of demarcation between the several Catacombs uncertain. Recent careful investigations of De Rossi, Armellini, Marucchi, and others less known have, however, led to the discovery of certain great and notable historic crypts, centres round which the network of corridors are grouped. These identifications have thrown a flood of light upon the very early history of the numerous and influential Roman congregations; much that was supposed to be purely legendary and fabulous has as we have observed, into the domain of real history. Very briefly we will touch on a few of the more remarkable "finds."

*Cemetery of Domitilla*. – The famous group of Catacombs known under this general title—perhaps with the sole exception of the Cemetery of S. Priscilla and the Cemetery of S. Callistus, hereafter to be described, is the vastest of all the Catacombs; and with the exceptions just alluded to, in some of its areas, the oldest in point of date.

Much of this great cemetery dates from the time of men who knew the Apostles Peter and Paul.

Its *grandeur*. - It was burying-place of certain Christian members of the imperial house of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian in the days of their power, and it tells us with no uncertain voice that in the ranks of the Christian congregation of Rome in the very first days were members drawn from the highest ranks of the proudest aristocracy of the world, and who did not shrink from sharing the same seats in the Christian prayer homes with the slave and the little trader.

Writing of the Domitilla Cemetery in 1903, Marucchi does not hesitate to style it perhaps the most important of all the Catacombs; but, " alas " he goes on to say, has been terribly ravaged by comparatively modern explorers." These destructive explorations have sadly affected the importance which the Catacomb and its several divisions, or areas, would have possessed as a great monument of very early Christian history, had these recent excavations been carried out with due care and reverence.

Roughly, the Cemetery of Domitilla is composed of three distinct divisions or areas. The first, the work of the first and second centuries. In this area there are several famous historical centres, e.g. the tombs of the two saints Nereus and Achilles, and of the once famous S. Petronilla, and the well-known entrance or vestibule which opens on the Via Ardeatina, and the Chapel or Chamber of Ampliatus. The second area is the work of the third century, and the third dates from the last years of the third and the first quarter of the fourth. These areas have been connected with corridors of different periods in the second, third, and fourth centuries; the whole network is of very great extent.

At the end of the sixth century, in the Pontificate of Siricius, great damage was occasioned to much of the earlier part of the cemetery by the construction of the Basilica of S. Petronilla, a building which also bears the names of Nereus and Achilles.

The fame of these early martyrs and the number of pilgrims to their shrines in the closing years of the fourth century, induced Pope Siricius-regardless of the mischief which such a work would occasion to the many unknown graves of an early period-to build a somewhat large church or basilica over the tombs of SS. Nereus and Achilles and S. Petronilla. The position of the tombs of these two saints has been ascertained; the grave of Petronilla has also been localized with fair certainty. The high altar of the fourth-century basilica was placed over the graves of the two martyrs; the remains of Petronilla lay in a chamber behind the apse of the basilica ; without, of course, maintaining the accuracy of the details of the sixth-century martyrology of Nereus and Achilles, the discoveries in the Cemetery of Domitilla have established the fact of the existence of these two traditional saints and martyrs. Scholars recognize now that much of the sixth century martyrology was founded upon dependable tradition.

The crypt of Ampliatus-another of the historic centres of this great catacomb, is situated in the middle of the area or district originally occupied by the tombs of the Christian

members of the Imperial Flavian House. The decorations of the sepulchral chambers here and the style of inscriptions belong to the first century and first half of the second.

In one of the carefully decorated crypts of the Flavian family is an arched tomb with the word "Ampliatius" graven on marble in characters which belong to a very early period. De Rossi, after examining the question at some length, concludes that this grave can be with very high probability considered to be the sleeping-place of the remains of the Arnpliatius loved of S. Paul (Rom. xvi. 8). The name is clearly that of a slave or freedman; subsequently the name (Ampliatius) became the recognized surname of the various members of the family and their descendants. It seems strange on first thoughts that one of servile should occupy a tomb of considerable importance in the heart of a Christian cemetery belonging to so great a House. This is no doubt explained by the fact that this Ampliatius occupied some very distinguished position in the early Christian community at Rome. De Rossi concludes from this, that Ampliatius was most probably the friend of S. Paul; this would account for the estimation in which this person of servile origin held by the noblest of the Roman Christian Houses.

#### THE VIA APPIA

On the Via Appia – “the Queen of Ways” as it was termed - there are four groups of cemeteries in close proximity. Two of these groups, probably three, are linked together by corridors.

The “Via Appia” led from the ancient Porta Capena through Albano, Aricia, etc., on to Capua, and later it continued to Brindisi. Three of the four groups of cemeteries or catacombs coming from Rome are on the right of the way: the cemetery of S. Callistus, of S. Sebastian (“ad Catacombas”), of S. Soteris; and on the left that of Prretextatus.

We have alluded above to the ancient Pilgrim Itineraries as giving a sure index to De Rossi in his investigation and exploration work. As an example we append a short extract from the older of the two Pilgrim Guides known as the Salzburg Itinerary, which dates from about the year of

625: “You come by the Appian Way to S. Sebastian Martyr, whose body lies deep down; there too are the sepulchres of the Apostles Peter and Paul, in which they rested for 40 years.... North on the same Appian Way you come to the Martyrs Tiburtius, Valerianus, and Maximus. When there you pass into a large crypt and you find S. Urban, Martyr and Confessor; in another spot Felicissimus and Agapitus, Martyrs; in a third place, Cyrinus Martyr; in a fourth, Januarius Martyr. On the same way you find S. Cecilia and a countless multitude of martyrs ('ibi innumerabills multitudo Martyrum'), Sixtus Pope and Martyr, Dionysius Pope and Martyr, Julianus Pope and Martyr, Flavianus Pope and Martyr. There are 80 martyrs resting there. Zephyrinus Pope and Martyr rests above Eusebius; and Cornelius Pope and Martyr rests in a crypt a little further off; and then you come to the holy Virgin and Martyr Soteris.”

Comparing the various Guides together, De Rossi found that, with very minor differences in the details, they agreed wonderfully; and in the main, although composed a thousand to

thirteen hundred years ago, he was able with their help to identify the principal shrines visited by the pilgrim crowds of the sixth and two following centuries.

(I) *The Cemetery of S. Sebastian* ("ad Catacombas") is situated on the Via Appia, right-hand side; about one and a half miles from the Porta S. Sebastiana (the ancient Porta Appia). The principal "memory" belonging to this catacomb is the Platonian chamber—so called from its having been lined with marble—in which for a brief season were deposited the bodies of the two Apostles SS. Peter and Paul. The fact of this chamber having been the temporary home of the sacred bodies is undisputed; the exact date of their having been placed there, and the length of the period during which they were left in the Platonian chamber in question, have been the subject of much controversy. The period of forty years mentioned in the above quoted Pilgrim Itinerary is now reduced by the most dependable of modern scholars to two years, and the date of the placing of the bodies in this spot is now generally assumed to have been A.D. 258, in the days of the short but bitter persecution of Valerian, when the tombs on the Vatican Hill and on the Via Ostiensis were not considered safe from outrage. When the active persecution ceased, the remains of the two apostles were restored to their original resting-places; the spot, however, where the sacred bodies had rested for a brief season assumed the eyes of the faithful a singular sanctity, and very many desired to be laid in the immediate neighbourhood of the hallowed place. This was no doubt the original reason for the formation of the Cemetery "ad Catacombas," the name of the little district in which the temporary tomb of the two apostles was situated.

The catacomb in question was eventually named after Sebastian, a brave confessor in the persecution of Diocletian, A.D. This Sebastian was tribune in the first cohort and commanded a company of the Praetorians, which was stationed on guard on the Palatine. He died for his faith under circumstances of a peculiar dramatic interest, being pierced with arrows and cruelly scourged. His body, so runs the probably true story, was taken out of the common sewer, into which it was ignominiously thrown, by a Christian matron named Lucina, who reverently interred it in the Cemetery "ad Catacombas" in the neighbourhood of the sacred Platonian chamber.

The remains of S. Sebastian were removed in the seventeenth century by Cardinal Borghesi from the crypt in which they were originally deposited and reinterred in the modern chapel which was erected over the ancient sanctuary. During the Middle Ages, when owing to the raids of the barbarians and consequent translation of the more celebrated martyrs to churches within the city, the eventful story of the catacombs was forgotten, this cemetery, owing to its connection with the two great apostles, was ever a hallowed sanctuary, and was visited by an unbroken stream of pilgrim visitors, and after the rediscovery of the City of the Dead in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, gave the name of its now famous district "ad Catacombas" to the various subterranean cemeteries which from time to time since then have been discovered.

The corridors with their graves in this famous cemetery have not yet been fully excavated.

*The Cemetery of S. Callistus.* - The great group of catacombs generally known under the title "S. Callistus" is situated on the right of the Via Appia, about a quarter of a mile nearer Rome than the Cemetery of S. Sebastian ("ad Catacombas") just described; the usual entrance being about one and a quarter miles from the Porta S. Sebastiana (Porta Appia).

It is composed of several groups of cemeteries of different periods from the first century to the fourth. These groups are so united by corridors that they may be considered as one vast catacomb. The Cemetery of Callistus in part dates from the first century, but it only obtained the designation of "Callistus" in the last years of the second or in the first years of the third century, when Callistus the deacon was appointed by Zephyrinus the Bishop of Rome as superintendent of *The Cemetery*. Subsequently Callistus succeeded Zephyrinus as bishop, and greatly enlarged the original area, one chamber of which he set apart as the official burying-place of the bishops or popes of Rome. Before the time of Callistus the official burying-place of the bishops was the cemetery on the Vatican Hill, immediately contiguous to the sepulchre of S. Peter. At the end of the second century the limited space on the Vatican Hill was completely occupied-hence the necessity for arranging a new papal crypt.

The oldest portion of the "Callistus" group is the so-called Crypt of Lucina (first and second century). It was evidently in the first instance excavated in the property of the noble family of the and was used as the buryingplace of Christian members of that great House. De Rossi believes that the "Lucina" in whose land the crypt was originally arranged was no other than the well-known Pomponia wife of Plautius, the famous general in the days of Nero, whose conversion to Christianity about the year of grace 58 is alluded to in scarcely veiled language by Tacitus. If this be the case, the name "Lucina" was assumed by the great lady in question, and by which she was generally known in Christian circles. The assuming of such an "agnomen" was not uncommon among Roman ladies. The original area of the Cemetery of Lucina was greatly enlarged in the days of the Emperor Marcus and in the last years of the second century. The chapel of the popes, above alluded to, and other important funereal chambers, are included in this enlarged area.

It was in the course of the third century, no doubt after the construction of the new crypt or chapel of the popes by Callistus, and of course in part to the presence of this great historical centre, that the cemetery assumed its grandiose proportions.

*The Cemetery of S. Soteris*, a vast catacomb, communicates with the older portion of the Callistus crypt and corridors. Much is as yet unexplored here. S. virgin and martyr-who has given her name to this great cemetery, was buried "in Cemeterio suo," A.D. 304. She suffered when the persecution of Diocletian was raging.

What we have termed the group, included generally under the term of the Callistus Catacomb, is the largest and most extensive of the catacombs which lie on the great roads which through the suburbs and immediate neighbourhood of Rome.

The discovery of this important area of the ancient Christian City of the Dead was made in the year 1849, when De Rossi found in an old vineyard bordering on the Via Appia a fragment of an inscription bearing the letters Martyr." The Itineraries had recorded that Cornelius, Bishop of Rome and Martyr, had been buried in the "Callistus" Cemetery. In the course of subsequent searches the other portion of the broken tablet was found, which completed the inscription" Cornelius Martyr." The vineyard was purchased by Pope Pius IX, and very soon the searchers came upon the ruined chapel of the popes and the crypt of S. Cecilia.

The position of the historic Callistus Catacomb was thus established beyond doubt, and for some fifty years portions of the great cemetery have been slowly excavated by De Rossi and his companions; the results have been of the highest importance, and have contributed in no little degree to our knowledge of early Christianity-its faith-its hopes-its anticipations.

*The Cemetery of Pratekstatus* is on the left hand of the Via Appia, almost parallel with the usual entrance to the vast network of the Catacomb of Callistus. It is, comparatively speaking, a cemetery of small dimensions, but of great antiquity. It must have been arranged quite early in the second century; not improbably portions of this cemetery date from the first century. Some of the decorations of the historic crypt are elaborate and striking, and evidently belong to the best period of classical art. As yet it has only partially been explored. It runs under private property, and the owner apparently is to allow a detailed examination: this is disappointing, as owing to its great antiquity and Possessing some historic crypts, once the resting-places of famous heroes in the early Christian combat, probably discoveries of high interest would result from a prolonged and careful search.

As early as A.D. 1857 De Rossi discovered in this cemetery of Prretextatus some crypts higWy decorated, evidently the resting-places of certain famous martyrs referred to in the Pilgrim Itineraries as sleeping in this catacomb.

There are many indications that we meet with here which tell us that this is a very ancient cemetery. Speaking of this catacomb of Prretextatus, the pilgrim itineraries mention particularly three of those small Basilicas in the immediate vicinity, which frequently in the fourth or fifth centuries were built directly over the crypt or crypts which contained the remains of well-known martyrs and confessors; this was for the convenience of pilgrims who came after from distant countries to pray at the shrines: the ruins of two of these Basilicas, apparently dedicated to SS. Valerian, Tiburtius, Maximus, and leno, have been discovered here. Of these confessors, Valerian and Tiburtius were respectively the husband and brother-in-law of S. Cecilia. Zeno 1 was also a martyr. Maximus was the Roman officer who had charge of the execution of Valerian and Tiburtius, and who, seeing their constancy under torture, became a Christian, and was in consequence put to death.

Other historic crypts have been ascertained to have existed in this little catacomb-namely, those of SS. Felicissimus, Agapetus; and Quirinus, with his daughter Balbina--(}f whom

Felicissimus and Agapitus were deacons in attendance upon Pope Sixtus. They suffered martyrdom under Valerian, A.D. 258. Quirinus was a tribune who was put to death at an earlier period under the Emperor Hadrian.

A yet more famous confessor than any of these, S. Januarius, the eldest of the seven martyr sons of S. Felicitas, was buried in this sacred second-century catacomb of The number of graffiti, the work of pilgrim visitors in the neighbourhood of the tomb of this Januarius, bears witness to the great veneration in which this martyr was held.

The ceiling of the tomb, which has been identified as that of S. Januarius, is beautifully decorated with paintings of the second century-representing the four seasons: the spring by flowers, the summer by ears of corn, the autumn by a vine, the winter by laurels; birds and little winged figures are artistically mingled in this very early decorative work. On the wall below a painting, representing the Good Shepherd with a sheep on His shoulder, has been almost destroyed by a grave excavated in the fourth century. The grave held the body of some devout Christian whose friends were anxious to lay their loved dead as near as possible to the sacred remains of the famous martyr S. Januarius. Not a few of the more striking of the catacomb paintings are thus unhappily disfigured by the mistaken piety of subsequent generations.

The personality of after whom this cemetery is named, is unknown.

## VI

### THE VIA LATINA

The ancient Via Latina branches off from the Via Appia near the Baths of Caracalla. It is soon, however, lost among the vineyards, but reappears and leads eventually to the Alban Hills.

The Pilgrim Itineraries mention three cemeteries here. They give a certain number of names of martyrs buried in these catacombs—none, however, apparently well known. They also allude to “many martyrs” interred in these catacombs.

The names of the three catacombs in question are (1) Apronienus -perhaps the name of the original donor; (2) SS. Gordianus and Epimachus; and (3) S. Tertullinus. These cemeteries have never been carefully examined, and even the site of the third has not yet been identified.

### THE VIA LABICANA

Leads from the Porta Maggiore, the ancient Porta tina, to Palestrina. The Itineraries tell us of two cemeteries on this road, that of S. Castulus and that of SS. Peter and Marcellinus. The Catacomb of S. Castulus has only been very partially examined. It is in a ruinous condition, and is not at present accessible. S. Castulus suffered martyrdom in the persecution of Diocletian.

The Catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, sometimes called "ad duas lauros," from the original name of the district, is in the immediate neighbourhood of the famous Torre Pignataro, the tomb of S. Helena, this appellation being derived from the pignae or earthen pots used in the building. The magnificent porphyry sarcophagus now in the Vatican was removed from this tomb. SS. Peter and Marcellinus, from whom this once celebrated catacomb is named, suffered in the persecution of Diocletian. S. Peter was in orders as an exorcist. S. Marcellinus was a priest. Pope Damasus, in his inscription originally placed on their crypt, tells us he learned the particulars of their martyrdom from the executioner employed by the State. This cemetery has lately been partially explored. The bodies of the two saints who gave their names to the catacomb were carried away, and are now in Seligenstadt, near Mayence. The saints termed "the Quatuor Coronati" were in the first instance buried here, but their remains were subsequently translated by Pope Leo IV to the church on the Caelian. This cemetery is of considerable extent.

The Itineraries enumerate the names of several martyrs once evidently well known. They also speak of many other martyrs buried here, using such expressions as "innumerabilis martyrum multitudo sepulta jacet" "alii (Martyres) innumerabiles," etc.

#### THE VIA TIBURTINA

The Via Tiburtina leads to Tivoli. It quits Rome by the Porta S. Lorenzo, which stands on the site of the ancient Porta Tiburtina. On this road are two large cemeteries, that of S. Cyriaca and that of S. Hippolytus. S. Cyriaca was a Christian widow. The importance, however, of this catacomb is mainly derived from its possessing the tomb of S. Laurence. S. Laurence suffered martyrdom three days after the death of Pope Sixtus II, to whom he was attached as deacon. A very general tradition relates that Laurence suffered on a gridiron. An extraordinary popularity is attached to his memory. Marucchi, one of the latest scholars who has written on the catacombs, does not hesitate to say that the veneration paid to him was almost equal that accorded to the apostles. There is scarcely a city in Western Christendom which does not have a church bearing his honoured name. In Rome itself there are six of these.

Over the crypt containing the tomb of S. Laurence, Constantine the Great built a little oratory or memoria, which soon became too small for the crowds of pilgrims. A second church was erected by Pope Sixtus III, A.D. 432, by the side of Constantine's Memoria which was ever known as "Basilica ad Corpus." The second church was termed the "Basilica Three of the fifth century Popes of Rome were buried in the "Basilica ad Corpus." In the thirteenth century the two churches were made into one by Honorius III, A.D. 1218.

The Itineraries mention several well-known martyrs buried in the cemetery which was excavated round the martyr's sacred tomb, notably SS. Justus, Cyriaca, Simferosa, etc., "cum multis martyribus." The catacomb in comparatively modern times has been ruthlessly damaged by the works in connection with a very large modern cemetery. Only

since A.D. 1894 has more care been taken in the preservation of the precious remains of this once important catacomb.

*Cemetery of S. Hippolytus.* - on the same great road, the Via Tiburtina which stretches across the now desolate Campagna to Tivoli, on the northern side of the road almost opposite the Cemetery of S. Cyriaca on which stands the Basilica of S. Laurentius just described, is the Catacomb of S. Hippolytus. It is only comparatively recently that this cemetery has been really explored, and much still remains to be excavated here. A small basilica underground was discovered, with the historic crypt in which the once famous martyr was buried. The corridors around have been sadly ravaged again and again by barbarian invaders in the fifth and following centuries, and the whole catacomb is in ruin, and has been only in part investigated. It is evidently of considerable extent. Proximity to the tomb of the great scholar martyr was evidently a privilege eagerly sought by many from the middle years of the third century onward. The numbers of Pilgrim Graffiti” or inscriptions more or less roughly carved and painted in the neighbourhood of the sanctuary, tell us that the spot where the remains of Hippolytus lay, was long the object of reverent pilgrimage after the Peace of the Church all through the fourth and following centuries. The Itineraries mention many martyrs buried here, among whom S. Genesius is perhaps the best known; he was a celebrated actor; once a mocker at the religion of which eventually he became the brave confessor; he died for his faith.

But the glory of this now ruined cemetery was the tomb of S. Hippolytus. He has been well described by Bishop, Lightfoot in his long and exhaustive Memoir (*Apostolic Fathers*, Part I. vol. ii.).

“The position and influence of Hippolytus were unique among the Roman Christians of his age. He linked together the learning and the traditions of the East, the original home of Christianity, with the practical energy of the West, the scene of his own life labours. He was by far the most learned man in the Western Church.... Though he lived till within a few years of the middle of the third century, he could trace his pedigree back by only three steps, literary as well as ministerial, to the life and teaching of the Saviour Himself, of whom he was the pupil, Polycarp, and S. John. This was his direct ancestry. No wonder if these facts secured to him exceptional honour in his own generation.”

The position he occupied in the Christian world has been much disputed. He is usually described. as Bishop of Portus, the harbour of Rome, and modern scholarship has come to the conclusion that he exercised a general superintendence with the rank of a bishop over the various congregations of foreigners, traders and others, on the Italian sea-board, with Portus as his headquarters.

A very dignified and striking statue, alas much mutilated, has been found amid the ruins over the Cemetery of Hippolytus. On the back and sides of the chair on which the figure of the scholar bishop is sitting, is engraved a generally received list of his works. There is no doubt as to the genuineness of the statue in question, which dates from about the year 222. It ranks as the oldest Christian statue which has come to light; indeed, it stands alone an example of very early Christian sculpture, and was probably erected in an interval of

the Church's peace in the reign of the Emperor Alexander Severus, and is a striking proof of the unique position which the writer and scholar held in the Christian community.

There is no doubt he was done to death-what, however, was the peculiar form of his martyrdom is uncertain. We know he was exiled to Sardinia, where he suffered, and his remains were brought back to Rome with the remains of Pontianus, sometime Bishop of Rome, who also suffered martyrdom at the same time in Sardinia; Pontianus being laid in the papal crypt in the Cemetery of Callistus, and Hippolytus in the catacomb which bears his name on the Via Tiburtina, about the year 237.

Pope Damasus, the great restorer of the sanctuaries of Rome, enlarged and beautified the crypt where the honoured remains were deposited, in the latter years of the fourth century, and a few years later Prudentius the Christian poet in his collection of hymns entitled *Crowns of the Martyrs*-devotes a long poem to the shrine and memory of Hippolytus.

In the opening years of the fourth century, when Honorius, Theodosius' son, was reigning over the Western Empire, it is evident that the fame and reputation of Hippolytus, scholar and martyr, were among the popular histories of Christendom, and his tomb one of the chief objects of pilgrimage.

The lines of Prudentius, written in the closing years of the fourth century, are quoted as giving a picture of a famous catacomb as it appeared to a scholar and poet in the days of Theodosius and Honorius. They also give some idea of the estimation and reverential regard with which the martyrs and confessors of the first age of Christianity were held in the century which immediately followed the Peace of the Church:

Hard by the City walls-amid the orchards-there is a Crypt.... Into its secret cells there is a steep path with winding stairs. . . . As you advance, the darkness as of night grows more dense.... At intervals, however, there are contrived openings cut in the roof above, which bring the bright rays of the sun into the crypt. Although the recesses twisting this way and that form narrow chambers, with galleries in deep gloom, yet some light finds its way through the pierced vaulting down into the hollow recesses. . . . And thus throughout the subterranean crypt it is possible still to revel in the brightness of the absent sun.

“To such secret recesses was the body of Hippolytus borne, quite near to the spot where now stands the altar dedicated to God.

That same altar-slab provides the sacrament, and is the trusty guardian of its martyr's bones, which it guards there in the waiting for the Eternal Life, while it feeds the dwellers by the River Tiber with holy food.

“Marvellous is the sanctity of the place. The altar is close by for those who pray, and it assists the hopes of such by mercifully giving what they require. Here, too, have I when sick with ills of soul and body, often knelt in prayer and found help. . . . Early in the morning men come to salute (Hippolytus); all the youth of the place worship here; they come-they go-until the setting of the sun. Love of religion gathers into one vast crowd both Latins and strangers.”-*Translated from Prudentius, “Peristephanon,” Passion of S. Hippolytus.*

The close proximity of the Cemetery and Basilica of S. Laurence (above described) as years passed on was fatal to the memory of S. Hippolytus. From very early times S. Laurence, the deacon of Sixtus II, received extraordinary honour. He suffered, as we have stated, in the persecution of Decius, A.D. 258, and occupies the place of S. Stephen in the Church of the West. It was of this famous and popular saint that Augustine wrote: "Quam non potest abscondi Roma, tam non potest abscondi Laurentii corona." In the prayer of the oldest Roman sacramentary we read, "De beati solemnitate Laurentii, peculiaris prae ceteris Roma lretatur." "No marvel," writes Bishop Lightfoot, "that the aureole which encircled the heads of other neighbouring saints and martyrs, even of the famous Hippolytus himself, should have faded in the light of his unique splendour."

As years rolled on, the neighbouring Basilica of S. Laurence grew larger and grander. The Basilica of S. Hippolytus built over his cemetery faded away, comparatively unca. red for; the great scholar was forgotten in the fame which gathered round the neighbouring popular saint. Paul I, A.D. removed the sacred relique of the saint scholar to the wellknown City Church of S. Silvester in Capite.

The Cemetery and Basilica of Hippolytus after the remains of the saint had been translated were quickly forgotten, and the very site was in time confused with that of the Cemetery and stately Church of S. Laurence on the other side of the Via Tiburtina. It was only in 1881 that De Rossi discovered the ancient cemetery and the ruined subterranean basilica above briefly described,-the basilica and catacomb visited by Prudentius in the last years of the fourth century, and so vividly painted by him in his hymn in the *Peristephanon*.

Outside Rome there are traces of the fame of the great scholar, but not many. There is a ruined church in Portus bearing his name; its tower, still noticeable, is a conspicuous landmark in the desolate Campagna. Arles possesses a church dedicated to Hippolytus. A strange story connects his remains with the once famous royal Abbey of S. Denis close to Paris. His body, or at least portions of his body, are also traditionally enshrined in churches at Brescia and Cologne. The Roman Churches of S. Laurence and the .. Quatuor Coronati JJ also claim to possess reliques of S. Hippolytus.

But these few scattered and doubtful reliques are wellnigh all that remains of Hippolytus, and while many of his writings are still with us, bearing witness to his industry and scholarship, his name and life-work are virtually forgotten by men; and in ecclesiastical annals only a dim, blurred memory of the career of one of the greatest scholars and writers of the first two Christian centuries lives in the pages of that eventful story.

Of the two saints whose basilicas and cemeteries were so close together on that Campagna Road just outside Rome, the one, S. Laurence, men have crowned with an aureole of surpassing glory; the other, S. Hippolytus, whose title to honour was really far superior to that of his companion in' the tombs of the Via Tiburtina, men have chosen to forget.

## THE VIA NONENTANA

The Via Nomentana leaves Rome on the north through the modern Porta Pia; in ancient times the Porta Nomentana, and in the Middle Ages the Porta S. Agnesi. On this road the Itineraries tell us of three cemeteries: that of S. Nicomedes, of S. Agnes, and the cemetery generally termed "Cœmeterium majus. De Rossi calls this last the Ostrian Cemetery; some call it after the famous martyred fostersister of Agnes, S. Emerentiana, who was buried there.

(1) Cemetery of S. Nicomedes. - This is only a small catacomb, but it possesses a high interest on account of its age. It dates evidently from the first century. Tradition tells us that Nicomedes was a presbyter who lived in the days of Domitian. He suffered martyrdom for his faith's sake, and his body was thrown into the Tiber. A disciple of his, one Justus, recovered his master's body and buried it "in horto juxta muros." The garden in question, hard by the city walls, was the site of the present little catacomb.

The masonry work here is of a very early date, and the various Greek inscriptions on the loculi also bear witness to its great antiquity; Marucchi alludes to a reservoir of water in the principal gallery, and believes that the presence of water prevented the cemetery from being further extended.

(2) *The Cemetery of S. Agnes* is on the Via Nomentana, about a mile from the Porta Pia. S. Agnes has been from very early times a singularly loved among the heroines of the days of persecution. Jerome well voices this popular estimate "omnium gentium litteris atque .... vita laudata est." Her story is well known; how she refused to become the bride of the Proconsul's son, alleging that she was already the bride of Christ. After some terrible experiences she was condemned to be burned as a Christian, but the fire was too tardy or insufficient, so the executioner stabbed her in the throat. The name "Agnes" is simply a Christian appellation which she assumed signifying her purity and chastity. The name of her family is unknown; it is, however, certain that she belonged to a wealthy, probably to a noble House. She was interred in a cemetery, the property of her parents "in prædiolo suo."

Her martyrdom took place in the course of the persecution of the Emperor Valerian, circa A.D. Portions of the catacomb which bears her name are of a yet older date than S. Agnes. Among other signs of great antiquity are the Greek inscriptions on various loculi. The cemetery, which has been explored with some care, consists of three stories, of different dates. It was, however, after the burying of the young martyr that the catacomb was developed and assumed considerable proportions, as many of the Christian congregation of Rome were desirous of depositing their loved dead in the immediate neighbourhood of the tomb of Agnes. The Emperor Constantine in the fourth century built the basilica known as S. Agnes over the tomb. There is an inscription on a small marble tablet at Naples, originally brought from Rome, which Armellini considers was originally on the loculus containing the body of the saint. The inscription is as follows:

AGNE SANC

## TISSIMA

The basilica has been several times restored, but preserves with fair accuracy the original disposition of the Church of Constantine.

When it was first built in the fourth century, as we find in other similar instances, considerable destruction and havoc were wrought in the galleries of the catacomb. The fourth-century builders often mercilessly cut away and destroyed galleries, cubicula, loculi, when they arranged for the foundations and lower stories of the church large or small which arose over the tomb of the special saint and martyr. We would instance as conspicuous examples of this strange disregard of the older burying-places, the Basilicas of S. Domitilla, of S. Laurence, of S. Sylvester; the last named is built over the Cemetery of S. Priscilla.

The body of S. Agnes was never translated from its original home. In the year 1605, in the pontificate of Paul v, her remains, together with those of her foster-sister the martyr S. Emerentiana, were placed in a silver sarcophagus or urn. This was seen in the year 1901-2, when some work beneath the altar was being carried out.

(3) *The Cameterium majus* in the immediate neighbourhood of the Catacomb of S. Agnes. De Rossi names it the "Ostrian" Cemetery, and connects it with the memories of S. Peter, as being the place where the apostle used to baptize. Marucchi, however, in the light of recent discoveries in the Catacomb of Priscilla on the adjacent Via Salaria, unhesitatingly believes that the site of S. Peter's work and preaching must be sought for in the last-named cemetery. A brief résumé of Marucchi's arguments, which are most weighty, will be given when the Cemetery of Priscilla is described.

The glory of this cemetery (*Cremeterium majus*), as the memory of S. Peter seems really to belong to the Catacomb of S. Priscilla, is that here was the original tomb of S. Emerentiana, who for her devotion to her foster-sister Agnes suffered martyrdom very shortly after the death of Agnes. The site of the tomb has been ascertained, but the remains of Emerentiana now rest in the silver urn which contains the body of S. Agnes in her basilica beneath the altar.

The appellation "*Cœmeterium majus*" dates certainly from the fifth century. One of the more striking features of this catacomb is a little basilica not of later construction but belonging to the original work. It is simply excavated in the tufa stone, and is divided into two parts by the passage running through the cemetery. It is a perfect subterranean church, containing separate divisions for men and women. The presbytery and the position of the altar are clearly defined ; the very chair for the bishop or presiding presbyter is in its place, as is the pillar on which the sacred oil burned in front of some hallowed sanctuary. We wonder what was the special purpose for which this little church, in the middle of the cemetery, was designed?

The Itineraries mention that various martyrs, whose life-stories are generally unknown to us, were buried here.

## VII

### THE VIA SALARIA NOVA

The Via Salaria Nova, like the Via Nomentana, from which it is but a little distant, lies on the north side of the city. Abutting on the road are four cemeteries: S. Felicitas, Thrason and Saturninus, Jordani, and the very important and most ancient Catacomb of S. Priscilla.

The story of S. Felicitas, who with her seven sons was put to death for her religion in the reign of and by the direct commandment of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, A.D. 162, is fairly well known. The "Acts" of the martyrdom by many scholars are not reckoned authentic, although the document in question is allowed to be of very high antiquity.

The story is generally very sharply criticized, as a reproduction of a story from the Fourth Book of Maccabees. The high estimation in which the Emperor Marcus universally now is held, no doubt contributes to the severe criticism with which the story of Felicitas and her seven sons is received. Naturally there is considerable reluctance in any way the truth of a story in which the favourite hero of historians and philosophers, the noble Emperor Marcus, plays so sorry a part, and in which the brave constancy and noble endurance of a group of those Christians he so much disliked and tried to despise, is so conspicuously displayed.

But this is one of the many instances, a witness no one can gainsay, of the catacombs to the main truth of a story hitherto largely discredited. The tombs of the heroic mother and her brave sons have been identified. We recapitulate.

In the Catacomb of S. Felicitas the body of the mother was interred and subsequently removed to the basilica built over the cemetery in question. In the ancient Catacomb of Prretextatus, Januarius' (the eldest of Felicitas' sons) tomb has been found; nay more-from the numerous prayers and allusions in the graffiti around it, it is evident that the tomb in question was deeply revered by generations of pilgrim visitors. In the famous Priscilla Catacomb two out of the seven have been found-Felix and Philip. We know, too, that in the Jordani Cemetery, Martialis, Vitalis, and Alexander lie buried. In the Catacomb of Maximus, a cemetery on the Via Salaria which has not been identified, Silanus, the seventh of the faithful band, was laid. The body of Silanus, the youngest, apparently was carried away, but subsequently restored, and laid in the same catacomb with his mother.

After the Peace of the Church a little basilica was erected over the Cemetery of S. Felicitas, and Pope Damasus wrote her honour one of his Epistles. At the end of the eighth century Pope Leo III translated the remains of the mother and her son Silanus to the Church of S. Suzanna. There they are still resting.

After the translation of its precious relics. the cemetery of which we are speaking; uncommon with so many of the catacombs; was deserted by the pilgrim visitors, and its very site was quickly forgotten. De Rossi, in 1858, was enabled to point out its situation, but it was not examined until the year 1884, when some workmen digging the foundations of a came upon some ancient loculi, with inscriptions, and a number of dim faint pictures. The little basilica of the sixth century thus came to light, and the ruins of what had once been the tomb and shrine of S. Felicitas in the catacomb which bears her name.

On the Via Salaria Nova, between the Cemetery of S. Felicitas and the very important Cemetery of S. Priscilla. there exists what may be termed a network of catacombs only very partially explored. The first is called after a wealthy Roman citizen who gave the hospitality of the tomb in a catacomb beneath his gardens to several martyrs to the Diocletian persecution-notably to Saturninus. This portion of the catacombs has as yet been only very little explored; the corridors. etc., are still earthed up.

A little farther on the same road is another cemetery. generally known too under the same name - "Thrason." Marucchi, however, calls it "Cœmeterium Jordanorum." It is probable that it was joined originally to that of Thrason. The meaning of the term Jordani .. used in the old Itineraries is uncertain. This is one of the deepest excavated cemeteries. As many as four stories of galleries, one beneath the other, have been found here. Several "Arenaria" or sandpits intervene between the groups of galleries of this catacomb. All this extensive network of catacombs and arenaria has only been partially excavated as yet. The work is naturally costly to execute, and is accompanied with some danger.

De Rossi places in one of these " Arenaria .. or sand-pits in the midst of this group of Catacombs of Thrason and the Jordani on the Via Salaria, the scene of the martyrdom of the well-known SS. Chrysanthus and his wife Daria, who bore their witness unto death in the persecution of the Emperor Numerian, *circa* A.D. 284. Daria had once been a Vestal Virgin; she became a Christian, and was the especial object of hatred by the fading pagan party.

S. Gregory of Tours, in his *De Gloria Martyrum* relates how after the Peace of the Church, when the tombs of these two famous martyrs were searched for and discovered, in the historic crypt of their tomb were found the sad remains of a large group of Christians-men, women, and even children. Some time after the martyrdom of SS. Chrysanthus and Daria, a number of Christians secretly came to the crypt to pray at the martyrs' tomb. Information was given. and the Imperial authority with all haste directed that the entrance should be walled up. This was speedily done, and the group of Christian worshippers were thus buried alive. The bodies were found, as Gregory of Tours relates, and with them the eucharistic vessels of silver they had brought for the celebration of the Holy Communion.

Pope Damasus, who made this singular discovery in the latter years of the fourth century-about a century after this wholesale martyrdom-would not allow the group or the sacred

tomb to be touched; but simply in the piled-up stones caused a little window to be made, that pilgrims might look on and venerate this strange sad of martyrs.

De Rossi ever hoped to come upon this little window in question, and after fifteen centuries again to gaze with all reverence on this .. miniature Christian Pompeii I .. S. Gregory in the sixth century tells us the little window looking on this moving scene was shown to pilgrims of his day and time.

De Rossi's hope-nay more, his expectation-of finding the window has not yet been gratified, the ruinous state of the catacomb preventing any exhaustive search.

There are many martyrs' tombs and historic crypts, we learn from the Pilgrim Itineraries, still to be uncovered in this group of cemeteries.

*The Cemetery of S. Priscilla.* - Recent researches have added much to our previous knowledge of this catacomb, and have confirmed De Rossi's judgment of its great antiquity and importance. Indeed, it ranks with the great network of the Callistus and Domitilla Cemeteries on the Appian and Ardeatina Roads-not in extent perhaps. but certainly in antiquity and interest. It lies along the Salarian Way above described as on the north of the city.

De Rossi's words are memorable: "The Cemetery of Priscilla is a centre where the various memories connected with the Churches of Pudens and Priscilla meet like lines drawn from different places."

Now three of the most ancient churches of Rome-churches whose foundation stories were laid in apostolic times-are referred to by the great scholar and here. They are S. Pudentiana on the Viminal Hill, S. Prassedis on the Esquiline, and S. Priscilla (S. Prisca) on the Aventine. Of these S. Priscilla is no doubt the lineal descendant of the church that was in the house of Aquila and Priscilla, the friends of Paul. We trace it back to the fifth century. It is evident that before the fourth century the little church in the house of the tent-makers had become the public church of S. Priscilla. Its founders, the well-known Aquila and Priscilla, were buried in the Cemetery of Priscilla.

Pope Leo IV in the ninth century specially refers to their tombs in the Priscilla Cemetery.

The second of the three ancient churches, S. Prassedis, in common with S. Pudentiana, was on the vast estate which the family of Pudens possessed at the foot of the Esquiline. There is, however, no tradition extant as to when it was first founded. It is mentioned in an inscription of the fifth century in the Cemetery of S. Hippolytus, and again in the year 490 in the Acts of the Council under the presidency of Pope Symmachus. It has been restored several times, and in the early Middle Ages is famous as the first place where Pope Paschal I deposited the remains of the 2400 martyrs which were translated for security's sake from the various catacombs.

In our day and time this most ancient church is best known for the little chapel, called from its unusual and mysterious splendour” Orto del Paradiso.” It is commonly called the Chapel of S. Zeno, to whom it was originally dedicated. S. Zeno suffered in the reign of Claudius (Gothicus), A.D. 268-70. He is buried in a crypt in the Cemetery of Prrextatus. S. Zeno is called in one of the Itineraries “The Brother of the S. Valentinus of the Catacomb on the Flaminian Way.” This famous chapel contains one of the great relics of Rome, the column to which it is said our Saviour in His Passion was bound-it is of the rarest blood jasper. In S. Prassedis are two ancient sarcophagi containing the remains of the two sainted sisters SS. Prassedis and Pudentiana, brought from their original tombs in the Cemetery of S. Priscilla at the time of the great translation of the remains of the saints by Paschal I. In the centre of the nave the well is still shown where S. Prassedis probably buried the remains of martyrs; a similar well exists in the sister church of S. Pudentiana.

The first of the three churches, S. Pudentiana, is by far the most interesting of the three. It is generally assumed to be the most ancient church in Rome; originally-so says the tradition-it was the church in the house of a senator named Pudens, who received and gave hospitality to S. Peter. It is mentioned in inscriptions of the fourth century. Siricius, who followed Damasus in the Roman Episcopate, A.D. 384-398, restored it. This would imply that it had existed long before the age of the Peace of the Church. It has alas I undergone many restorations since; but it still preserves a magnificent and stately mosaic in the apse, of the date of Siricius. This is the oldest piece of mosaic work in a Roman church. (S. Constantia with its beautiful mosaic roof, which is slightly older, was not in the first instance a church, but simply a mausoleum.) The figures of the two sisters SS. Prassedis and Pudentiana holding crowns, appear standing behind the Lord and His apostles. Recent investigations have brought other indications of its great antiquity to light, and Marucchi considers that yet more may be discovered.

A close connection evidently exists between these most ancient churches and the Cemetery of Priscilla we are about to speak of.

A very ancient document-” the Acts of Pastor and Timotheus “-which Baronius, Cardinal Wiseman, and others deem authentic, gives at some length the story of the foundation of this very early Church of S. Pudentiana; the majority of scholars, however, while acknowledging their great antiquity, hesitate to receive these “ Acts” as belonging to the very early period at which they purport to be written. They probably, however, embody the substance of the generally received tradition. This ancient document consists of two letters; the first from one Pastor, a priest, addressed to Timotheus; the second the answer of Timotheus. To these is added an appendix by Pastor, which takes up and completes the story. We give a portion of this:

“Pudens went to his Saviour leaving his daughters, strengthened with chastity, and learned in all the divine law. These sold their goods, and distributed the produce to the poor and persevered strictly in the love of Christ. . . . They desired to have a baptistery in their house, to which the blessed Pius (the Bishop of Rome, A.D. not only consented but with his own hand drew the plan of the fountain. . . . By the advice of the blessed Pius,

the enfranchisement of the Christian slaves was declared with all the ancient usages in the oratory founded by Pudens; there at the festival of Easter were baptized, so that henceforth assemblies were constantly held in the said oratory, which night and day resounded with hymns of praise. Many pagans gladly came thither to find the faith and receive baptism. . . . The blessed Bishop Pius himself often visited it with joy, and offered the sacrifice for us to the Saviour.

“Then Pudentiana went to God. Her sister (Prassedis) and I (Pastor) wrapped her in perfumes, and kept her concealed in the oratory. Then after 28 days we carried her to the Cemetery of Priscilla and laid her near her father Pudens.”

(Then follows an account of the death of Novatus, who, according to the Note in the Liber Pontificalis (2nd Recension) in the account of Pope Pius I, was apparently a brother of the two sisters; he bequeathed his goods to Prassedis, who proceeded to erect a church in his Baths.)

“At the end of two years a great persecution was declared against the Christians, and many of them received the crown of martyrdom. Prassedis concealed a great number of them in her oratory.... The Emperor Antoninus heard of these meetings in the oratory of Prassedis, and many Christians were taken. . . . The blessed Prassedis collected their bodies by night and buried them in the Cemetery of Priscilla....

Then the Virgin of the Saviour, worn out with sorrow, only asked for death. Her tears and her prayers reached to heaven, and 54 days after her brethren had suffered, she passed to God. And I, Pastor, the priest, have buried her body near that of her father Pudens.”

To sum up the general tradition, which the recent investigations in the Church of Pudentiana and in the Catacomb of S. Priscilla largely bear out:

A disciple of the Apostles Peter and Paul, one Pudens, a Roman of senatorial rank and rich, received S. Peter in his house, which became a meeting-place for Christian folk at Rome in very early days. This subsequently became the Church of S. Pudentiana. Pudens had two daughters, Pudentiana and Prassedis. Later the Baths of Novatus (who was brother of the two sisters), which apparently formed part of the house or palace of Pudens, became a recognized meeting-place for Christians, and this subsequently was termed the Church of S. Pudentiana.

The Cemetery of S. Priscilla on the Via Salaria also belonged to this Christian family, and was no doubt constructed on the property of the same Pudens. Pudens and his two daughters were buried in this cemetery. One portion of this catacomb was used as the burying-place of the illustrious family of the Acilii Glabrones which evidently numbered many Christian members.

De Rossi believes that Pudens, the father of the two sisters Pudentiana and Prassedis, belonged to this illustrious house of the Acilii Glabrones.

There was also evidently a near connection between the Aquila and Priscilla so closely associated with S. Paul and the family of Pudens. It has been suggested with great probability that Aquila was a freedman or client of Pudens. and that Aquila and his wife Priscilla were intimately connected with the noble family we have been speaking of, Priscilla, S. Paul's friend, being named after the older Priscilla. All these, we know, were buried in the Cemetery of Priscilla. The Priscilla who has given her name to the catacomb was the mother of Pudens.

The foregoing little sketch, showing the connection of this Cemetery of Priscilla with these most ancient churches, is a necessary introduction to the description of the catacomb in question, which we have not hesitated to style one of the most important of the Roman cemeteries. It is, we think. one of the oldest, ranking here with the Cemeteries of Domitilla and the Lucina area of S. Callistus. Each of these three belongs probably to the first century of the Christian era.

From the references in the Liberian Calendar, compiled A.D. 354, under the head of "Depositiones Martyrum"; in the Liber Pontificalis, and in the Pilgrim Itineraries, we learn that in the Cemetery of Priscilla were interred the remains of many martyrs, confessors, and saints. There for several centuries rested the bodies of Aquila and Priscilla; Pudens and his sainted daughters Praxedis and Pudentiana; two of the martyred sons of S. Felicitas, Felix and Philip, who bore their witness in the days of the Emperor Marcus, and the Martyr Crescentius. Here too were buried seven of the Bishops of Rome, two of whom wear the martyr's crown - Marcellinus and Marcellus, who suffered in the Diocletian persecution. These are the most notable, but many other martyrs were interred in this most ancient God's acre.

Some of these hallowed remains, after the Peace of the Church in the fourth century, were brought up from the crypts of the great catacomb and laid in the basilica subsequently known as S. Sylvester."

In the ninth century, when the great translation of the precious remains of the saints and martyrs from their old resting-places in the catacombs outside Rome to securer resting-places within the city, took place, the Cemetery of Priscilla in common with the other God's acres we tenn catacombs was despoiled of many of its sacred deposits. In common too with the other catacombs, S. Priscilla at once ceased to be an object of reverent pilgrimage, and was quickly forgotten, and remained forgotten for many hundred years. It has only been explored in the last thirty or forty years, and not yet by any means exhaustively. It was only in A.D. 1887 that the crypt of the noble family of the Acilii Glabrones was discovered.

Quite recent investigation and discoveries have now satisfied Marucchi, the last explorer and student of the catacombs, long the assistant and disciple of De Rossi, that the Cemetery of Priscilla must be identified as the locality of the preaching and teaching of S. Peter-so often alluded to as the "Sedes ubi prius sedit sanctus Petrus "--that the Cemetery of S. Priscilla was the Nymphas beati Petri Marucchi has with infinite pains and scholarship proved his point, and has shown to a wondering group of interested scholars

the very pools still filled with water in the dark crypts of S. Priscilla in which the great apostle probably baptized the first converts to the religion of his Master, for whom in the end he witnessed his noble confession on the Vatican Hill in the reign of the Emperor Nero.

The Cemetery of Priscilla, as at present explored, consists roughly of two vast galleries; many of its crypts and corridors dating from the first and second centuries. Their age is accurately determined, among other well-known signs, by the character of the decorative work and by the nature and phraseology of the inscriptions; the existence of the many epitaphs is one other sure proof of the very early date of the interments.

From the notices in the Pilgrim Itineraries, notwithstanding their present often ruined and desolate condition, a good many of the original tombs of the more famous confessors and saints can be fairly identified. We indicate a few of the more remarkable features of this important and venerable cemetery.

On the first story, the original tomb of Priscilla, according to the ancient Itineraries, is in a crypt close to an old entrance staircase. Close to the crypt is a large chamber of the second century, evidently used for public worship. Small chambers or chapels lead out of this large crypt, one of these being the famous Greek Chapel, so called in later times from some Greek inscriptions on the walls. The paintings on the walls are important and highly interesting. This ancient chapel was also used for worship. In the neighbourhood of this portion of the cemetery is a large crypt which from various sure signs, such as the evident desire on the part of many to make it their last home; from the pillars on which once were placed the lamps which used ever to burn close to specially revered sanctuaries; from the many means of access for pilgrims of the third and fourth centuries, - was clearly the last resting-place of several of the more famous saints of the Catacomb of S. Priscilla. No inscription or graffiti of pilgrims have yet been deciphered to tell us who lay here. It has been suggested that Praxedes, Pudenciana, and other well-known saints were probably interred in or near this place. Marucchi calls attention to the great number of loculi in this cemetery, still untouched not rifled of their precious contents. The inscriptions on many of these loculi for the most part are very short and simple, containing little besides the name of the dead, with just a brief beautiful reference to the sure hope of the dead in Christ.

In this first or uppermost gallery of the catacomb on which we are dwelling, was discovered quite lately a very large crypt surrounded with corridors, sadly ruined, but with the remains of elaborate decoration still visible and with fragments of marble lying about, with pieces of sarcophagi and portions of inscriptions carefully carved, some in Greek, beautifully wrought. This area, which is quite distinct from the great cemetery in the midst of which it lies, once contained the remains of the Christian members of the noble Roman house of the Acilii Glabrones. From the inscriptions which have been found and deciphered, this burying-place of a famous family dates from the first century, and the interments from the first and following centuries.

These Acilii Glabrones whose names occur and recur in the broken inscriptions were members of a distinguished family, holding a very high position in the aristocracy of

Rome under the early Emperors. We learn a good deal about a head of this illustrious house, Acilius Glabrio, from the historians Suetonius and Dion Cassius.

In the year of grace 91, Acilius Glabrio was consul, and excited the jealousy of the Emperor Domitian, who condemned him to fight with wild beasts in the gardens of one of the Imperial villas. From this deadly combat he came out victorious, but the hatred of the Emperor was not satisfied, and he exiled the powerful patrician, and eventually put him to death.

The accusation against Acilius Glabrio seems to have been that he was among the “devisers of new things” (“molitores! novarum rerum”). It was a vague and mysterious made against various persons of high degree in the Domitian. The accusation was connected with the practice of some strange foreign superstition unknown to the religion. This crime is now generally understood to been the practice of Christianity, and Acilius Glabrio, Clemens the near kinsman of the Emperor, and many others alluded to by Suetonius who were arraigned under this charge and put to death, were evidently Christians. This conjecture, since the recent discovery of the great crypt of the Acilii Glabriones in the Priscilla Cemetery belonging to this noble house, has become a certainty, for the Christianity of those buried there has been absolutely proved from words and sacred Christian signs carved upon the broken slabs which once formed part of the sarcophagi and loculi bearing the family name.

Thus, according to Marucchi, to Allard the well-known and scholarly historian of the Persecutions, and to De Rossi, Acilius Glabrio, the great patrician, the consul of the first century, the contemporary of the Apostles Peter and Paul and no doubt their friend and convert, was one of that aristocratic group in Rome which accepted the faith of Jesus. a group of which so little is known, and whose very existence hitherto has been generally questioned; and these, recognizing the brotherhood of slaves and freedmen and the poorest and saddest of the dwellers of the great city, not only helped them in their life, and associated them in all their dearest and most certain hopes, but gave them the “hospitality of the tomb round the stately family crypt the corridors and funereal chambers where these poor and insignificant members of the Christian congregation might rest. The Priscilla Cemetery, dating as it does from the days of the apostle, is a great example of this loving Christian custom.

Now general tradition ascribes the foundation of this vast and ancient catacomb to Pudens, the wealthy senator; to his mother Priscilla, of whom beyond her name we know nothing; to her sainted daughters Praxedis and Pudentiana. The question then arises-Was this Pudens a member of the great house of the Acilii Glabriones? The leading Italian scholars in the lore of the catacombs think he certainly was. De Rossi even suspects that Pudens was the martyr consul himself. With our present knowledge this supposition cannot be decisively maintained. It is, however, an interesting hypothesis.

The Basilica of S. Sylvester, of which we shall speak presently, which was erected shortly after the Peace of the Church in the fourth century, was directly over crypt of the Acilii Glabriones.

A very remarkable feature in the Catacomb of S. Priscilla are the reservoirs of water, which evidently served in very early days as baptisteries. The most considerable of these reservoirs or tanks is on the upper story of the cemetery, and is communicated with by a broad staircase of over twenty-five steps, which come out behind what was once the apsidal end of the Basilica of S. Sylvester. Marucchi describes it as *une vaste piscine encore pleine d'eau, desservie par un petit canal.* This great baptistery became, from the fourth century onward, a spot of intense interest to the many pilgrims who visited the catacomb sanctuaries.

Another large reservoir of water has been found on the second story of this catacomb; other and smaller tanks have also been found.

Marucchi believes that this cemetery is the one alluded to in the many traditions, including the notices in the Itineraries, as the special scene of S. Peter's labours and preaching, teaching and baptizing, as the "*cœmeterium beati Petri ubi baptizaverat,*" as the "*sedes ubi prius sedit sanctus Petrus.*"

The investigation which has led to recent discoveries in this cemetery had not been completed when De Rossi identified the *Cœmeterium Ostrianum* (of which we spoke above) as the scene of S. Peter's work. It is these latest finds "that have induced Marucchi to fix the Priscilla Cemetery as the place where the great apostle laboured in those early years of the history of Roman Christianity.

Beneath the first vast gallery of this catacomb with its many memories of saints and martyrs, including the famous crypt of the *Acilii Glabrones*" house, lies another and very ancient area of sepulchral galleries.

This area was communicated with by several staircases, some of which are now completely closed. This vast sepulchral area has been as yet only partially explored. It is described roughly as consisting of a long gallery, out of which lead more than twenty other galleries, many of which as yet are only imperfectly investigated.

Marucchi, who has devoted a long and important section of his great work to the Priscilla Catacomb, writes of this second story of the cemetery as the most extensive and carefully planned of all the cemeteries of subterranean Rome that have been yet examined.

His words here are remarkable, and must be quoted: "*On peut dire sans exagération, que c'est la région cémétériale la plus vaste et la plus régulière de toute la Rome souterraine.*"

The masonry used in its construction; its many inscriptions on the loculi, carved in marble, or painted in red on tiles,-all bear witness of its hoar antiquity; much of it dates certainly from the second century. It contains, as we have remarked already, a reservoir or tank of water--of course a baptistery--deep and of considerable size.

This singular feature, when taken in conjunction with the great tank or reservoir of the first story and the several smaller tanks or reservoirs discovered in the various corridors and sepulchral chambers-peculiarities and features possessed by no other catacomb-amply justifies the ancient appellation "II ad Nymphas," which no doubt exclusively belongs to the Cemetery of S. Priscilla, and which in several parts seems to preserve a memory of the baptisms of S. Peter.

Over most of the catacombs-certainly over the more important-shortly after the Peace of the Church, basilicas or churches of various dimensions were erected for the accommodation of pilgrims and members of the Roman congregations who desired to visit and to venerate the sanctuaries of the subterranean cemeteries which soon became famous and objects of reverence in the Christian world. The basilica subsequently known as S. Sylvester, which was built over the Cemetery of Priscilla, no doubt before the year 336, has perhaps obtained a greater notoriety than any other of these fourth-century cemetery churches.

Into this basilica, apparently shortly after its erection, were translated many of the bodies of martyrs, whose remains had been in the first instance deposited in the crypts of S. Priscilla beneath. The Pilgrim Itineraries dwell upon this, and especially mention how under the high altar of S. Sylvester two of the martyred sons of S. Felicitas rested-Felix and Philip.

Into S. Sylvester, too, were brought the remains of the two martyr Popes, Marcellus and Marcellinus. There also Pope Sylvester, the builder of the basilica after whom it has been named, was interred; and at his feet Pope Siricius, the successor of Pope Damasus. Three more of the occupants of the papal dignity have been interred in this honoured sanctuary, namely, Liberius, A.D. 353-5; Celestinus, A.D. 422-32; and at a somewhat later date Pope Vigilius, A.D. 538-55; in all the remains of seven of the Bishops of Rome rested in S. Sylvester.

Indeed, this little basilica ranks as the third of the sacred places of interment of the Bishops of Rome. The first is on the Vatican Hill-in the immediate neighbourhood of the grave of S. Peter-where ten or eleven of the first occupants of the See of Rome lie. The *second* is the famous so-called Papal Crypt in the Cemetery of S. Callistus on the Appian Way. The *third* is the Basilica of S. Sylvester the Cemetery of Priscilla. The *fourth* is once more on the Vatican Hill, near the grave of S. Peter, in the stately church erected by the Emperor Constantine on the site of the little Memoria chapel of Linus.

It has been well suggested that in each instance the selection of the spot for the formal creation of an official papal burying place was influenced by some direct memory of S. Peter which was attached to the spot in question. In the case of the first and fourth this is obvious.

In the case of the first was the little Memoria the sacred tomb. In the case of the fourth-the place selected was on the Vatican Hill-under the shadow of the house of God erected by Constantine over the first Memoria.

Round the grave of S. Peter it was natural and fitting that the first Bishops of Rome should lie. When the space was entirely filled up, as was the case at the close of the second century, and a fresh official burying-place for the Bishops had to be found, Zephyrinus and Callistus were, with great probability, directed to that great cemetery which at a very early date bore the name of Callistus, on account of the memories of S. Peter and S. Paul, which were connected with the adjacent cemetery ad Catacumbas” (S. Sebastian); and Marucchi thinks some treasured memory of the great apostle connected with the beautiful legend of the Quo vadis”-a spot not far from the Callistus Cemetery-hung round the God's acre selected for the site of the Papal Crypt.

The third choice of a spot for the burying-place of the Popes, the basilica on the S. Priscilla Catacomb, has been attributed to the many memories of S. Peter associated with the Catacomb in question, which are now identified with the scenes of S. Peter's teaching and baptizing.

There in the Basilica of S. Sylvester, until the great translation of the Catacomb saints in the pontificates of Paul I and Paschal I was carried out, the remains of the seven Popes, the two sons of Felicitas, and of many other famous and heroic martyrs rested. When, however, the precious treasure of these saints' remains was removed to the securer shelter of the metropolis hard by, S. Priscilla's Catacomb and Basilica were soon forgotten.

There is, alas I little left of the basilica of S. Sylvester; its very existence was unknown until De Rossi discovered its ruins in The subterranean crypt and corridors and baptisteries have fared better than the basilica built above them, and have already provided an almost mine of riches for the antiquarian, the theologian, and the historian; and in coming years, when further investigations in this vast historical cemetery are carried out, discoveries of a yet greater interest may be looked for-discoveries. to use the words of the latest toiler in S. Priscilla, which may tell us more of the passing by” of S. Peter in this venerable home of so many and such varied sacred memories.

## VIII

### THE VIA SALARIA VETUS AND VIA FLAMINIA

*Cemetery of S. Pamphilus*, we learn from the Itineraries, was a martyr; nothing, however, is known of his history.

The cemetery has not been thoroughly explored. It is, however, of some importance. Several galleries have been partially examined-but with some risk.

*The Via Salaria Vetus*, by the side of which this Catacomb, is situated, branches off from the Via Pinciana on the north of the city.

*Cemetery of S. Hermes and S. Basilissa* is on the same road, a little farther from the city. The “Acts of S. Hermes” are not accepted as belonging to the very early date (A.D. II-when Hadrian was Emperor) of the martyrdom, the particular event they profess to relate.

These Acts relate that Hermes was a Prefect of Rome. No such name occurs in the lists of Prefects. It has been suggested, however, that he was an official of the Prefect.

The remains of a very considerable basilica have been discovered in this Catacomb; a yet older building apparently existed in the same position.

The galleries of graves that have been partially explored are in a very ruinous and dangerous condition. It is recorded that the body of S. Hermes was translated by Pope Gregory IV in the ninth century. There are parts of this crumbling cemetery evidently of great antiquity.

Other martyrs, once well known, rest in this Catacomb; of these, S. Basilissa, S. Protus and S. Hyacinthus are perhaps the best known. SS. Protus and Hyacinthus apparently suffered in the persecution of Valerian, A.D. The tomb of S. Basilissa has not been identified.

The remains of S. Hyacinthus were found as late as 1841 in a closed loculus and wrapped in a cloth which still emitted a sweet perfume. The bones had evidently been burned. It has been suggested that probably the martyr had suffered by fire; this was an unusual form of martyrdom. The name of the saint and date of the deposition and the word were on the loculus. The inscription and the hallowed remains are now in the Church of the Propaganda.

Probably further investigation will be made in this interesting but ruined Catacomb. Researches here, however, are difficult and dangerous. Much of the work of Damasus in the later part of the fourth century has been recognized in this place. This cemetery was apparently held in high estimation by the earlier pilgrims.

The Itineraries speak of another cemetery on the Via Salaria Vetus under the name of "ad Clivum Cucumeris," but it has not as yet been identified.

*Cemetery of S. Valentinus.*-The old Via Flaminia leaves the city at its north-east corner, and is a direct continuation of the Corso. It is the great road communicating with the north of Italy, as the Via Appia does with South Italy. It passes through the Porta del Popolo, formerly the Gate of S. Valentinus; in old days it was termed the Flaminian Gate. On this Via Flaminia not very far from the city there is the Catacomb of S. Valentinus-the only cemetery on this road.

S. Valentinus is the last of our long catalogue of subterranean cemeteries. Little is known of the confessor and martyr after whom this Catacomb is named. His Acts," as we possess them, were only compiled in the sixth century. Valentinus suffered martyrdom A.D. (Claudius Gothicus was then Emperor.) He is stated to have been a Christian priest and physician.

The martyr's body was recovered by Sabinilla, a Christian lady, and was buried near the place where he suffered. The desire to be buried near S. Valentinus led to further excavations, but the tufa in this place was too hard and did not lend itself to the formation of galleries. Corridors were excavated above the tomb of the martyr; little, however, of interest has been found as yet. A third gallery was also constructed. It was the second gallery above the grave of the martyr which became the public cemetery, but it has been only very partially examined; much is still blocked up.

Some time after the Peace of the Church, under Pope Julius, A.D. 337-52, a basilica named after S. Valentinus was built a little to the right of the martyr's crypt. This church was restored, probably rebuilt, by Pope Honorius I, A.D. The ruins of this Church of S. Valentinus have been recently brought to light. The Itineraries speak of the body of S. Valentinus as in the restored basilica. These sacred remains were, as in other cases, no doubt translated from their original resting-place into the church above. The bodies of other martyrs who probably suffered in the Diocletian persecution are alluded to in the Pilgrim Guides. In the ruins of the basilica a chapel was identified by an inscription as having been dedicated to certain of the local martyrs, and with these nameless saints S. Zeno is mentioned by name. S. Zeno was evidently once highly venerated. His presence here is accounted for by a notice in one of the Itineraries, which styles him *frater Valentini*,"-possibly only signifying in *Passione*."

S. Zeno was buried in the well-known Cemetery of *textatus* on the Appian Way. He is perhaps best known now from the famous Chapel of S. Zeno in the Church of S. Prassedis, the work of Pope Paschal I-usually called the "Orto del Paradiso." A mosaic in that beautiful chapel pictures the two martyrs S. Valentinus and S. Zeno together.