

final victory." The openings of the Catacombs are scattered over the Campagna, whose mournful desolation surrounds the city; often among the mouldering mausolea that rise, like stranded wrecks, above the rolling sea of verdure of the tomb-abounding plain.* On every side are tombs—tombs above and tombs below—the graves of contending races, the sepulchres of vanished generations; "*Piena di sepoltura è la Campagna.*"†

How marvelous that beneath the remains of a proud pagan civilization exist the early monuments of that power before which the myths of paganism faded away as the spectres of darkness before the rising sun, and by which the religion and institutions of Rome were entirely changed.‡ Beneath the ruined palaces and temples, the crumbling tombs and dismantled villas, of the august mistress of the world, we find the most interesting relics of early Christianity on the face of the earth. In traversing these tangled labyrinths we are brought face to face with the primitive ages; we are present at the worship of the infant Church; we observe its rites; we study its institutions; we witness the deep emotions of the first believers as they commit their dead, often

* These great roads for miles are lined with the sepulchral monuments of Rome's mighty dead, majestic even in decay. But only the wealthy could be entombed in those stately mausolea, or be wrapped in those "marble cerements." For the mass of the population *columbaria* were provided, in whose narrow niches, like the compartments of a dove-cote—whence the name—the *terra cotta* urns containing their ashes were placed, sometimes to the number of six thousand in a single *columbarium*. They also contain sometimes the urns of the great.

† Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*.

‡ Aringhi, in the elegant Latin ode prefixed to his great work, exclaims, "*Sub Roma Romam querito*"—Beneath Rome I seek the true Rome.