

niche, and a full length figure of St. Urban in pontifical robes, with his name inscribed. Both of these, De Rossi thinks, belong to the tenth or eleventh century. Another picture, probably of the seventh century, of a richly attired Roman lady with jewelled bracelets and necklace, is conjectured to represent St. Cecilia. A large recess in the wall next to the "Papal Crypt" is thought to have held her sarcophagus. De Rossi and his English editors seem to accept substantially the Romish legend of this celebrated martyr. Protestant readers, however, will take the liberty of rejecting the miraculous part of the story as an invention of the fifth century, when the legend first appears.

St. Cecilia, virgin and martyr, according to her rather apocryphal acts was a maiden of noble rank—*ingenua, nobilis, clarissima*. She sang so sweetly that the angels descended to listen to her voice; and to her is ascribed the invention of the organ, which is therefore her attribute in art. She was betrothed to Valerian, a pagan of patrician rank, yet had vowed to be the spouse of Christ alone. She confessed her vow to Valerian on her marriage-day, and assured him that she was ever guarded by an angel of God, who would avenge its violation. He promised to respect her vow if he might behold her celestial visitant. She told him that his eyes must be first illumed by faith and purged with spiritual euphrasy by baptism, and sent him to St. Urban, then hiding in the Catacomb of Callixtus, who instructed and baptized him. On his return he found Cecilia praying, with an angel by her side who crowned her with immortal flowers—the lilies of purity and the roses of martyrdom. His brother Tiburtius came in, and, struck with the heavenly fragrance, for it was not the time of flowers, he also was converted and baptized. Refusing to sacrifice to the pagan gods, the brothers both received the crown of martyrdom.

Cecilia herself was reserved for a more glorious testimony. By order of the Roman prefect she was shut up in the *caldarium*, or chamber of the bath, in her own palace, which was heated to the point of suffocation. After a whole day and a night she was found unharmed. No sweat stood upon her brow, no lassitude oppressed her limbs. A lictor was sent to strike off her head. Three times the axe fell upon her tender neck, but, as the law forbade the infliction of more than three strokes, she was left alive though bathed in blood. For three days she lingered, testifying of the grace of God and turning many to the faith; and then, giving her goods to the poor and her house for a church forever, she sweetly fell

asleep. Her body was placed in a cypress coffin—very unusual to the Catacombs, it is doubtful if a single example was ever discovered—and buried in the cemetery of Callixtus, "near the chapel of the popes."

But miracles ceased not with her death. In the translation of the martyrs from the Catacombs by Pascal I., in 817, the remains of Cecilia were overlooked. The saint appeared to the Pope in a vision and revealed the place of her burial. He sought the spot, and found her body as fresh and perfect as when laid in the tomb five centuries before! He placed it in a marble sarcophagus under the high altar of the Church of St. Cecilia, which he rebuilt upon the site of her palace.

In the year 1599, or nearly eight centuries later, Cardinal Siondrati, while restoring the church, discovered this ancient sarcophagus. It was opened in the presence of trustworthy witnesses, and there, say the ecclesiastical records of the time, vested in golden tissue, with linen clothes steeped with blood at the feet, besides remnants of silken drapery, lay the incorrupt and virgin form of St. Cecilia in the very attitude in which she died.*

It is difficult to know what proportion of truth this legend contains; but, like many other of the Romish traditions, the large admixture of fiction invalidates the claims of the whole. Its sweet and tender mysticism, however, lifts it out of the region of fact into that of poetry, and almost disarms hostile criticism. The excessive praise of virginity indicates a comparatively late origin. On the festival of St. Cecilia, the 22d of November, her tomb is adorned with flowers and illumined with lamps, and mass is celebrated in her subterranean chapel by a richly appalled priest—strange contrast to the primitive worship with which alone she was acquainted. In a sarcophagus discovered near her tomb were found the remains, it is assumed, of her husband Valerian and his brother Tiburtius, who had manifestly been beheaded; and also those of the prefect Maximus, who was converted by their martyrdom and was himself beaten to death by *plumbæ*. The skull of the latter was found broken, as if by such a weapon, and its abundant hair matted with blood!

* In an arched recess under the high altar of St. Cecilia is a beautiful marble statue of the saint in a recumbent posture, by Stefano Maderna, accompanied by the following inscription:

EN TIBI SANCTISSIMÆ VIRGINIS CECILIAE IMAGINEM QUAM IPSE INTEGRAM IN SEPULCHRO IACENTEM VIDI EADEM TIBI PRORSUS EODEM CORPUS SITV HOC MARMORE EXPRESSE.
"Behold the image of the most holy Virgin Cecilia, whom I myself saw lying incorrupt in her tomb. I have in this marble expressed for thee the same saint in the very same posture of body."