

RIVER TIBER WITH ISLAND AND OLD BRIDGE.

Holy Week in the Eternal City

Scenes and Ceremonies in the City of the Caesars and the Popes

By JAMES ACTON

DAWN is ushered in by a reveille of church bells which, with the excitement and thrill of anticipation puts further sleep beyond thought. What a flood of emotions rush upon one as throwing open the casement he catches the dim outlines of a vision that hitherto had been but a shadowy, improbable dream. There in the distance, grouped in sombre stillness against a background of amber, tinged with amethyst, are the Albanian Mountains, with here and there a hamlet or villa like pearl settings in the foreground. Across the housetops comes the heavy earth smell of the Campagna, freshened somewhat by the faint odor of the flowers of early spring, while like a broken thread, the skeleton arches of the Claudian Aqueduct point with bony fingers to the departed greatness and vanished splendor of the former Mistress of the World. The birds with full abandon celebrate the advent of the orb of day, and already the chill of Italian shadows is being kissed into genial warmth by the first rays of the morning sun.

To realize that one is actually gazing upon the theatre of the mightiest events in the history of our civilization, the home of the Caesars and the Popes, that here were laid the foundations of our modern civil law and government, that from this place were promulgated those spiritual forces that have subdued the world as completely as ever did Roman legions, may well move the most phlegmatic. But to see anything of Rome in a week one has little opportunity for extended reflections along this line. Someone has said you must either enter Rome in the morning and leave at night or stay for a year.

Rome was founded by Romulus some seven centuries before the Christian era, and for five centuries after the birth of Christ continued to sway the destinies of the world. It held within its area

control of the Popes, and on this account the Pontiff withdrew to the Vatican and his successors have since been voluntary prisoners, never going beyond the Vatican gardens except to the Basilica of St. Peter's on special occasions. Before 1871 it was a common occurrence to see the Holy Father borne on a palanquin or in his state coach about the streets of Rome, while the purple-clad cardinals with their red hats flitted about in their strange equipages or on foot, according to their ideals of dignity or humility. The Pope's guard of honor was then, as to-



INTERIOR OF ST. PAUL'S WITHOUT THE WALLS.

day, made up of Swiss Zouaves, who, with their curious uniforms, still lend a mediaeval character to the pomp of church celebrations. The city itself was garrisoned at that period by French troops, for Napoleon III. had undertaken the maintaining of the temporal power of the sovereign Pontiff. When Napoleon went down in the conflict with Germany which culminated in Sedan and the siege of Paris, the victorious Italian army marched into Rome practically unresisted.

To-day the function of the Church in Italy is purely ecclesiastical, with the unfortunate fact also that the sympathies of the male population at least have been very largely estranged by its attitude on the question of temporal power. As a result women form the bulk of attendants upon church services, and the country, as far as the men are concerned, is fast becoming as irreligious as France. It is an unusual thing to find men of the middle or upper classes giving any attention even to the religious care or training of their children. Of course interest in Rome naturally divides itself into two heads, the past and present. To most people the past represents the most attractive side of this most fascinating of all ancient or modern cities, for there is a compelling interest associated even with the viciousness of a great deal of Rome's story that commands our consideration. One cannot visit the Tiber which, as the one unchanging and unchangeable thing about Rome, should be the first to claim the attention of the visitor, without recalling the "brave days of old," when the bridge was so nobly manned against Rome's enemies. One sees the old *Insula Tiberina* just as it stood in the days of Julius Caesar, and the very bridge upon which the Romans of that day crossed and recrossed the turgid yellow stream stands intact, its arch bearing an inscription that has stood the test of nearly twenty-five centuries. On the far side of the river is the round Temple of

long period it was used as a Christian church. The Pantheon is a circular building with walls twenty-two feet thick and a dome of concrete, the height of which is exactly equal to the diameter. A circular aperture at the apex open to the sky, admits the light, the temple originally taking its name from the resemblance of the dome to the vault of heaven. It is now used as a chapel and mausoleum for the remains of Italian kings and literati.

A fitting close to the first day in Rome is a panoramic view of the city from the Pincian Hill at sunset. From this vantage point may be obtained not only a magnificent outlook upon the modern city, St. Peter's, the Vatican, the Tiber and the Campagna, but on a clear day the shimmer of the distant Mediterranean may be caught. As the sun sinks behind the mighty dome of St. Peter's, outlining the pinnacles and statuary with silver and gold, one can fancy he hears the words, "Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church." As the disappearing sun spills his javelins of light athwart the azure of the pure Italian sky, flooding the horizon with an aureole of crimson and gold, we are reminded of the words of the prophecy, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the end of the earth."

To finish with ancient Rome, or at least to complete our reflections upon its former state and magnificence, we turn on the second day to that which may be considered the very heart of Rome's greatness; the Forum. As one stands for the first time upon the Capitoline and looks down upon the ruins of temples, courts, rostra, triumphal arches and palaces, and realizes that he has before him that which once formed the very centre of the world's greatest stage, his emotions are more easily felt than described. To the left are the remaining pillars of



THE COLOSSEUM.

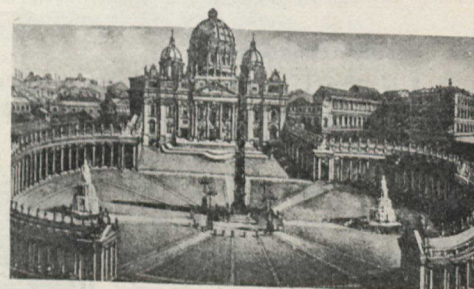
at one time one million of souls, whose proud boast was "I am a Roman citizen"; after the ravages of Hun, Goth and Vandal the population dwindled to less than twenty thousand; to-day it is a modern city of some four hundred thousand inhabitants. Within the past fifty or sixty years the work of excavation has proceeded with the result that many interesting relics of ancient times have been given back to an astonished world. Unfortunately in the building of the modern city much of the material belonging to ancient Rome was used, the celebrated Colosseum being for years a quarry from which stone was taken even for public buildings. The Romans themselves have thus done more than the hordes of savage barbarians that overran their city and country to destroy the many traces of former magnificence, while even Christianity in its frenzy against idolatry despoiled not only heathen temples, but public places of their priceless statuary and art treasures.

Holy Week is a busy time in the Eternal City, for it is the period when pilgrimages from all parts of Europe, and even America, make their way to this Catholic Mecca, and, as it is usually the pleasantest time of the year in Italy, large numbers of tourists are to be found courting the blue skies and warm sunshine as they scurry here and there with their red "Baedekers." "h bene!" said the old concierge, as we started out after an early breakfast, "times have changed since the Pope crossed the Tiber and shut himself up in the Vatican. Those were the days when Holy Week meant something in Rome. *Madonna mia*, but there were processions with the Pope, Holy Cardinals, Patriarchs, Bishops. Zouaves, Guards and pilgrims from all countries, such as one never sees now, even inside St. Peter's!" It must be remembered that after the revolution of 1870-1871, led by Garibaldi, Victor Emmanuel was proclaimed King of United Italy, and Rome became its capital. It had hitherto been under the absolute



ROMAN FORUM FROM THE CAPITOL.

Vesta, with its twenty Corinthian columns still standing beneath its modern roof, while farther up on the same side, we pass the Castle St. Angelo, known as Hadrian's Tomb, a large mausoleum built by Emperor Hadrian and completed by Antonius Pius, 139 A.D. Formerly encased in marble and surmounted by many magnificent statues, it suffered during the siege of the Goths, when it was turned into a fortress. On the south side of the Tiber is the Pantheon, the best preserved of all the ancient edifices of Rome. This, like the so-called Temple of Vesta, owes its preservation to the fact that for a



ST. PETER'S AND THE VATICAN.

the Temple of Saturn, beyond them the crumbling arch of Septimius Severus. Almost at our feet is the rostra of Caesar, the scene of impassioned eloquence and scathing invective, of which the Romans were masters. Just below us is the Julian Basilica, shorn of its pillars and statuary, and beyond this the remains of Vespasian's Temple and the Home of the Vestals with its atrium and impluvium still outlined amid the mosaic pavement. Yonder is the Arch of Titus, with its inscriptions depicting the Jewish captives and spoils of the Temple under which no Jew will pass, and beyond stand the Arch of Constantine, Meta Sudens, and the Colosseum. Days will hardly suffice for the examination of these ghostly reminders of pomp and splendor, from which the grave-clothes of centuries have been snatched. On our right is the Palatine, the home of the Caesars just being brought to light, over which for centuries the plowman has "turned the stubborn glebe." Here we have the House or Palace of Augustus, with its Hall of Justice, in which Paul probably faced Nero. Close by is the House of Livia, where the mother of Tiberius lived and carried on her intrigues. It is amongst the best preserved of ancient domiciles. Close by the Domus Augustiana is the secret underground passage between the Palace and the Forum in which the mad Caligula is said to have been assassinated. Every foot of ground teems with reminiscent suggestiveness, and only the limit of time prevents the archaeologist from lingering indefinitely. For nearly five hundred years it was the scene of scheming ambition and bloodshed such as the world never before and never since has witnessed. Little wonder that a scourge of fire was sent to utterly overthrow and cast out a thoroughly degenerate race and prepare the ground for the seed of Christian truth, that should save mankind from falling to a level far below that of the beast.

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