

dust. As you pass, the graves in the walls seem for an instant to open, then close again. The galleries run in all directions, with burial-recesses in their sides. There seems no limit to their extent. You go down by a crumbling staircase to another story underneath the first, with other galleries and other crypts, also unnumbered. Then down another story still, then another, and another. Here other corridors and other chambers everywhere. Thus, for ages and ages, the sandaled work has glided through this vast necropolis.

After the fourth century, the Catacombs became objects of religious reverence. Pope Damasus (366-384) prepared catalogues of the chief burial-places and the holy men who were slumbering in them. In time, subterranean interment became a regular trade, and the grave-diggers carelessly destroyed many religious paintings which adorned the walls. So, in the eighth and ninth centuries, Popes Paul I., Paschal, and other Pontiffs removed large numbers of the relics. When Boniface IV. consecrated the Pantheon as a church in 609, he caused twenty-eight wagon-loads of bones of saints to be buried beneath the altar. In the fourteenth century, when a frightful state of society prevailed, the Catacombs became hiding-places for vassals of the rival Roman families, for outlaws and assassins; who, as the Papal authorities gained strength, were gradually driven out. In 1534, under Pope Paul III., some of the more remarkable crypts were cleaned out and lighted with lamps. The most thorough exploration of these hidden chambers was made by Father Bosio, who, toward the end of the same century, spent thirty years in studying the Catacombs. Later, Seroux d'Alagny, purposing to spend six months at Rome in the study of Christian archæology, became fascinated with his subject and staid for nearly fifty years.

De Rossi published a complete collection of the Christian inscriptions, numbering over 11,000. Pope Clement VIII. decreed severe spiritual and temporal punishment on any who should desecrate these sacred retreats.

With the interest of these men you sympathize, as you look more carefully about this labyrinth of narrow galleries. These do not lead to the cemeteries, but are the cemeteries themselves. From 2½ to 5 ft. wide, about 8 ft. high, and generally on the same level, they sometimes diverge as from a centre; but oftener intersect one another at various angles, producing net-works which cannot be reduced to any system. They descend into the earth story below story, to the number usually of four or five. But in one part of the cemeteries of St. Callistus there are seven of these labyrinths, one below another, all connected by staircases cut out of the living rock.

The interments were sometimes in ordinary graves, in the floors of the galleries; but generally in long, low, horizontal niches cut in the walls of the galleries, tier above tier, like the berths of a ship; the