

THE BLESSING OF THE LAMBS.

In the latter part of last year, in a crypt under the altar of the Church of St. Agnes, outside the walls of Rome, near the gate known as Porta Pia, the mortal remains of that glorious virgin saint were found in a coffin of silver, in which they were placed during the pontificate of Paul V. The discovery was made during an exploration of the catacombs of the old church conducted by Cardinal Kopp, the prince Bishop of Breslau.

It may interest the readers of the *Sentinel* to know that it is in this church that occurs, on Jan. 21, the feast of St. Agnes, the blessing of the Lambs, from whose wool are made the palliums worn by the Archbishops of the Church throughout the world. In the first volum of her fascinating work, the late Miss Starr thus describes a visit to this church on this occasion :

“ Outside the walls of Rome stands the church of St. Agnes, built by Constantia, the daughter of Constantine, over the very crypt where the remains of the virgin martyr were “ deposited in peace ” on the very day of her martyrdom. The villa Agnes is close by, and to this villa, from which opened a way to the catacombs, with passage which led to it open at the top so as to admit both light and air. To this open crypt the faithful of the early Christian ages were accustomed to bring their many needs, imploring the assistance of St. Agnes for their relief, not only such humble clients as her dear foster sister, Ementiana, who thus earned martyrdom at the hands of pagan ruffians who cast down dirt and stones on the head of the innocent child ; but such persons as Constantia, the daughter of the reigning Emperor. Although not yet a Christian, the pains and disgust attending a virulent ulcer had not only been dispelled by a vision while praying at St. Agnes' tomb, but the ulcer perfectly cured. Her conversion followed, then her baptism, and as a tribute of gratitude she built over the humble chamber in which lay the precious remains of St. Agnes the beau-