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CHRISTIAN LIFE AND CHARACTER AS READ IN THE CATACOMBS.

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FEW places in Rome are more attractive to the student of Christian archæology than the Lapidarian gallery in the palace of the Vatican. In this long corridor,* are preserved a multitude of epigraphic remains of the venerable past—shattered wrecks of antiquity, which have floated down the stream of time, and have here, as in a quiet haven, at length found shelter. The walls on either side are completely covered with inscribed slabs affixed to their surface. On the right hand are arranged sepulchral and votive tablets, altar-dedications, fragments of imperial rescripts and edicts, and other evidences of the power and splendour of the palmy days of Rome. On the left are the humble epitaphs of the early Christians, rudely carved in stone or baked in terracotta, and brought hither chiefly from the crypts of the Catacombs.

Of greater interest to him who would rehabilitate the early ages of the Church, and

* It is eight hundred feet in extent, and contains about three thousand inscriptions.

“To the sessions of sweet silent thought
Would summon up remembrance of things past,”
is this long corridor of inscriptions than any of the four thousand apartments of that vast palace of the Popes, with their priceless bronzes, marbles, gems, frescoes, and other remains of classic art. He will turn away from the noble galleries where the Laocoon forever writhes in stone, and Apollo, lord of the unerring bow, watches his arrow hurtling towards its mark, to the plain marble slabs that line these walls. Here the monuments of pagan and of Christian Rome confront each other. The spectator stands between two worlds of widest divergence, and cannot but be struck with the immense contrast between them. On the one hand are recorded the pride and pomp of worldly rank, the varied titles and manifold distinctions of every class of society. The undying historic names of Rome’s mighty conquerors, the leaders of her cohorts and legions, mingle with those of her proud patrician citizens, and alike display on their sepulchral slabs the august array of *prænomen*, *nomen*, and