

selves, and I shall therefore without any further delay conduct them into these subterranean abodes. The lights are ready and we descend the stairs from the body of the church into the passages. All is dark, and we grope our way along by the aid of the light we carry, following the guide, and pausing every now and then to examine the scenes presented. I did not find the atmosphere unpleasant, although some writers complain of it as oppressive, and the passages appeared generally to be quite dry. They are from eight to ten feet in height, and from four to six feet wide, and at every step we find graves cut in the walls, most frequently in tiers one above another. In all those which I saw, the bodies and monumental slabs which covered the apertures had been removed, and there were only the cavities remaining where the bodies had been deposited. After passing on a short distance we come to lateral branches of the passages, which had been blocked up to prevent parties straying and becoming lost in the intricate windings, which indeed has several times occurred, and in one instance as late as the year 1837, it is said that a school of nearly thirty youths with their teacher descended into these very Catacombs and never reappeared. As we proceed, we come to steps which lead down to other tiers of galleries running along beneath, or up to similar passages above us, so ingeniously was everything contrived to afford security for those who dwelt here. Here and there the passages widen into larger spaces or apartments which are called chapels, because it is said they were used as places of worship. After following the guide for about half or three-quarters of a mile in distance, and observing no difference in the appearance of the walls and tombs, we think it time to return to the upper world, as it might be difficult to regain the entrance in case any accident should extinguish the lights. But before we retrace our steps it will be well to pause and allow our imagination to revert to the past.

It is very difficult for the tourist, who wishes to recall the scenes of former ages, to do so in places where everything around speaks of the bustle and business of everyday life. But in the Catacombs, as in the silent streets of Pompeii, there is nothing to prevent meditation. All is silent,—and in the case of the Catacombs, all is dark, save where the flickering light throws