

parlance, 'Catacumbas,' was given to a certain part of the Appian Way, about two miles beyond the present walls. Etymologically considered, it means *beside the sepulchres*. In the course of time it became the distinctive name of one of the group of cemeteries in that vicinity, namely, the Cemetery of St. Sebastian Martyr; and later on in the middle ages, the term became general, and was applied to all Christian underground burial places.

Now, the Christians had no existence recognized by law,—"*Non licet esse Christianos.*" They were esteemed only as material for arena amusements,—"*christiani ad leones.*" Still, at the time of the first Flavian Augustus, they had there spacious cemeteries which, within, were ornamented with the art of the period, and, without, had large, conspicuous openings on the public roads. The explanation of this fact, which, to many people, will doubtless seem strange, lies in the reverence of the Roman law for the graves of the dead. With a strange inconsistency that same law which proscribed the Christian religion, and persecuted it in its every member, from the Supreme Pontiff down to the humblest slave, recognized as holy the sod under which a human corpse, whether of a Christian or of a pagan, rested. Human life was of very little value amongst the Romans. The poor, the slaves, and the gladiators might be made the victims of famished lions and tigers; the victor might celebrate his triumph by