

No sooner was this mine of ecclesiastical treasure made known than antiquarians availed themselves of opportunities to publish their contents, so far as they were able, with fac-similes of the inscriptions. The first in this field was Father Bosio, who spent more than thirty years, from 1567 to 1600, in his explorations. He wrote a work on the Catacombs which he did not live to publish, but it appeared after his death in Italian, and a translation of it into Latin, by Father Aringhi, is one of the standard works upon the subject. He was followed by other Italian writers, and subsequently by M. D'Agincourt, a Frenchman, who spent fifty years in collecting and arranging the materials for his work, which was also published after his death. And late public journals announce that a French *savant* who had spent many years in his researches in these tombs, has returned to Paris with an accumulated treasure of fac-similes of inscriptions, bas-reliefs, and other remains of the primitive Church. So early was the work of copying and publishing commenced, and so constantly has it been continued down to the present moment, and that too by authors of different nations, who have so carefully scrutinized the publications of their predecessors, that the genuineness of those published cannot be questioned.

Protestant writers were at first inclined to suppose that they had little interest in these remains, but by degrees it began to be ascertained that the rude mementoes of the first centuries of the Church exhibited a state of things much more in accordance with their views and principles than those which prevail in the Church of Rome, and consequently much more attention has been recently given to them, particularly since the excellent arrangement which has been made of the most valuable inscriptions in the Vatican. A large number of these were copied by permission of the Papal authorities in 1841 by Dr. Maitland, to whom I am indebted, among other things, for the inscriptions I shall hereafter refer to, although my recollections of them during my visits to the Vatican when in Rome have enabled me to verify many as corresponding with those which I saw when on the spot.

But I have detained my readers long from the tombs them-