

Agatha herself; and so for the first time voices began to be heard, here and there, demanding from those that had the quickest eyes how she proceeded.

'She is all but at the bottom,—she is close to the smoke,—she has passed it,—she is in the very centre of the crater,—she is beginning the ascent.' Such were some of the sentences that passed here and there through the multitude. Darkness gathered in thicker and thicker, but still, patiently and unweariedly, the crowd waited for the event. An hour passed,—an hour and a half passed. Judge how the spirits of darkness must have longed to burst their chains, and to wreak their vengeance on her who was thus destroying their empire!

'I see her—I see her,' shouted a man who was standing near the prince's canopy. 'There she is, by yonder rock,—there, now just between it and the withered tree.'

And a few more moments sufficed to bring Agatha to the foot of the knoll.

It seemed for one instant as if amazement had swallowed up every other emotion. But when she approached Father Froes, and said, 'I thank God, and I thank you too, my Father,' and when the priest exclaimed, 'Now, men of Japan, who has proved Himself the true God this day?' there burst from that part of the crowd a shout so loud, so long and so wild, that you might hear it echoing from peak to peak before it was taken up by the more distant parts of the multitude, and so ran round the arena of this strife between the true faith and the worship of devils.

'The Lord,' said Father Froes, turning to the people who stood by him, 'the Lord hath sold Sisera into the hand of a woman!'

[*Tales Illustrative of the Prayer-Book.*]

A Visit to the Catacombs of Rome.

THE catacombs are large subterranean passages and rooms which exist beneath the city of Rome: some suppose them to be the quarries whence stone was hewn for the buildings of the Ancient City.

In these the early Christians used to assemble for Holy Worship, when the heathen Emperors persecuted all who bore the name of Christ. They were also used in the early ages of the Church for burial places; niches being cut in the rock on each side to admit the bodies.

A recent traveller, a lady, thus describes a visit to a catacomb which had been newly discovered and opened up, and from which, consequently, a great portion of the bodies had not yet been removed. Of course the interest attaching to these remains was far greater in such a case as this; since one not only saw the place

where they had been laid, but in two instances, at least, we looked into the freshly opened tomb.

Several times we saw the little phials which had been placed beside them, still red with what is supposed to be the blood of the Saints of God, slain in the cause of truth.

"In the centre of a vineyard, some way beyond the walls, we came to a low door with an inscription on it, to the purport, that none were to enter without the permission of those authorized to give it. Each of us in succession received a long wax taper, the guide providing himself with several, and we proceeded in silence along the narrow vaulted passages. There was something awful in thus penetrating into the abodes of the dead. After a very little advance, we came to places where were the bones and skulls of those who had been buried there in times when even the tomb, unless thus concealed, secured not the senseless clay from the bitter fury of relentless persecutions. Sometimes there are three or four tiers of shelves on either side, entirely covered with these mouldering remains.

"Who could stand in such a place and not feel the very nothingness of earth and all its interests, its pleasures, pomp, and splendour, compared with the inheritance purchased by Him, whose promises alone can take the sting from that king of terrors, whose worthless power was evidenced at every step?

"The guide stopped before a tomb; and Dr. Grant, calling us round him, pointed out the sign of a martyr's resting place,—one whose very name at once carried the thoughts beyond the gloom and darkness of the grave, beyond even the fiery trial of the last earthly scene. A palm-branch was the chosen emblem; and was it not expressive?—was it not that surviving friends might dry the tear which dimmed the eye, and learn to look, in faith renewed and strengthened, into that heaven above, where rest and triumph is now their portion—to think of them there, clothed in the white robes which are given them that are slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony that they held,—with crowns of gold upon their heads, and palms in their hands, crying, 'Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever!'

"Dr. Grant directed the guide to take from several of these opened sepulchres of the martyrs, a little roughly formed lamp, which seems to have been placed beside each tomb, probably by those friends who may have lighted it when they visited the spot where those dear to them were laid,—when they came to the grave to weep there. Even this little earthen vessel seemed to speak of comfort, and to remind one, amid the dark and gloomy recesses, that where the blessed spirits now are, they need no light, neither the sun, nor the moon, for the Lord God doth give them light.

"It was touching to notice marks of affection sometimes found recorded. How strange was it to