

volcanic tuff, for their burial places. It was in these cemeteries that the Christians took refuge during the fearful persecutions; but after the conversion of Constantine they were again used as places of burial, and little by little became the resort of large numbers of pilgrims and the scene of many religious ceremonies. During the pontificate of Damasus I, in the second half of the fourth century, they began to be regarded with extraordinary veneration, and the Pope himself took a special interest in the restoration of the works of art which they contained, and in the renewal of the inscriptions on the graves of martyrs.

According to tradition, the bodies of St. Peter and St. Paul rested for a year and seven months in these catacombs (under the Basilica of St. Sebastian) previous to their removal to the basilicas which bear their names.

To return to the employment of the volcanic tuff. It was the first of all stones to be employed in Rome, and earlier still it was used in the ancient Etruscan city of Veii.¹ Of such material Canina believes the ancient walls of Romulus to have been constructed, as also those of Servius Tullius (563 B.C.), remains of which are still to be seen.²

In 1887, traces of very ancient walls were discovered under the walls of the Cloister of Ara Coeli. These consisted of square masses of volcanic tuff, believed to have been part of the Capitoline Arch of twenty-eight centuries ago!³

On one side of the Capitoline Hill which is formed of this brownish tuff is the famous Tarpeian Rock; this being one of the localities where the stone was

¹ Signor Boni tells me that the tuff was used at a still earlier period.

² Signor Boni says: 'The so-called works of the kings are, so far as I could ascertain, of the republican age.'

³ Jervis, *op. cit.*