

teries in all now known, many of which are only partially accessible. Signor Michele De Rossi, from an accurate survey of the Catacomb of Callixtus, computes the entire length of all the passages to be eight hundred and seventy-six thousand *mètres*, or five hundred and eighty-seven geographical miles, equal to the entire length of Italy, from Ætna's fires to the Alpine snows.

The entrance to the abandoned Catacomb is sometimes a low-browed aperture like a fox's burrow, almost concealed by long and tangled grass, and overshadowed by the melancholy cypress or gray-leaved ilex. Sometimes an ancient arch can be discerned, as at the Catacomb of St. Priscilla,* or the remains of the chamber for the celebration of the festivals of the martyrs, as at the entrance of the Cemetery of St. Domitilla. In a few instances it is through the crypts of an ancient basilica, as at St. Sebastian, and sometimes a little shrine or oratory covers the descent, as at St. Agnes, † St. Helena, ‡ and St. Cyriaca. In all cases there is a stairway, often long and steep, crumbling with time and worn with the feet of pious generations. The following illustration shows the entrance to the Catacomb of St. Prætextatus on the Appian Way, trodden in the primitive ages by the early martyrs and confessors, or perhaps by the armed soldiery of the oppressors, hunting to earth the persecuted flock of Christ. Here, too, in mediæval times, the

miles, to the port of Ostia, in one direction, and to Albano, twelve miles, in another. *Visit to Europe*, vol. i, p. 329. This is impossible, as will be shown, on account of the undulation of the ground, and the limited area of the volcanic *tufa* in which alone they can be excavated. The number of distinct Catacombs has also been magnified to sixty; and Father Marchi estimated the aggregate length of passages to be nine hundred miles.

* Fig. 1.

† Fig. 30.

‡ Fig. 29.