

You can now walk on the closely-jointed blocks of lava with which the *Via Sacra* was paved—over which conquering Cæsars marched in triumphal procession with a tread that made the world tremble. A few pillars, standing singly or in clusters, hoary with age, mark the sites of Pagan temples and shrines, while all around are fragments of columns and capitals of granite and finely wrought pieces of marble. The grand weather-beaten arch of Septimus Severus is itself a sight worth going a long way to see. In the Forum the Senate met. Here Cicero and other illustrious orators tickled the ears of the literati, and demagogues inflamed the masses who met to air their grievances. Here many a harangue was cut short with the dagger! Here bankers, brokers and money-lenders congregated and exacted the legal twelve per cent, and often a great deal more, from needy customers, while white-robed priests and priestesses were offering sacrifices to Pagan dieties in splendid temples close at hand, and gentlemen of leisure were sipping their 'mild Falernian' in the shady colonnades that encircled the Forum. Going further back in the story of Rome, here was the *Curtian Lake*—where the ground opened, creating a gulph which an oracle declared would never close until that which was most important to the Roman people was sacrificed to it, and where Marcus Curtius, equipped in full armour, leaped his horse into the abyss, exclaiming that "nothing was more important than youth, arms, and courage!"

One of the most interesting of these ruins is the *Temple of Vesta* and the cloisters that were occupied by the Vestal Virgins. Vesta was the goddess of the hearth, and her worship was to Greece and Rome what the ancestral worship is to China. Every dwelling-house was in a sense a temple of Vesta while this establishment in the Forum was the public sanctuary and the controlling centre of the system. The Vestal Virgins were the presiding priestesses, selected and consecrated for this service and bound to their ministry for thirty years. They enjoyed special privileges, and were regarded with universal veneration. Their prayers were thought to have great influence with the gods. The penates, or household gods alleged to have been brought by Æneas from Troy, were placed in their keeping,

and it was their special duty by turn to keep the sacred fire always burning in the temple; whosoever allowed it to go out was punished by scourging. The Vestal who violated her vow was buried alive at the Colline gate, the remains of which were lately discovered, and near it a deep pit, supposed to be the place where this sad ceremonial was wont to be enacted.

Another place of still greater interest, adjoining the Forum, is *The Mamertine Prison*—a dark, deep dungeon, twenty feet beneath the floor of the church of *S. Pietro in Carcere*. As you descend the narrow staircase you are shown a dent on the wall firmly believed by "the faithful" to be the impression of St. Peter's head! If you do not believe that St. Peter was ever in Rome at all, you will discard the legend; but, when you stand on the floor of that dungeon, and feel the chill of its adamantine walls, and grope round in the dark, or look up to the hole through which prisoners were lowered into it, it requires no great strain upon imagination to realize that you are in the very place where St. Paul was chained to his pillar during his last imprisonment, and why he so longed for "the cloak that he left at Troas." (2 Tim. 4 : 13). No doubt this is the prison from which he was taken out to the place of execution, repeating, perhaps, to his gaoler what he had written to Timothy.—"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course. I have kept the faith!"

Missionary Cabinet.

ALESSANDRO GAVAZZI—THE CHRISTIAN PATRIOT.

I

THIS Great Italian orator, reformer and evangelist, died at his residence in Rome on the 9th of January last, in the 81st year of his age. The fullest sketch of his life that has yet appeared, is from the appreciative pen of his intimate friend, the Rev. John R. Macdougall of Florence, in the London "Christian" of 15th February, and in the report of the Free Christian Church in Italy for 1888, a copy of which, through the courtesy of the author, is before