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LETTERS FROM ROME.

Mr. Maguire, M.P., in his correspondence with the *Cork Examiner*, gives us some interesting particulars relative to the

SOVEREIGN PONTIFF.

The first time on which I saw the Pope was at Vespers, in his private Chapel in the Quirinal, on which occasion he was surrounded by Cardinals and Prelates, amongst whom was conspicuous an Armenian Bishop and a Greek Archbishop. In the place set apart for those who desired to be present at the ceremonies, might be seen, whether priests or laymen, the representative of almost every nation under the sun—French, Italian, Greek, Spanish, German, English, as well as Irish and Scotch, American, the swarthy Indian and the Nubian, with fine eyes and forehead full of intellect, but a skin of the duskiest jet.—Every form of feature and hue of skin might be found amongst a group of the students of the Propaganda, who stood a few paces from where I had an admirable place. To me, as indeed to all, the Pope was the chief object of attraction—his every look and gesture being fraught with interest, deeper of necessity to the Catholic, who recognised in the mild and noble figure before him the head of the Venerable Head of the Church, the spiritual Sovereign of the greater portion of the Christian world. The features of Pius the Ninth, made familiar to most people through portrait and cast, are more remarkable for gentleness, mildness, and benevolence, than for any other quality; but I could not imagine a manner and bearing more full of dignity than his, as he sat enthroned amidst the Princes of the Church, or rose to intone the vespers, or impart the apostolic benediction. I have elsewhere seen many pious priests in the performance of their sacred functions; but I had never beheld a countenance more expressive of more profound piety, or so illumined with that heavenly brightness which manifests outwardly the working of the Spirit within. Heart, and mind, and soul seemed, as they really were, absorbed in the ceremonies in which he assisted; and not for a second's space did his attention wander from his devotions. On three or four subsequent occasions I had the good fortune to be present when the Pope assisted at various ceremonies of the Church more or less grand and impressive; and I was on each occasion struck by the same piety, the same devout abstraction, the same beautiful expression of that holiness which irradiates the human face as with beams of light. Judge, now, from the daily life of this good man, how far from the truth is the picture which prejudice and misrepresentation have drawn of the present Pope. He rises before six o'clock, and celebrates Mass himself every morning in the year. Not content with this act of daily devotion, he always hears another Mass. He then gives audience to his Secretary of State, on matters of public importance, and next to his Major Domo, on the affairs of his household. He then receives all the letters addressed to him, which, as I shall have reason to show, are of the most varied character.—These he carefully reads, and places in the hands of his Private Secretary, for further information, or to be at once acted upon, as the case might be. At ten o'clock, his audiences, properly so called, commence, and generally last till two, when he dines, his fare being of the simplest kind. At three o'clock he frequently drives out, his excursion lasting generally till five. At five o'clock the audiences are resumed and usually last till nine or ten at night. He then reads his office, just as an ordinary priest, and retires to bed as simple and plain as belongs to the humblest student in Rome. Besides special audiences, which may happen at any moment, each day is set apart for those of a particular kind, and the transaction of certain classes of business, connected either with the internal administration of the Papal States, or appertaining to those less grave matters which demand the daily consideration of the Sovereign Pontiff.

It may be asserted, with perfect truth, the Pope is the sovereign who of all others in the world is the most accessible to his subjects.—Even the humblest may approach his person; nor is the blackest criminal in the States debarred from the privilege of addressing him by petition. Hence the numerable claims for audiences; and hence the flood of appeals, on every imaginable subject, that pours in on His Holiness, either directly, or through a multitude of channels, official or otherwise. A petition to the Pope is no idle mockery, but an appeal that, in one shape or other, is certain to reach the ear, if not touch the heart, of the most merciful and benevolent of living men. No matter for what offence a prisoner may have been incarcerated, the prisoner may appeal directly to the Pope; and no officer or person in charge of a prison dares to stand between the criminal and the seat of mercy. As in all other places in the world, but perhaps more peculiar in Southern countries, there are crimes, even terrible ones, which are almost wholly the result of passion and excitement; and if, upon due enquiry, through the proper channel,

which is unfailingly made, the Pope feel convinced that mercy may be beneficially extended, it is so extended, and the punishment is either greatly lessened, or a free pardon is granted.—As I shall have something to say of the public prisons of Rome, which I have personally examined in detail, I shall not further allude to this portion of the subject at present, but content myself with the statement of a fact which will afford the best idea of the real value of this privilege of petition—that no fewer than 60 or 70 pardons are granted by the Pope every month in the year—that from 700 to 800 persons, condemned for various offences, are annually restored to freedom by the exercise of that noble prerogative of Princes—mercy. The clarity of the Holy Father is also hourly appealed to, and scarcely ever in vain. If we walk through the streets, hands may be seen stretched forth, holding letters of supplication—perhaps complaints of injustice, or of wrong inflicted, but more general appeals for alms; and these are taken by one of the Noble Guard, a number of whom accompany His Holiness, and afterwards handed to himself personally. Then the Post-office is a constant means of communicating directly, and without any intermediate agency, with the Pope; and there is no letter or petition which he receives, be it from the humblest, the meanest, or the most guilty, that he does not read, and into the subject matter of which he does not enquire. Since his accession to the Pontificate, in 1846, Pius the Ninth has spent in charitable and pious works, no less a sum than 1,500,000 scudi—a sum fabulous in amount when taking into consideration the extent of his private resources. These consist of 355 scudi a month, or about 4,200 scudi in the year, which would be about equal to £1,000 a year of English money. What a revenue for a Sovereign Prince! How then were the 1,500,000 scudi obtained?—from what source was this enormous fund derived? The answer is significant, and may afford a lesson to those who foolishly imagine that the Papacy would be destroyed the moment that, by revolution or plunder, the Pope should be deprived of his temporal power, and of his sovereignty over the Papal States. The greater portion of the wealth which the Pope so generously devoted to works of piety and charity poured in upon him at Gaeta, while he was an exile from his country and his throne—poured in upon the Father of the Christian Church from all quarters of Christendom, at the very moment that fools and bigots were frantically shouting out—"the Papacy is at an end." There are those in Rome and throughout the States who long for a change of Governments—for any change, by which they might hope to realize their dreams, or accomplish their personal objects—and who therefore, are hostile to the existing state of things; but in the breast of the people, there exists a sincere loyalty to the throne and person of the Pope, and a profound conviction of those virtues which adorn his character as a man, a ruler, and a priest.

THE ROMAN CATACOMBS;

OR, SOME ACCOUNT OF THE BURIAL-PLACES OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS IN ROME. BY THE REV. T. SPENCER NORTHCOTE, M.A.

(From the Weekly Register.)

There are few subjects of interest with regard to which authentic information has been so little accessible to the mere English reader, as the Roman Catacombs. Indeed, with the exception of "Fabiola," in which they are of course only touched incidentally, we know of none to which we could refer such a person, except a sketch by Mr. Northcote himself, accessible only to those who have the old numbers of the *Rambler* in which it appeared. The present little volume, therefore, which gives in a short, clear, and interesting form the chief results of the investigations which have hitherto taken place and are still in progress, will be most acceptable, both to those who want a handbook for a visit to the Catacombs, and to tarry-at-home students, who wish to gain information with regard to them.—The earlier chapters, the author says, will convey all the preliminary information essential for the former, while the later chapters will meet the wishes of the latter.

What may be called the literary history of the Catacombs in England is not the least curious circumstance respecting them. Had they been known in the middle ages, they would have afforded an additional and powerful motive for a pilgrimage to the *Limen Apostolorum*. Kings and Queens, Barons, Knights, and Ladies, would have visited them with devout reverence.—Palmer would have borne back accounts of them on their return. The news of them would have reached even country villages, when the parish Priest came down from the Universities, and they would have been familiar to the inmates of every convent and monastery. But they were discovered, and after having been lost for ages, at the end of the sixteenth century, "by Antonia Bosio, a Maltese, who after having been educated by

the Jesuits, resided at Rome as agent, or Procurator for the Knights of Malta," and "the city," says a contemporary writer, "was amazed to find that she had other cities, unknown to her, concealed beneath her own suburbs; beginning now to understand what she had before only heard or read of." Unhappy England had already been separated from the Unity of the Church by the axe and quartering blocks of Henry and Elizabeth. But the profession of Protestants was that they had returned to the ancient faith, corrupted by the Popes, Monks, and Priests. Nothing then ought better to have pleased Protestants than the rediscovery of the Christian Rome of the earliest ages; the martyr disciples of the Apostles; the members of that glorious Church of Rome whose obedience, as St. Paul testifies, was "published in every place." Protestants might have been expected at once to rush forward to claim these Primitive Christians as their own, and to rescue them from the intrusion of Papists, with whom they had nothing in common. Alas! they set themselves, without inquiry or examination, to maintain that the Catacombs were no real relic of the early Christians. The first English writer on the subject (Burnet) maintained that they were merely the quarries in which the bodies of the Roman slaves were thrown to rot; that they had been closed up by "the monks," after they had forged "some miserable sculptures and some inscriptions," intending to make a pretended discovery of them; that they died without doing this, and they were thus left to be found by accident in the 16th century.—The truth is, that to be forced to admit the genuineness of any remains of Christian antiquity is gall and wormwood to a staunch Protestant, like Burnet. Cicero's Villa, the edifices of Augustus or Pericles, nay, even the traces of the ancient Israelites in Egypt or in the Desert, any of these it is a real pleasure to him to find genuine. He will swallow down considerable improbabilities, rather than question them. But the burial-place of an Apostle, the relics of a martyr, or the more sacred spot where the earthly flesh of the Divine Word lay in the grave or suffered on the cross, or was born of the Virgin, the true cross, or the nails, or the crown of thorns, these it is agony to him to be obliged to admit. They are sure to be tricks of the Monks, or inventions of the Popes. For this apparent perverseness, there was, in this instance at least, a great excuse; for the paintings and inscriptions of the Catacombs are enough to show any man that, whatever the first Christians of Rome were, they certainly were not Protestants; and it was a much less blow to such men as Burnet to make them out heathens at once than to admit, what is the plain fact, that they were just what he was pleased to call Papists. And yet nothing can be plainer, if we admit the testimony of their own monuments (e.g. upon such subjects as the *cultus* of Our Blessed Lady, and the whole glorious communion of prayers and merits existing between the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant. Burnet's explanation was at once adopted as part and portion of the great Protestant Tradition, and has been handed down nearly unaltered till our own times. It was no doubt nonsense. What business then had sense to be Popish? It was false; but truth loses its rights, and falsehood inherits them when it becomes necessary to assail Popery, and defend Protestantism. As far as we know, the publication of "Fabiola," was the first serious assault upon the Protestant tradition of the Catacombs, though the general English practice of visiting Rome, since the peace of 1815, has probably opened the eyes of many individuals.

The fact is, as Mr. Northcote shows, that the Catacombs were not ancient excavations made use of either for Christian or heathen burial or for both indiscriminately; but were a gigantic work, undertaken and executed by Christian hands expressly for the burial of departed Christians, and used by them also for the concealment of their assemblies for worship, and in times of extreme danger of the person of the Holy Father, and perhaps of some other Christians especially exposed to danger. They are wholly unlike the sandpits and quarries, some of which, more ancient than themselves, still exist. They are dug in strata useless for such purposes, and exactly fitted for the objects of the Christians. They seem to have been commenced as soon as there were Roman Christians to make them, in the times of the Apostles, or, at the latest, of their disciples. The heathen Romans burned the bodies of their dead. The Jews at Rome, abhorring this custom, had, as Mr. Northcote shows, a catacomb of their own. The Christians, whether Jew or Gentile, naturally adopted the mode of burial which most closely imitated the sepulchre of their Lord, who was wrapped in clean linen, with spices, and laid in a cave hollowed out of a rock, and closed at the mouth with a stone. Imagine a concealed gallery, narrow and of various heights as suited the situation, and with such resting places so closed on each side, in tiers one above another, and you have a Christian Catacomb. To make them was, as we see in

"Fabiola," a distinct profession, and they were extended, branching out, crossing and recrossing each other, till the length of the galleries excavated is estimated at 900 miles, and the number of graves at "almost seven millions." They are exclusively Christian; for, although heathen inscriptions have not unfrequently been found on the stones which close the mouth of the graves, they are plainly palimpsests, the inscription being turned upside down or on one side, or being on the inner side of the stone towards the grave, while Christian words have been inscribed on the outside.

We must refer to Mr. Northcote's book those who desire a more particular account of the contents of this Christian city of the departed. It is so small, so cheap, and so deeply interesting, that we can hardly doubt it will find its way into the hands of every one of our readers; and we have left ourselves room to refer to but a very small part of the subject which we have marked for notice or quotation. They will find a very interesting detail of the construction and history of the Catacombs, the entrances to them, apertures for air, &c., and their subsequent history, and some account of the paintings, distinguishing those of earliest times, which are chiefly symbolical, and those of later days; and in the last chapters, a more particular account of several Catacombs in which researches have lately been or are still in progress under the Cavaliere De Rossi. In the fourth chapter there is an interesting account of the resting places of the holy relics of the glorious Fathers of the Roman Church, St. Peter and St. Paul, who were at first buried each near the place of his martyrdom, then removed to the site where the church of St. Sebastian was afterwards built, two miles from the city, on the Appian Road. After nineteen months they were restored to their original resting places. The body of St. Peter was moved for safety to the same place at a later period, and remained there half a century, when it was restored to the Vatican, where it still awaits the second advent of his Lord. The spot where these holy remains rested for a time was for some ages the only part of the Catacombs known, and it was there that "St. Bridget was wont to kneel rapt in contemplation, where St. Charles Borromeo spent whole nights in prayer, and where the heart of St. Philip Neri was so inflamed with Divine love as to cause his very bodily frame to be changed;" for "in the days of those saints it was the only one accessible, but on that very account has suffered more than others from the devastation of careless, curious and greedy visitors." We will conclude with one instance, which shows how much light is thrown even upon Ecclesiastical History by the investigations now in progress. An ancient Itinerary mentions that S. Cornelius and S. Cyprian were buried in a part of the Catacomb of S. Calixtus. The statement was evidently unhistorical, as we know that the great African Martyr was buried in his own country. Dr. Rossi has lately found the tomb of S. Cornelius, "apart from the chapel of all the other Popes, because he was not martyred at Rome, but at Civita Vecchia, and his body was brought to Rome and interred in this cemetery by the private devotion of a noble Roman lady." S. Cyprian suffered on the same day, though not the same year, and the two were therefore commemorated on the same festival. Accordingly, "by the side of S. Cornelius is another Pontifical figure, and the letters of the name, which still remain, are sufficient to show that this was no other than S. Cyprian." Mr. Northcote truly observes, that this instance shows how easily the mistake may have arisen upon which Protestants pride themselves, as if to impute fraud and falsehood to others, proved some special and peculiar sagacity in themselves, when the same relic is stated by tradition to be preserved in two different and remote churches.

COMMERCIAL MORALITY OF PROTESTANT ENGLAND.

The London *Times* deprecates the sanctified rascality of the present age:—

Englishmen have long prided themselves upon their recognised character for honour and truth. It has been their pride to compare their own staunch frankness with the polished submissiveness of Southern Europe or the supple falsehood of the reindeer East. It has been at once the reproach and the boast of their diplomacy that it would not lie to serve a turn or gain an advantage; and that whenever it overreached a rival it overreached him by plainspoken truth alone. It has been the traditional glory of our commerce that to the ends of the globe our merchants' words were as good as other merchants' formal bonds. It was surely no slight thing to enjoy such a character, and it would be no slight privation to lose it. But it may not be unreasonable to inquire—is this character quite so safe as once it was?

There is no man, whether engaged in business or a profession, who can help feeling that recent

ourences throw a stain on the morality of our age. Go on further back than the year now drawing to a close, and what do we see? Breaches of trust the most flagrant; embezzlements and frauds the most iniquitous and most ruinous. But this is not all, neither is it the worst part of the case. There have been dishonest men—forgers and embezzlers—in all ages and in all countries, just as there have been burglars and footpads. In a people generally honest there will always be some men who are rogues, as in a people generally brave there will be some men destitute of courage. But, so long as the social tone is healthy, the exceptional rogues will be punished and the exceptional cowards despised. The grave and serious evil is when public censure or public contempt fall lightly on the craven and the rogue; more serious still when the habits of society provoke, or seem to provoke, the very crimes which it should condemn; when collusion is disguised in the mask of charity, and grants to the rich and the educated the pardon which it withholds from the poor and ignorant.

The past year has, indeed, been fertile in enormities which are incompatible with a general and earnest love of mercantile integrity;—a great banker, a man of family, education, and social influence, purloining securities entrusted to his care; a great City firm making advances in order to prop up a rotten and fraudulent imposture; clerks forging certificates to the extent of thousands of pounds; and then two joint-stock banks pillaging alike their depositors and their contributors to further the speculations of their directors and their functionaries. The year which has witnessed the malversation of Paul and Strahan, the frauds of Sadleir, Davidson, Windle Cole, and Co., the robberies of Robson, and the explosion of the Tipperary and British Banks, is more eloquent on the state of our social morality than any elaborate theme can be.

Bad as the naked truth is, there is worse behind, detection does not constitute guilt. How many persons must have been—or, at least, might have made themselves—cognizant of the iniquities at work long ere the explosion took place! Will any one tell us that Robson's frauds could not have been suspected and nipped in the very germ? How many men—respectable men—in the city were privy to the misdeeds of Davidson and Gordon? And how many were participants in that monstrous swindle, the concoction of the Royal British Bank, and the dissipation of its funds?

This last case is so much the more flagrant than the rest inasmuch as the guilty conspiracy of several men indicates a lower tone of morality than the scheme, however bad, of one or two men. A man may plot some infamy in the solitude of his own house, and be scouted as a monster when the contrivance bursts upon the world. But a score or two of men combining to pervert the opportunities of their education and position to the ruin of some thousands of people, meeting day after day and week after week to authorize first of all a public deception, and then a series of private robberies, in the heart of London, in the daily gaze of hundreds of respectable citizens, without opposition or remonstrance—this is a thing far more painful, far more pernicious, than the delusion of any number of subscribers or the losses of any number of depositors. Luckily, for future warning, a history of this rascality has been given to the world by one who was behind the scenes. And what scenes there must have been in Great James street and Threadneedle street!—the needy M.P. touting for subscribers, then introducing his canny *prétege* from the Highlands, then both launching the bank on the world with religious ceremonies and a delusive capital of borrowed money, and within six years dispensing upwards of £100,000 between themselves and their favorite directors! Of these last, two were legislators and magistrates, the others men of business—not, indeed, of note, but not of greater obscurity than many hundreds now engaged in commerce. There is no special reason for supposing that they were much worse men than others who have not attained so evil a notoriety. The manager was a man who had many clients and many agencies; who lived not only with external decorum, but with something like sanctity. And all these people met one another week after week, met other city men of influence, were on terms of friendship with them, yet they were allowed to proceed without opposition in a career which was patent to all conversant with the banking transactions of London, and without a reproach on manoeuvres which cannot have been concealed! As in another case we have cited, the most unscrupulous of the set continued his ostentatious performance of religious duties, his attention to religious societies, and all the Pharisaical observances which disgust one half and delude the other half of mankind. And perhaps, too, in a few years, when the memory of disclosures now recent has passed away, many of these architects of ruin will return unquestioned and uncensured to vary their contrivance of new schemes of plunder by presiding at religious and charitable meetings, and to enjoy the com-