

# Northern Messenger

VOLUME XXXV., No. 27.

MONTREAL, JULY 6, 1900.

30 Cts. Per An. Post-Paid.

## Excavations at Pompeii.

(By Felicia Buttz Clark.)

The historical value of the excavations which have been made at Pompeii during the past fifty years is incalculable. Before the accidental discovery of the buried city, 300 years ago, and the subsequent researches which have been made among the ruins, knowledge as to the customs and manner of life of the ancient Romans was chiefly, if not entirely, obtained through manuscripts, which dated back to the early centuries—and these were very few. When Pompeii was brought to light, and its houses were found to be in precisely the condition in which they were when the ashes of Vesuvius covered them with a funeral pall, the whole world expected great discoveries. And the world was not disappointed. The

to cover up the ruined objects which man neglects. Professor Lanciani, one of the most respected archaeologists of the day, says that, if no effort were made to remove it, ordinary dust would cover the Roman Forum each year to the extent of four inches. Hence, it is easy to see how large objects, ruined temples, statuary, and even tall pillars have, in the course of centuries, been buried and their places forgotten. So it was in Pompeii. Dust fell upon dust, layer over layer, and the fresh green grass sprang up to hide and shroud the burial-place of the unfortunate city.

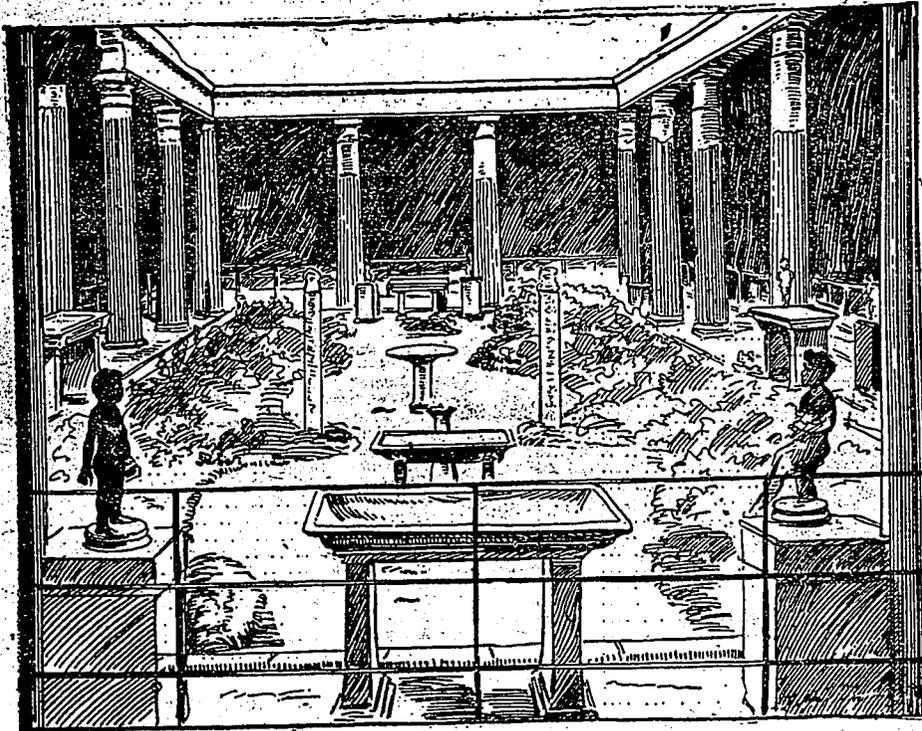
After the loads of earth are carried away by means of a couple of cars drawn on a single track, the workmen come to a layer of pumice stone, which is very light and porous. Every schoolgirl knows that

the earth, and then through the pumice and ashes. As they removed the last layer of pumice, they found that they had uncovered one of the finest houses yet found in Pompeii. Many of the richest objects, which must have been contained in it when the family was obliged to flee 2,000 years ago, had been already seized by robbers who returned to the buried city after the danger was over. But many treasures remained. The government then resolved that the house should be left just as it had been found, so that visitors need no longer imagine what Pompeii had been, but could see for themselves exactly how statues and tables had stood. The result is wonderful.

From the outer door a wide passageway leads to the small atrium, where the pastor of the house transacted business, and thence to a very large, rectangular tablinum, which was devoted to the family. On the walls of the various rooms, which open from a covered corridor surrounding the court, are exquisite paintings, whose original coloring has been marvellously preserved. The dining-room, with mosaic floors, has a decoration of large figures, whose graceful draperies were painted by the hand of a master. As a dado, are frescoes representing cupids accomplishing all sorts of household work. In one their charming, laughing faces look up from their labor of planing and sawing; in another, they are chiselling marble columns and statues; and in still another, they are cooking dinner. The tints are exceedingly delicate, and the apartment has been carefully roofed over and enclosed, to prevent any injury from wind or dampness.

In the kitchen is precisely the same form of stove which is to be seen to-day in Italy, with an opening under it for fuel. Here are the brass cooking vessels, the kettles and frying pans, which were used on that last day; and on the iron tripods under which the fire was made are other utensils, almost identical in form with those in use by us at the latter end of the nineteenth century. Returning to the court, where growing plants flourish just as similar plants did so long ago, one sees that leaden pipes conducted cool water to this garden, and that each statuette is supplied with its cunningly-hidden opening, through which jets of water fell continuously into the channels provided for it. Chained to the wall near by are two quaint money-chests, but, alas! there is no more gold in them; it was stolen centuries ago. By means of a seal found here it was found that this house belonged to a family by the name of Vetti; hence it is known as the Casa dei Vetti.

Who knows what further treasures the excavations of the next fifty years in Pompeii may give us? Work is going on there daily. A couple of weeks ago the men unearthed a house whose garden showed distinctly the marks of the holes where the plants had been. As late as yesterday, while the International Press Congress were watching the diggers, they saw brought to light a very beautiful mural painting, which is thought to be one of the largest and finest yet discovered. A graceful terra-cotta bust of a woman was taken out of its cov-



INTERIOR VIEW OF THE CASA DEI VETTI, RECENTLY UNCOVERED AT POMPEII.

museum at Naples—no doubt the richest and most unique on the continent of Europe—contains numberless works of art, which have come to light during the excavations of past years. Not all of these have come from Pompeii; many of the most exquisite bronzes were found in that sister city, Herculaneum. For some reason, this latter place is not shown frequently to visitors, and a good many of its buildings are underground, while above them rise the houses of Naples.

About one-half of the town of Pompeii has already been excavated. Owing to its exposed position on a plain, and the fact that no town has been erected over it, the removal of the eighteen or twenty feet of ashes and earth which cover it is only a question of time.

Since 1860 the work has been conducted on a systematic plan; yet it is calculated that, by the constant employment of eighty men, it will take fifty more years to lay bare the entire city. The rubbish through which they dig consists of four layers. That nearest, or rather on, the surface is the earth, which has accumulated in these years. It is curious how nature hasten

pumice stone and ink stains are sworn enemies, but probably she does not know, or has never thought of the fact that the porous stone with which she rubs her hands, is of volcanic origin, and is the solidified foam which is formed by the escaping gas on the surface of molten lava. In walking through a quantity of these stones, such as are found at Pompeii, one has a very peculiar sensation, almost as if the foot were on a movable pavement. It is also very warm.

Below the pumice come the ashes. Black and heavy-looking they are, and it was these which did the most damage to Pompeii. Lord Lytton, in his 'Last Days of Pompeii,' tells of the hot pumice stones which fell over the city on that awful day, and of the blinding, overpowering shower of ashes, which penetrated into all the corners, stopping up the ways of escape, and filling the throat and lungs of the poor, gasping population. There is a stratum of fully a foot, I should say, of these ashes in the accumulations which cover Pompeii. It is no wonder that the men and women fled to their cellars to escape this choking dust, and there lay down and died.

Three years ago the workmen dug through