



Brieflet No. 14.

IN ROME—THE BASILICA OF ST. PETER'S.*

THE *Via del Borgo Nuova*—the main street leading from the Castle of St. Angelo up to St. Peter's, is so utterly devoid of interest as to ensure an agreeable surprize when it comes to an abrupt termination and lands you in the Piazza in full front of the Cathedral. Right here you get that first view of St. Peter's that can never be effaced from memory. It bursts upon you suddenly, producing an impression similar to what most people experience when first confronted with the falls of Niagara. You do not fully realize the greatness and the grandeur. The eye cannot immediately take it in; if you walk round about it, as far as it is possible to do so, and come back again to the portico, and from that point of view endeavour to familiarize yourself with the surroundings, you will admit that Gibbon does not exaggerate when he styles this, "The most glorious structure that has ever been applied to the use of religion."

The Piazza is enclosed by semicircular colonnades 900 feet in length, constituting a magnificent approach to it. The Piazza

is beautifully paved. In the centre of it stands the famous red granite *Obelisk of the Vatican*, which differs from most of the other Egyptian obelisks, in that it has no hieroglyphics carved on it. It was brought to Rome more than eighteen hundred years ago from Heliopolis, the "On" of Scripture, where it was dedicated to the Sun. The shaft is a single stone eighty-three feet high and nine feet square at the base. It is computed to weigh a million of pounds. On either side of it are fountains throwing enormous jets of sparkling water to a height of seventy feet, while all around, ranged on the top of the colonnades, are colossal marble statues of saints and martyrs, a hundred and twenty-six in number, producing an effect more easily imagined than described. The church alone cost \$50,000,000. It was 120 years a building. The work went on continuously under twelve different architects, during the reign of twenty popes. It was consecrated in 1626. It was Leo X who undertook to raise money for its completion by collecting "Peter's pence," and the sale of indulgences which, strangely enough, led to the Reformation of the sixteenth century. The stupendous dome rises to a height of 448 feet to the top of the cross. Dwelling on the roof of the cathedral, there is a hereditary colony of "care-takers." Most of them were born up there. They form a

* For the use of this cut we are indebted to Rev. Dr. E. R. Smith, editor of the missionary magazine *The Gospel in All Lands*; New York—price \$1 50—to ministers, \$1.00 per annum.