

Christian suffering and enduring below. To use the beautiful language of Lord Lindsay, as quoted by Bishop Kip from his work on Christian Art:—

“To our classic associations indeed, Rome was still, under Trajan and the Antonines, the city of the Cæsars, the metropolis of Pagan idolatry,—in the pages of her poets and historians we still linger among the triumphs of the Capitol, the shows of the Coliseum,—or if we read of a Christian being dragged before the tribunal, or exposed to the beasts, we think of him as one of a scattered community, few in number, spiritless in action, and politically insignificant. But all this while there was living beneath the visible, an invisible Rome—a population unheeded, unreckoned,—thought of vaguely, vaguely spoken of, and with the familiarity and indifference that men feel who live on a volcano, yet a population strong-hearted, of quick impulses, nerved alike to suffer or to die, and in numbers, resolution and physical force, sufficient to have hurled their oppressors from the throne of the world, had they not deemed it their duty to kiss the rod, to love their enemies, to bless those that cursed them, and to submit, for their Redeemer's sake, to the ‘powers that be.’ Here in the ‘dens and caves of the earth’ they lived: here they died—a ‘spectacle’ in their life-time to men and angels, ‘and in their death’ a triumph to mankind—a triumph of which the echoes still float around the walls of Rome, and over the desolate Campagna, while those that once thrilled the Capitol are silenced, and the walls that returned them have long since crumbled into dust.”

But it pleased God at last to give rest to his Church from Pagan persecution. The Emperor Constantine became a professing Christian, and there was no longer a necessity for the use of the Catacombs as a place of refuge. They were still, however, used as a place of interment:—it was a pleasing thought to the son that his ashes should repose by the side of his martyred father, and thus the practice was continued. They were used also as a place of meditation; devout Christians would go there, and think over the past, and pray near the tombs of the departed saints, and endeavour to catch a portion of the martyr zeal and love. Jerome and Prudentius mention in their works that they were accustomed to resort to the Catacombs for such purposes. It was a dangerous practice, however, and it is not improbable that prayers to the saints, an error which very early crept in, might have been partly owing to this habit. Subsequently they used to ornament them; the inscriptions of the later Christians—that is to say, of the fourth and part of the fifth centuries—became more elaborate, they introduced sarcophagi