

# THE CENTURY MAGAZINE

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## ST. PETER'S.

BY F. MARION CRAWFORD.

WITH PICTURES BY A. CASTAIGNE.

### I. THE FIRST IMPRESSION.

WE have an involuntary reverence for all witnesses of history, be they animate or inanimate, men, animals, or stones. The desire to leave a work behind is in every man and man-child, from the strong leader who plants his fame in a nation's glory, and teaches unborn generations to know him, to the boy who carves his initials upon his desk at school. Few women have it. Perhaps the wish to be remembered is what fills that one ounce or so of matter by which modern statisticians assert that the average man's brain is heavier than the average woman's. The wish in ourselves makes us respect the satisfaction of it which the few obtain. Probably few men have not secretly longed to see their names set up for ages, like the «Paulus V Borghesius» over the middle of the portico of St. Peter's, high above the entrance to the most vast monument of human hands in existence. Modesty commands the respect of many, but it is open success that appeals to almost all mankind. But Pasquin laughed:

«Angulus est Petri, Pauli frons tota. Quid inde?  
Non Petri, Paulo stat fabricata domus.»<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> «The corner is Peter's, but the whole front Paul's. What, then?  
Not being Peter's, the house is built for Paul.»

The thing itself, the central cathedral of Christendom, is so enormous that many who gaze on it for the first time do not even notice that hugely lettered papal name. The building is so far beyond any familiar proportions that at first sight all details are lost upon its broad front. The mind and judgment are dazed and staggered. The earth should not be able to bear such weight upon its crust without cracking and bending like an overloaded table. On each side the colonnades run curving out like giant arms, always open to receive the nations that go up there to worship. The dome broods over all, like a giant's head motionless in meditation.

The vastness of the structure takes hold of a man as he issues from the street by which he has come from Sant' Angelo. In the open space in the square and in the ellipse between the colonnades and on the steps, two hundred thousand men could be drawn up in rank and file, horse and foot and guns. Excepting it be on some special occasion, there are rarely more than two or three hundred persons in sight. The paved emptiness makes one draw a breath of surprise, and human eyes seem too small to take in all the flatness below, all the breadth before, and all the height above. Taken together, the picture is too big for convenient sight. The impression itself moves unwill-

ily in the cramped brain. A building almost five hundred feet high produces a monstrous effect upon the mind. Set down in words, a description of it conveys no clear conception; seen for the first time, the impression produced by it cannot be put into language. It is something like a shock to the intelligence, perhaps, and not altogether a pleasant one. Carried beyond the limits of a mere mistake, exaggeration becomes caricature; but when it is magnified beyond humanity's common measures, it may acquire an element approaching to terror. The awe-striking giants of mythology were but magnified men. The first sight of St. Peter's affects one as though, in the every-day streets, walking among one's fellows, one should meet with a man forty feet high.

## II. HISTORICAL SUGGESTIONS.

INVOLUNTARILY we conceive that St. Peter's has always stood where it stands, and it becomes at once, in our imaginations, the witness of much which it really never saw. Its calm seems meant to outlast history; one thinks that it must have seen history born, and that, while the Republic built Rome, and Augustus adorned it, and Nero burned it on the other side of the Tiber, the cathedral of the world was here, looking on across the yellow water, conscious of its own eternity, and solemnly indifferent to the ventures and adventures of mankind.

It is hard to think the great cathedral down to the little basilica built by Constantine, the sentimentalist, on the site of Nero's circus; built by some other man perhaps, for no one knows surely; but a little church, at best, compared with many of those which St. Peter's dwarfs to insignificance now. To remind men of him the effigy of that same Constantine sits on a marble charger there, on the left, beneath the portico, behind the great iron gate, with head thrown back, and lifted hand, and marble eyes gazing ever on the cross. Some say that he really embraced Christianity only when dying. The names of the churches founded by him in Constantinople are all sentimentally ambiguous, from Sophia, «wisdom,» to Anastasia, «resurrection» or «revival,» and hence «spring.» It is strange that the places of worship built by him in Rome, if they were really his work, should bear such exceedingly definite designations and direct dedications as St. Peter's, St. John's, St. Paul's, and the Church of the Holy Cross. At all events, whether he believed much or little, Christianity owes him much, and romance is indebted to him for

almost as much more. But for Constantine there might have been no Honorius, no Pepin, no Charlemagne, no Holy Roman Empire.

In old times criminals of low degree used to be executed on the Esquiline, and were buried there, unburned, when their bodies were not left to wither upon the cross in wind and sun, as generally happened. The place was the hideous feeding-ground of wild dogs and carrion birds, and witches went there by night to perform their horrid rites. It was there that Canidia and her companion buried a living boy up to his neck to die of starvation, that they might make philters of his vitals. Every one must remember the end of Horace's imprecation:

. . . insepulta membra different lupi,<sup>1</sup>  
Et Esquilinæ alites.

Then came Mæcenas, and redeemed all that land; turned it into a garden, and beautified it; uprooted the moldering crosses, whereon still hung the bones of dead slaves, and set out trees in their stead; dug over the shallow graves of executed murderers and of generations of thieves, and planted shrubbery and flowers, and made walks and paths and shady places.

Therefore it happened that the southern spur of the Janiculus became after that time a place of execution and cruel death. The city had never grown much on that side of the Tiber,—that is to say, on the right bank,—and the southern end of the long hill was a wilderness of sand and brushwood.

In the deep Mamertine prison, behind the Tabularium of the Forum, it was customary to put to death only political misdoers, and their bodies were then thrown down the Gemonian steps. «Vixerunt,» said Cicero, grimly, when Catiline and his fellow-conspirators lay there dead; and perhaps the sword that was to fall upon his own neck was even then forged. The prison is still intact. The blood of Catiline, of Vercingetorix, and of Sejanus is on the rocky floor. Men say that St. Peter was imprisoned here. But because he was not of high degree Nero's executioners led him out and across the Forum and over the Sublician bridge, up to the heights of Janiculus. He was then very old and weak, so that he could not carry his cross, as condemned men were made to do. When they had climbed more than half-way up the height, seeing that he could not walk much farther, they crucified him. He said that he was not worthy

<sup>1</sup> May the wolves and birds of the Esquiline scatter their unburied remains.



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

#### INTERIOR OF ST. PETER'S.

to suffer as the Lord had suffered, and begged them to plant his cross with the head downward in the deep yellow sand. The executioners did so. The Christians who had followed were not many, and they stood apart, weeping.

When he was dead, after much torment, and the sentinel soldier had gone away, they took the holy body, and carried it along the hillside, and buried it at night close against the long wall of Nero's circus, on the north side, near the place where they buried the martyrs killed daily by Nero's wild beasts and in other cruel ways. They marked the spot, and went there often to pray.

After that, within two years, Nero fell and

perished miserably, scarcely able to take his own life in order to escape being beaten to death in the Forum. In little more than a year there were four emperors in Rome. Galba, Otho, and Vitellius followed one another quickly; then came Vespasian, and then Titus, with his wars in Palestine, and then Domitian. At last, nearly thirty years after the apostle had died on the Janiculus, there was a bishop called Anacletus, who had been ordained priest by St. Peter himself. The times being quieter then, this Anacletus built a little oratory, a very small chapel, in which three or four persons could kneel and pray over the grave. And that was the be-



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

THE PAPAL BENEDICTION IN FRONT OF ST. PETER'S.

gining of St. Peter's Church. But Anacle-  
 tus died a martyr too, and the bishops after  
 him all perished in the same way up to Euty-  
 chianus, whose name means something like  
 «the fortunate one» in barbarous Greek-  
 Latin, and who was indeed fortunate, for he  
 died a natural death. But in the mean time  
 certain Greeks had tried to steal the holy  
 body, so that the Roman Christians carried it  
 away for nineteen months to the catacombs  
 of St. Sebastian, after which they brought  
 it back again and laid it in its place. And  
 again after that, when the new circus was  
 built by Elagabalus, they took it once more  
 to the same catacombs, where it remained in  
 safety for a long time.

Now came Constantine, in love with religion  
 and inclined to think Christianity best,  
 and made a famous edict in Milan. And it is  
 said that he laid the deep foundations of the  
 old Church of St. Peter's, which afterward  
 stood more than eleven hundred years. He  
 built it over the little oratory of Anacle-  
 tus, whose chapel stood where the saint's body  
 had lain, under the nearest left-hand pillar  
 of the canopy that covers the high altar as  
 you go up from the door. Constantine's  
 church was founded on the south side, within  
 the lines of Nero's circus, outside of it on  
 the north side, and parallel with its length.  
 Most churches are built with the apse to the  
 east, but Constantine's, like the present basil-

ica, looked west, because from time immem-  
 orial the bishop of Rome, when consecrating,  
 stood on the farther side of the altar from  
 the people, facing them over it. And the  
 church was consecrated by Pope Sylvester I,  
 in the year 326.

Constantine built his church as a memorial,  
 and not as a tomb, because at that time St.  
 Peter's body lay in the catacombs, where it  
 had been taken in the year 219, under Elagab-  
 alus. But at last, in the days of Honorius, dis-  
 establiher of heathen worship, the body was  
 brought back for the last time, with great  
 concourse and ceremony, and laid, where it  
 or its dust still lies, in a brazen sarcophagus.

Then came Alaric and the Vandals and  
 the Goths. But they respected the church  
 and the saint's body, though they respected  
 Rome very little. And Odoacer extinguished  
 the flickering light of the Western Empire,  
 and Dietrich of Bern, or Theodoric of Ver-  
 ona, founded the Gothic kingdom, and left  
 his name in the Nibelungenlied and else-  
 where. At last arose Charles, who was first  
 called «the Great» on account of his size,  
 and afterward on account of his conquests,  
 which exceeded those of Julius Cæsar in ex-  
 tent; and this Charlemagne came to Rome,  
 and marched up into the church of Constan-  
 tine, and bowed his enormous height for Leo  
 III to set upon it the crown of the new empire,  
 which was ever afterward called the Holy

Roman Empire, until Napoleon wiped out its name in Vienna, having girt on Charlemagne's sword, and founded an empire of his own, which lasted a dozen years instead of a thousand.

So the ages slipped along till the church was in bad repair and in danger of falling, when Nicholas V was pope, in 1450. He called Alberti and the great Bramante, who made the first plan, and his successor, the great Julius II, laid the first stone of the present basilica under the northeast pillar of the dome, where the statue of St. Veronica now stands. The plan was changed many times, and it was not until 1626, on the thirteen hundredth anniversary of St. Sylvester's consecration, that Urban VIII consecrated what we now call the Church of St. Peter.

### III. IMPRESSIONS FROM NAVE AND DOME.

WE who have known St. Peter's since the old days cannot go in under the portico without recalling vividly the splendid pageants we have seen pass in and out by the same gate. Even before reaching it we glance up from the vast square to the high balcony, remembering how from there Pius IX used to chant out the pontifical benediction to the city and the world, while in the silence below one could hear the breathing of a hundred thousand human beings. That is all in ghost-

land now, and will soon be beyond the reach of memory. In the coach-houses behind the Vatican the old state coaches are moldering; and the Pope in his great *sedia gestatoria*, the bearers, the fan-men, the princes, the cardinals, the guards, and the people, will not in our time be again seen together under the Roman sky. Old-fashioned persons sigh for the pageantry of those days when they go up the steps into the church.

The heavy leathern curtain falls by its own weight, and the air is suddenly changed. A hushed, half-rhythmic sound, as of a world breathing in its sleep, makes the silence alive. The light is not dim or ineffectual, but very soft and high, and it is as rich as floating gold-dust in the far distance and in the apse, an eighth of a mile from the door. There is a blue and hazy atmospheric distance, as painters call it, up in the lantern of the cupola, a twelfth of a mile above the pavement.

It is all very big. The longest ship that crosses the ocean could lie in the nave between the door and the apse, and her masts would scarcely top the canopy of the high altar, which looks so small under the super-possible vastness of the immense dome. We unconsciously measure dwellings made with hands by our own bodily stature. But there is a limit to that. No man standing for the first time upon the pavement of St. Peter's



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

THE CRYPT OF ST. PETER'S WHERE POPES AND CARDINALS ARE BURIED.

can make even a wide guess at the size of what he sees unless he knows the dimensions of some one object. It is literally too «great and wonderful.»

Close to Filarete's central bronze door a round disk of porphyry is sunk in the pavement. That is the spot where the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire were crowned in the old church; Charlemagne, Frederick Barbarossa, and many others received the crown, the chrisam, and the blessing here, before Constantine's ancient basilica was torn down lest it should fall of itself. For he did not build as Agrippa built—if, indeed, the old church was built by him at all.

A man may well cast detail of history to the winds, and let his mind stand free to the tremendous traditions of the place, since so much of them is truth beyond all question. Standing where Charles the Great was crowned eleven hundred years ago, he stands not a hundred yards from the grave where the chief apostle was first buried. There he has lain now for fifteen hundred years, since the «religion of the fathers» was «disestablished,» as we should say, by Honorius, and since the popes became the *pontifices maximi* of the new faith. This was the place of Nero's circus long before the Colosseum was dreamed of, and the foundations of Christendom's cathedral are laid in earth wet with blood of many thousand martyrs. During two hundred and fifty years every bishop of Rome died a martyr, to the number of thirty consecutive popes. It is really and truly holy ground, and it is meet that the air once rent by the death-cries of Christ's innocent folk should be inclosed in the world's most sacred place, and be ever musical with holy song and sweet with incense.

It needs fifty thousand persons to make a crowd in St. Peter's. It is believed that at least that number have been present in the church several times within modern memory; but it is thought that the building would hold eighty thousand—as many as could be seated on the tiers in the Colosseum. Such a concourse was there at the opening of the Ecumenical Council in December, 1869, and at the two jubilees celebrated by Leo XIII; and on all three occasions there was plenty of room in the aisles, besides the broad spaces which were required for the functions themselves.

To feel one's own smallness and realize it, one need only go and stand beside the marble cherubs that support the holy-water basins against the first pillar. They look small, if not graceful; but they are of heroic size, and the bowls are as big as baths. Everything

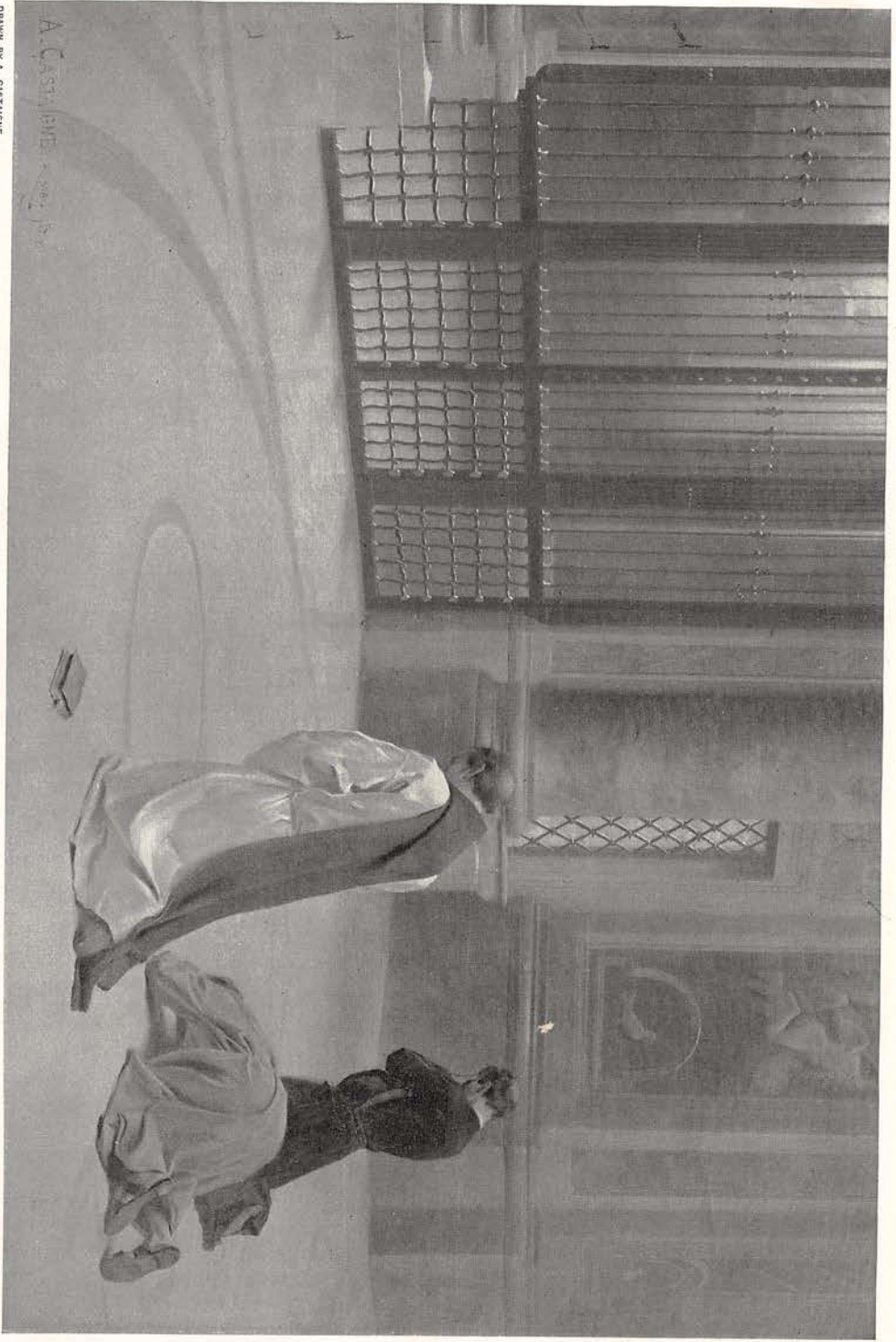
in the place is vast; all the statues are colossal, all the pictures enormous; the smallest detail of the ornamentation would dwarf any other building in the world, and anywhere else even the chapels would be churches. The eye strains at everything, and at first the mind is shocked out of its power of comparison.

But the strangest, most extravagant, most incomprehensible, most disturbing sight of all is to be seen from the upper gallery in the cupola looking down to the church below. Hanging in mid air, with nothing under one's feet, one sees the church projected in perspective within a huge circle. It is as though one saw it upside down and inside out. Few men could bear to stand there without that bit of iron railing between them and the hideous fall, and the inevitable slight dizziness which the strongest head feels may make one doubt for a moment whether what is really the floor below may not be in reality a ceiling above, and whether one's sense of gravitation be not inverted in an extraordinary dream. At that distance human beings look no bigger than flies, and the canopy of the high altar might be an ordinary table.

And thence, climbing up between the double domes, one may emerge from the almost terrible perspective to the open air, and suddenly see all Rome at one's feet, and all the Roman mountains stretched out to south and east, in perfect grace of restful outline, shoulder to shoulder, like shadowy women lying side by side and holding hands.

And the broken symmetry of streets and squares ranges below, cut by the winding ribbon of the yellow Tiber; to the right the low Aventine, with the dark cypresses of the Protestant cemetery beyond, and the Palatine, crested with trees and ruins; the Pincian on the left, with its high gardens, and the mass of foliage of the Villa Medici behind it; the lofty tower of the Capitol in the midst of the city; and the sun clasping all to its heart of gold, the just and the unjust, the new and the old alike, past and present, youth, age, and decay,—generous as only the sun can be in this sordid and miserly world, where bread is but another name for blood, and a rood of growing corn means a pound of human flesh. The sun is the only good thing in nature that always gives itself to man for nothing but the mere trouble of sitting in the sunshine; and Rome without sunlight is a very grim and gloomy town to-day.

It is worth the effort of climbing so high. Four hundred feet in the air, you look down on what ruled half the world by force for ages, and on what rules the other half to-day



DRAWN BY A. CASTIGLIONE.

BEFORE THE GATES OF THE CHAPEL OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

by faith—the greatest center of conquest and of discord and of religion which the world has ever seen. A thousand volumes have been written about it by a thousand wise men. A word will tell what it has been—the heart of the world. Hither was drawn the world's blood by all the roads that lead to Rome, and hence it was forced out again along the mighty arteries of the Cæsars' roads to be spilled in the Cæsars' battles—to redden the world with the Roman name. Blood, blood, and more blood,—that was the history of old Rome,—the blood of brothers, the blood of foes, the blood of martyrs without end. It flowed and ebbed in varying tide at the will of the just and the unjust, but there was always more to shed, and there were always more hands to shed it. And so it may be again hereafter; for the name of Rome has a heart-stirring ring, and there has always been as much blood spilled for the names of things as for the things themselves.

It is wonderful to stand there and realize what every foot means, beneath that narrow standing room on the gallery outside the lantern, counting from the top downward as one counts the years of certain trees by the branches. For every division there is a pope and an architect: Sixtus V and Giacomo della Porta, Paul III and Michelangelo, Baldassare Peruzzi and Leo X, Julius II and Bramante, Nicholas V and Alberti. Then the old church of Constantine, and then the little oratory built over St. Peter's grave by St. Anacletus, the fourth bishop of Rome; then, even before that, Nero's circus, which was either altogether destroyed, or had gone to ruins before Anacletus built his chapel.

#### IV. A REVERY IN THE CRYPT.

AND far below all are buried the great of the earth, deep down in the crypt. There lies the chief apostle, and there lie many martyred bishops side by side: men who came from far lands to die the holy death in Rome—from Athens, from Bethlehem, from Syria, from Africa. There lie the last of the Stuarts, with their pitiful kingly names, James III, Charles III, and Henry IX; the Emperor Otho II has lain there a thousand years; Pope Boniface VIII of the Caetani, whom Sciarra Colonna struck in the face at Anagni, is there, and Rodrigo Borgia; Alexander VI lay there awhile, and Agnese Colonna, and Queen Christina of Sweden, and the Great Countess, and many more besides, both good and bad—even to Caterina Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus, of romantic memory.

In the high, clear air above, it chills one to think of the death silence down there in the crypt; but when you enter the church again after the long descent, and feel once more the quick change of atmosphere by which a blind man could tell that he was in St. Peter's, you feel also the spell of the place and its ancient enchantment; you do not regret the high view you left above, and the dead under your feet seem all at once near and friendly.

It is not an exaggeration or a misuse of a word to call it magic. Magic is supposed to be a means of communication with beings of another world. It is scarcely a metaphor to say that St. Peter's does that. It is the mere truth and no more, and you can feel that it is if you will stand, with half-closed eyes, against one of the great pillars, just within hearing of the voices that sing solemn music in the chapel of the choir, and make yourself a day-dream of the people that go up the nave by seeing them a little indistinctly. If you will but remember how much humanity is like humanity in all ages, you can see the old life again as it was a hundred years, two, three, five, ten hundred years before that. If you are fortunate, just then, a score of German seminary students may pass you, in their scarlet cloth gowns, marching two and two in order, till they wheel by the right and go down upon their knees with military precision before the gate of the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament. Or, if it be the day and hour, a procession crosses the church, with lights and song and rich vestments, and a canopy over the Sacred Host, which the Cardinal Archpriest himself is carrying reverently before him with upraised hands, while the censers swing high to right and left. Or the singers from the choir go by, in purple silk and lace, hurrying along the inner south aisle to the door of the sacristy, where heavy yellow marble cherubs support marble draperies under the monument of Pius VIII. If you stand by your pillar a little while, something will surely happen to help your dream and sweep you back a century or two.

And if not, and if you have a little imagination of your own which can stir itself without help from outside, you can call up the figures of those that lie dead below, and of those who in ages gone have walked in the dim aisles of the ancient church. Up the long nave stalks Pelagius, Justinian's pope, with Narses by his side, to swear by holy cross and sacred gospel that he has not slain Vigilius, pope before him; and that Narses, smooth-faced, passionless, thoughtful, is the conqueror of the Goths, and, having con-





A. CASTAIGNE. ROMA 95.

DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

PIUS IX LYING IN STATE IN THE CHAPEL OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

quered them, he would not suffer that a hair of the remnant of them should be hurt, because he had given his word. High-handed Henry V, claiming power over the Church, being refused full coronation by Pope Paschal till he yields, seizes Pope and College of Cardinals then and there, and imprisons them till he has starved them to submission, and half requites the Church for Gregory's humiliation of the father whom he himself thrust from the throne—of that Henry whom the strong Hildebrand, Gregory VII, made to do penance barefoot on the snow in the courtyard of Matilda's castle at Canossa. And Matilda herself, the Great Countess, the once all beautiful, the betrayed in love, the half sainted, the all romantic, rises before you from her tomb below, in flowing robes and lofty head-dress, and once more makes gift of all her vast possessions to the Church of Rome. Nicholas Rienzi strides by, strange compound of heroism, vanity, and high poetry, calling himself in one breath the people's tribune, an Augustus, and an emperor's son. There is a rush of armed men shouting furiously in Spanish, «Carne! Sangre! Bourbon!» There is a clanging of steel, a breaking down of gates, and the Constable of Bourbon's horde pours in, irresistible and all-ravaging, while he himself lies stark and stiff outside, pierced by Bernardino Passeri's short bolt, and Clement trembles in Sant' Angelo. Christina of Sweden, Monaldeschi's murder red upon her soul, comes next, fawning for forgiveness, to die before long over there in the Corsini palace by the Tiber.

A man may call up half the world's history in half an hour in such a place toward evening, when the golden light streams through the Holy Dove in the apse. And, in imagination, to those who have seen the great pageant within our own memory, the individual figures grow smaller as the magnificence of the display increases out of all proportion, until the church fills again with the vast throng that witnessed the jubilee of Leo XIII but a few years ago, and fifty thousand voices send up a rending cheer while the most splendid procession of these late days goes by.

#### V. THE FUNERAL OF PIUS IX.

It was in the Chapel of the Sacrament that the body of the good Pope Pius IX was laid in state for several days. That was a strange and solemn sight, too. The gates of the church were all shut but one, and that was only a little opened, so that the people passed in one at a time from the great,

wedge-shaped crowd outside—a crowd that began at the foot of the broad steps in the Piazza, and struggled upward all the afternoon, closer and closer toward the single entrance. For in the morning only the Roman nobles and the prelates and high ecclesiastics were admitted, by another way. Within the church the thin stream of men and women passed quickly between a double file of Italian soldiers. That was the first and last time since 1870 that Italian troops were under arms within the consecrated precincts. It was still winter, and the afternoon light was dim, and it seemed a long way to the chapel. The good man lay low, with his slippered feet between the bars of the closed gate. The people paused as they passed, one by one, and most of them kissed the embroidered cross and looked at the still features before they went on. It was dim, but the six tall waxen torches threw a warm light on the quiet face, and the white robes reflected it around. There were three torches on each side, and on each side, too, there were three Noble Guards in full dress, motionless, with drawn swords, as though on parade. But no one looked at them. Only the marble face, with its kind, far-away smile, fixed itself in each man's eyes, and its memory remained with each when he had gone away. It was very solemn and simple, and there were no other lights in the church save the little lamps about the Confession and before the altars. The long, thin stream of people went on swiftly, and out by the sacristy, all the short afternoon, till it was night, and the rest of the unsatisfied crowd was left outside as the single gate was closed.

Few saw the scene which followed, when the good Pope's body had lain four days in state, and was then placed in its coffin at night, to be hoisted high and swung noiselessly into the temporary tomb above the small door on the east side—that is, to the left of the Chapel of the Choir. It was for a long time the custom that each pope should lie there until his successor died, when his body was removed to the monument prepared for it in the mean time, and the pope just dead was laid in the same place.

The church was almost dark, and only in the Chapel of the Choir and that of the Holy Sacrament, which are opposite each other, a number of big wax candles shed a yellow light. In the niche over the door a mason was still at work, with a tallow dip, clearly visible from below. The triple coffins stood before the altar in the Chapel of the Choir. Opposite, where the body still lay, the Noble Guards and the



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

THE POPE GOING DOWN TO PRAY AT ST. PETER'S TOMB.

Swiss Guards, in their breastplates, kept watch with drawn swords and halberds.

The Noble Guards carried the bier on their shoulders in solemn procession, with chanting choir, robed bishops, and tramping soldiers, round by the Confession and across the church, and lifted the body into the coffin. The Pope had been very much beloved by all who were near him, and more than one gray-haired prelate shed tears of genuine grief that night.

In the coffin, in accordance with an ancient custom, a bag was placed containing ninety-three medals, one of gold, one of silver, and one of bronze for each of the thirty-one years during which Pope Pius had reigned; and a history of the pontificate, written on parchment, was also deposited at the feet of the body.

When the leaden coffin was soldered, six seals were placed upon it, five by cardinals, and one by the archivist of the Chapter of St. Peter's. During the whole ceremony the prothonotary apostolic, the chancellor of the Apostolic Chamber, and the notary of the Chapter of St. Peter's, were busy, pen in hand, writing down the detailed protocol of the proceedings.

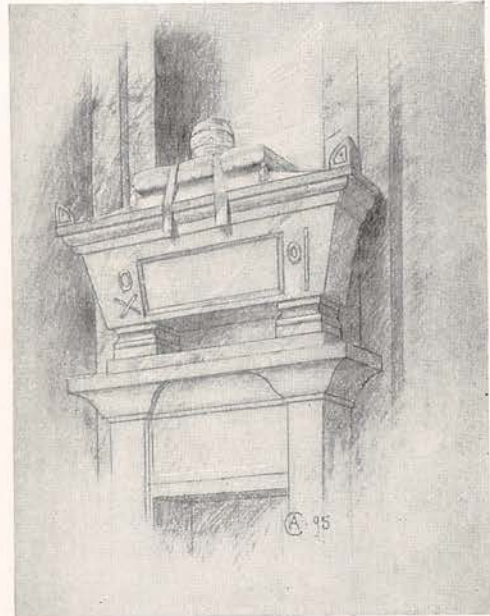
The last absolution that was pronounced, and the coffin in its outer case of elm was slowly moved out, and raised in slings, and gently swung into the niche. The masons bricked up the opening in the presence of cardinals and guards, and long before midnight the marble slab, carved to represent the side of a sarcophagus, was in its place, with its simple inscription, «Pius IX, P. M.»

From time immemorial the well containing the marble staircase which leads down to the tomb of St. Peter has been called the «Confession.» The word, I believe, is properly applied to the altar-rail, from the ancient practice of repeating there the General Confession immediately before receiving the communion, a custom now somewhat modified. But I may be wrong in giving this derivation. Indeed, a marble balustrade follows the horseshoe shape of the well, and upon it are placed ninety-five gilded lamps, which burn perpetually. There is said to be no special significance in the number, and they produce very little effect by daylight.

But on the eve of St. Peter's day, and perhaps at some other seasons, the Pope has been known to come down to the church by the secret staircase leading into the Chapel of the Sacrament, to pray at the apostle's tomb. On such occasions a few great candlesticks with wax torches are placed on the floor of the church, two and two, between the Chapel and the Confession. The Pope, attended only by a few chamberlains and

Noble Guards, and dressed in his customary white cassock, passes swiftly along in the dim light, and descends the steps to the gilded gate beneath the high altar. A marble pope kneels there too, Pius VI, of the Braschi family, his stone draperies less white than Pope Leo's cassock, his marble face scarcely whiter than the living Pontiff's alabaster features.

Those are sights which few are privileged to see. There is a sort of centralization of mystery, if one may couple such words, in the private pilgrimage of the head of the



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

TEMPORARY TOMB FOR THE POPES.

Church to the tomb of the chief apostle, by night, on the eve of the day which tradition has kept as the anniversary of St. Peter's martyrdom from the earliest times. The whole Catholic world, if it might, would follow Leo XIII down those marble steps, and two hundred million voices would repeat the prayer he says alone.

Many and solemn scenes have been acted out by night in the vast gloom of the enormous church, and if events do not actually leave an essence of themselves in places, as some have believed, yet the knowledge that they have happened where we stand and recall them has a mysterious power to thrill the heart.

#### VI. THE MUSIC OF ST. PETER'S.

OPPOSITE the Chapel of the Sacrament is the Chapel of the Choir. St. Peter's is a

cathedral, and is managed by a chapter of canons, each of whom has his seat in the choir, and his vote in the disposal of the cathedral's income, which is considerable. The chapter maintains the choir of St. Peter's, a body of musicians quite independent of the so-called «Pope's choir,» which is properly termed the «choir of the Sistine Chapel,» and which is paid by the Pope. There are some radical differences between the two. By a very ancient and inviolable regulation, the so-called «musico,» or artificial soprano, is never allowed to sing in the Chapel of the Choir, where the soprano singers are without exception men who sing in falsetto, though they speak in a deep voice. On great occasions the choir of the Sistine joins in the music in the body of the church, but never in the chapel.

Secondly, no musical instruments are ever used in the Sistine. In the choir, on the contrary, there are two large organs. The one on the west side is employed on all ordinary occasions; it is over two hundred years old, and is tuned about two whole tones below the modern pitch. It is so worn out that an organ-builder is in attendance during every service, to make repairs at a moment's notice. The bellows leak, the stops stick, some notes have a chronic tendency to «cypher,» and the pedal «trackers» unhook themselves unexpectedly. But the canons would certainly not think of building a new organ.

Should they ever do so, and tune the instrument to the modern pitch, the consternation of the singers would be great; for the music is all written for the existing organ, and could not be performed two notes higher, not to mention the confusion that would arise where all the music is sung at sight. This is a fact not generally known, but worthy of notice. The music sung in St. Peter's, and, indeed, in most Roman churches, is never rehearsed or practised. The music itself is entirely in manuscript, and is the property of the choir-master, or, as is the case in St. Peter's, of the chapter, and there is no copy-right in it beyond this fact of actual possession, protected by the simple plan of never allowing any musician to have his part in his hands except while he is actually performing it. In the course of a year the same piece may be sung several times, and the old choristers may become acquainted with a good deal of the music in this way, but never otherwise. Mozart is reported to have learned Allegri's Miserere by ear, and to have written it down from memory. The other famous Misereres, which are now published, were pirated in a similar way. The choir-master

of that day was very unpopular. Some of the leading singers who had sung the Misereres during many years in succession, and had thus learned their several parts, met and put together what they knew into a whole, which was at once published, to the no small annoyance and discomfiture of their enemy. But much good music is quite beyond the reach of the public—Palestrina's best motets, airs by Alessandro Stradella, the famous hymn of Raimondi, in short, a great musical library, an *archivio*, as the Romans call such a collection, all of which is practically lost to the world.

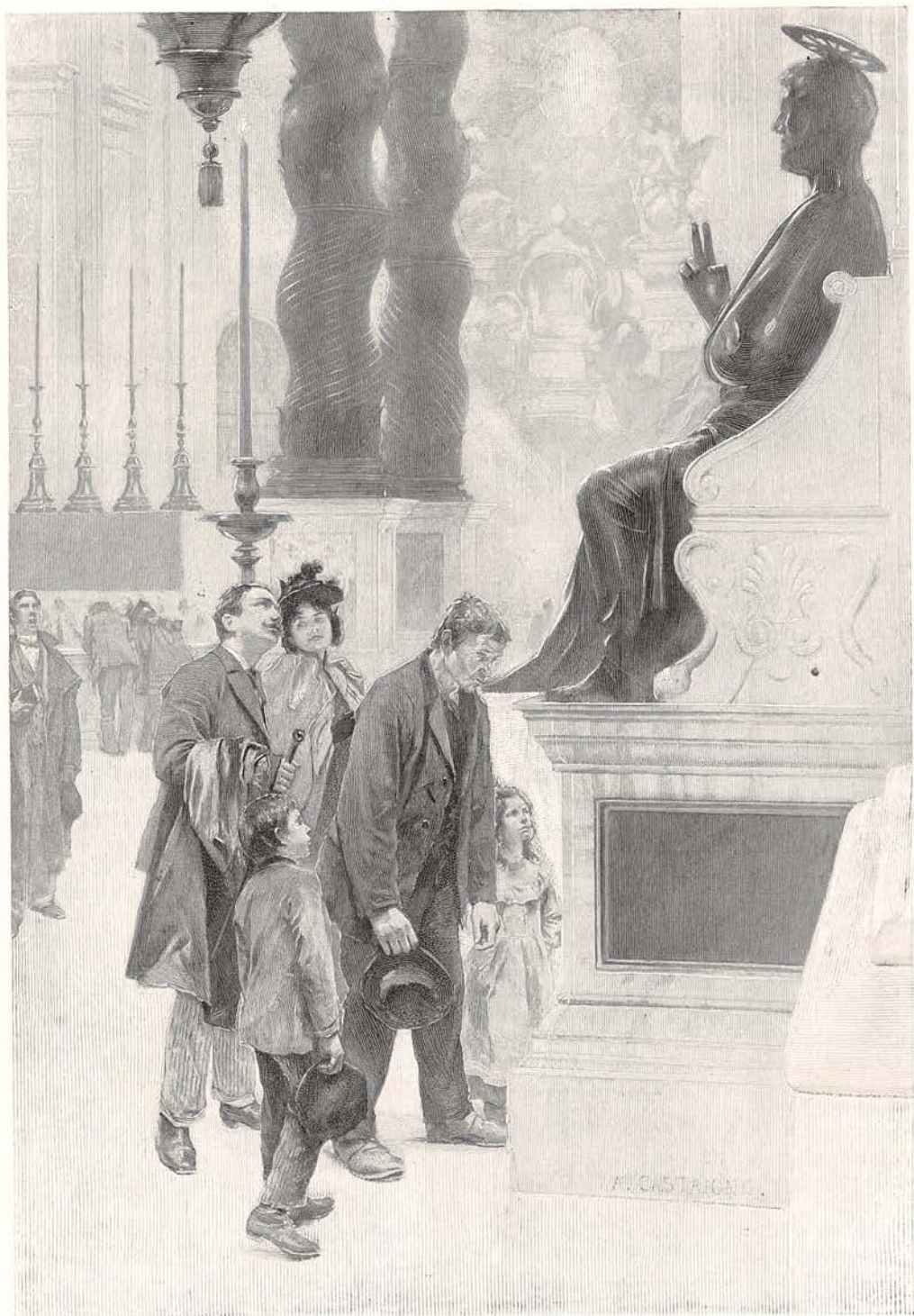
It is wonderful that under such circumstances the choir of St. Peter's should obtain even such creditable results. At a moment's notice an organist and about a hundred singers are called upon to execute a florid piece of music which many of them have never seen or heard; the accompaniment is played at sight from a mere figured bass, on a tumble-down instrument two hundred years old, and the singers, both the soloists and the chorus, sing from thumbed bits of manuscript parts written in old-fashioned characters on paper often green with age. No one has ever denied the extraordinary musical facility of Italians, but if the general musical world knew how Italian church music is performed it would be very much astonished.

It is no wonder that such music is sometimes bad. But sometimes it is very good; for there are splendid voices among the singers, and the Maestro Renzi, the chief organist, is a man of real talent as well as of amazing facility. His modernizing influence is counter-balanced by that of the old choir-master, Maestro Meluzzi, a first-rate musician, who would not for his life change a hair of the old-fashioned traditions. Yet there are moments, on certain days, when the effect of the great old organ, with the rich voices blending in some good harmony, is very solemn and stirring. The outward persuasive force of religion lies largely in its music, and the religions that have no songs make few proselytes.

#### VII. SCULPTURE AND PAINTING.

NOTHING, perhaps, is more striking, as one becomes better acquainted with St. Peter's, than the constant variety of detail. The vast building produces at first sight an impression of harmony, and there appears to be a remarkable uniformity of style in all the objects one sees.

There are no oil-paintings to speak of in the church, and but few frescos. The great



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

AT THE STATUE OF ST. PETER.

altarpieces are almost exclusively fine mosaic copies of famous pictures which are preserved elsewhere. Of these reproductions the best is generally considered to be that of Guercino's «St. Petronilla» at the end of the right aisle of the tribune. Debrosses praises these mosaic altarpieces extravagantly, and even expresses the opinion that they are probably superior in point of color to the originals from which they are copied. In execution they are certainly wonderful, and many a stranger looks at them and passes on believing them to be oil-paintings. They possess the quality of being imperishable, and beyond all influence of climate or dampness, and they are masterpieces of mechanical workmanship. But many will think them hard and unsympathetic in outline, and decidedly crude in color. Much wit has been manufactured by the critics at the expense of Guido Reni's «Michael» for instance, and as many sharp things could be said about a good many other works of the same kind in the church. Yet, on the whole, they do not destroy the general harmony. Big as they are, when they are seen from a little distance they sink into mere insignificant patches of color, all but lost in the deep richness of the whole.

As for the statues and monuments, between the «Pietà» of Michelangelo and Bracci's horrible tomb of Benedict XIV there is the step which, according to Tom Paine, separates the sublime from the ridiculous. That very witty saying has in it only just the ingredient of truth without which wit remains mere humor. Between the ridiculous and the sublime there may sometimes be, indeed, but one step in the execution; but there is always the enormous moral distance which separates real feeling from affectation—the gulf which divides, for instance, Bracci's group from Michelangelo's.

The «Pietà» is one of the great sculptor's early works. It is badly placed. It is dwarfed by the heavy architecture above and around it. It is insulted by a pair of hideous bronze cherubs. There is a manifest improbability in the proportion between the figure of Christ and that of the Blessed Virgin. Yet, in spite of all, it is one of the most beautiful and touching groups in the whole world, and by many degrees the best work of art in the great church. Michelangelo was a man of the strongest dramatic instinct, even in early youth, and when he laid his hand to the marble and cut out his «Pietà» he was in deep sympathy with the supreme drama of man's history. He found in the stone, once and for all time, the grief of the human mother for

her son, not comforted by foreknowledge of resurrection, nor lightened by prescience of near glory. He discovered in the marble, by one effort, the divinity of death's rest after torture, and taught the eye to see that the dissolution of this dying body is the birth of the soul that cannot die. In the dead Christ there are two men manifest to sight. «The first man was of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.»

In the same small chapel stands a strangely wrought marble column inclosed in an iron cage. The Romans now call it the Colonna Santa (the holy pillar), and it is said to be the one against which Christ leaned when teaching in the temple at Jerusalem. A great modern authority believes it to be of Roman workmanship, and of the third century; but those who have lived in the East will see much that is Oriental in the fantastic, ornamented carving. It matters little. In actual fact, whatever be its origin, this is the column known in the middle ages as the «Colonna degli Spiritati,» or column of those possessed by evil spirits, and it was customary to bind to it such unlucky individuals as fell under suspicion of «possession,» in order to exorcise the spirit with prayers and holy water. Aretino has made a witty scene about this in the «Cortigiana,» where one of the Vatican servants cheats a poor fisherman, and then hands him over to the sacristan of St. Peter's to be cured of an imaginary possession by a ceremonious exorcism. Such proceedings must have been common enough in those days when witchcraft and demonology were elements with which rulers and lawgivers had to count at every turn.

Leave the column and its legends in the lonely chapel, with the exquisite «Pietà»; wander hither and thither, and note the enormous contrasts between good and bad work which meet you at every turn. Up in the right aisle of the tribune you will come upon what is known as Canova's masterpiece, the tomb of Clement XIII, of jesuitical memory, as strange a mixture of styles and ideas as any in the world, and yet a genuine expression of the artistic feeling of that day. The grave pope prays solemnly above; on the right a lovely heathen genius of Death leans on a torch; on the left rises a female figure of Religion, one of the most abominably bad statues in the world; below, a brace of improbable lions, extravagantly praised by people who do not understand leonine anatomy, recall Canova's humble origin and his first attempt at modeling. For the sculptor began life as a little waiter in a *canova di vino*, or

wine shop, whence his name, and it was when a high dignitary stopped to breakfast at the little wayside inn that he modeled a lion in butter to grace the primitive table. The thing attracted the rich traveler's attention, and the boy's fortune was made. The pope is impressive, the Death is gentle and tender, the Religion, with her crown of gilded spikes for rays, and her clumsy cross, is a vision of bad taste, and the sleepy lions, when separated from what has been written about them, excite no interest. Yet somehow, from a distance, the monument gets harmony out of its surroundings.

One of the best tombs in the basilica is that of Sixtus IV, the first pope of the Rovere family, in the Chapel of the Sacrament. The bronze figure, lying low on a sarcophagus placed out upon the floor, has a quiet, manly dignity about it which one cannot forget. But in the same tomb lies a greater man of the same race, Julius II, for whom Michelangelo made his great «Moses» in the Church of San Pietro in Vincoli—a man who did more than any other, perhaps, to make the great basilica what it is, and who, by a chain of mistakes, got no tomb of his own. He who solemnly laid the foundations of the present church, and lived to see the four main piers completed, with their arches, has only a little slab in the pavement to recall his memory. The protector and friend of Bramante, of Michelangelo, and of Raphael,—of the great architect, the great sculptor, and the great painter,—has not so much as the least work of any of the three to mark his place of rest. Perhaps he needed nothing but his name, which must always stand among the greatest.

After all, his bones have been allowed to rest in peace, which is more than can be said of all that have been buried within the area of the church. Urban VI had no such good fortune. He so much surprised the cardinals, as soon as they had elected him, by his vigorous moral reforms, that they hastily retired to Anagni, and elected an antipope of milder manners and less sensitive conscience. He lived to triumph over his enemies. In Piacenza he was besieged by King Charles of Naples. He excommunicated him, tortured seven cardinals whom he caught in a conspiracy, and put five of them to death, overcame and slew Charles, refused him burial, and had his body exposed to the derision of the crowd. The chronicler says that «Italy, Germany, England, Hungary, Bohemia, Poland, Sicily, and Portugal were obedient to the Lord Pope Urban VI.» He died peacefully, and was buried in St. Peter's in a marble sarcophagus.

But when Sixtus V, who also surprised the cardinals greatly, was in a fit of haste to finish the dome, the masons, wanting a receptacle for water, laid hands on Urban's stone coffin, pitched his bones into a corner, and used the sarcophagus as they pleased, leaving it to serve as a water-tank for many years afterward.

In extending the foundations of the church, Paul III came upon the bodies of Maria and Hermantia, the two wives of Honorius, the emperor who «disestablished» paganism in favor of Christianity. They were sisters, daughters of Stilicho, and had been buried in their imperial robes, with many rich objects and feminine trinkets; and they were found intact, as they had been buried, in the month of February, 1543. Forty pounds of fine gold were taken from their robes alone, says Baracconi, without counting all the jewels and trinkets, among which was a very beautiful lamp, besides a great number of precious stones. The Pope melted down the gold for the expenses of the building, and set the gems in a tiara, where, if they could be identified, they certainly exist to-day—the very stones worn by empresses of ancient Rome.

Then, as if in retribution, the Pope's own tomb was moved from its place. Despoiled of two of the four statues which adorned it, the monument is now in the tribune, and is still one of the best in the church. A strange and tragic tale is told of it. A Spanish student, it is said, fell madly in love with the splendid statue of Paul's sister-in-law, Julia Farnese. He succeeded in hiding himself in the basilica when it was closed at night, threw himself in a frenzy upon the marble, and was found stone dead beside it in the morning. The ugly draperies of painted metal, which now hide much of the statue, owe their origin to this circumstance. Classical scholars will remember that a somewhat similar tale is told by Pliny of the «Venus» of Praxiteles in Cnidus.

In spite of many assertions to the effect that the bronze statue of St. Peter which is venerated in the church was originally an image of Jupiter Capitolinus, the weight of modern authority and artistic judgment is to the contrary. The work cannot really be earlier than the fifth century, and is therefore of a time after Honorius and the disestablishment. Any one who will take the trouble to examine the lives of the early popes may read the detailed accounts of what each one did for the churches. It is not by any means impossible that the statue may have been made under St. Innocent I, a contemporary of Honorius, in whose time a Roman lady called Vestina made gift to the



Church of vast possessions, the proceeds of which were used in building and richly adorning numerous places of worship. In any case, since it is practically certain that the statue was originally intended for a portrait of St. Peter, and has been regarded as such for nearly fifteen hundred years, it commands our respect, if not our veneration.

The practice of dressing it in magnificent robes on the feast of St. Peter is connected with the ancient Roman custom, which required the censors, when entering upon office, to paint the earthen statue of Jupiter Capitolinus a bright red. But the connection lies in the Italian mind and character, which cling desperately to external practices for their hold upon inward principles. It is certainly not an inheritance of uninterrupted tradition, as Roman church music, on the contrary, most certainly is; for there is every reason to believe that the recitations now noted in the Roman missal were very like those used by the ancient Romans on solemn occasions.

The mere facts of real interest connected with the basilica, its foundation, its construction, and its subsequent history, would fill a volume, and overflow one man's brain. The church is not only a real landmark. Astronomers say that if there were a building of the same dimensions on the moon we could easily see it with modern telescopes. It is also, in a manner, one of time's great mile-stones, of which some trace will probably remain till

the very end of the world's life. Its mere mass will insure to it the permanence of the great pyramid of Cheops. Its mere name associates it forever with the existence of Christianity from the earliest time. It has stamped itself upon the minds of millions of men as the most vast monument of the ages. Its very defects are destined to be as lasting as its beauties, and its mighty faults are more imposing than the small perfections of the Greeks. Between it and the Parthenon, as between the Roman empire and the Athenian commonwealth, one may choose, but one dares make no comparison. The genius of the Greeks absorbed the world's beauty into itself, distilled it to perfection, and gave humanity its most subtle quintessence; but the Latin arm ruled the world itself wholesale, and the imperial Latin intelligence could never find any expression fitted to its enormous measure. That is the secret of the monstrous element in all the Romans built. And that supernormal giantism showed itself for the last time in the building of St. Peter's, when the Latin race had reached its last great development, and the power of the Latin popes overshadowed the whole world, and was itself about to be humbled. Before Michelangelo was dead Charles V had been emperor for forty years, Dr. Martin Luther had denied the doctrine of salvation by works, the nations had broken loose from the popes, and the world was at war.

*F. Marion Crawford.*

BECALMED.

THE yards are squared, the course is set,  
And port and starboard decks are wet,  
Yet not a flaw from day to day  
Darkens the flood or sifts the spray.

Becalmed we lie, with rocking keel;  
The helmsman nods above the wheel,  
Or idly scans the shoreless sea,  
Which sets no whispering murmurs free.

The still heights of the firmament  
Spread round us like a silver tent,  
And fervid days and silent seas  
Wrap us in balmy dreams of ease.

No messenger with hurrying feet  
Hails me with tidings of defeat,  
Nor sad-faced herald hastes to tell  
That with my love all is not well.

I only know no seas can part  
Us farther than a faithless heart,  
And even Death we might deride  
To part us more, though side by side.

*L. Frank Tooker.*