

ST. PETER'S AT ROME

Some of the Sacred Relics Preserved Therein

Spiral Columns from the Ruins of Solomon's Temple—Wood of the True Cross, the Lance, and the Impression of the Saviour's Face—Other Treasures.

St. Peter's at Rome, although the most vast and magnificent church of the city and of the world is second in rank to St. John Lateran, the Cathedral of Rome, and grew up about the little chapel built by Anacletus, third bishop of Rome, over the grave of the apostle. Pandolfi, in his *Tesori Nascenti*, mentions that the body was taken by night from the place of his crucifixion on the Janiculum Hill by two Roman ladies, his converts, Basilissa and Anastasia, who secretly laid it in a grotto of the Vatican gardens, from the double motive that they had been the scene already of Christian martyrdom and torture, and the pious wish to imitate the circumstances of our Lord's burial. Both these ladies were put to a cruel death during the persecution of Nero, their tongues being cut out because they refused to tell where they had buried Peter.

The renowned Vatican Hill is one of the range rising from Campagna, south of Rome, up to the Janiculum, extending in graceful undulation along the right bank of the Tiber, reaching its highest northern point at Monte Mario, and gradually sinking toward Ponte Molle (Milian Bridge). This little chain of hills formed the boundary separating Etruria from Latium.

It is uncertain how long the remains of Peter lay undisturbed in the garden tomb under the little chapel or oratory Anacletus built over them during one of those breathing times between one persecution and another. Paul, who suffered martyrdom the same day, had been buried in the garden of a widow, Theona, near the left bank of the Tiber, on the spot where now stands the high altar of St. Paul's outside the walls.

Pandolfi says that in the sentence of death passed upon the Apostles Peter and Paul, Peter being a Jew, was condemned to be crucified on the Janiculum above the Jews' quarter in Trastevere. To Paul, being a Roman citizen of Tarsus, in Cilicia, decapitation without the city was conceded. They were led from prison together and taken through either the old Ardeatine or Trigemina Gate, since called St. Paul's. At the spot where, according to tradition, they separated—Peter to be taken across the river—there has stood for ages a small chapel, in memory of their last parting.

The heathen Roman were convinced that the two chief Apostles might have rested quietly enough ever afterward in their tombs, and all the confusion about their identity would never have happened had it not been for the passionate zeal and probably rivalry of the Christians themselves.

Some rich Greek converts of Paul's, visiting Rome while the fervor of their faith was still high, contrived to steal both the bodies, and carried them along the Appian Way to the cemetery, afterward called St. Sebastian. Here they were hidden until the Greeks were ready with their preparations for taking their precious theft to the East. But Gregory the Great relates that the Roman Christians discovered the robbery and overtook the Greeks the night they went out with the chest they had prepared to put the bodies into. A portentous thunderstorm came on, during which they rescued the sacred relics, but were only able to bury them hurriedly in a dry well near at hand, afterward erecting an altar over them to mark the place. The strictness of the Roman laws and customs as to the respect due to place of sepulture necessitated all this secrecy and caution; it was not even generally known to the whole Christian colony that the graves were rifled, and they continued to resort to the first shrines as usual. In the dry well, then, tradition says, lay the two Apostles for 252 years, until the Peace of the Church, when Sylvester who succeeded Melchisedech as Bishop of Rome, discovered them, and solemnly replaced the skeletons in their original graves, consigning the heads, however, to the Lateran Basilica.

According to one account of this solemnity, when Sylvester had the bones taken up out of the dry well, there was no means of distinguishing those of one apostle from the other. But Sylvester prayed fervently for a sign, and a voice was heard in the air saying: "The larger bones are of the Preacher, the smaller are of the Fisherman." Only Peter's skull was there; the head of Paul having been left probably by the thieving Greeks in their haste and hurry, in Theona's garden. Anyway the place where it lay was marked and known to the Christians. Pope Sylvester divided the bones then, and there on a marble table or slab still preserved in the crypt of St. Peter. Half were placed in the Vatican grotto and

half in Paul's first grave, beside the Ostian Way. From the earliest age of Christianity both the apostles have been commemorated together. Their day is the same, June 29. They are mentioned together daily at mass, matins and vespers. The hymn of the Empress Eudoxia composed in the fifth century and sung annually in St. Peter's at the great second vespers, the "Vesperone," commemorates both: "Oh, happy Rome, resplendent with such blood!"

There are representations of the first or old Basilica of St. Peter, built by Constantine the Great, on medals of the Renaissance Popes. In splendor the early basilica even exceeded the present. It was called variously "Most August Basilica," and "Limina Apostolorum" (Threshold of the Apostles). A vast square cloister or portico formed the approach to the church, so richly and beautifully decorated, and having at each corner a sparkling fountain, that the people called it the Paradise. Within the church the walls were covered with mosaic pictures on gold ground; the nave and aisles were divided by pillars taken from pagan temples. At the mid-point of cross-nave was the high altar, over Peter's tomb. From the earliest period it was called the Confession. The space was surrounded by twelve large spiral columns of white marble, on each of which was the silver statue of an Apostle. These columns were brought from the ruins of Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem by Helena, the mother of Constantine. There is nothing incredible in that, and the columns are still in St. Peter's. Two in each plaster of the dome form door-posts in the galleries above St. Andrew, Helena, Veronica and Longinus. The other two can be seen more nearly, and their size observed, in the Sacrament Chapel. One of the spiral columns, being by tradition that against which Jesus leaned when calling attention to the beauty of the temple, is kept enshrined in a small chapel within that of the Pieta. The mosaic of the first apse had the figure of Christ in the midst, with Peter and Paul on either hand. The head of these traditional portraits are still preserved in the Vatican. Besides the Chair of Peter, which was always regarded as a relic and never used by any of the succeeding Bishops of Rome, Constantine placed a marble throne in the Tribune, to be used by the Pontiff on solemn occasions. Each Pope added to the embellishment of St. Peter's. We read of a marvelous candelabra, which stood in front of the Confession, having 385 lights, made of gilt metal and set with precious gems. The most sacred relics preserved in St. Peter's from the earliest ages are the wood of the True Cross, the Lance, and the Volto Santo, or impression of the Saviour's face upon the hankerchief of Berenice or Veronica.

The Popes prohibited any copy to be made of the "Volto Santo" under pain of excommunication. Two other portraits of our Lord on linen were esteemed authentic by the Church. One was the handkerchief He sent to Abgarus, King of Edessa, concerning which there are many interesting traditions; the other the cloth wrapped round His face and head in the sepulchre, which the disciples found folded together "in a place by itself" (St. John, xx, 7). This also bore the likeness of Christ. Various places claimed having possessed these portraits at different epochs; but it would lead too far from the Vatican to follow them both. The true image was kept sometimes for safety in the Castle of St. Angelo; the Church of Santo Spirito (of the Saxons) also had the honor of guarding it during repairs of St. Peter's. At the second jubilee, in 1350, the Pope, being at Avignon, commanded the relic to be exhibited in St. Peter's, when the crowds who rushed to behold it were so great, many persons were trampled and crushed to death. Berenice of Veronica never was canonized, but the Roman people called her a saint, and the name is to this day frequently given in baptism.

According to tradition, Longinus was the Roman soldier who with his lance pierced the Saviour's side; he became a Christian and suffered martyrdom at Caesarea in Cappadocia. The lance was buried, with the cross and other instruments of the Passion, in the place where Empress Helena found them. It was set in a wooden cross and placed in the portico of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, where the venerable Bede mentions it was an object of deep interest to faithful pilgrims.

After Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Saracens, the lance was secretly transported to Antioch; again brought back to Jerusalem in 1099; from whence it was removed to Constantinople. Emperor Constantine V. divided the lance in two pieces, presenting the point to Charlemagne.

Baldwin II, fifth Latin Emperor of Constantinople, (1261-72) being in need of money, gave the point of the lance to the Republic of Venice in pawn. St. Louis IX of France redeemed the relic from Venice, paying the loan, and caused it to be

placed in Paris with the crown of thorns in the chapel he built for the latter. The rest of the lance remained at Constantinople, jealously preserved among the imperial treasures, with other relics, by Mohammed II. The grand master of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, Aubusson, obtained this portion of the lance from Bajazet II. and sent it with other relics to Pope Innocent VIII. in 1492. The lance was landed at Ancona, and brought thence in procession to Rome. It was received by Pope Innocent at the Flaminian Gate (Porta del Popolo), and he carried it to St. Peter's. Arrived there, the Pope was so tired with his long walk and fasting that he sank down in tears, unable to sing Mass, which he deputed to Cardinal Della Rovere and other cardinals. The lance is kept in the same shrine with the Volto Santo.

Volumes have been written upon the True Cross. The old basilica does not seem to have possessed one. Urban VIII. in 1729 took some fragments of this great relic from Santa Croce, in Jerusalem, and from Santa Anastasia, placed them in a silver cross adorned with precious stones, and consigned the whole to the Chapter of the Vatican Basilica (Meroni Diz: Storicoecclie), ordering that the True Cross be shown to the people at the same time with the lance and the Volto Santo.

Gregory XVI, in 1838, caused the larger portion to be placed in a new reliquary, and since then that alone has been exhibited. It is thus described in the above work by a person favored with a close inspection:

"When Pope Gregory XVI, on January 18, 1838, bestowed upon the basilica two precious reliquaries for the wood of the holy cross, he ordained that the larger one should be shown in future with the lance and the Volto Santo.

"This largest fragment, which had been long in the Pontifical sacristy, has on one side engraven the image of the crucified Redeemer pierced with four nails, and eleven figures in bas-relief. On the other side the image of the Blessed Virgin and eight figures, also in bas-relief. The Pontiff decreed that this august relic should be exhibited for public veneration on Good Friday in the Pontifical Sistine Chapel of the Apostolic Vatican Palace, and upon the high altar of St. Peter's on certain days of the year, among others on the festivals of the Invention and of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross."

God does not ask where you have been or what you have been doing. He wants to know where you are now.

Restitution of Ecclesiastical Salaries.
The Prussian Government has submitted to the Diet a bill which is destined, says the correspondent of the "Daily News," to remove another relic of the Kulturkampf. The bill provides for the restitution of the salaries of Catholic bishops and priests which were suspended in order to force the Catholic hierarchy to recognize the May laws. These funds have now accumulated to the amount of \$4,000,000. Last year the Government proposed to pay the interest of this sum to the Catholic bishops, but the Centre party refused this offer and insisted upon having the capital paid down. In the present bill the Government has complied with this demand and the sequestered money will be duly distributed. This is a real triumph of the Centre party, which has stuck to its demands with great persistence.

The Family Altar.
It is in front of the family altar that the holiest vows are taken. More lives are subdued in the sitting-room than were at Marathon, or Austerlitz, or Gettysburg. Firmer foundations are made in cob-webbed garrets than you find beneath capitol or many-spired cathedral. Keener philosophies are inculcated at the tea table during the ruddy winter evenings, than in college halls or from pulpit and platform. The family is three-armed: The first arm points to social movements; the second is mixed up in politics; and the third points heavenward. Hence it is that society, government and religion—the world's greatest institutions—depend for their maintenance, stability, and soundness upon the family.

The Franciscans and the East.
The Catholics of Aleppo have recently presented to the Franciscan Fathers of that place a letter testifying to the devotion of these Fathers in the recent epidemic of cholera which has devastated that town. After referring to the fact of public notoriety that they had been visited by the scourge of cholera, the signatories declare it to be their duty "before God and the whole world" to make the zeal of the Fathers known, and with particular mention of Fathers Philip of Nazareth and Cherubim of Afragola.

A heart that can keep when it ought to give cannot be happy.

God's greatest desire is to give Himself to us. The real soul of sin is to oppose His wish.

DE SOTO'S REMAINS.

A Belief That the Explorer's Bones Have Been Found.

Bones Unearthed by Workmen in Fort Jefferson, Ky.—A Sword, Breastplate, Helmet and a Few Human Bones Supposed to Have Belonged to De Soto.

While laborers were excavating for the foundation of a large brick block that is now being erected in Fort Jefferson, Ky., one of them unearthed a few human bones, says the St. Louis "Globe Democrat" of recent date. As this part of the Mississippi Valley abounds in Indian mounds, the workman supposed he was digging into one of them, but soon he uncovered what proved to be a long, straight and very heavy sword. News spread rapidly over the town that the grave of one of the soldiers of Gen. Clark or of Gen. Grant had been discovered, and together with his sword, which had been buried with him. In 1781 General Clark built a fort where this place now stands. It was there that he fought a decisive battle with the Indians, losing many of his own men and covering the ground with the dead bodies of the aborigines. During the late war General Grant had his headquarters at this place for many months. Several small battles were fought here, and it can be truly called the bloody ground of guerrilla warfare, for nowhere in the South was a locality so molested and devastated by guerrillas and desperadoes as Southwestern Kentucky and Southern Missouri.

Knowing these, it was very natural for the people to believe that they had found a grave of one of Clark's or Grant's soldiers, or that of some wandering guerrilla. As the workman proceeded with his labors he threw up a steel breastplate and helmet. These were almost eaten up with rust, and through the holes of the helmet could be seen the gray bones of a fast-decaying skull.

In order to gain some information concerning this strange discovery, the handle and scabbard of the sword were cleaned. The sword itself was rusted to the scabbard and could not be drawn. The shield on the handle and the scabbard were made of a strange composition that rust had but little effect upon, and they seemed but slightly injured by time. The handle of the sword is of pure gold, at the top of which is a large diamond clustered around with rubies.

On the handle is the name "Hernando De Soto." Below is the coat of arms, which consists of a spring cooing out of a hillside, and close by the spring a child. Underneath this is the inscription, written in Latin, "The Spring of Youth."

The engraving is remarkably well done. These few bones and implements of war are no doubt all that remains of the great De Soto, who, believing that somewhere in the New World was a spring which bestowed on anyone who bathed in its crystal waters perpetual youth, gave up wealth and luxury to undergo the hardships of a wild and unknown country, and at last die in discouragement and defeat. History says that De Soto died somewhere in this part of the country, and his body was thrown into the river in order to keep the fact of his death from the Indians. But history is probably mistaken. Fort Jefferson has the honor of his grave.

THE VOICE OF JOSHUA.

An Interesting Account of Acoustics at Mounts Ebal and Gerizim.

Dr. William C. Winslow, D. D., &c., Vice-President of the Egypt Exploration Fund, sends to the journal printed in the interests of the Palestine Exploration Fund the following account of "Acoustics at Mounts Ebal and Gerizim:

"The recent cablegram to a Boston daily journal of 'A Singular Experiment,' that a party at Mounts Gerizim and Ebal in Palestine had successfully tested the ability to hear the blessings and curses proclaimed at that spot or site (see Deut. xvii. and Josh. viii.) is interesting as another bit of essential confirmation of the narratives of the Pentateuch and other Biblical history; but the experiment is not a 'singular' one, having been previously made, I am certain, and at all events by myself, in 1880 while engaged in scientific and archaeological work in the Holy Land. On a perfectly clear and windless day in spring (like our late May) I stationed two persons on Mount Ebal, myself and an attendant on Mount Gerizim, and several persons in the valley between the mountains. We who read were some 700 feet above our little audience. We had arranged visual signals to indicate when one party was to begin and end in reading, lest the other party should not know when to 'take up the tale,' or even the audience when to say the amens. But no signal was needed. Not only did the audience hear our words distinctly, and we their amens, but each speaker heard the words of the other speaker shot across a distance of nearly half a mile. We pro-

nounced the blessings and curses with a high key, and not with a Phillips Brooks-like rattling of the tongue. In all probability, Joshua delivered the sentences midway between the two mountains, and the Levites repeated them for some distance up and down the valley, so that from the mountain side on either hand the million or two Hebrews intelligently replied with the same words. I remember, used Gerizim as a pulpit from which to speak his parables to the Samaritans. With the hills for a sounding-board, the spot is wonderfully acoustical. The sense of hearing in Joshua's day was particularly acute, as the Israelites were accustomed to listen to out-door sermons and sermons. No does the record state literally that every man, woman and child heard the words, but that Joshua read the words before them."

THE AGNUS DEI.

It Is Blessed by the Pope in Easter Week.

The Agnus Dei, which many of us carry about with us, are blessed by the Pope on Wednesday of Easter Week, but only on the first and every seventh year of his Pontificate. The custom of blessing them at this time is a very ancient one. In the early ages of the Church, as is well known, baptism was administered at Easter, and on Holy Saturday each of the neophytes received from the Pope an Agnus Dei. Holy Saturday is now also the day upon which they are distributed and sent to all parts of the world.

The ceremonies and prayers used in blessing Agnus Dei are very beautiful and impressive. The Pontiff asks God to bless and sanctify these forms of war, which bear the impress of the Most Innocent Lamb, that by their contact and presence the faithful may be incited to pray, storms and tempests be driven away, and the wicked spirits be put to flight by the virtue of the Holy Cross with which they are marked; and he further prays that as the Innocent Lamb, Jesus Christ, when immolated on the altar of the Cross, delivered our first parents from the power of the devil, so may these spotless lambs be endowed with power unto good—the power to protect those who devoutly wear them against the malice of demons, against tempests, pestilence, sickness, fire and enemies, that they may be efficacious in protecting us from all dangers that may arise. Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who devoutly wear the Agnus Dei are sometimes miraculously preserved from the dangers above mentioned. It is related in the Life of St. Paul the Fifth that the City of Rome was saved from destruction, which was threatened by the overflow of the River Tiber, by means of an Agnus Dei, when thrown into the river, caused the waters to subside. The miracle was witnessed by many thousands of people, and it is mentioned in the process of the holy Pope's beatification.

New Cathedral Consecrated in Burmah.

On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, a new Catholic cathedral was consecrated at Mandalay, the old capital of Burmah. The cathedral was built at the sole expense of a wealthy Burmese convert to catholicity. On the following day the Very Rev. Rocco Tornatore was consecrated Bishop and Vicar-Apostolic of Eastern Burmah. Mr. Tornatore was one of the pioneer preachers of the gospel among the half-savage Karen tribes in the Shan Hills, and has been a missionary in Burmah since 1868.

A Few Minutes With God.

Our churches are open all the year and our blessed Lord is ever-present in the tabernacle waiting for us. How easy it is for you, dear reader, to just step in a moment, and in less time than you waste in talking to a friend, ask God for help, for strength and for mercy. Think of those less fortunate than you who live in some remote parts of the world, where perhaps they never see either church or priest. Remember, to-day you are here and to-morrow may never come for you. Many a one owes his salvation to making frequent visits to God's house and there, prostrate at the altar, asked forgiveness. You would be surprised to see the people in the different stations of life who daily visit our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. Try it, and before the year comes to its close you will find the benefit of it.

Bigotry of French Officials.

A glaring instance of the Philistinism of irreligion is reported from France. Some gentlemen connected with the Education Department subscribed enough money to have Millet's picture, the Angelus, engraved, intending to send copies of the engraving to the public schools. The parents, it is said, had actually been made up for distribution when some godless jack-in-office intervened. The word "Angelus," they declared, "reminded them of the worst days of superstition." They could not let it pass, and so the schools lose the picture.