Or, the Church of the Catacombs.

Written by His Eminence Cardinal Wissman

[Published by special request.]

CHAPTER I-Continued

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Diogenes rebuked him, saving. That he comes to us in Pancratius company is security enough.

"I own," interposed the youth, that I do not know as much about him as about Tibertius, who is really a gallant, noble fellow. Torquatus is, however, very anxious to obtain all information about our affairs, and seems in earnest. What makes you fear, Severus?"

Only a trifle, indeed. But as I was going early to the cometery this morning, I turned into the baths of Antonius.

What!" interrupted Pancratius, laughing, 'do you frequent such fashionable resorts?

'Not exactly,' replied the honest artist, but you are not perhaps clidedly for the delence of a fortified aware that Cucumio the capsarius and his wife are Christians?"

Is it possible? where shall we find them next?

Well, so it is, and moreover they are making a tomb for themselves in the cemetery of Callistus, and I had to show them Majus's inscription for

Here it is said the latter, exhibiting it, as follows:

> CVOVMIO ET VICTORIA SE VIVOS FECERVAT

CAPBABARIVE DE ANTONINIANAS.

'Capital!' exclaimed Pancratius, amused at the blunders in the epitaph, but we are forgetting Torqua-

'As I entered the building, then, said Severus. 'I was not a little sur prised to find in one corner, at that early hour, this Torquatus in close conversation with the present prefect's son, Corvinus, the pretended cripple, who thrust himself into Agnes's house, you remember, when som charitable unknown person (God bless him!) gave large alms to the poor there. Not good company Christian .

True Severus, returned Pracra tius, blushing deeply, but he is young as yet in the faith, and probably his old friends do not know of his change. We will hope for the best.

The two young men offered to accompany Pancratius, who rose to leave, and see him safe through the poor and profligate neighbourhood. He accepted their courtesy with pleasure, and bade the old excavator a hearty good night.

CHAPTER II.

king part in general affairs. Her commenced. bouse, besides being, or rather containing a title or parochial church. was now honored by being the resiapproach of a violent persecution, in which the rulers of Christ's spiritual kingdom were sure to be the first sought out, as the enemies of Casar, rendered it necessary to transfer the ing pontificate, when the wild beasts were ordered to be transferred to it, that Pope Marcellus might feed them scon caused his death.

sick and poor of her own sex, the making, and keeping in order of sacred vestments and linen for the altar, and the instruction of female converts preparing for baptism, as well as the attending them at that sacred rite, belonged to the desconnesses, and gave sufficient occupation in addition to domestic offices. In the exercise of both these classes of duties. Lucina quietly passed her life. Its main object seemed to be attained. Her son had offered himself to God; and lived ready to shed his blood for the faith. To watch over him, and

Early in the morning of the ap-scientific and minute examination, dead in Christ.

in our last chapter took place. It will be sufficient to say, that in it full instructions were given for increasing the collection of aims, to be employed in enlarging the cometeries and burying the dead, in succouring those driven to concealment by persecution, in mourishing prisoners. and obtaining access to them, and finally in ransoming or rescuing the bodies of martire. A notary was named for each region, to collect their acts and record interesting events. The cardinals, or titular priests, received instructions about the administration of sacraments, particularly of the Holy Eucharist, during the persecution; and to each was intrusted one consetery or more, in whose subterranean church he was to perform the sacred mysteries. The boly Portiff chose for himself that of Callistus, which made Diogenes, its chief sexton, not a little, but innocently, proud.

The good old excavator seemed rather more cheery than otherwise, under the exciting forebodings of coming persecution. No commanding officer of engineers could have given his orders mose briskly, or more decity committed to his skill to grand, than he issued his to the subordinate superintendents of the vasious cometeries round Rome, who met him by appointment at his own house, to learn the instructions of the superior assombly. The shadow of the sundial at the Ports Cappens was pointing to mid-day, as he issued from it with his sons and found already waiting the three young men. They walked in parties of two along the Applian road; and at nearly three miles from the gate, they entered by various ways (slipping round different tombs that lined the road) into the same villa on the right-hand Here they found all the requisites for a descent into the subterranean comotories, such as candles, lanterns, and the instruments for procuring light. Severus proposed that, as the guides and the strangers were in equal number, they should be divided into pairs, and in the division he allotted Torquatus to himself. What his reason was we may easily con-

the whole matter of these into a more connected parrative. And besides, they will wish to know something of the subsequent history of its narrow cell, the front was herthose wonderful excavations, into metically closed either by a marble ful pilorims.

The history of the early Christian cometeries, the catscombs as they It seems to us as though we had are commonly called, may be divided neglected one, whose character and into three portions, from their beginthoughts opened this little history, ning to the period of our narrative, the pious Lucina. Her virtues were or a few years later, from this term indeed of that quiet, unobtrusive as to the eighth century, then down to ture, which affords little scope for our own time, when we have reason appearing on a public scene, or take to hope that a new epoch is being but by far the greater number of

the name of catacombs, because it might mislead our readers into an dence of the supreme Pontiff. The idea that this was either the original or a generic name of those early Christian crypts. It is not so, however. Rome might be said to be surrounded by a circumvallation, of cemeteries, sixty or thereabouts in residence of the ruler of the Church, number, each of which was generally from his ordinary dwelling, to a secknown by the name of some saint or curer asylum. For this purpose saints whose bodies reposed there. Lucina's house was chosen; and it Thus we have the cemeteries of SS. continued to be so occupied, to her Nereus and Achilleus, of St. Agnes, great delight, in that and the follow- of St. Pancratius, of Presentatus, of Priscilla, Hermes, &c. Sometimes these cemeteries were known by the chere. As St. Paul so often pronames of the places where they exisat home. This loathsome punishment | ted. The cemetery of St. Sebestian, surrection, and speaks of our being which was called sometimes Come-Lucina admitted, at forty, into the terium ad Sanctam Coefficient, and natural for His disciples to wish to order of deaconnesses, found plenty by other names, had among them be builed after His example, so to of occupation in the duties of her of- that of ad Catacumbas. The meaning be ready to rise with Him. fice. The charge and supervision of of this word is completely unknown; the women in church, the care of the though it may be attributed to the was the second thought that guided circumstance of the relics of SS. Peter and Paul having been for a Every expression connected with time buried there, in a crypt still ex- them alluded to the rising again. isting near the cemetery. This term The word to bury is unknown in became the name of that particular Christian Inscriptions. Deposited cemetery, then was generalised, till in peace, the deposition ofwe familiarly call the whole system of the expressions used: that is, the

Their origin was, in the last centur till called for again, as a pledge, or ry, a subject of controversy. Follow- precious thing, intrusted to islithful, ing two or three vague and equivocal but temporary, keeping. The very passages, some learned writers pro name of cemetery suggests that it nounced the catacombs to have been is only a place where many lie, as in originally heathen exceptions, made 2 dormitory, slumbering for a while: to extract sand, for the building of till dawn come, and the trumpet's pray for him, were her delight, the city. These sand-pits were called sound awake them. Hence the grave rather than an additional employ arenaris, and so occasionally are the is only called 'the place,' or more Christian cometeries. But a more technically, the small home, of the

pointed day, the meeting mentioned | particularly made by the accurate F. Marchi, has completely confused this theory. The entrance to the catacombs was often, as can ret be seen, from these sand-pits, which doubt were a convenient cover for the cometery; but several circumstances prove that they were never used for Christian buriel, nor conver- Christians. tod into Christian perseberies.

The man who wishes to got the the categories themselves, of their porty the thousand adjusted a sand out of the ground will keep his easy origin. The style of paintings, expansion as near the surface as als: and will make it as ample as is consistent with the safety of the roof. still abounding round Rome. But the catacombs are constructed on principles exactly contrary to all

The catacomb dives at once, gen erally by a stoop flight of stops, below the stratum of loose and frieble sand into that where it is indurated to the bardness of a tender, but consistent rock; on the surface of which every stroke of the pick-axe is yet distinctly traccable. When you have reached this depth you are in the first story of the cometery. for you descend amain by stairs, to the second and third below, all construc-

ted on the same principle. A catacomb may be divided into three parts, its passages or streets, its chambers or squares, and its churches. The passages are long, narrow galleries, out with tolerable regularity, so that the roof and floor are at right angles with the sides, often so narrow as sourcely to allow two persons to go abreast. They somelines run quite straight to a great length, but they are crossed by others, and these scale by others so as to form a complete labyristh. or net-work, of subterranean coeri dors. To be lost among them would casily be fatal.

But these passages are not contructed, as the name would imply merely to lead to something also They are themselves the catacomb or cometery. Their walls, as well as the sides of the stairceses, are homey combed with graves, that is, with rows of excavations, large and small It would probably weary our read- of sufficient length to admit a human ers to follow the whole conversation body, from a child to a full-grown of the barty. Diogenes not only man, laid with its aids to the galiney answered all questions put to him, but Sometimes there are as many as four from time to time, gave intelligent teen, sometimes as few as three or little lectures on such objects as he four, of these rows, one above the considered peculiarly attractive. But other. They are evidently so made we bolleve we shall better interest to measure, that it is probable the and inform our friends, if we digest body was lying by the side of the grave, while this was being dug.

When the corpse, wrapped up, a we heard from Diogenes, was laid in which we have conducted our youth- or more frequently by several broad tiles, put edgeways in a groove or mortice, cut for them in the rock, and comented all round. The inscription was cut upon the marble. or scratched in the wet morter Thousands of the former sort have been collected, and may be seen in museums and churches; many of the latter have been copied and published toenby are anonymous, and have no We have generally avoided using record upon them. And now the reader may reasonably ask, through what period does the interment in catacomberange, and how are its limitatietermined. We will try to

content him, as briefly as possible. There is no evidence of the Christians having ever buried anywhere. anterlorly to the construction of catacorabs. Two principles as old se Christianity regulate this mode of burial. The first is, the manner of Christ's entombment. He was laid in a grave in a cavern, wrapped up in liners, embalmed with spices, and a stone, seeled up, closed his sepulposes. Him for the model of our reburied with Him in baptism, it was

This lying in wait for resurrection the formation of these cometeries. these excevations—the Catacombs. | dead are but left there for a time.

These two ideas, which are comthe Christian system, but must have who died in 394, reverently-d been maper wivid in its carrier times. In he half we to the most with the are thomselves underground, and no They impired abborrance of the from mirroling take the concess pages coutons of burning the deed; the minter nor have we a hint that this mode Beetlestus therefore mid was at my time, adopted by the cons

possible, will have it of certain pos- of still sourishing art. Their was in the Lord and are it ille sentil tible access, for drawing out materi- bols, and the symbolical tests itself. are characterastic of a very ancient period. For this peculiar tests and the supply of what he is seeking. declined as time went on. Although had all this we find in the arconaria inscrimtions with dates are rare jet but Astrollos beautout not to toro about to be published, by the learned and sagretous Caralter De Bent about three hundred are found beering commise dates, through every period, from the early emperous to themiddle of the fourth our tury (4.5). 200). Another our out and detect esting quitom furnishes us with daise on tombe. At the closing of the grave, the relations or friends, to mark it, would prose into its wet platter, and leave there a coin, a cames, or engraved year, acceptings even a shell or public probably that they might find the sepulchre again, cenesially where no inscription was left. Many of these objects continue to be found, many have been louge collected. But it is not smoothern. where the coin, or, to speak added tifically, the model, has fallen from its place, to find a mould of it left. distinct and clear in the commitwhich equally gives its date. This is sometimes of Domities, or other early emperors.

It may be asked, wherefore this anxiety to rediscover with cartabate the tomb? Besides motives of natural plety, there is one constantly recorded on sepulchral inscriptions. In England, if want of space petronted the full date of a person's dauth being given, we should freise chromioling the year, to the day the month, when it occurred. It is more bistorical. No one cares about rembering the day on which a person died, without the year; but the year, without the day, is an important recollection. Yet while so few antique year of people's deaths, thou give we the very day of it, on which they died, whether in the hepardness of believers, or hi the sentrance of martyrs. This is easily explained. Of both siness supual company tion had to be made, on the very de of their departure; and hoperate knowledge of this was necessary.

Therefore it alone was recorded. In m commetery close to the one i which we have left our three youths: with Diogenes and his sons, were lately found inscriptions minused together, belonging to both orders of the dead. One in Greek, after mentioning the Deposition of Augustian on the 18th day before the Calenda. or lat of June, adds this simple ad-

Live in the Lord, and prayform. Another fragment is as follows: . Mones of June ... Live in peace and pray for us.

This is a third: Wistorias be retrosped, and mag the spirit be in enjoyment

(Good) This last reminds us of a mos peculiar inscription found sorstched in the mortar beside a grave in the cemetery of Prestexistus, not many yards from that of Californs. It is remarkable, first, for being in Letin written in Greek leters; then for containing a testimony of the Divinity of our Lord; legily, for expressing a prayer for the refreshment of the departed. We fill up the portions of words wanting, from the falling out of part of the plasters

To the well deserving sister Bon .The sighth day before the calend of Nov. Christ God Almighty refresh thy spirit in Christ."

in spite of this digression on prayers inscribed over tembs, the resder will not, we trust, have forcotten, that we were establishing the fact, that the Christian cometeries of Rome owe their origin to the earliest ages. We have now to state down to what period they were used. Alter peace was restored to the Church, the devotion of Christians prompted them to desire burial near the martyrs, and hely people of an earlies of Tours, damens the age. But, generally speaking they become in the saddent were matisfied to lie under the pawement. Hence the sepulchral stones. which are often found in the rubbish of the categories, and sometimes in their places, bearing consular dates of the fourth century, are thicker, larger, better carved, and in a less simple style, than those of an earlier period, placed upon the walls. But emparer closed the before the end of that century, there

bined in the planning of the cate-combs, were not later insertions into following, at launce

the early Christians, and delicities But amples proof is to be found in their own evolution work and an ample The state of the s put remaining belongs to a period simplerant enhancement with The control of the same of the

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