

**MONUMENTS OF EARLY
CHRISTIAN ART,
SCULPTURES AND
CATACOMB PAINTINGS**

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Monuments of early Christian art, sculptures and catacomb paintings by J. W. Appell

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J. W. APPELL

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EARLY CHRISTIAN ART.

SCULPTURES AND CATACOMB PAINTINGS.

ILLUSTRATIVE NOTES,

COLLECTED IN ORDER TO PROMOTE THE REPRODUCTION OF REMAINS
OF ART BELONGING TO THE EARLY CENTURIES
OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA.

By J. W. APPELL, PH. D.,

AN ASSISTANT KEEPER IN THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM.

UNDER REVISION.



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(These illustrations, some of which have the recommendation of being new to the English public, have with much care been drawn on wood by Mr. Andrew Reid.)

NOTES ON MONUMENTS OF EARLY CHRISTIAN ART.

SCULPTURES AND CATACOMB PAINTINGS.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE spring of Christian art must be traced to the Catacombs, more especially the Catacombs of the Eternal City—those far-stretching and labyrinthic under-ground passages or galleries, interspersed with chambers in various forms, where the followers of the new faith buried their dead. From the cemeteries of *subterranean Rome* the most numerous remains of the early centuries of our era bearing Christian emblems and inscriptions, or representing Christian subjects, have been brought to light; and in beholding their half-obliterated wall-paintings, we may still form a distinct idea how the Christian element was first introduced into art.

It was at the close of the sixteenth century, after ages of neglect, that the explorations of this gloomy and mysterious city of the dead were eagerly set on foot. Vast discoveries were made at that time, and great must have been the emotion felt by the explorers,—amongst whom ranks foremost the indefatigable Antonio Bosio, who left us the first description of the Catacombs, published after his death, under the title of "*Roma Sotterranea*" (1632). The sides and roofs of the sepulchral recesses were then found to be covered with a great variety of paintings. And besides the thousands of inscriptions, in Latin and Greek, and also some sculptured sarcophagi, innumerable objects of various descriptions were discovered in and near the resting-places of early Christians,—small terra-cotta and bronze lamps, exhibiting the monogram of Christ and Christian symbols, glass vessels and fragments of glass, with figures in gold leaf, vases of terra-cotta and other material, unguent boxes, gems, glass pastes, medals, rings, fibulae, and other personal ornaments, various utensils (which, in some instances, have been too readily

taken for instruments of torture), and even little ivory dolls and other playthings upon the spots where children had been buried. Unfortunately, however, a great many of the most curious objects fell into private hands, and were afterwards lost to the world, among them such as are particularly noticed by Bosio, Aringhi, Boldetti, and Bottari; and the relics of primitive Christianity we now see in museums and churches at Rome are therefore only to be considered as a small portion of the Catacomb treasures.

In our own time much has been done to throw fresh light upon the Christian monuments of the first centuries, the attention of archæologists having been again strongly directed to the history of the Catacombs. Under the auspices of Pius the Ninth, and mainly under the direction of the well-known investigator of subterranean Rome, Giovanni Battista de' Rossi, new excavations have been carried on, which have led to important results, the most important, in fact, since the days of Bosio. The Christian Museum in the Lateran Palace has likewise been founded by Pope Pius the Ninth (1854), and this collection, systematically arranged by the late Father Giuseppe Marchi, forms now a centre of "sacred antiquities" to which we have first to turn in order to study the characteristics of early Christian art. It contains the most complete series of Christian sculptures; for those have been removed to it which were formerly in the Vatican.

Before the opening of the Lateran collection the Christian Museum at the Vatican was the only one of the kind. This museum was founded by Pope Benedict the Fourteenth in 1756, and the Christian antiquities brought together by Francesco Vettori, Filippo Buonarruoti, Cardinal Carpegna were incorporated in it; although now devoid of its sculptures, it is still rich in objects of the highest interest, for the greatest part excavated from the Catacombs. Other collections in Rome, containing monuments and remains of the early Christian ages, are:—the Kircherian Museum of the Collegio Romano, where a room is entirely dedicated to them, the "Custodia" of Relics in the Apollinare College, the Borgan Museum of the College of the Propaganda, and the Museum of the Capitol.

It is proposed in the following pages to give brief notices—1st. Of early Christian Sculptures, which are to be found not only in the collections mentioned above, and in ecclesiastical buildings of Rome, but also in other Italian cities,

and on this side of the Alps. 2nd. Of the more curious Catacomb paintings. In this account, or rather catalogue, many deficiencies must necessarily be met with; for, to attain completeness, personal inspection of the monuments scattered through churches and museums of Italy, France, and other countries would be indispensable, not to speak of visits to the Catacombs. No pains, however, have been spared to gather information from all accessible sources, and as there exists no other catalogue of these relics, it is hoped that the present one, even in its imperfect state, may be found of some use to students.
