

CHAPEL OF "QUO VADIS?"

Site of Christ's Latest Apparition to Peter in Rome.

SHRINES MARK TWO SPOTS AS THE SCENE

Dr. Croke Discusses the Origin of the Legend Which is Attributed to the Second Century.

ROME, May 11.—Dr. William J. D. Croke, a member of the British and American Archaeological society of Rome delivered a lecture recently on the chapel known as the "Domine Quo Vadis" supposed to mark the traditional spot where the Saviour appeared to St. Peter as he fled from Rome along the Appian Way (A. D. 66).

Just as has been the work of illustrating the sites of the Eternal City little or nothing seems to have been done in the case of this chapel and the legend from which it originated. The ground bearing the name of Quo Vadis has hardly a written history; scarcely more than a legend.

When the literary fictions and legends which compose the history of the Quo Vadis site is gathered one is moved by a regret and a surprise. The regret is that, contrary to the laws governing the life of legend, this of the Quo Vadis plunges into an obscurity of literary reminiscence. It has of its own little or no documentation

mention of the Acts of Paul. The counter-plea is that Hegesippus connects the phrase, "I must be crucified again," with St. Peter.

Hegesippus was in Rome long before Origen was born, as he lived under Pope Anicetus (105-126) and Pope Eleutherius (174-189), and he had found Christian belief overcrowded by the Gnostic theories and in the idea that the unerring tradition of the apostolic preaching would be manifested everywhere by the succession of bishops, and especially at Rome. He would be a most apt and credible witness, who could not have been interested in the local memories of St. Peter, and through him we should get the legend at a point removed only 100 years from the death of St. Peter and St. Paul. But the legend of the Quo Vadis is given for the first time by St. Ambrose somewhere about the year 400, and probably it is only a transmutation from Flavivus Josephus.

On the whole it seems as if the attribution of the vision to St. Peter were a usurpation of the Acts Paul, although the episode is attributed to St. Peter in St. Ambrose's account, it is told in a narrative of the passion of both apostles. The records of the great apostles were so interwoven, and their memories, too, that the ascription to St. Peter of an incident in St. Paul's life is far from surprising.

The acts on which Origen relied were put in circulation at some not precisely known date, between the years 150 and 170. So were the acts of Peter. Origen only equals in time the compilation of these narratives. The scriptural origin for the story makes the Pauline version impossi-

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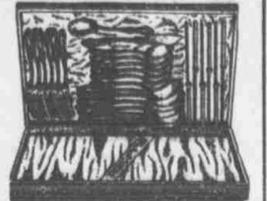
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CHAPEL "DOMINE QUO VADIS" AND ENGLISH SHRINE IN BACKGROUND.

of a literary kind after that which the age of the fathers gave it, though there is sufficient evidence of its intense popularity among the pilgrims who from all parts of the world thronged Rome during the medieval era. On the other hand, and here again by a reversion of the common laws of legendary, if the actual beginning of the story be obscure it has early and serious attestors.

The total silence shrouding both the event and the beginnings of the story may be assumed to be fair evidence for attributing its origin to the growth, or some nameless artificers of crowd myths. There can be no doubt that it is another of the cases, abounding in the first centuries of Christianity, of the imagination working on the scriptures.

The formation of the story may be connected with second century musing on the sixteenth chapter, and two other parts of the gospel of St. John. In the sixteenth chapter the Lord has held his last discourse with the disciples. "But these things I have told you, that when the hour of them shall come, you may remember that I told you. But I told you not those things from the beginning, because I was with you. And now I go to Him that sent me, and none of you asketh me: Whither goest thou? (Quo Vadis?)"

Then there is the sudden apparition in the twenty-first chapter of St. John's gospel, and to the spirit of those chapters which affect the special relations of Peter with Jesus and touch upon the fisherman's ardent and impetuous nature, the idea breathing in the legend of the Quo Vadis answers in very marked and full, assuredly not casual, correspondence. Then again in the thirteenth chapter, thirty-sixth verse, we read: "Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterward."

The legend is substantially as follows: St. Peter leaves under friendly companionship from his jailers, identified as Saints Processus and Martinianus, and from his flock. "So he bade them farewell, and blessed the brethren, and started off alone to seek safety without the walls."

"And when he had scarcely passed the city gates he saw Christ coming to him, and he fell down and worshiped him, and said to him, 'Lord, whither goest thou?' And Christ said to him, 'I come to Rome to be crucified once more.' And Peter said to him, 'Lord, wilt thou be crucified afresh?' And the Lord said to him, 'Yes, I shall be crucified afresh.' And Peter said, 'I will turn back and follow thee.'"

"And when he had so spoken, the Lord ascended into heaven. And Peter followed him with longing eyes, and sweet tears, and then, when he had come to himself, he understood that it was spoken of his own passion, for so he, the Lord, does suffer in all the chosen by the compassion of his mercy—and the power of his glory. And Peter turned back and went into the city with joy, glorifying God and telling the brethren how that he, Jesus, was in him about to be crucified again."

Among the vouchers that the story has in its behalf there is Origen (born A. D. 185), who in the long drawn reasoning of his commentaries on the Fourth Gospel had occasion to collect from St. Paul, for purposes of comparison, various texts about a crucifixion of Christ, again through lapses after illumination received, and a re-creation of self with Christ through atonement. In the midst of these texts he says: "And if we admit what is written in the Acts of St. Paul, as something said by the Saviour, 'I must be crucified again,' just as one admits this, 'I must be crucified again after the coming,' so also before the coming one must admit that there is occasion to allow this when there is the same cause for saying 'I must be crucified.'"

It has been argued that the name of Peter should be substituted for that of Paul in the text of Origen at the title of the Acts, but the modification has been refused on the plea that Origen had already made

ble, while the acts of Peter put the start of its documented history at a point 100 years after the death of St. Peter, as if this apostle's name, and not St. Paul's, occurred in the text of Origen.

The next set of witnesses is composed of St. Ambrose, St. Gregory, and the acts of Sts. Processus and Martinianus. The story is also in the spurious acts of the Passion of St. Peter, professing to be from the pen of his successor, St. Linus, which were perhaps once genuine, but were corrupted subsequently by Manichaeans.

The story given by St. Ambrose serves to perpetuate the irrelevant matter of the precise time when St. Peter fled from Rome. The account given by St. Gregory is altogether favorable to St. Peter and no reproach is implied to the apostle for forsaking Rome.

The respect with which the legend was received during the post-apostolic and papal periods, supports the explanation drawn from sacred writ, and the story seems to have been passed down as if it had been devised at a very early date. As regards the medieval and subsequent transmission of the story, a search through the works dealing with the subject fails to reveal that it is older than the sixteenth century.

There is a book of the indulgences attached to the churches of Rome dating from 1411 which mentions it. The site is very much better remembered than the shrine, and this bears other names, one of which, Sancta Maria de Palmis—St. Mary of the Palms—connected it with the trophies of Christian martyrs at the gate of the city walls.



IMPRESSION OF DIVINE FEET LEFT ON ONE OF THE STONES OF APPIAN WAY.

Besides the chapel or shrine generally known as "Domine Quo Vadis," there is a small round shrine bearing the name of Cardinal Pius, containing the literature of those two shrines one is inclined to believe that the English chapel, as the round building is called, may be on the site indicated by the primitive traditionary story and not that now identified as such.

Such a suspicion is abetted by an engraving of about the year 1550 reproduced in the "Acta Sanctorum." It is described in the picture of Sancta Maria de Plantia, or of the footprints.

The larger shrine is circular, with a domed roof and a circular window over the entrance. In short, it resembles the chapel ascribed to Cardinal Pius, and not the other. Of course, the other was restored later in the sixteenth century, and more than once. The surviving circular chapel is supposed to have been built by Cardinal Pius, because the other was threatened with ruin. This explanation is imaginative, as the best way to save an historic edifice on a memorial site is obviously not to erect another on a different spot.



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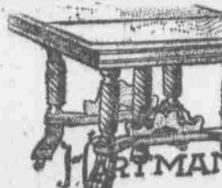


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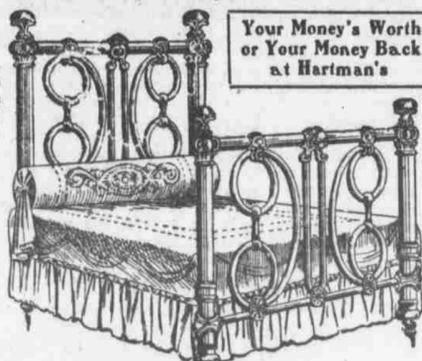


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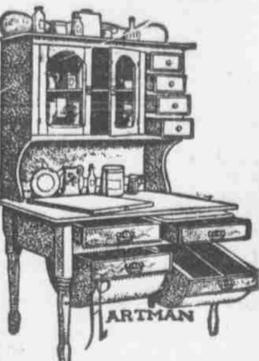


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