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M. 29

ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY IN ITALY IN 1921

By GUIDO CALZA



THE LIBRARY IN DR. GENNADIUS' LONDON RESIDENCE.

"A" presents the south side of the room with Dr. Gennadius' working table and chair in front, the card catalogue cabinets on each side of the table and on these the dust-tight cases containing some of the old artistic and historic bindings of the Collection.

TWO great events have characterized the life of Artistic and Archaeological Italy during the past year, two events of world-wide importance and extraordinary character that place the year 1921 among the most fortunate for Art and Archaeology. They are: the restoration of the monuments that record Dante, and the restitution of the Italian artistic treasures still held by Austria. Whoever wishes to balance the artistic and archaeological books of the past year must begin by taking these two events into account. Italy thought it not enough to revise the various critical editions of the Divine Poem and of all Dante's works; that the official ceremonies and the Dante commemorations, and the concerts and the beautiful cinematograph that reproduces the most notable events of the poet's life with exquisite artistic sense, were not enough. Italy, just come out of the great war stronger and greater, wished to prove her new spirit of wisdom by celebrating the sixth centenary of her greatest poet with enduring works of peace after all the clash and clamor of war.

DANTE

Therefore the attention of the *Direzione Generale delle Antichità e Belle Arti* was turned to the restoration of monuments mentioned in the "Divine Comedy" as having some connection with the life of the poet.

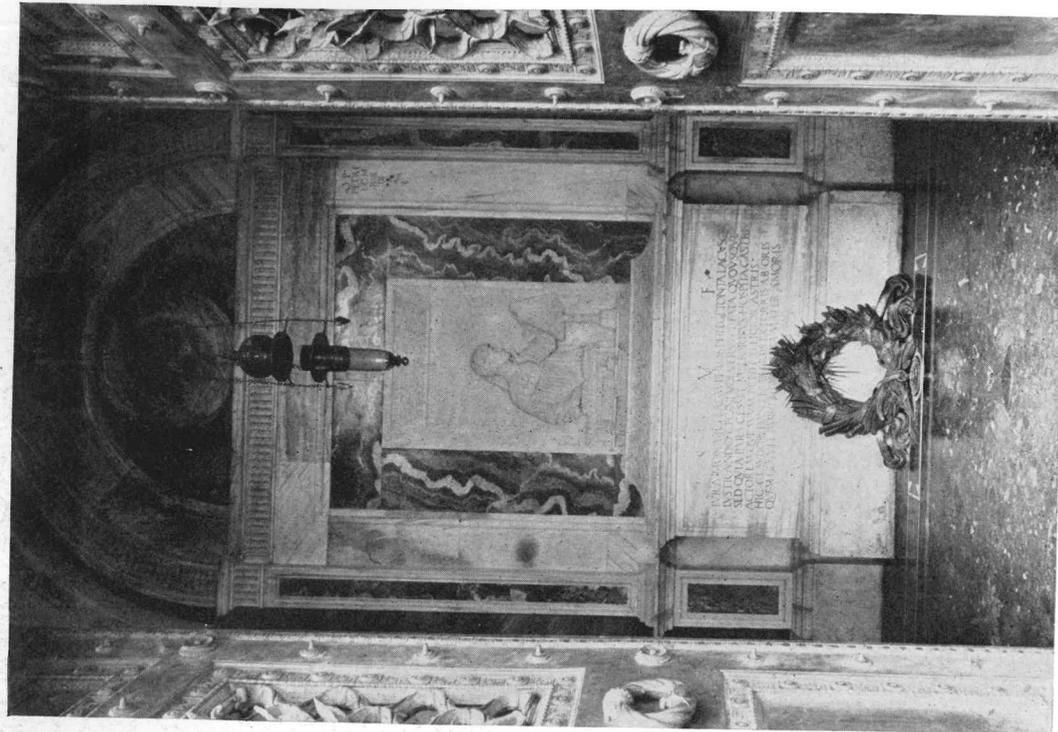
RAVENNA

At Ravenna, the city that holds the sacred bones of Dante in custody, the church of San Giovanni Evangelista has been restored, which, founded

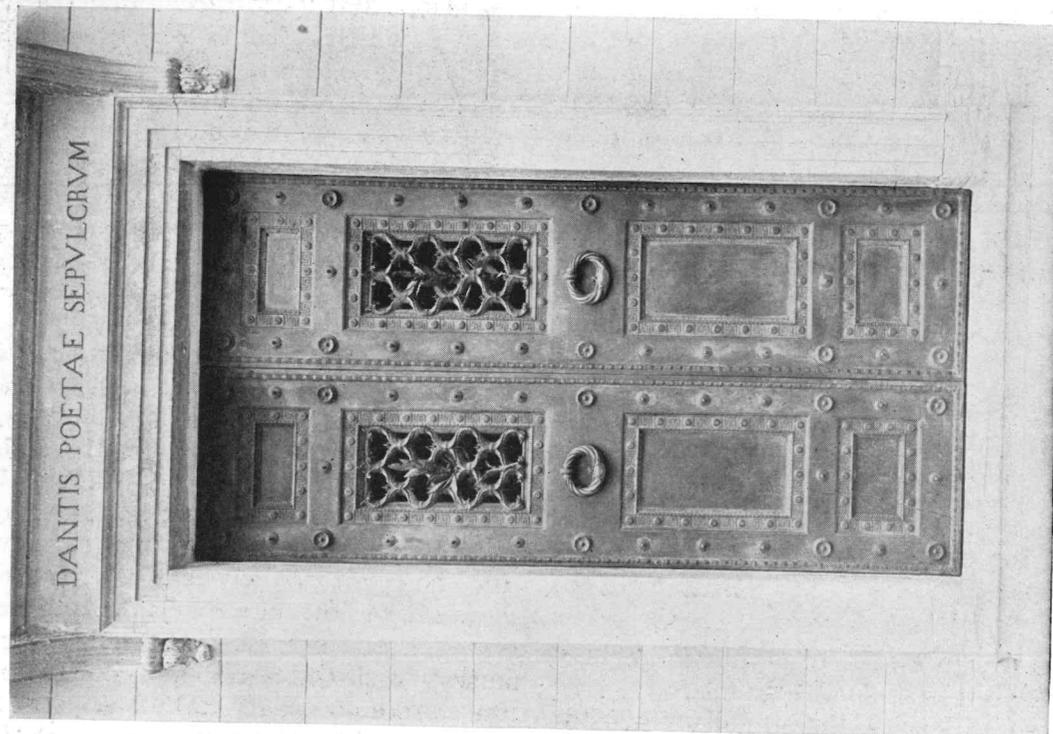
about the year 424 by Galla Placidia, had been altered and debased by Baroque remodeling. But now the beautiful apse with its open gallery has returned to the light; the Gothic Chapel has been reopened, its frescoes cleaned and the quadriportico isolated, giving the history of this church, which shows the earliest example of the apsidal gallery and of the apse covered with a flat roof—two new and very interesting architectural problems. And also, restorations in San Francesco di Ravennà, the church of Dante's funeral, have given it the basilican form once more, while preserving that architectural harmony with which ages of glorious art had endowed it. The quadrifori in the Campanile have been reopened and the cornice made over, beneath which gleam the beautiful majolica. The interim of the mediaeval basilica reappears almost intact, since the stucco has been removed, and the stairs leading to the crypt and to the presbytery reconstructed.

The Polentana Chapel, which contains the tombs of Dante's hosts, has been restored with the aid of documents; and, while removing a wall, paintings by Giotto were discovered, which, now that they have been cleaned and re-touched again after many ages, show the portrait of the poet. This church, restored in this way, even if not identical with the one that Dante saw, corresponds in simplicity and dignity with the spirit of the poet. Nor could the worthy adornment of Dante's tomb be neglected; for, with the miserable, hideous eighteenth-century construction that defaced it, it had appeared unworthy of the great poet. Now,

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Ravenna: Interior of Dante's Tomb.



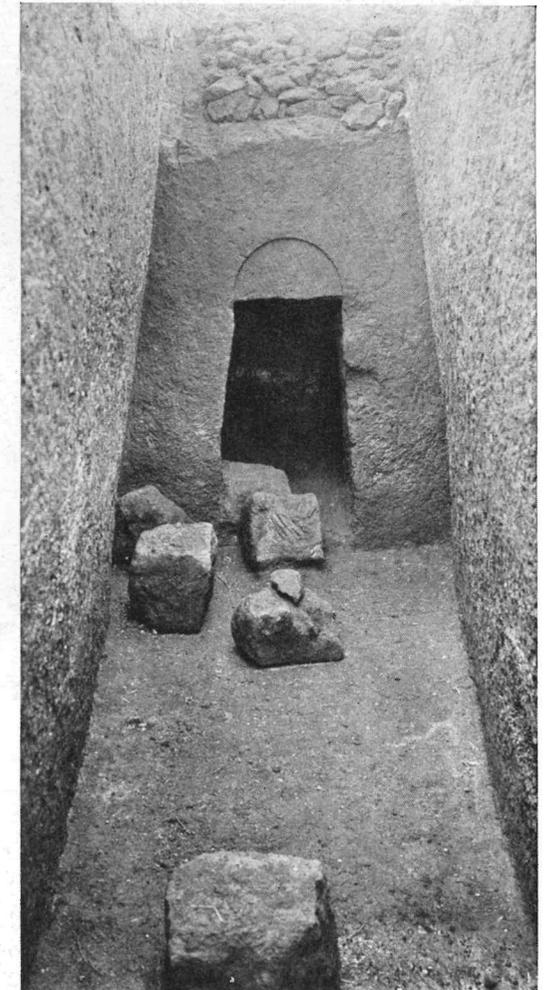
Ravenna: Dante's Tomb. The new bronze doors (given by the Commune of Rome).

instead, the austere polychrome marble facing and the beautiful bronze doors, the gift of the Commune of Rome, and the one votive wreath in bronze and silver, the work of the sculptor Poliaghi, which the Italian army placed on the sarcophagus, make this tomb a sanctuary worthy of our great national poet.

FLORENCE

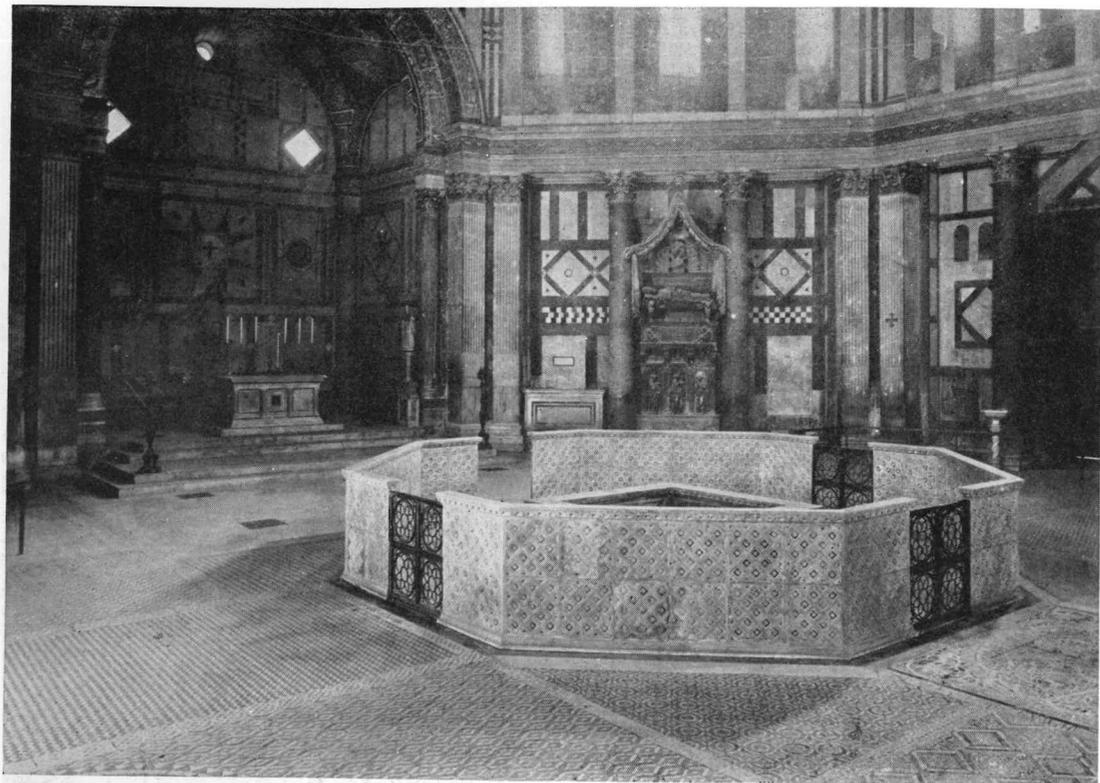
In Dante's native city, Florence, the first thought has been to restore the baptismal font in San Giovanni, not only because the poet mentions it in his poem, but because he himself received Christian baptism there. But alas! Almost nothing of the ancient font still remained, for it was destroyed at the end of the XVI century by the Grand Duke Francis, and the marbles that decorated it lost or used elsewhere. Yet it has been possible, with the aid of an old drawing and of several fragments, to make a very successful reconstruction. And the important restorations in the Church of Santa Croce have been hastened; the stained glass window of the "Deposition from the Cross" attributed to Giovanni di Marco, has been replaced in the façade and the Castellani Chapel cleaned, giving us some hitherto unknown but very important frescoes that may be attributed to pupils of Giotto: the figures of the four evangelists and the doctors on the vaulting, and, on the walls, eight large narrative paintings with other smaller ones. Various restorations have also been made in Santo Stefano del Popolo, belonging to the Badia, which Dante mentions in his poem, but which is especially celebrated because Giovanni Boccaccio began to read the cantos of the "Divine Comedy" in public there.

Moreover, the Frescobaldi Palace has again acquired its ancient aspect; it is



Etruscan Tomb of the VI Century B. C., with long dromos. Recent excavations at Monte Maria near Rome.

famous for having offered the hospitality of its walls to Charles de Valois, who came to Florence in the name of Boniface VIII and whose labors brought about Dante's unmerited exile. It must, then, have been at the height of splendor in Dante's time; and, in fact, since the more recent plaster has been scraped off, the older and better preserved parts of the exterior walls may be seen with the outlines of the primitive windows. So that this palace, which stands at the corner of one of the



Florence: Baptismal font in San Giovanni, after its restoration.

most suggestive streets of old Florence, has again acquired the severe character of the XIII century just as Dante saw it. Nor has the Torre della Castagna, only a few steps from the house of the Alighieri and from Dante's parish church been neglected, nor the Torre degli Amidei, famous for the tragedy of the Buondelmonte from which arose the fratricidal struggle between Guelf and Ghibelline; nor the church of Santa Maria dei Ricci, celebrated for having been Dante's parish church, which freed from the disfiguring plaster has again taken on its primitive form, and contains the altar of the Portinari family with their coats of arms and two little bronze doors of the XIII century: these have each and all been restored.

ARCETRI, ROMENA, SANZODENZO

Not only Florence and Ravenna have again acquired a little of their characteristic XIII century aspect by means of the restoration of their most famous monuments, but, in many parts of Italy, all the buildings more or less directly connected with the most noteworthy events of Dante's life have been made the object of intelligent care. And so the Church of San Leonardo at Arcetri, an humble little country church built after the year 1000, and the famous castle at Romena, rich in historical memories, which stands on the right bank of the Arno, and at Sanzodenzio, the church that sheltered Dante and the Florentine exiles in 1302, have once more the appearance, the decorations, the life they had during that epoch. In the Province of Rome,



Florence: Frescoes of the Castellani Chapel in the Church of Santa Croce.

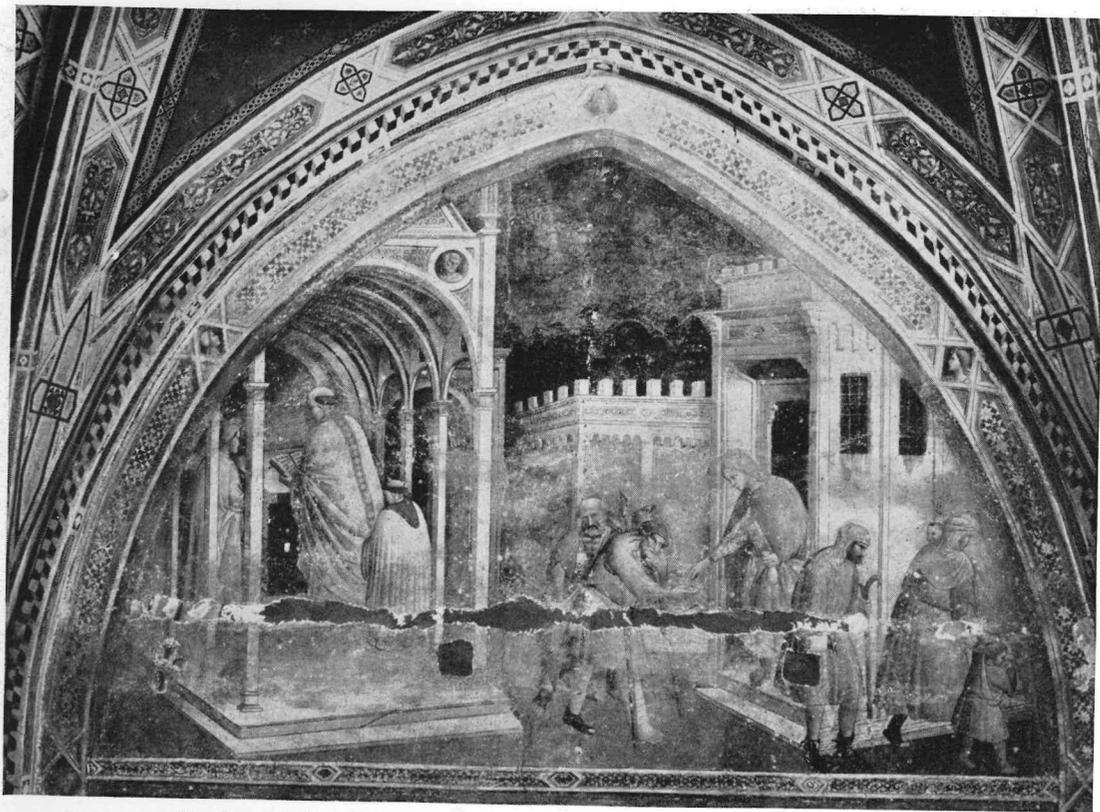
Anagni, the home and favorite residence of Boniface VIII possesses many vivid souvenirs of the age of Dante. Therefore the Cistercian Monastery with its large halls and decorative frescoes of the early XIV century, which must have been the palace of Boniface, has been restored, as well as the palace of the Caetani family, where the Pope submitted to the famous insult from Sciarra Colonna.

RESTITUTION BY AUSTRIA

The second great artistic event in Italy was the restitution of the objects from excavations and of the art treasures which Austria had seized and carried off at various times. It is necessary to

say at once that both Austria and Italy have conducted themselves in this affair with a tact and good taste worthy of cultured nations. Italy has insisted ever since 1859 and 1866 on her right to these artistic treasures, which Austria had already promised to give back many years ago. For example: the celebrated tapestries by Raphael belonging to the Gonzaga of Mantua, which were taken to Vienna in 1866 under oath to return them after war, have now come back to their original frames in the magnificent Mantuan Palace of the Gonzaga.

At the same time as these, the sumptuous robes worn by Napoleon I at his coronation as King of Italy, the tunic,



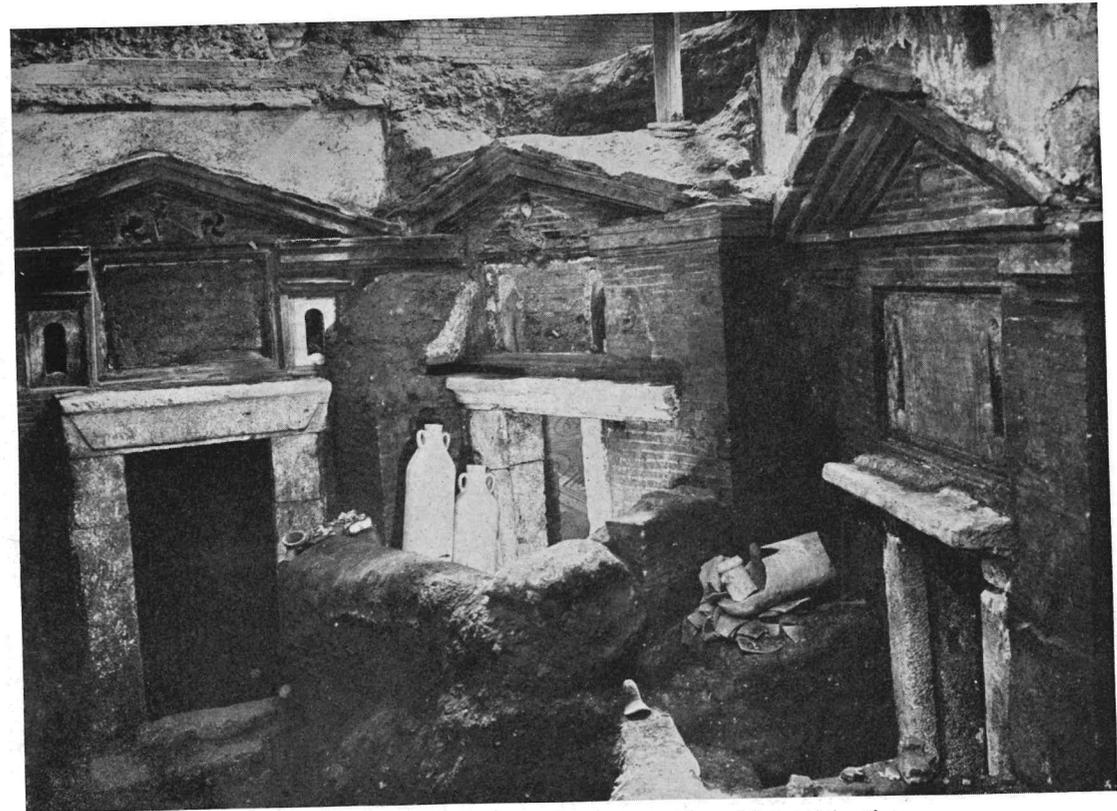
Florence: Frescoes of the Castellani Chapel in the Church of Santa Croce.

mantle, sceptre and decorations have returned to form part of the artistic patrimony of Italy, as well as the Byzantine reliquary of Cardinal Besarione, the famous painting of Pirano by Vivarini, the ivory casket from the Duomo at Pirano, archaeological material from Aquileia, illuminated codices taken from convents in the Trentino and the Alto Adige, six priceless musical codices that belonged to the Duomo at Trent, and 3200 objects excavated in the prehistoric necropolis of the Venezia Giulia.

The most valuable of these objects of art are perhaps the bronze medallions representing the Labors of Hercules, the work of Bonacolsi detto l'Antico (XV cent.); on one of them the hero is shown tearing the Nemean lion to

pieces and killing the hydra of Lerna. Yet the most priceless is the delicate bronze by Donatello, "Love breaking his bow," one of the masterpieces of the great Florentine sculptor of the Quattrocento, which was taken from the Ducal Palace at Modena. It would seem that this bronze symbolizes the Renaissance breaking the bonds of the Middle Ages.

However noteworthy the restitution of these objects may be, on account of their actual value and on account of the affection we feel for the memorials of our forefathers, their disappearance from the rich collections of Vienna does not mean impoverishment, for the Viennese museums and galleries still possess a very large number of masterpieces. Their restitution has served, instead, to



Rome: Three tombs excavated near the Basilica of Saint Sebastian.

solve every controversy with the government of Vienna and is an act of probity that stills the rancor of past years.

These exiles, that have returned to their native land after so many years, these last redeemed prisoners that have obtained their liberty—in a word, all these treasures of art are soon to be re-united at Rome in a splendid exposition in Palazzo Venezia. This exhibition will be the acknowledgment of our sacred right and of our fervid love for our artistic patrimonium.

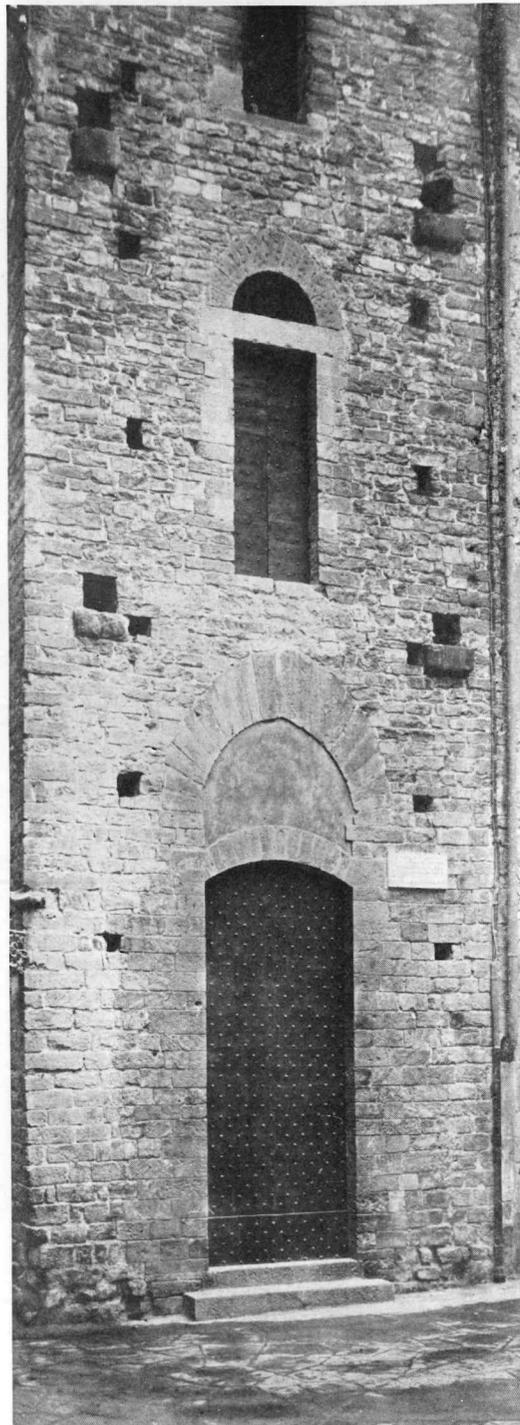
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AND DISCOVERIES

Moreover, the work done in the archaeological excavations and the discoveries made, have not been less important than in other years.

ROME

The demolition of Palazzo Caffarelli at Rome has made it possible to study more carefully the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitol. The southeast angle of the basement has been unearthed to a depth of over six meters; but all the other parts of the temple have disappeared, owing to the crumbling and falling of the tufa blocks. An interesting Jewish catacomb belonging to the lower class and dating from the II and III century of the Christian Era has been discovered beneath the Villa Torlonia on the via Nomentana. While on the via Salaria, the cemetery of Pamphilus has come to light, part of which had been visited in 1534. Especially notable is the discovery of two unexplored galleries,

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Florence: Torre della Castagna after its restoration.

characterized by *loculi* in a perfect state of preservation and by small objects (ivory and crystal statuettes, lanterns and coins), which were used as signs to identify the tombs that had no inscriptions. The names of some priests, who, perhaps during the VIII or IX century visited the place and celebrated mass there, have been found carved on the sides of an altar.

But as if to bear witness yet another time to the love and respect felt for the great memorials of the antique beauty of Rome, the Fortuna Virilis, on the Piazza Bocca della Verita, the exquisite rectangular temple in the Foro Boario, has just been isolated and set free from the confusion of huts and hovels, that crowded around it.

Time has in some places corroded the delicate graceful profiles of the mouldings of this little Ionic temple, a marvelous jewel of Greco-Roman architecture, but it was far more damaged by the barbarous alterations made in it, when the Armenians used it as a hospital. However, after the work of demolition had been carried out, the basement, faced with travertine, came to light, and traces of stucco were found on the columns and exterior walls. And now this temple is to have its antique form once more from the roof down—the vestibule will be opened, the cella restored and the pavement raised to the level of the ancient floor.

While demolishing some modern pilasters inside the church, the remains appeared of IX century frescoes. They are paintings that date back to the beginning of the transformation of the temple into a church (Santa Maria Egiziaca), and are, therefore, exceedingly valuable and interesting.

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OSTIA

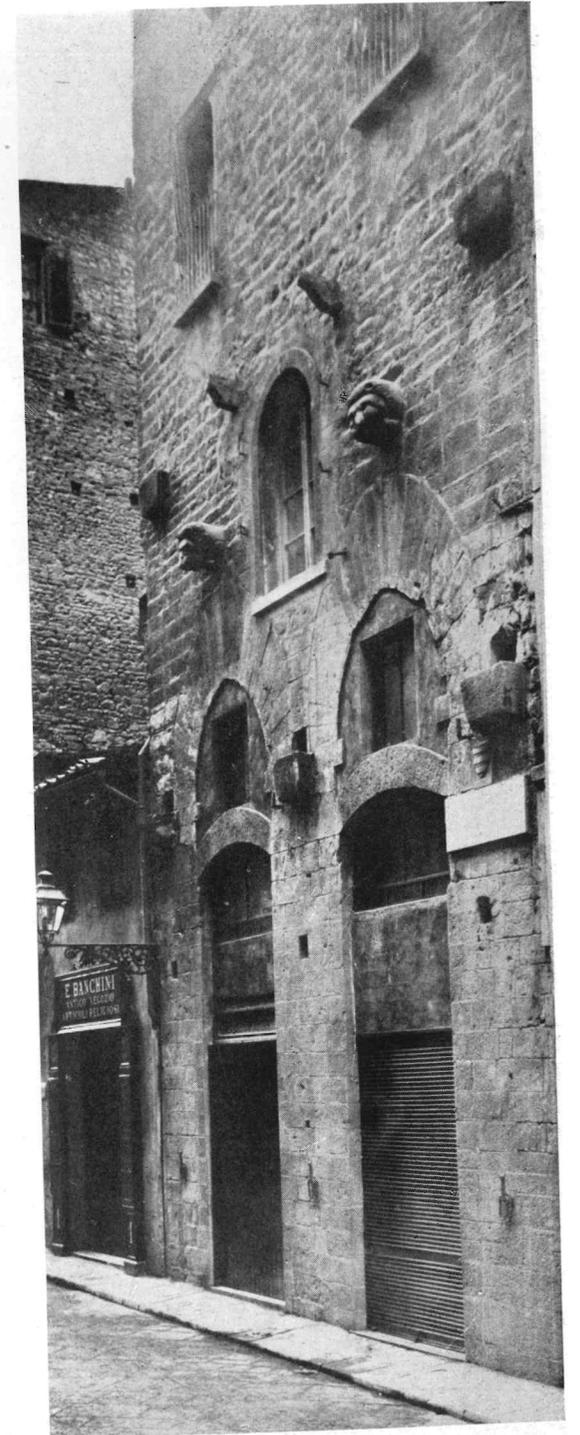
In the Roman Campagna it is always Ostia that has the first place for new and important discoveries. Besides the finding of large grain warehouses and a little V century Christian church, the excavations of the year 1921 brought to light some noteworthy sculptures, among which is a group of the Emperor Commodus and Crispina, represented as Mars and Venus, and also a graceful Amazon-Diana, which reproduces a Greek type of the IV century, of Praxiteles perhaps; the head is a portrait of a Roman princess of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. And the excavations now in progress within the area of the ancient forum promise to be rich in surprises. Considerable work has also been undertaken at Porto, which takes its name from Trajan's port. The hexagonal dock has been dredged and a wharf with mooring-rings for the vessels and warehouses for provisioning the antique capital have been found.

LANUVIUM

In ancient Lanuvium, the ruins of the Temple of Apollo with three cellae and a plan resembling that of the Temple of Apollo at Veio, but belonging to a somewhat later period (the V or the IV century B. C.), has been unearthed on the hill occupied by the Acropolis. Southern Italy is ever the fertile field of discoveries; the excavations have been continued in Sardinia, in Sicily and in Magna Graecia.

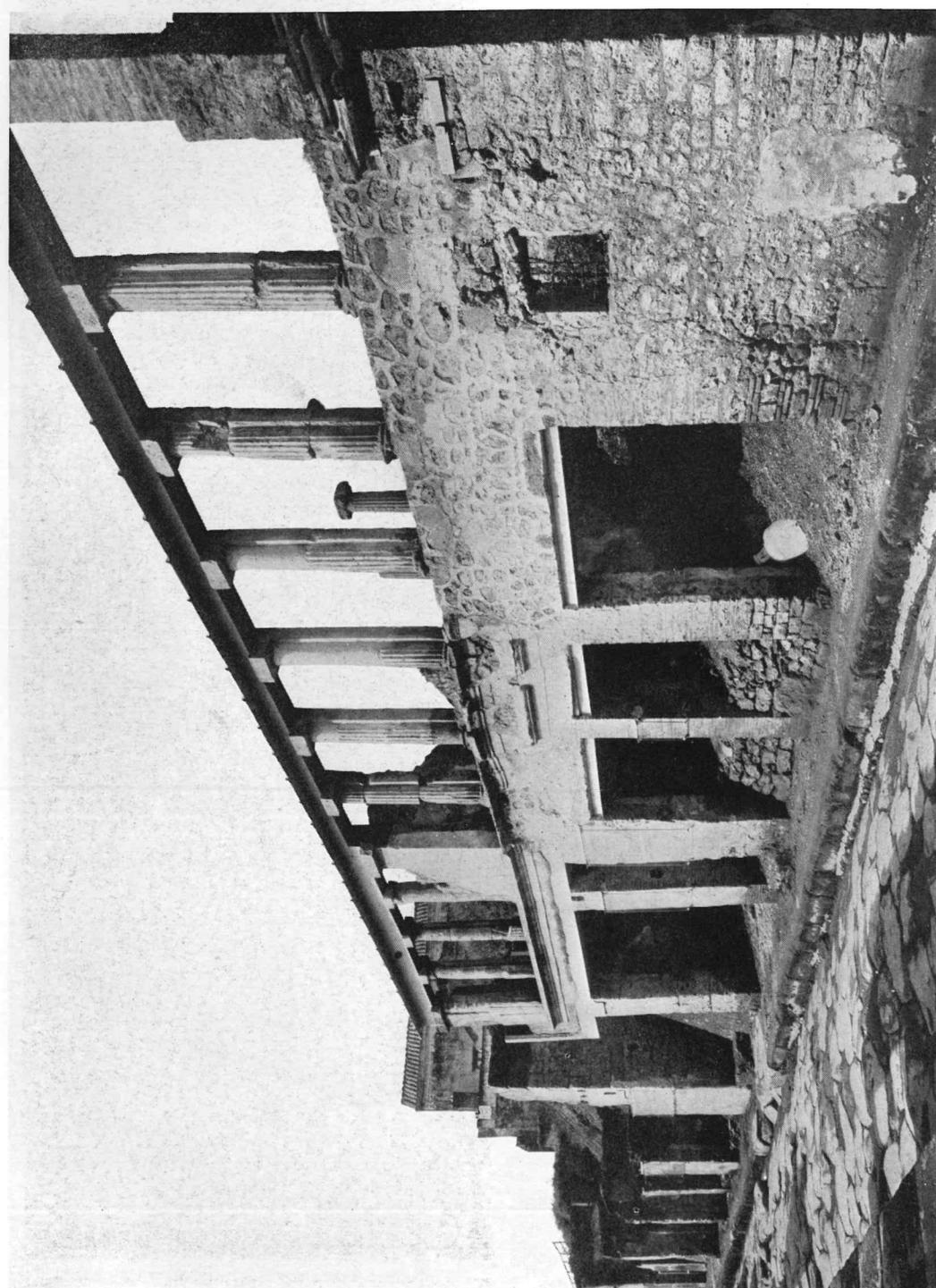
POMPEII

But our attention always turns to Pompeii, where the excavations in the via dell' Abbondanza show us an antique street with houses and shops almost intact after twenty centuries of death; for we may still see the roofs



Florence: Torre degli Amidei after its restoration.

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Pompeii: Loggia on a house in via dell' Abbondanza.

projecting over the streets, and the entrance doors of the houses and shops still have bronze bosses to ornament them and iron bolts to close them. And political posters, announcing the programs of the Pompeian candidates are continually coming out on the fronts of these houses, as well as frescoes representing processions of divinities and scenes from real life. A laundry has also been discovered and three little houses in a good state of preservation with interesting frescoes. But more beautiful than all is the house of Giocondo Quartone with a vast triclinium frescoed with episodes from the "Iliad" and a wonderful garden with fountains, fish-ponds, marble groups, little temples, statues, arbors and jets of water in the most intricate fountains—all excavated and preserved with such love and intelligent care that they give us a vision of life which dissipates thousands of years of death.

NAPLES

And not far from Naples, on the via Appia Antica, accidental excavations have brought to light a very important group of antique sculpture—a heroic statue, representing a nude *ephebus* in the style of the *Hermes* of the school of Polycletus and some portrait statues of the Augustan Age.

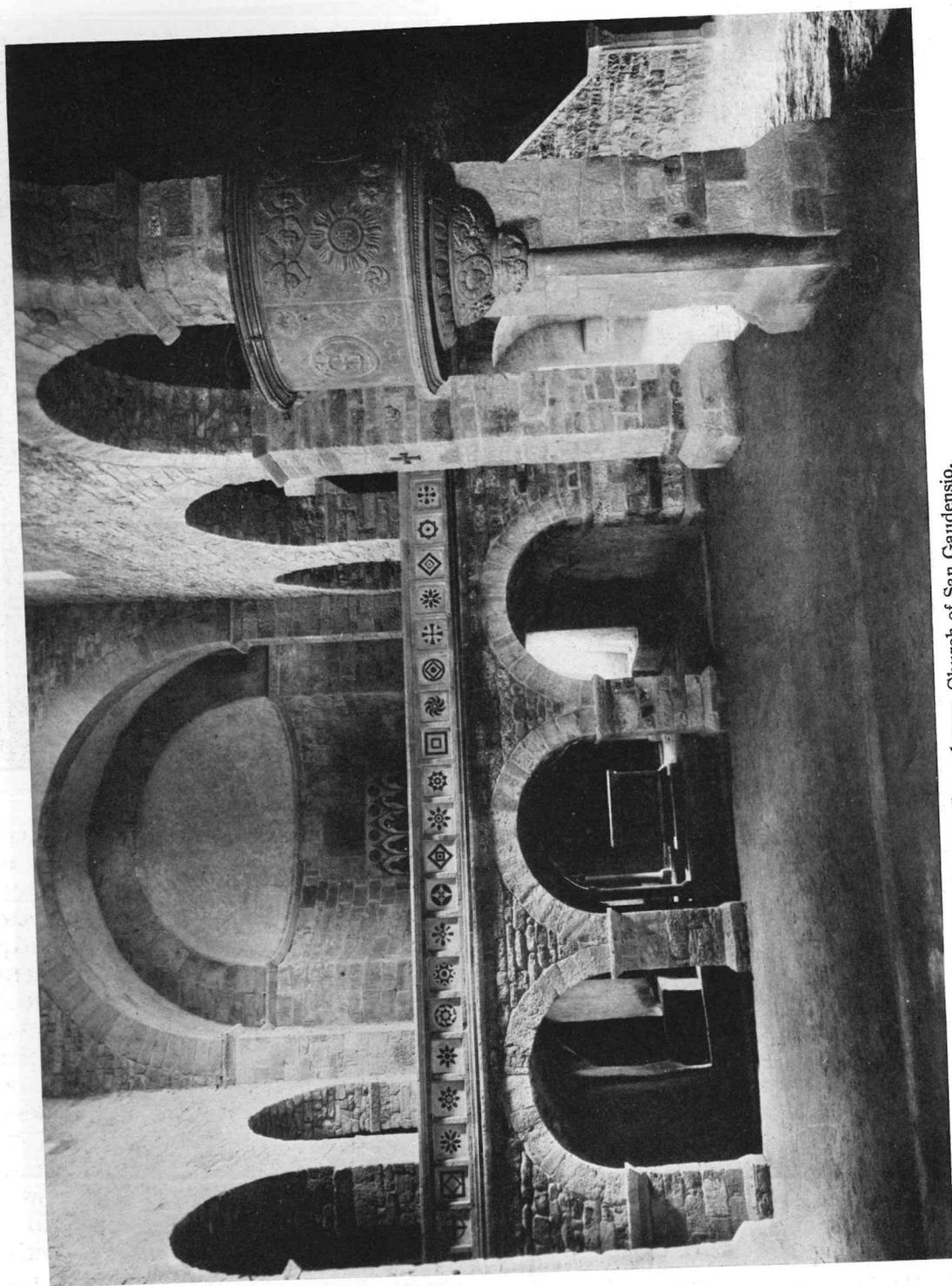
ROME

But two really important discoveries made at the very gates of Rome should be especially noted. Beneath the ancient Church of St. Sebastian on the via Appia near the well-known tomb of Cecilia Metella, the latest excavations have brought to light a Roman country-house with large rooms decorated with frescoes and many interesting tombs of various forms.

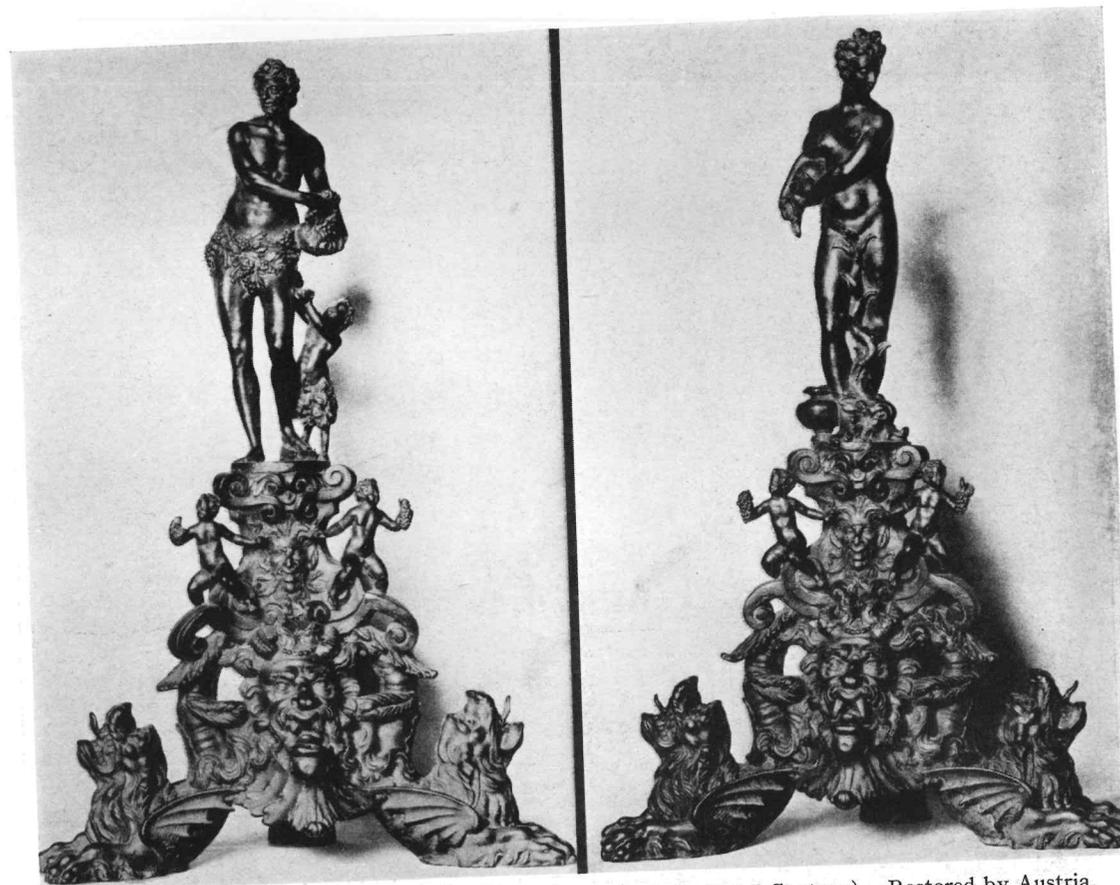
Christian tradition narrates that, when the persecution under Diocletian



Artemis of Ostia with portrait head of a Roman princess. Greek sculpture of the IV Century.



Sanzodeno: Church of San Gaudensio.



Bronze fire-standings by Alessandro Vittoria (beginning of the XVII Century). Restored by Austria.

raged, not only against the living, but also against the dead, the faithful removed the bodies of Saint Peter and Saint Paul to a place on the via Appia, called *ad catacumbas*, where the *Basilica Apostolorum* was afterwards erected, its name being changed later for that of the Church of Saint Sebastian in memory of the young officer martyred by Diocletian.

These extensive excavations, besides having brought to light inscriptions of the early Christians who visited the temporary tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, have also disclosed fourteen meters of archaeological strata that cover almost three centuries of history—that is to say tombs of the IV and V and VI centuries A. D. in

addition to the ruins of the Roman villa. These sepulchres have pictorial decorations and bas-reliefs in a marvellous state of preservation as they are not even darkened or ever so slightly peeled. Many reasons make it seem probable that these are pagan tombs; and the photograph shows three of the most ancient. If these excavations bring us down to the last centuries of the Roman Empire, others, not less interesting, though barely commenced on the hill of Monte Mario to the north of Rome, would seem to date back to the very beginnings of Rome. It is not yet possible to determine with exactitude if a pre-historic village stood there on the height—as appears probable from the archaeological material

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Pompeii: Front of a shop with frescoes and a balcony.

already found (chiselled flint and characteristic pottery) but it may be said, for the present at least, that an Etruscan *pagus* of the VI century B. C., perhaps, existed there. A *dromos* tomb has been found in fact, proving the existence of an Etruscan village, which may have lasted until the earliest

Roman period. And the excavations now in progress will certainly tell us a little of its life and history. Thus, archaeology has again last year served the history of Rome by illustrating both its origins and its decadence.

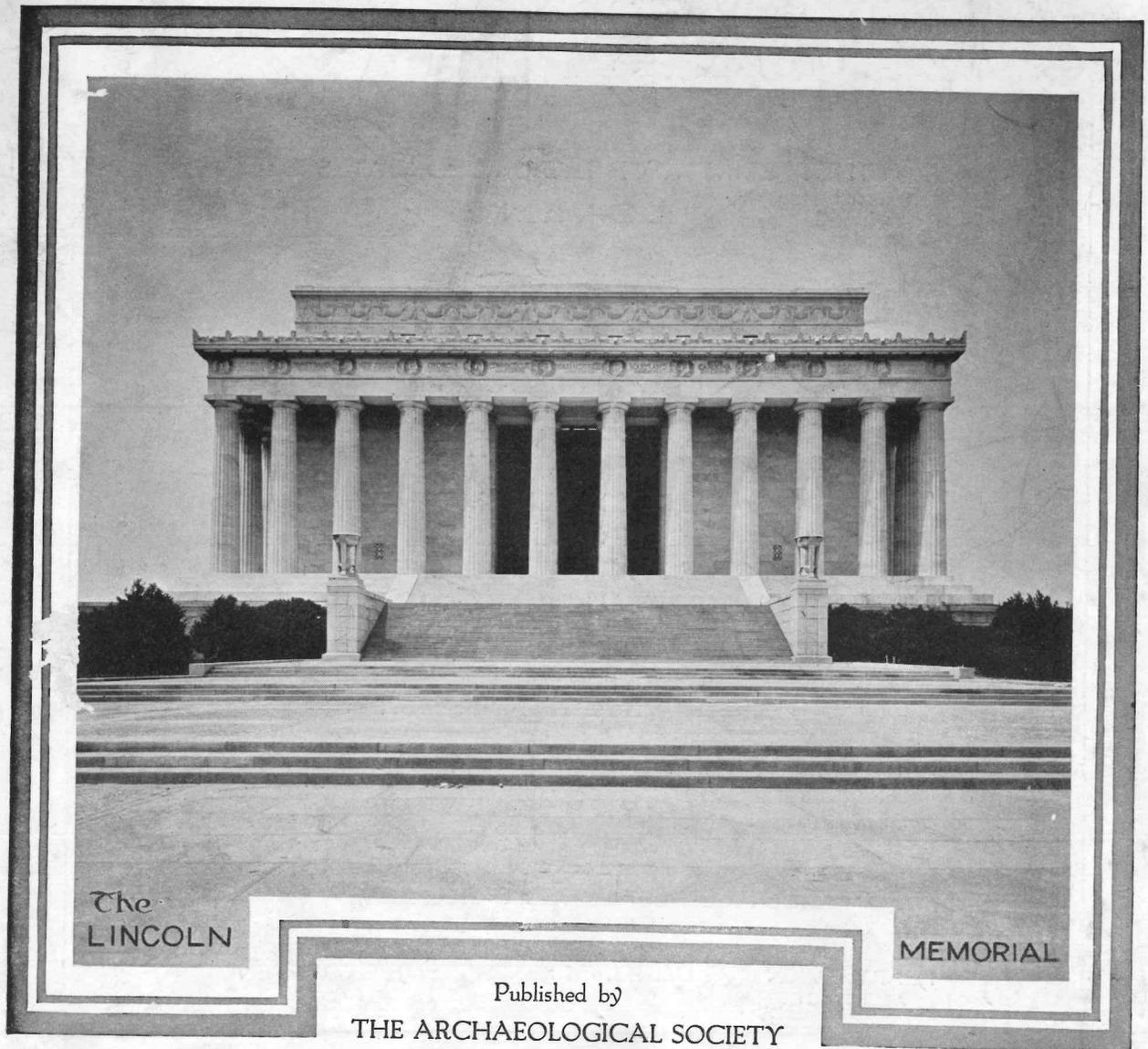
Rome, Italy.

TO A COIN OF ATHENS

To start, to wonder, yes, to love—
How cans't thou move me, tiny Disk?
What power is thine that wakes to life,
The hidden, the unborn?
So small—yet in thine image old,
Of Athene and Her Owl and Olive,
Bearest thou witness, little Coin,
To Her by whose deathless power,
Is wrested from the Unknown Dark,
The ore of human thought—
The rarest thing yet indispensable,
That makes Man's world!

GRACE W. NELSON.

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The
LINCOLN

MEMORIAL

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