

attributed an age of 400 years, and the colors and designs are wonderfully preserved.

We may consider the paintings of the Roman catacombs under three heads, naturally suggested by the positions in which they are found; first those on the slabs; second, those on the walls; and third, those on the ceilings.

The slabs generally bare only the inscription, but frequently there was painted or carved upon them, also, one or more christian symbols, such as a dove, an anchor, an olive branch or the monogram of Christ. The figures were commonly conventionalized, making them purely symbolical.

On the walls, the paintings were simply decorative frescos with flowing and geometrical lines, and, frequently, repetitions of design.

A cubiculum is a chamber in which the members of a family were buried. The funeral feast was carried on in these chambers, and, being a custom that decended to the Christians from the pagans, the custom was often profaned by heathen license in gluttony and insobriety.

Some of the frescos represent these facts. Many of these mural paintings of large design, depicted on the walls at an early day, have been destroyed by the desire of being buried near one's relations. This desire caused new tombs to be cut in the walls, regardless of the pictures. One of the most perfect examples of early christian pictorial decorations, the so-called "Dispute with the Doctors," in the catacombs of Callistus, has thus suffered irreparable mutilation.

Another motive that incited the ancients to destroy these paintings, is found in the fact that when persecutions ceased and christianity became the imperial faith, interment became a regular trade, in the hands of grave diggers or fossores, who quarried numerous new luculi in the walls decorated with religious paintings.

In the baptistry of the catacombs of St. Pontinus, where immersions were undoubtedly made, the wall at the back exhibits a well preserved fresco of a jeweled cross, beneath an arched recess above which is a fresco of the baptism of our Lord.

This picture, as represented by Perret, is very artistic. It shows Christ standing in water to his elbows, his arms hanging, a dove descending over his head, John the Baptist standing on the left with his hand on Jesus and an angel on the right of Him. The early christian representations are to be distinguished from the mural decorations of the pagans, by the absence of all that was immoral and idolatrous. Any symbols that were strictly religious, were slowly brought into use and these were meaningless to any but christian eyes, As examples we note "the Vine," "The Good Sheperd," "The Sheep."

The ceilings were covered with more elaborate painting. The work of the Monk Bosio, in searching the catacombs, has given faithful representation of the interiors. A description of one of the frescoed ceilings will serve to illustrate the character of these pictures. On the ceiling of one of the chapels is painted the Good Sheperd with a lamb over his shoulders and two others lying at his side. This occupies a central circle which is surrounded by a circle of birds. The remaining space is marked off by twelve semi-circles. Eight of these surround respectively the following pictures: first, the paralytic bearing his bed; second, the seven baskets full of fragments; third, the raising of Lazarus; fourth, Daniel in the lion's den; fifth, Jonah swallowed by the fish; sixth, Jonah vomited forth; seventh, Moses striking the rock; eighth, Noah and the dove. Such illustrations are most frequently found in the christian catacombs, but scenes as sacred as the crucifixion and subjects from the passion, are never represented.

JOHN SMITH.

Secretary Proctor is erecting a building for the village library at Proctor, Vt. The nucleus of the collection of books was originally given by him for the benefit of the hands and employes of the marble company there. In giving it he agreed that for every book they would add to the library, and for every dollar they would give to it, he would add a book and give a dollar.