

a community called ...

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New Series.]

[No. 206.

ROME IN ROME.

No 3.

THE HOLY STAIR-WAY

(LA SCALA SANTA).

BY

A ROMAN CITIZEN.

NEW YORK:
PHILLIPS & HUNT.

CINCINNATI:
CRANSTON & STOWE.

1887.



ROME IN ROME.

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THE HOLY STAIR-WAY.

BY A ROMAN CITIZEN.

(*La Scala Santa.*)

CLOSE to the famous Basilica of St. John in the Lateran stands a chapel called *Sancta Sanctorum*, in which no layman is ever admitted, as it is said to contain some precious relics and an image of Christ painted by angels. The entrance to the chapel is by a fine portico; whence five grand stair-ways

lead to the bronze door of the chapel, always closed, and to a window armed with a strong gilt grating.

The middle stair-way is called *holy* because it is said to be the very staircase of Pilate's palace in Jerusalem on which Jesus walked up and down on the day of his crucifixion. It consists of twenty-eight steps in white marble, covered with boards of walnut-wood, in which here and there are seen some holes in the form of a cross, meant to indicate the places where, according to the tradition, drops of the blood of Jesus fell on the steps.

Any one who wishes to ascend the stair-way must do it on his knees; and every day you can see men and women ascending it in that way, while they recite prayers and bow to kiss the holes on the steps.

Now, this indecent and heathen religious practice is fully authorized, nay, encouraged, by the infallible (!) popes themselves. Near the first step, indeed, a notice can be seen

that we textually translate and copy here for our readers:

“One of the sacred souvenirs of the passion of our Lord is the *holy stair-way*; and it deserves religious act and devotion since more than once it was ascended by our divine Redeemer, and it was sanctified by his precious blood. Therefore, after having been brought from Jerusalem to Rome by St. Helena in A. D. 326, and placed near the Lateran Basilica, and then by Sixtus V. in 1589 magnificently set up before the world-famed chapel of *Sancta Sanctorum*, it was always and is often visited by pious faithful, and is to be ascended on the knees.

“To encourage the faithful in such pious and useful spiritual exercise, Leo IV., in A. D. 850, and Pascal II., in his bull dated August 5, 1100, granted an indulgence of nine years for each of the twenty-eight steps of said holy stair-way every time they are ascended devoutly, with a heart at least contrite, praying or meditating on the passion

of our Lord. Pius VII., by a decree of the Congregation of Indulgences, dated September 2, 1817, again granting *in perpetuo* the said indulgence, declared that it can be applied also to the souls in purgatory."

Here we have gross imposture, idolatry, and heresy sanctioned by papal authority :

1. *Imposture*, since it is evident that the "holy stair-way" is not, and never was, the staircase of Pilate's palace, and there is no proof whatever of St. Helena ever carrying to Rome any staircase. Jerusalem was utterly destroyed by the Romans, A. D. 70, and remained for half a century a deserted heap of ruins, and they coolly pretend that, two centuries after its being rebuilt, Helena may have found and recognized the staircase of Pilate intact and ready to be sent to Rome!! The Roman clergy perfectly know that the holy stair-way is nothing more than a common staircase, but they maintain for the sake of money and prestige their "pious fraud."

2. *Idolatry*, inasmuch as they declare that the said staircase "deserves religious act and devotion." No material object in this world deserves that, even though we knew surely that it had been connected with our Lord. This is a piece of the fetichism of the Romish Church; the relic-worship along with the belief in the virtues of holy water and holy oil is exactly similar to the worship which the lowest heathen offer to their fetiches, and to the faith which they have in their power.

3. *Heresy*, in that they teach that by ascending these steps merits may be acquired and pardon of sins. How can they call a "spiritual exercise" this ascending the steps on the knees? Why, it is clearly a "bodily exercise," and St. Paul says that "bodily exercise profiteth little."

What a comedy are the popes performing in granting nine years' indulgence for each of the twenty-eight steps, namely, two hundred and fifty-two years for ascending the

whole of the steps! They know their indulgences are good for nothing, and now that they can no longer sell them (as nobody would pay a cent for such rubbish) they give them for ascending certain steps!

True Christian faith protests against this scandal, as conscience protested within the young monk, Luther, as he was on his visit to Rome ascending these steps. A voice cried to him as he was half-way up, "By faith shall the righteous live," and he rose up at once and ran down and fled from that heathen scene.

Yea, not by the Romish practices, but by *faith*, shall the righteous live.

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