

“MESSENGER SERIES,” No. 4.

THE ACTS

OF THE

EARLY MARTYRS

BY

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SECOND SERIES.

PHILADELPHIA:
PETER F. CUNNINGHAM, 216 SOUTH THIRD STREET.
1871.



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P R E F A C E .



WITH the holy thou wilt be holy, and with the perverse thou wilt be perverted" (Ps. xvii), says the Prophet-King. If this is true, when said of good and of evil company, it is no less so when applied to good and to bad books; nay, without exaggeration, we may assert, that in the latter supposition the truthfulness becomes much more evident. True or false friends we cannot make our inseparable companions; but how easy it is to have with us, at all times, a favorite book, and draw from it lessons of virtue and wisdom; or a baneful poison, which, slowly but surely, undermines our nobler nature, and, at last, produces moral ruin and death! Would to God that all they, to whom the care of the young and innocent has been confided, were fully aware of the awful responsibility placed upon them in this

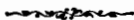
regard! how great the evils that might be prevented! how abiding the happiness that might be secured!

If, then, in this age of indiscriminate reading, we feel that we are actually doing a good work, when, from among the multitude of books daily brought to our notice, we can select some which we dare conscientiously recommend as not hurtful to morality and Christian piety, should we not make it a duty to spread, as far as we are able, those writings which make us acquainted with the virtuous lives and generous deeds of the heroes of Christianity—our Brethren in the Faith, who have ennobled our common nature? What lessons to be learned! what examples to be imitated!

May God, who is so wonderful in His Saints, bless our endeavors to make known more and more the mighty workings of His grace in the hearts of His chosen friends; that, in the days of trials and struggles, should they ever come, we, strengthened by their example, may, as children of the Saints, prove that we are not unworthy of having received their glorious inheritance!



THE MARTYRS.



I.

ST. CYPRIAN.

IF OF every one of God's Saints it may truly be said, that his death was precious in the sight of the Lord, there are very many among them about whom it is no less true to assert, that their life also was precious in the sight of men. For the bright example of their virtues so shone before others that, almost unawares, men were induced to study and practically to emulate what they admired most in the models placed before them. Thus it is that the friends of God comply with the injunction of the Saviour: "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Hence we

may also infer, that the higher the position to which God raises any one in His Church, the more should he strive by good deeds to excel his brethren and to go before them in godliness, in faith, in charity. What more illustrious example of all this can we find, than is presented to us in the life and death of the great St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage?

Born in Africa of a rich and noble family, Thascius Cyprianus was teaching eloquence when he became acquainted with a holy priest named Cæcilius. Cyprian was still a Pagan. The pursuit of worldly knowledge, the securing of a great name among men, had been the sole object of his ambition. He had, indeed, heard of the teachings of Christianity; but self-denial, humility, simplicity, contempt of the transitory riches and honors of this life seemed wholly beyond his aspirations. He knew not the all-powerfulness of divine grace. By degrees, however, as he gave himself up to the training of the servant of God, a new light illumined his mind, his understanding began to perceive the sublimity of the doctrines of truth, and his heart was opened to their hallowed influence. But when his soul had been purified in the saving waters of Baptism, he became in Christ a new creature. His views, his desires were changed. He longed no more to be of this world, except inasmuch as he

might be made an instrument of salvation unto others.

His master, Cæcilius, had passed to a better life, Cyprian inherited his piety and other virtues. Even when a Pagan, and still more when a catechumen, he had made it a law to himself, to endeavor to acquire every good quality which he discovered in those who were distinguished by their prudence and wisdom. He now devoted himself with unwearied zeal to the study of the holy Scriptures, less anxious to penetrate their meaning than to understand their practical bearing. This reading inspired him with a great love for the evangelical counsels: he began to lead a life of perfect chastity; he sold all his possessions, and distributed the price of them among the poor. After this, he undertook the defense of Christianity, in several learned works, and, on account of his acquirements and virtue, was raised to the dignity of the priesthood, although he was still a new convert.

On the death of Donatus, Bishop of Carthage, Cyprian was unanimously chosen to succeed him. It was in vain that he declared himself unworthy of so great a dignity, and incapable of worthily discharging its duties. His humility made him conceal himself for some time, but the will of Heaven was too plainly manifest to be long resisted.

This new office caused no change in his manners. To mildness and charity he united great firmness and courage. His very looks inspired those who approached him with respect and veneration. He was ever kind and cheerful, whilst at the same time he was grave and dignified. In his dress he was without worldly display, neither did he exhibit any affected poverty. How he loved the poor of his flock, we may judge by the interest he took in their well-being when he was only a catechumen.

The Church had enjoyed some years of repose, but, after the death of the Emperor Philip, his successor, Decius, inaugurated his reign by a most cruel persecution. Soon it extended to Africa. St. Cyprian, on account of his success in defending the Christian Religion, was especially obnoxious to the Pagans. They had ever shown a spiteful disposition toward him, because, being born among them and having followed their superstitions for a long time, he had devoted his extraordinary talents and vast erudition to a doctrine which they affected to despise. When they beheld him fearless amidst the dangers which threatened him from every side, and learned how, by his letters and eloquent words, he was cheering on his people to stand firm in the Faith, their angry feelings were still more violently aroused. Again and again, in the midst of the

festivities at the amphitheatre, the vengeful cry had been raised: "Cyprian to the lions!"

His personal safety did not move the holy Bishop, but the interests of the Church were to be considered. Wherefore, yielding to the earnest entreaties of the Faithful, he betook himself to a place of retirement. Here, however, he did not pass away his time in idleness. He wrote numerous letters to his clergy, guiding and exhorting them—like a watchful shepherd. He consoled the confessors, who were lingering in prison: he manifested the greatest solicitude for all whom the Lord had intrusted to his charge. Thus it was that, although absent, he seemed yet to be in their midst.

When peace was restored to the Church, St. Cyprian returned to Carthage. But he was soon again, and a third time, obliged to seek safety in exile. For the masters of Rome, who rapidly succeeded each other, seemed all to agree in one plan of policy, that of persecuting the Church. But the hand of God was also heavy upon them.

During these intervals of clouds and sunshine, our Saint had to keep up a ceaseless struggle against heresy and schism. The relaxation of morals among the people, was to him another source of grief and trouble. Besides, war and pestilence, which alternately ravaged the fairest

portions of the Empire, gave ample exercise to his unbounded charity. Thus his life presents an uninterrupted series of cares and anxieties, of opposition and success, of sorrows and consolation. But he that places his trust in God shall not be put to confusion, he shall stand firm as the rock, although the winds of adversity howl around him. So it was with St. Cyprian; he possessed his soul in peace, in spite of all the assaults of the enemies of truth.

Meanwhile, Valerian had obtained possession of the Empire. At first he showed himself favorable to the Christians. Unfortunately for himself and for the people, he suffered himself to be guided and ruled by Macrianus, one of his courtiers. This man, conscious that the lowness of his birth, and the meanness of his character caused him to be despised by the Romans, resolved to astonish them by the greatness of his power. To attain his aim, he availed himself of every means that his wicked mind could suggest: flattery, intrigue, threats, duplicity, even the secret arts of magic, all were brought into play. The fickle-minded Emperor became the sport of this sworn enemy of the Christians. An edict of persecution was issued. At first, the Governors of the different Provinces were satisfied with sending into exile those who refused to sacrifice to the gods: soon, however,

confiscation, and tortures, and death were deemed necessary to gratify the hatred of the persecutors.

St. Cyprian, who had so often strengthened and cheered on the Faithful by his eloquent words, was now to animate them by his example. Paternus, the Proconsul of Africa, summoned him to stand before his tribunal. He said to him :

“Our most pious Emperors, Valerian and Gallienus, have done me the honor of writing to me, that it is their will, that they who do not follow the worship of the Romans, be forthwith compelled to conform to the customs and ceremonies thereof. I have summoned thee before me, to learn from thy own lips, what answer thou hast to make in reply to the orders of our Emperors.”

“I am a Christian and a Bishop,” answered Cyprian. “I know no other gods, except the one true God, who created the heavens and the earth, and the sea and all things therein. He is the God whom we Christians serve. To Him we offer our prayers and supplications, both night and day, for ourselves, for all men, and for the health and prosperity of the Emperors themselves.”

“Dost thou persevere in that declaration?” asked Paternus.

“An upright resolution, which God directs, cannot be changed,” replied the Saint.

“Thou art then ready to go into exile to the City Curubis, according to the orders of the Emperors?” said the Proconsul.

“I am ready to go.”

“The Emperors have honored me by writing their commands not only in regard to the Bishops, but also concerning the Priests; I would, therefore, wish to know from thee, who are the Priests that live in this city.”

“Your own laws wisely and justly forbid us to become informers. They cannot, therefore, be reported and pointed out by me; but you may be able to find them in all the neighboring cities.”

“I will endeavor to find them this very day in their respective places,” said Paternus.

“Our principles and practice, which your own good sense must approve, forbid any of us to give himself up, of his own accord. If, however, you institute a diligent search, it will not be difficult for you to find them.”

“I will not fail to use a becoming diligence,” said the Proconsul. Then he added: “I have also orders to forbid you to hold your assemblies, or to enter into the cemeteries. Every one who

disobeys this command shall be punished with death."

"If you have such orders, it is for you to see how you can best comply with them," said Cyprian.

Upon this the Proconsul commanded that the holy Bishop should be taken to Curubis. This city was situated upon the sea-coast, about fifty miles from Carthage. The location was healthy and pleasant, although sandy and barren. The inhabitants treated the Saint with the greatest kindness. The Christians of the place, as well as those of the neighborhood, availed themselves of his abode among them to hold frequent intercourse with him. He solved their doubts, settled their differences, directed them in the path of Christian perfection, prepared them for Martyrdom,—which the disturbed state of the times seemed to foreshadow to many of their number. Nor was the Saint himself left without a warning of the Martyrdom which awaited him.

On the very night after his arrival, St. Cyprian had a vision, which he thus related to Pontius, his deacon, who had followed him into exile: "Before I fell asleep, there appeared to me a youth of uncommon stature: he led me to the residence of the Proconsul, and placed me before his tribunal.

No sooner had he looked at me than he began to write my sentence on a tablet, which he held in his hand. As he had not previously made me pass through the usual interrogatory, I had not the least knowledge of the nature of the sentence. The youth, however, who stood behind the Proconsul, read what had been written, and, as he was not allowed to speak to me, he gave me to understand by signs the substance of the sentence. For he stretched out one of his hands in the shape of a broad-sword, and struck the other, thereby imitating the action of beheading a person. No words could have made his meaning more plain and intelligible. I understood that the hour of my death was not far distant. Immediately, I begged the Proconsul to delay the execution of my sentence for a short time—even if it were only for one day—that I might set my affairs in proper order. After I had repeated my request, he appeared satisfied with the justice of the demand, and, smiling, he wrote again on the tablet. By twisting his fingers one behind the other, the youth signified to me that my petition had been granted.” This delay of one day the Saint understood to mean one year.

St. Cyprian now gave his undivided attention to regulating the affairs of his Church. Whilst he was thus occupied, there arrived a messenger from

Rome, sent to him by Pope St. Xystus. The Holy Father forewarned him, that the persecution was about to break out with renewed violence. Valerian, who was preparing his fatal expedition against the Persians, thought to propitiate the favor of the gods by publishing a more cruel edict against the Christians. He commanded that Bishops, Priests, and Deacons should be forthwith executed; that Senators and Roman knights should be first degraded, and that, if they persevered in their Religion, they should be beheaded; that women of high rank should be banished; that officers and domestics of the imperial household should be sold as slaves. The Saint immediately communicated these tidings to the other Bishops, that they might prepare themselves and their flocks to stand firm in the Faith. Senators, and many other persons of high rank, visited St. Cyprian, and besought him to change his place of abode, at least for a short time, until the first fury of the gathering storm should have passed away. But he preferred to await the good pleasure of his Father in heaven, rather than deprive the souls, committed to his care, of his presence—which the times had rendered so necessary to them.

Meanwhile, Galerius-Maximus had succeeded in the Proconsulship of Africa. He recalled the Saint

to Carthage, that he might have him near at hand as soon as the imperial edict should be promulgated. This edict reached Carthage about the middle of August, whilst the Proconsul was residing at Utica. He sent immediately a band of soldiers to seize the venerable Bishop, and to bring him to the place of his own residence. But when St. Cyprian heard of this order of his arrest, he yielded to the advice of his friends, and withdrew into a place of concealment: not indeed because he desired to escape death, but that he might die in Carthage, and—by the public confession of his Faith—give an example of courage and perseverance to his flock.

When Galerius returned to Carthage, the Saint went again to the garden, which was his ordinary abode. Here he was arrested by the chief officer of the Proconsul. Placed in a chariot, he was taken to a country-seat at Sextus, six miles from the city, where Galerius resided. The Proconsul not being ready, and, perhaps, unwilling to proceed immediately with the trial, put it off for some days. In the meantime, the Saint was intrusted to the keeping of the chief officer, who dwelled in the suburb called Saturnus, between the streets of Venus and Salus. When it became generally known, that the holy Bishop had been

taken, and was kept as a prisoner at the house of the chief officer, the whole city was stirred up. The Pagans, as well as the Christians, vied with each other in expressing their sympathy. They passed whole days and nights before his dwelling; for the noble qualities of the Confessor of the Faith, but above all his unbounded charity, had endeared him to all his fellow-citizens. It was not without great difficulty, that order could be preserved among the vast multitude, that was incessantly thronging around the house, anxious as they were to listen once more to his eloquent voice, and to have even a glimpse of his person. The chief officer, who treated the Saint with great kindness and respect, permitted several of the Faithful to take their evening meal with him.

On the fourteenth of September—a year after the vision of the Saint at Curubis—St. Cyprian, accompanied by a strong guard, was led to the prætorium of the Proconsul. The distance was about a stadium from the officer's house. The sky was calm and serene: the weather oppressively warm. An immense crowd of people of every rank and condition followed: except for the solemn silence which reigned among these vast numbers, the march might have appeared as that of a triumphal procession. When they arrived at the

prætorium, as the Proconsul was still absent, the officer requested the Saint to rest himself upon a seat covered with linen, as if prepared for a person of episcopal dignity. One of the soldiers, who had formerly been a Christian, seeing him all wet with perspiration, on account of the hurry of the journey, and the warmth of the day, kindly offered him a change of dry linen, but the Martyr excused himself, and said: "We are using a remedy for complaints, which will probably finish to-day."

Galerius now entered, and seated himself on his tribunal. Addressing the Bishop, he said to him:

"Art thou Thascius Cyprianus?"

"I am," answered the Saint.

"Art thou he who has shown himself the chief and father of sacrilegious men?"

"I am he."

"Our most sacred Emperors will and command, that thou shouldst offer sacrifice to the gods."

"I will not do it."

"Have a care of thyself."

"Do what you have been commanded. In a matter so manifestly just, there is for me no need of deliberation."

The Proconsul, after taking the advice of his

council, said, with some difficulty, as he was in ill health :

“Thou art long since accused of living without piety and religion ; thou hast misled many persons by instilling into their minds the ungodly principles of thy doctrines ; thou hast shown thyself an enemy of the gods of Rome, and hast despised her holy laws ; nor have our pious and most sacred Emperors, Valerian and Gallienus, and our most noble Cæsar Valerian, been able to make thee conform to the ceremonies of their worship. Wherefore, since thou art proved to be the author and leader of the most baneful crimes, thou shalt serve as an example to them whom, by thy wickedness, thou hast associated with thyself, that thus order and right principles may be established by thy blood.”

Having thus spoken, he raised his voice, and read from a tablet this sentence :

“It is our will, that Thascius Cyprianus be beheaded.”

“Thanks be to God,” replied the holy Bishop.

When the Christians, who thronged around the tribunal, heard the sentence, they all cried out as with one voice : “Let us go and suffer with him.” And a great tumult arose.

The Martyr left the prætorium attended by a

large body of soldiers, the centurions and tribunes marching on each side of him. They led him out of the city into a wide plain surrounded by a grove of high trees, upon which many climbed, because the immense crowd hindered them from witnessing the execution. Arrived at the appointed place, the Saint took off his mantle, and kneeling down, continued for some time in prayer. Then he put off his dalmatic, which he gave to the deacons, and, remaining in a linen garment, he awaited the executioner—to whom, as a token of that generous charity which had distinguished him through life, he ordered twenty-five pieces of gold to be given. Then, at his request, Julian, a Priest, and Julian, a sub-deacon, tied his hands, and holding them before his eyes, and bending his head, he received the stroke of death. He suffered on the fourteenth of September, A. D. 258.

The Pagans themselves wept over his death, because, in spite of their prejudices, they were forced to confess, that the holy Martyr, in his deeds of kindness and charity, had never made any distinction between them and the members of his flock. The Faithful buried his body in a field adjoining the place of execution. Here they were wont to assemble, and to implore

the intercession of him, who had been their guide and model whilst upon earth, and whose friendship and protection, they knew, would not be wanting to them—now that he was crowned with bliss in heaven.





II.

SS. TRYPHON AND RESPICIUS.

THE persecution under the Emperor Decius, was one of the most cruel endured by the Church. All the Governors of the Provinces, throughout the Empire, seemed animated with an unusual zeal to display their loyalty, by executing the edict of their master in a manner that might prove gratifying to his blood-thirsty disposition. If the localities in the neighborhood of the capital witnessed cruelties which shocked the feelings of the persecutors themselves, we need not wonder that the most barbarous exercise of power distinguished the Governors of distant countries. For cupidity, no less than hatred, inclined the officers of the law to hunt down and despoil the victims of arbitrary tyranny. Hence, every Christian who was supposed to possess wealth, or to rank high among his brethren, was at once doomed

to destruction. Neither age, sex, nor condition could avert the fatal blow, when the prospect of securing to themselves the possessions of the oppressed had once awakened the avarice of the men in power. Thus, too, it happened that the blessed Martyrs Tryphon and Respicius were called to glorify God, by their sufferings.

Born at Apamea, in Bithynia, they were persons distinguished among their countrymen by their wealth and position, but much more by the practice of every Christian virtue. No sooner was the edict of persecution published, than Fronto, the Irenarch of Apamea, resolved at once to cause the arrest of the two servants of God. Considering, however, their high rank, and the esteem in which they were held by all their fellow-citizens, he did not venture to proceed further, but sent information to the Governor of the Province of what had been done. Aquilinus was exceedingly rejoiced at the opportunity thus offered of trying before his tribunal two personages, so well known throughout his jurisdiction. He gave orders that they should forthwith be brought to Nicæa, where he resided. Their journey to the capital was one of great hardships, as well on account of the roads, which, at that season, were almost impassable, as on account of the treatment which they received from the

soldiers who had them in keeping. On their arrival in Nicæa, they were thrown into a horrid dungeon; wherein they lingered for many days, because the Governor, occupied as he was with affairs of State, or rather, desirous of gaining time to prepare for the trial, was unwilling to give them a hearing.

Meanwhile, the Confessors of the faith strengthened themselves for the contest by prayer and fasting, by mutual exhortation, and by the consideration of the uncertainty and transitoriness of the things of earth. From the dreariness of their prison, they looked up to the brightness and joy of the abode, where their heavenly Master was waiting for them—ready to bestow the crown of victory, if as true champions of the Cross, they would prove their fidelity by following in His foot-steps.

When at last the day of trial came, they were taken from their place of confinement and led before the tribunal of the Governor. A band of soldiers accompanied them through the streets of the city, and a vast multitude of people followed—all eager to witness the interrogatory of two Christians about whose virtues and wisdom they had heard so much. Aquilinus himself had taken care to gather around his tribunal a great number

of civil and military officers, in order to add solemnity to the proceedings.

When they stood in the presence of the Governor, the chief officer, addressing him, said :

“These are the holy men, as they are styled, brought from the neighborhood of Apamea, to be interrogated before your most eminent and illustrious tribunal.”

The Governor said to them :

“Then, first of all, tell me your names.”

The Saints replied : “One of us is called Tryphon, the other Respicius.”

Aquilinus then said : “About your rank in society, I will not ask you any questions : it matters very little. But what it concerns me to know is, how has the fickle goddess Fortune dealt with you ? Has she favored you with her smiles, or has she disdained to notice you ?”

Tryphon answered :

“Among us Christians, there is no such being known as that which you call the goddess Fortune. Whatsoever befalls us, whether good or evil, whatsoever happens in this world, we receive as coming from the hand of Divine Providence : this we believe, this we know. If, besides, you desire to learn what position we hold in society, I freely confess we are both of noble birth.”

Thereupon, Pompeianus, the chief officer, said to them :

“With that we were already acquainted ; but, perhaps, you yourselves are not aware that the Emperor has given orders, that all Christians of noble birth shall be burnt alive, unless indeed they are willing to offer sacrifice to the immortal gods.”

Respicius replied :

“Would to God that we might be deemed worthy to be burnt alive for our fidelity to our Lord Jesus Christ. If such are the orders which you have received, do not delay to execute them.”

The Governor said :

“The Emperor has, however, graciously condescended to make two exceptions, in case the person accused should not be of the proper age, or if he should not be of a sound mind. The former, I am convinced, does not regard either of you, as you both appear to be of full age ; the latter is not so evident to me. Tell me, then, do you believe yourselves to be of sound understanding ?”

“Our understanding is perfectly sound in Christ Jesus our Lord,” answered Tryphon. “For that very reason we are anxious to prove it by entering upon this struggle for His sake.”

“If you were really wise,” said Aquilinus, “you

would not hasten so thoughtlessly to your own ruin."

"What you look upon as our ruin is, on the contrary, the completion of our happiness," they replied.

"Foolish men!" exclaimed the Governor, "they know not what is in store for them. Is it the part of wisdom to prefer suffering to enjoyment? Did you ever reflect that tortures are fearful arguments, when they must be employed to teach good sense to men of your age and condition?"

"No torments shall ever hinder us from applying ourselves to the study of that perfect wisdom of which you are wholly ignorant. To live in the practice of its teachings, is joy and consolation; to die for its profession, is supreme happiness."

"We shall soon see how great is the difference between boasting, when you feel unhurt, and your perfect wisdom, when tortures are applied."

"We boast not, O Aquilinus," said Tryphon; "of ourselves, we are weak and helpless; but He, whose teachings we follow, will strengthen our weakness, and enable us to endure, not only patiently, but also joyfully, whatsoever torments you may choose to inflict—if such be His holy will. He alone is our hope: He too is our strength."

"Enough of all this," said the Governor. "Are

you ready, this very moment, to offer sacrifice to the gods?"

"Neither now, nor ever," both answered.

"Put them upon the rack," said Aquilinus to the executioners.

On hearing this command, the Martyrs immediately took off their garments, and showed themselves ready to undergo the torture. The executioners placed them upon the rack, and, during three hours, made them suffer all the horrors of this kind of punishment. The sufferers, however, seemed insensible to all their cruelties, so that the tormentors themselves were filled with astonishment at their power of endurance, and began to inquire of them how it happened that they possessed so wonderful a fortitude—which certainly was far above the strength of mortal men. They answered:

"These tortures are indeed calculated to shorten our lives; but the very knowledge of this is to us a source of comfort. We know that we suffer, because we profess the doctrines of Him who died to save us, and who is to be our Judge hereafter. By our sufferings we are likened unto Him, and He will reward us with a happiness whereof there shall be no end. But you also, you shall be judged one day by Him, and be made to give an account of all

your works. Are you prepared to stand before His judgment-seat, and to prove that all your deeds are done in righteousness and for justice's sake? You, especially, O Aquilinus, who are a judge upon earth, have you no dread of the judgments of an all-seeing and all-knowing God, who will summon you ere long before His tribunal? If you are as wise as you profess yourself to be, prepare to meet your own Supreme Judge; repent of your wrong-doings that you may find mercy before Him, who will judge one day yourself and your works."

This bold manner of speaking was by no means pleasing to the Governor. Wherefore, he resolved to make them feel the effect of his anger by protracting their sufferings. As on that very day he was going out on a hunting party, accompanied by his officers, he gave orders to have the Martyrs tied to horses in order to afford them, as he sportfully remarked, a last opportunity of enjoying the pleasures of the chase. It was the season of winter. Naked, torn, and bruised as they were by the torment of the rack, they were forced to run through rugged fields, where every step they made opened new wounds, and left the blood-stained impress of their feet. After that fearful excursion, Aquilinus called them again before him, and said:

"A bitter experience must have taught you that

it is by no means a pleasant matter to disobey our commands. Are you now willing to listen to wiser counsels, or to justify your conduct before us?"

"It is before God alone," answered Tryphon, "that we hope to be justified. His commands we obey, Him we serve: it is in vain for men to attempt to make us do things which are contrary to His holy law."

"I call our immortal gods to witness," said the Governor, "that unless you make up your minds willingly to offer sacrifice to them, no means will be spared to force you to comply with our order."

"We regard no orders which are contrary to our conscience, and to the obedience which we owe to our God, the Creator of heaven and earth," they replied.

"Let them again be taken to prison," said Aquilinus to his officers. "We will allow them time to consider the folly of their obstinacy. Imprisonment may cool down their enthusiasm and bring back the sober good sense which they were formerly supposed to possess."

Thereupon, the Martyrs were again led to the prison to endure still greater sufferings than they had undergone before—in consequence of special orders given to that purpose by Aquilinus.

Meanwhile, the Governor set out to visit some

other cities under his jurisdiction. On his return to Nicæa, he sent for the two prisoners, and said to them :

“ I doubt not that the delay which I have granted has had a good effect upon you. Hitherto, I own, I have treated you harshly ; but I have at my disposal, the means wherewith to make amends for the past : riches and honor await you, provided you resolve to follow the advice which I give. Justify yourselves before men by obeying the orders of the Emperor. If you do but offer sacrifice to the gods of the Empire, I myself will intercede for you, and obtain such favors that you will never regret the step you have taken ? ”

“ If it were possible for us,” replied Tryphon, “ to render ourselves pleasing to man without displeasing God, we would not neglect the opportunity. No one is so silly as to disregard his own interests, when he can secure them by fair and honorable means. But when we must choose between the duty which we owe to our Maker and the iniquitous commands of man, it were the greatest folly to hesitate, even for a moment, in our choice. You have already heard our answer, we repeat it again : we know and serve but one God, the Creator and Ruler of the universe. It is useless to make any further attempts to force us to deny

Them: for we remember that our Lord Himself has said: 'He that shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven.'"

"I admire your good sense," said Aquilinus; "it is for that very reason that I am desirous of saving your lives. I entreat you, therefore, once more, to have compassion on yourselves. Why would you forego the chance you have of securing happiness for yourselves, by offering sacrifice to the gods?"

"We cannot give a better proof that we have compassion on ourselves," answered Respicus "than by confessing our Lord Jesus Christ, the true Judge, who will come one day to call every one to an account for all his actions."

This unwavering constancy of the Confessor excited the anger of Aquilinus. Wherefore, he ordered their feet to be pierced with large nails. After this, he commanded them to be dragged through the principal streets of the city. The weather was very cold, the streets very rough. The brave champions seemed, nevertheless, insensible to the cruel treatment. When they were led back before the Governor, he was filled with wonder on seeing them so cheerful and unconcerned, and he exclaimed

"How is this? do you feel no pain?"

“None at all,” they answered, “the nails seem only to have been put in the soles of our shoes.”

“Well, let us see,” said Aquilinus, “whether there are not torments which prove more effective.”

Thereupon, he ordered the executioners to bind their hands and feet, and scourge them until they lay all covered with blood. After this their flesh was torn with iron hooks, and lighted torches were applied to their bleeding wounds. Whilst they were thus tortured, their countenances appeared radiant with a celestial joy; for an Angel from heaven hovered over them, displaying two bright crowns, which he seemed to place upon their brows. This vision inspired them with new powers of endurance, and both exclaimed:

“Lord Jesus Christ, suffer not that this day the evil one prevail against Thy servants. Hear us, and finish our course. As this combat is Thine, so let Thine be also the victory.”

The executioners filled with awe, as if some supernatural power had struck them, left off their bloody work. But the Governor aroused them, and suffered them not to relent.

“Torture them,” he said, “until they yield obedience to the Emperor’s will.” Then addressing the Martyrs: “How long will ye persevere,” he

said, "in your mad resolution? be wise according to your age, and obey at once."

"You have heard and seen, O wicked tyrant," replied Respicius, "that your useless words cannot change our firm resolve. You ought to know ere this that we despise your gods made of wood or stone. We serve the one true God. No torments shall turn us away from His love."

Aquilinus, apparently weary of the bloody work of that day, gave orders to put off the final execution. On the following morning, they were for the third time led before the Governor. He said to them:

"Are you now ready to obey the commands of the Emperor?"

"We have said again and again," answered Tryphon, "that we fear and worship the living God alone, who is in heaven."

"Beat them with leaden plummets," said Aquilinus, to the executioners, "until they can endure it no longer."

When he saw himself at last again disappointed, filled with rage, and at a loss what to do, he listened to the advice of his counsellors, and, holding a naked sword in his hand, he pronounced this sentence:

"These two men, Tryphon and Respicius, who



are Christians, and unwilling to obey the commands of the Emperor, we order to be beheaded."

The soldiers, who were in attendance, immediately seized the Martyrs and led them to the place of execution. When arrived there, the unconquered soldiers of Christ, raising their hands to heaven, cried out with a loud voice :

"Lord Jesus Christ, receive our souls, and let them find rest in the bosom of the Patriarchs!" and forthwith they presented their heads to the executioner.

The Christians of the city took possession of the sacred remains and buried them in a secret place—where they were wont to assemble and assist at the sacred Mysteries—recommending themselves to the patronage and intercession of the holy Martyrs.

They suffered in the year 250. Their festival is kept on the tenth of November.





III.

ST. THEODOTUS.

ONE of the most illustrious Martyrs that adorn the Church of God, was St. Theodotus of Ancyra, in Galatia. His life and the humble occupation which he followed, seem of themselves little calculated to attract our attention; but the manner in which he made the lowliest means subservient to the noblest end, excites in us, almost in spite of ourselves, the highest admiration.

From his earliest years, he began to prepare himself, by the practice of every virtue, for the struggle which he was to sustain at the end of his life;—like a prudent champion desirous of securing a certain victory, he trained himself by first learning to conquer his own passions. Against the evil propensities of his own nature he declared a relentless war; nor did he desist before he had brought them under perfect subjection to the spirit.



Among the virtues which he called to his aid, whilst thus engaged in spiritual contests, the one upon which he placed his chief reliance was temperance. He held as a maxim, that a Christian should find a delight in mortifying the body; that his glory should consist in self-abasement; his greatest riches in enduring poverty with magnanimity, and a soul possessing itself in peace. Thus this man, in his humble calling of an inn-keeper, was guided by principles which make the hero and the sage. He used fasting as a means to combat the natural love of pleasures, temperance to overcome the assaults of the flesh, alms-deeds to deprive riches of the power of doing harm. Nor was he satisfied with thus devoting himself to his own perfection and sanctification. Zeal for the salvation of one's neighbor, which ever distinguishes genuine sanctity, animated also our Saint. By his earnest and powerful exhortations, he induced many of his brethren to lead new and edifying lives, and persuaded a great number of Jews and Pagans to embrace the precepts of Christianity.

As his house was a place of resort for persons of every class and condition in society, he availed himself of this circumstance to render services of kindness to all: he pleaded the cause of the innocent, who were oppressed by the injustice of

their powerful neighbors ; he took a special care of the sick and the poor ; he sympathized with the afflicted and soothed their pains ; in short, his charity knew no bounds, but had a balm for every wound, by making the sufferings of others all his own. God, in His goodness, blessed the Christian behavior of His servant ; and many miracles attested the sanctity of Theodotus. The most inveterate diseases yielded to the blessing of his hand : where other remedies had failed, there the voice of his prayer obtained a perfect cure. However, he applied himself chiefly to heal the ailments of the soul. Under his treatment, the dissolute became chaste, when they heard him extol the surpassing excellence of angelic purity ; men of pleasure embraced a life of sobriety, when, by his own example, they learned the advantages of self-control ; the covetous stretched forth the hand of generous liberality, when he had made them fully understand the words that had been spoken : “ It is a more blessed thing to give, rather than to receive.” Hence, his house became a school of holiness, and many of his followers had the glory of laying down their lives for the Faith.

Meanwhile, the government of Galatia had been given to Theotecnus, a man of a most violent and cruel disposition. He was an apostate,—having

forsaken the profession of Christianity in the hopes of obtaining worldly preferment. No sooner had he heard, that the Emperor was about to publish an edict of persecution against the Church, than, thinking that now was the favorable moment of securing the good graces of Maximian, he made a solemn promise of rooting out the very existence of Christianity in Ancyra, provided he were appointed its Governor. The Emperor immediately granted him what he so anxiously desired. When it became known, that Theotecnus was approaching the city, great consternation reigned among the Faithful. Many of them at once left their homes and fled to the mountains: others concealed themselves in caves, or sought the solitude of the desert. The Governor, in order to increase the alarm, and thus to lessen the difficulty of the task which he had undertaken, sent messenger after messenger before him, to proclaim, in advance, the rigor with which he intended to execute his cruel designs. Without waiting for his own arrival, the officers were commanded to tear down the churches, to drag the Priests into the temples of the gods, and to force them to offer sacrifice. This sudden storm so overwhelmed the Christians, that the greater number of them hardly bethought themselves of any means to avert its fury; for the long calm

which they had enjoyed had left them almost unprepared.

Their enemies, on the other hand, rejoicing at the easiness wherewith they were apparently securing their triumph, gave themselves up to every excess. They passed days and nights in mirth and revelry, amidst scenes of the wildest dissipations; and this licentious conduct, far from exhausting, served, on the contrary, to awaken their animosity against the Christians. For, when they left the places of loose indulgence, they broke open the houses of the Faithful, and destroyed or carried off whatever came within their grasp. If any one ventured to complain or to oppose them, he was treated as a rebel, and an enemy of the Empire. The magistrates, instead of endeavoring to restore order, appeared, by their own example, to encourage the extravagance of the revelers. After the imperial edicts had been published, this state of affairs became still more insupportable. No Christian ventured to show himself in public. The most distinguished among them, after having been despoiled of their possessions, were thrown into prison; their wives and daughters were dragged through the streets by heartless ruffians. They who succeeded in effecting their escape from the city, did not, by finding safety in the desert and on

the barren mountains, improve their condition. Here want and starvation followed them—all the more unendurable, as they had been delicately reared, amidst all the comforts which wealth can afford. The consequence was, many of them returned to Ancyra, in the vain hope of discovering that their persecutors were less inhuman than was supposed.

During these fearful times, the blessed Theodotus did not remain idle. Undismayed by the dangers which surrounded him on all sides, he boldly exposed himself to the assaults of his enemies, for the sake of giving aid to his brethren. It was not with the desire of hoarding up riches that he kept his inn; neither the acquisition of wealth nor its possession could have influenced a mind so noble and so generous. The object he kept ever in view was, that his dwelling should be a place of safety for the persecuted, a harbor of rest for the unfortunate, an asylum for the virtuous. But the extent of his charitable cares was not limited by what he did at home. He visited those who were imprisoned for the Faith, he consoled them in their sufferings, he supplied them with food and clothing. Nor did he neglect them after they had laid down their lives. He collected their ashes, or gathered together their torn and scattered limbs, and buried

them reverently—thus saving their sacred remains from being devoured by wild beasts and birds of prey. The pain of death, pronounced against those who performed this work of mercy, did not deter him from this pious duty.

The wicked Theotecnus had issued an order whereby it was commanded, that provisions of all kinds, before they could be exposed for sale, should first be offered to the idols. By this act of tyranny, the Christians were deprived of the means of obtaining food for themselves, as well as bread and wine for the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries, unless they outwardly conformed to the superstitious ceremonies of the Pagans. The priests of the idols were specially charged to watch strictly over the execution of this order. In this extremity, however, the provident care of Theodotus came to the relief of his brethren. He had laid in great stores of provisions, which he now resold to them without exciting the suspicions of the authorities, since his avocation granted him the right of so doing. Thus his inn was a place of shelter for the homeless, a house of worship, the abode of Christian charity.

Whilst the Saint was thus employed, one of his friends, named Victor, was arrested by order of the Governor. The priests of Diana accused him of having spoken disrespectfully of the great Apollo,

and of having said, among other sacrilegious things, that he whom they worshiped as a god had violated his own sister, Diana, in the temple of Delos. Victor did not deny these accusations. On the contrary, he boldly addressed his accusers: "These crimes," said he, "of which I say that your god is guilty, are no inventions of mine; your own poets and historians substantiate the charge. Let theirs be the fault, if these accusations are false. But this I say, that your regard for common decency, and your own self-respect should make you ashamed of worshiping as a god, one who is believed guilty of crimes, the commission of which would fill poor mortals with horror."

The pagan friends of Victor tried to persuade him, to avoid the punishment of the laws, by yielding to the orders of the Governor. "Obey the command of Theotecnus," they said, "thou shalt open for thyself the way to honors by securing the friendship of the Emperors. Wealth and preferment will be at thy disposal. If thou refuse these fair terms, thou becomest thy own most cruel enemy. The most dreadful torments await thee: confiscation of thy possessions, the ruin and disgrace of thy family, an infamous death must follow; thy lifeless body, deprived of the honors of the

tomb, shall be brutally cast away to be devoured by hungry dogs."

When Theodotus heard of the dangers to which his friend was exposed, he hastened to his assistance; under cover of the night, and by bribing the jailer, he obtained admittance into the prison. He said to Victor: "A Christian must care for naught, except to lead a blameless life, by being upright in his dealings with others, by standing steadfast in the true Faith, by securing the one thing necessary, life everlasting."

Then, after cheering him up, and encouraging him to endure patiently the hardships of the prison, he put him on his guard against the secret snares of his pretended friends. "Hearken not," said he, "to the deceitful proposals of false friendship. These men are evil counselors. They seek not thy advantage, but thy ruin. Wouldst thou forsake us to follow them? What do they offer thee in exchange for all thou must necessarily lose? Is it a life of pleasure? Is it wealth and power? Are these short-lived vanities to be compared with the joys of the spirit,—the life of heavenly purity, which hitherto have been thine? No, my beloved friend, the greater their promises, the more worthless the fulfilment. Of what profit to the wretched Judas were the thirty pieces of silver for which he



betrayed his Divine Master? Think on this and remember, that the gifts and blessings, which are worth possessing in this life, are not at the disposal of the ungodly. Our God alone is the Master of them, and reserves to Himself the bestowal thereof. They that love and serve Him are entitled to their possession."

These words of Theodotus reanimated the wavering Faith of Victor. He resolved to stand firm against all the insidious wiles of his false advisers. The day of trial soon arrived. He was put to the torture. The numerous spectators were filled with astonishment at the heroic fortitude which he displayed. He had nearly run his course; the crown of victory lay within his grasp, when he begged of the tyrant, to allow him time to consider the proposals that had been repeatedly made to him. The executioners, thinking that he had apostatized, immediately put a stop to their bloody work. He was taken back to prison, where he died shortly after of the wounds which he had received, thus leaving it unknown, except to God alone, in what sentiments he left this world.

At a distance of forty miles from Ancyra, is a town called Malos. During one of the excursions, which charity prompted our Saint to make into the neighboring country, he was led thither by the

special providence of God. He saw a vast multitude of people assembled on the banks of the river Halys. He soon learned from them, that they had just thrown into the river a part of the remains of the holy Martyr Valens, who, after suffering various torments, had at last been burned whilst still alive. When the crowd withdrew, Theodotus began to follow the tortuous course of the river, in the hope of obtaining possession of the Martyr's body. He had not gone far, before he saw, to his great delight, that the eddies had cast the precious relics upon the bank. Taking with him this sacred treasure, so providentially discovered, he did not venture to enter the town, but betook himself, at some distance below, to a grotto, near which flowed a branch of the Halys. Thinking that he would be secure from observation in this lonely place, he was greatly astonished at seeing himself suddenly surrounded by a crowd of men. They were Christians who had but recently been freed from prison by the intercession, and, especially, by the bribes of the Saint. For they had been accused by their nearest relations of having overthrown an altar of Diana, and were awaiting their final doom, when Theodotus undertook to save them. This unexpected meeting filled them all with the greatest joy. They could not sufficiently express their thankfulness to the

servant of God; he, on his part, praised their zeal and courage, and exhorted them to give all the honor and glory of what he had done to Him, who had deigned to use so poor an instrument as himself, to accomplish so worthy an end.

As Providence had thrown them so happily together, Theodotus thought it proper that they should not separate without rejoicing in common. Wherefore, he invited them all to stay and partake of a suitable repast, which his experience in matters of the kind, and his knowledge of the country, found it not difficult to prepare. They seated themselves upon the green sward,—the murmuring of the stream, the warbling of birds, their own canticles of thanksgiving enlivening the scene. Before beginning their meal, he sent two of his companions to the town, to invite the Priest to come and share their banquet, and bestow his blessing upon the good things which God's kindness had provided for them. For it was the Saint's habitual practice, never to take food without first obtaining, if at all possible, the blessing of a Priest; besides, he was now particularly desirous of enjoying this favor, as he was on a dangerous journey. When the men drew near the church, they were set upon by a pack of furious dogs, who disregarding the sacred rights of hospitality due to

strangers, would doubtless have done them some harm had not the Priest come to the rescue. Hearing the noise, as he was leaving the Church, after the prayer of Sixth, he immediately drove off the unmannerly brutes, and kindly saluted the strangers. They, however, did not know the Priest. On learning that they were Christians, he welcomed them most cordially to his dwelling. As they were entering, he suddenly stood still, and, gazing intently at his two visitors, exclaimed, "O Fronto, (for that was the Priest's name,) behold thy dream verified! Yes, my friends," he continued, "last night, I saw in a dream, or a vision, two men who perfectly resembled you in every feature. They said, that they had brought into this country a great treasure, which they were to give to me. As I doubt not that you are the two men whom I saw, please tell me, where and what is this treasure?"

"It is quite true," answered the men, "that we have found a rich treasure by meeting the wonderful Theodotus, whom you may see whenever you are ready to accompany us. But first, O Father, lead us to the Priest of this town."

"I am he who stand before you," said Fronto. "But I am all anxiety to behold the blessed man of whom you speak. Let us go without further

delay to welcome him to my dwelling; for, where there are Christians, it is not proper that any one should be suffered to pass the night in the woods."

Upon this they repaired together to the place where Theodotus and his companions were waiting for them. When they arrived, they all embraced one another in token of mutual esteem and affection. Fronto entreated them to take up their abode at his house, at least for a few days. But the Saint begged to be excused, as his duties would not allow him to absent himself for any length of time from Ancyra. "For there," said he, "a glorious field is opened for Christians to distinguish themselves in the service of their Master. And, although I do not look upon myself as a champion fit to sustain the glorious cause of Christ, yet I can be a witness of the generous struggle of others, and applaud them when they triumph. Besides this, I can always render some service to my brethren in their need."

When they had partaken of the repast, Theodotus, looking around him and smiling, said to Fronto: "How beautiful this quiet spot appears to me! If we could erect here a little chapel, I think it would be the very place suited for the reception of holy relics."

"I am of the same opinion," replied the Priest,

“but, would it not be better first to obtain some relics, before we make plans for a building wherein to put them? Have then a care to secure the sacred remains of some Martyr, and I will not fail to prepare a proper place for their reception.”

“I will look out for that,” said the Saint, “or rather the Lord Himself will provide. This only I ask of thee, Father, do not delay in making the preparation: the relics shall be here at an early day.”

So saying he took from his finger a ring, which he gave to the Priest as a pledge of his promise, and added: “Let God be a witness between us, that the relics shall be at hand after a few days.”

Upon this they all separated, after thanking God, whose kind providence had granted them so pleasant and unexpected a meeting.

When Theodotus reached Ancyra, he found the city full of consternation and confusion. The persecution seemed to have unsettled the state of affairs, as much as if an earthquake had spread dread and havoc among the inhabitants. Law and order were no longer known. Forgetting all care of others, every one was busy with forming plans for his own preservation.

At that time, there lived in Ancyra seven Virgins, who, from their very childhood, had consecrated

themselves to God. They had spent their days in the practice of every virtue, and, above all, they had ever been most solicitous to keep unsullied their purity—which they had placed under the special guardianship of their heavenly Bridegroom. The Governor gave orders to have them arrested. They were put to the torture; but no amount of cruelty was able to shake their constancy in the Faith. Finding himself disappointed in this, Theotecnus handed them over to some young libertines to be insulted at will, in contempt of their Religion. When they heard this inhuman sentence, which was to them worse than death—in the midst of torments, they raised their hands and eyes to heaven, and prayed: “Lord Jesus Christ,” they said, “so long as it was in our power to preserve undefiled our virginal purity, Thou knowest how carefully we have labored so to do. Suffer not that to-day we lose that which, by a willing and pleasing sacrifice, we have made wholly Thine.”

The most impudent of the young men was about to lay hold of Thecusa, the eldest of the Virgins, when, bathed in tears, she cast herself at his feet and said to him:

“My son, what endless remorse art thou preparing for thyself? What pleasure can there be in ill-using us, whom thou beholdest worn out with

fasting, sickness, torture, yea, and old age? Why wouldst thou dishonor these bodies, which, according to the Governor's command, are only fit to become the food of beasts and birds of prey?"

Seeing that her words, or rather the power given to them from on high, began to produce an impression on the mind of the young man, she removed the veil from her head, and, showing her gray hairs, she continued: "Behold, my son, seventy years have left their impress on this head; my sisters are not much younger. If venerable age and innocence do not move thee, does not thy memory associate them with some tender recollection of the past? Hast thou not, perhaps, a mother, a relative of the same age? If they be still alive, or even if unsparing death have laid them in the grave, let the remembrance of them plead this day in our favor. Spare us for their sake. Leave us to our tears and sufferings. Believe me, if, yielding to the noble impulse of a manly nature, thou harm us not, Jesus, our God and Saviour, will not leave thy generosity unrewarded."

This moving appeal produced the desired effect. The young men, far from making any attempt to injure their helpless victims, shed tears of compassion, and went their way, loudly protesting against the unfeeling barbarity of Theotecnus, who had

endeavored to make them the tools of his detestable tyranny.

Meanwhile, the Governor learned that his wicked designs against the holy Virgins had been frustrated. Determined to have his revenge, yet dreading to expose their chastity a second time, on account of the esteem in which their virtue was held, even by the Pagans, he resolved to employ another expedient. He ordered that they should be made to officiate as the priestesses of Diana and Minerva. The Pagans of Ancyra had a custom of going every year, on a certain day, to a neighboring lake to wash the images of these goddesses. The day, on which that ceremony was to take place, had just then come. Theotecnus willed that Thecusa and her companions should be placed at the head of the procession. Standing in a chariot, exposed to the impudent gaze and the derision of the assembled multitude, the modest servants of Christ appeared rather dead than alive. After them came the musicians, with flutes and cymbals; and the bacchants dancing, singing and howling, to testify that they were laboring under the inspiration of the god of wine. The Governor himself, attended by his guards, closed up the procession. Many of the spectators, although enemies of the Christians, were shocked at the barbarous sight, and openly

expressed their disgust; others praised the modesty of the holy Virgins, and even shed tears of compassion, when they beheld the rough treatment which they were made to endure.

Such was the spectacle which Ancyra presented, when Theodotus returned: He was not without uneasiness concerning the seven Virgins, who were struggling for the Faith; he feared that the natural weakness and timidity of their sex might at last give way before these long-continued trials,—less on account of their painfulness, than by reason of the publicity given to them. Wherefore, he begged of God, with many tears, to strengthen His servants in this hour of peril. That he might give himself to prayer without being interrupted, he shut himself up in a little cottage, belonging to a poor man, Theocharis by name; it stood near the church of the Patriarchs. Here he was joined by some Christians, among whom were the young Theodotus, a relative of the Saint, and Polychronius, a nephew of the Virgin Thecusa. They had thus remained in prayer, prostrate on the ground, from sunrise until midday, when the wife of Theocharis brought the news, that Thecusa and her six companions had been drowned in the lake. On hearing this, Theodotus raising himself from the ground, but still kneeling, lifted up his eyes toward heaven with a

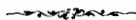
look that bespoke the joy, the love, and thankfulness of his heart: "I thank Thee, O Lord," he said, "because Thou didst not suffer that my sighs and tears should be unavailing: Thou hast heard the prayer of Thy unworthy servant."

Then, addressing the wife of Theocharis, he asked her some particulars of the Martyrdom of the Virgins. She, having been an eye-witness of all that had passed, answered:

"After coming to the lake, the Governor began anew to tempt their constancy, by making to them the most flattering promises, if they would renounce their Religion, and worship the gods of the Empire. Thecusa and her companions would not so much as listen to his fair words. Then he tried once more to frighten them with threats of tortures; the holy Virgins heeded them not. Next the priestesses of Diana and Minerva advanced, and endeavored to clothe them with white garments, and to put crowns upon their heads, as a mark of their priestly office; the noble Christians tore the garments and the crowns, and with scorn and disgust cast them far away. At this, Theotecnus grew exceedingly furious; he gave orders, immediately, to put them all in a small boat, to tie stones about their necks, and to cast them into the depths of the lake. This

was done. They were drowned at a distance of from four to five hundred feet from the shore."

When Theodotus had heard the account of the Martyrdom of the Virgins, he resolved at once to obtain possession of their bodies. Wherefore he called in Polychronius and Theocharis, and together they began to deliberate about the most speedy and feasible means of effecting this purpose. About sundown a Christian youth, named Glycerius, came in and told them that the Governor, suspecting that the Christians would endeavor to carry off the bodies of the Martyrs, had placed a strong guard of soldiers near the lake. This news filled the Saint with great grief; it seemed to him now almost impossible to execute his intention, both on account of the soldiers, who were to hinder their approach, and by reason of the heaviness of the stones which had sunk the bodies into the water. Night had now come, and they had not yet agreed on any plan which appeared practicable. When the darkness had become so great that his steps could not be watched, the Saint went to a neighboring church of the Patriarchs, but on arriving there he was sorely disappointed. The Pagans had walled up the entrance. However, he prostrated himself outside, near the place where the altar stood. There he continued for sometime in prayer.



After this he betook himself to another church, called of the Fathers; and, finding that one closed up in the same manner as the former, he threw himself on the ground before the entrance, and poured forth his soul in fervent prayer. Suddenly he heard a great noise behind him, and thinking that he was pursued, he hastened to the dwelling of Theocharis. Here he had not been long before, worn out with fatigue and anxiety, he fell into a deep sleep. But he was scarcely asleep, when the blessed Thecusa appeared to him, and said:

“Sleepest thou, my son Theodotus, and hast thou no care for us? Hast thou so soon forgotten all the lessons and the good advice which I gave thee, during thy childhood and youth, whereby, contrary to the expectation of all, I led thee from virtue to virtue? When I was with thee, thou didst ever honor me as thy mother; knowest thou not, that, after her death, a dutiful son owes the last duties to his mother? Suffer not, my son, that our bodies beneath the waters become the prey of fishes. Arise, hasten to the lake; for after two days a great struggle awaits thee. But, above all, beware of a traitor.” So saying she vanished.

Theodotus awoke from his sleep, arose, and immediately calling the Brethren together, he related to them the vision. All declared themselves

ready to follow him whithersoever he would lead them. The remainder of the night they spent in praying, that God might grant a favorable issue to their undertaking. At the first appearance of day, they sent Theocharis and Glycerius to examine, by personal observation, how matters stood; for they had reason to suppose that the guard might have been withdrawn from the lake, as, on that day, the Pagans celebrated a great festival in honor of Diana. After an absence of about three hours, the messengers whom they had sent out returned. They reported, that the soldiers were still on guard, and that they had thought it unsafe to approach the lake, lest the soldiers, if aware of their presence, might suspect their intention, and redouble their watchfulness. Upon this they resolved to attempt nothing further that day, but to take some rest, and prepare for future labors.

So soon as night returned, they all went forth cheerfully, although they had tasted no food that day. Observing the strictest silence, they followed the road leading toward the lake. They were provided with sharp scythes so as to be able to cut speedily the thick ropes, with which the stones were tied to the bodies. The night was so very dark and cloudy that neither stars nor moon appeared. On their way they had to pass through



the place where criminals were publicly executed. No one ever ventured to pass over this spot after nightfall. All around, there were hanging dead bodies and skeletons, the flesh whereof had been devoured by birds of prey; the heads of others, stuck upon stakes, presented a ghastly spectacle. The ground was strewed with half-burnt limbs, that had been mangled upon the rack. A sudden feeling of dread and horror seized Theodotus and his companions. They began well-nigh to waver in their resolution, when, all at once, they heard a voice, saying: "Advance boldly, O Theodotus." This terrified them the more; but immediately each one signed himself on the forehead with the sign of the Cross. At the same time, there appeared before them, towards the East, a brilliant light in the form of a Cross. With mingled feelings of awe and joy, they prostrated themselves upon the ground, and, with their faces turned toward the glorious sign, they thanked and adored God.

Thus cheered on, they arose from prayer and proceeded on their journey. It was now so dark that they could not distinguish one another. To add to their distress a heavy rain set in, which rendered the road so soft and slippery, that it was next to impossible for them to keep on their feet. They saw no remedy for their troubles,

except to have again recourse to prayer. They were heard. On a sudden they beheld a stream of light coming, as it were, from a bright torch moving before them. At the same moment, there appeared two venerable men clad in shining garments, with snow-white hair and beard, they said to Theodotus: "Take courage, Theodotus. The Lord Jesus Christ hath written thy name among the Martyrs. He hath heard thy prayers and seen thy tears for the recovering of the holy bodies. We are sent to receive thee. We are they whom they call the Fathers. Near the lake, thou shalt find the Blessed Sosander, in full armor: he fills the guards with terror. But thou shouldst not have brought a traitor with thee."

Following the light that went before them, they arrived at last at the lake. The rain now began to fall in torrents; lightning rent the clouds; peal after peal of thunder succeeding shook the very ground; the unloosened winds seemed to threaten a general destruction. The guards were bewildered with fear. But they had not to struggle against the elements alone: for, whithersoever they turned their eyes, they beheld the gigantic form of a warrior, clad in coat of mail, with shield and helmet, brandishing a lance, whilst fire seemed to flash from his looks. Thrown into disorder, and more dead than alive,



the terrified soldiers fled, and succeeded at last in reaching some huts that stood not far off, wherein they concealed themselves. Meanwhile, the force of the wind had driven the waters of the lake toward the opposite shore, so as to leave uncovered the spot where lay the bodies of the Martyrs. Theodotus and his companions soon took possession of the precious remains, and, placing them carefully upon beasts of burden, removed them to the Church of the Patriarchs, where they buried them reverently. The names of these seven holy Virgins were: Thecusa, Alexandra, Phaina, Claudia, Euphrasia, Matrona, and Julitta; the three first had not only consecrated their virginity to God, but had also embraced the other evangelical counsels.

In the morning, it was rumored all over the city, that the bodies of the Martyrs had, during the preceding night, been taken out of the lake. This news excited a great commotion among the inhabitants. Wherever a Christian made his appearance, he was forthwith arrested and put to the torture, to force him to point out the probable authors of this misdemeanor against the laws. When the Saint heard what was going on, he immediately determined to deliver himself up to the magistrates, and to avow publicly that he alone was to be blamed for the act,—if the performing of

so humane an action were at all blameworthy. The Brethren, however, would by no means suffer him to follow his inclination in this matter.

Meanwhile, Polychronius, the nephew of Thecusa, disguised as a peasant, joined himself to some country people who were taking their produce to market; that thus he might ascertain more fully the feelings and opinions of the citizens concerning the occurrences of the night. This imprudent step he took without asking the advice of his more experienced Brethren. As he was well known to many of the inhabitants of Ancyra, his disguise did not save him from being soon fully recognized. He was arrested and taken before the Governor. When questioned by Theotecnus about the removal of the bodies, he preserved at first an unbroken silence—even when placed upon the rack, he seemed unwilling to betray his friends; but when, by order of the tyrant, the executioner put the sword upon his neck and told him to be ready to receive his death blow, he lost courage, and yielding to the fear of death, he declared, that Theodotus had carried off the bodies of the Virgins, and pointed out the place where they had been buried. Thereupon, Theotecnus commanded that the bodies should be taken up and burnt in public by the executioner. Then it was that the Brethren

understood that the wretched Polychronius was the traitor, against whom Theodotus had twice been warned.

When the Saint was informed of the treason of his young acquaintance, he shed many tears—weeping over the loss of one who had been so dear to him, on account of the relationship that existed between the apostate and the martyred Thecusa,—his own spiritual mother. From that moment, he became wholly indifferent to the things of earth, and thought only of death, which he knew was not far distant. He besought his Brethren to unite their prayers with his own, that God might deign to bestow upon him the crown of Martyrdom. All were filled with great concern when they heard him speak in this manner, the more so as, hitherto, he had been to them their greatest support, the source of consolation in all their trials and afflictions. Theodotus requested all to kneel down and pray with him. At first, he prayed in silence, but, after a while, raising his voice, he said: “Lord Jesus, O Thou the only hope of them that seem without hope, grant me the grace to finish courageously the bloody course that is before me; give me strength so to combat, that it may be made manifest to all, that Thou supportest me. I offer to Thee my blood, which I am eager to shed for the glory of

Thy name; receive this my oblation, and let it plead for the salvation of my Brethren; let the tyrant be appeased by this humble sacrifice which I offer unto Thee for their sake. Relieve them from further oppression; still the storm; give peace to Thy Church; that they, who believe in Thee, may worship Thee in freedom undisturbed, and sing and praise Thy power and mercy now and forever."

The Brethren who were present could not be consoled at the thought of being separated from one whom they so dearly loved. Weeping and lamenting, they said to him: "Farewell, beloved Theodotus, O thou so long the light and joy of all thy brethren. Thee, indeed, when thou departest from among us, the joyous choirs of Angels and Archangels will welcome into their midst; thee, our Lord Jesus Christ, will hail as His good and faithful servant, who has continued steadfast amidst all trials and tribulations; but who shall be left to comfort us? Grief, and mourning, and distress shall be our portion, when thou art no more. Who will uphold us in our doubts and troubles, when thou art gone?"

Theodotus was greatly moved by this manifestation of grief and affection. Mingling his tears with theirs, he embraced them all, as a token of his tender love for them. Then, suppressing every

outburst of feeling, he said to them, in a calm and earnest tone: "After a few days, the venerable priest Fronto will come to Ancyra; to him I have given a ring, which he will show to you; when he gives you this token of my trust in him, hinder him not from carrying off whatever there may remain of my body." After uttering these few words, he signed himself with the sign of the cross, and went forth courageously to the combat that awaited him.

When he was at some distance from the house of Theocharis, he met two of his friends, citizens of Ancyra. Hearing that he was going into the city to deliver himself into the hands of Theotecnus, the Governor, they said to him: "O Theodotus save thyself; do not expose thyself to the rage of the people aroused against thee. For know that, at this very moment, the priestesses of Minerva and Diana, attended by a crowd of the populace, are accusing thee before the Governor. They say that thou withdrawest the people from the worship of their goddesses, by telling them that they are lifeless beings made of wood and stone. Polychronius, also, charges thee with having carried off the remains of the seven martyred Virgins. Whilst it is yet time, go, conceal thyself; a man of thy prudence should know, that it is neither safe nor

wise to go, of his own accord, in search of torments and of death.”

The Saint replied to them :

“If ye are my friends, make no vain attempt to dissuade me from my purpose; but go to the Governor and say to him, in my name: ‘Theodotus, whom the priestesses and the whole city are accusing, is standing at the door, waiting to obtain a hearing.’ By so doing, you will grant me the greatest favor I can desire.”

Saying this, he began immediately to walk before them, with a firm and fearless step, as if he were engaged in transacting some business which might indeed awaken his zealous care, but the result of which could not in the least disturb his equanimity. With so calm and cheerful a mind did he meet his accusers.

The room, wherein Theodotus presented himself before the Governor, was not by any means calculated to inspire confidence or cheerfulness in a visitor. The fire, the caldrons with boiling water, the rack, the wheel, and various other instruments of torture, were ill-ominously displayed on all sides. The Saint surveyed this apparatus, without betraying the least emotion, except that he smiled when the Governor seemed to ask, by a look of inquiry, whether this terrible sight did not frighten him.



Soon, however, Theotecnus, assuming a gentle tone, which was altogether unnatural, said to him :

“Theodotus, the instruments of torture which thou seest are not intended for thee ; so far, at least, as it depends entirely upon thee whether or not it may be found necessary to use them. Be but wise, and offer willingly a sacrifice to the gods of the Empire ; this done, I will take it upon myself to acquit thee of all the offenses laid to thy charge. I will hearken neither to the expostulations of the whole city, nor to the accusations of the venerable priestesses of Diana and Minerva. Moreover, I promise thee the favor of our invincible Emperors ; they will honor thee with their letters, and, in turn, will be delighted to read thine own. And, if thou settest any value on my friendship, I assure thee from this moment it is thine. What do I ask in return for all this ? It is very little indeed. Renounce that man Jesus, whom Pilate, the Governor of Judea, years ago crucified. Endeavor to persuade others to follow herein thy example. Thou appearest to me a wise and prudent person ; now, a man’s wisdom consists in weighing well all matters which concern our own interest, and in availing ourselves of every favorable opportunity : in short, in rendering ourselves happy. Besides, I will make thee a priest of the great Apollo, the inventor and

master of sciences and of all useful arts. Thou shalt have the power to appoint officers to fill dignities in the State, and the sole control of the priests in the temples. Every imperial favor will be bestowed through thy hands. Desirest thou riches for thyself? Honor, and power, and boundless wealth are placed at thy feet. Thou hast but to will it, and all these magnificent promises shall at once be realized."

At these words of the Governor, a burst of applause arose from the vast multitude assembled in and around the hall. They congratulated Theodotus, and pressed him to accept, without delay, the generous terms offered by Theotecnus. No one doubted that, if Theodotus possessed half the good sense for which they gave him credit, he would, without hesitation, do all that was required to secure his worldly interests. When, however, silence was restored, the Saint, raising his eyes toward heaven, spoke as follows :

"First of all, I beg my Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ,—of whom you have spoken this day as if He were merely a mortal man,—to grant me grace, that I may be able to refute your errors concerning your gods, and to explain briefly His Incarnation and the wonders of His life. With regard to your gods, it is almost impossible to speak of

them without blushing. The one whom you call Jupiter, whom you worship as the greatest of your deities, is in reality only such, because he is reputed the most infamous of them all. Orpheus, your poet, says that he slew his own father, Saturn; that he took for wife his own mother, Rhea; that he was again and again guilty of adultery and incest, and that, not satisfied with these crimes, he was, besides, a detestable corrupter of youth. Your other gods, Apollo, Mars, Vulcan, and the rest, were all the faithful imitators of the wickedness of their infamous chief. There is not a single one among them to whom you can point, as forming an honorable exception in their career of crime. Your laws punish such abominations with great severity; yet your writers extol them with admiring enthusiasm, when perpetrated by those whom you call gods. Is it possible that these things can be tolerated, and that decency, and virtue, and worth can have existence among you? Think of this and blush at the thought. Place in opposition to this the holy doctrines of our Religion. Here everything is pure, and chaste, and divine. Ages before His coming among men, the Prophets—men inspired from above—had foretold the Incarnation, the miracles, the sufferings, the death, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The heavens themselves pro-

claimed His divinity: it was by the appearance of a wonderful star that the Magi, the sages of Persia and Chaldea, learnt His birth upon earth, went to adore Him as the God of the universe, and as such offered to Him their most precious gifts. I need not mention the miracles which He wrought; you have all heard of them: how he changed water into wine; how, with five loaves and two fishes He fed five thousand persons; how He walked upon the waters; how He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf; how, by a single word, He healed every malady, and restored the dead to life, after they had been buried for days. Were He not God, could He have done all this? Were He not God, would nature have obeyed His voice as that of its Creator?"

These words of the Saint produced among the listening throng an effect similar to that which is observed on the sea, when its waves are gradually lashed into fury by the winds. At first, low murmurs of dissent were heard; next, as he proceeded with his remarks, shouts and riotous language succeeded; until, as he was finishing, tumultuous roars of execration burst forth from every side and overwhelmed the voice of the speaker. The priestesses of Minerva and Diana rent their garments, tore the crowns from their heads, and, with

hair dishevelled, rushed madly among the people, appealing to them to avenge their insulted deities. The mob, goaded on to frenzy, pressed toward the tribunal of the Governor. "Why not silence a man," they said, "who has the boldness to revile our gods in your very presence? Have you not heard his blasphemies? Put him to the torture at once, that the wrath of our mighty deities may be appeased, lest in their vengeance they destroy us all."

Theotecnus, cruel as he naturally was, did not need to be instigated by an infuriated mob. But, on this occasion, it seemed to him a stroke of policy to make a show of forbearance, in order that the blame of torturing one, who had ever been looked upon as a general favorite, might rest with the people. However, when the will of the populace was now clearly known, he entered with eager haste into their sentiments. Without considering that by so doing he degraded his station, he leaped from his tribunal, and began personally to superintend the preparations for the torture—thus acting in the twofold capacity of judge and of chief executioner. In the midst of all this uproar and confusion, Theodotus stood looking on, calm and self-collected, as if he were a stranger, who felt not the least concern in all this bustling excitement.

When everything was ready, the Governor ordered the Martyr to be stretched upon the rack. Immediately the executioners set to work: with pinchers and iron hooks they tore his limbs, and lashed his body with leathern thongs. Nor did the people stand by as idle spectators: every one who could, endeavored to get near the victim, and to add his share to the torture. They vied with the executioners themselves in unfeeling barbarity. The Saint, meanwhile, regarded them with a smiling countenance, without showing any signs of pain; for his mind and heart were occupied in the contemplation of the sufferings of his Redeemer, to whose love he made himself a willing sacrifice. When the torturers were almost exhausted with their cruel exertions, the Governor ordered strong vinegar to be poured over all the wounds, and then burning torches to be applied, so as to scar the whole body of the Martyr. As the Saint perceived the smell of the burning flesh, he turned his head a little aside. Thereupon, Theotecnus, imagining that his constancy was beginning to yield beneath the weight of torments, approached him, and sneeringly said:

“What has become of thy boasting words, Theodotus? A moment ago thou couldst bid defiance to our power, and now a little torturing

has made thee a coward. Assuredly, hadst thou worshipped our gods, instead of scoffing at their power, this misfortune would not have befallen thee. I would advise thee, since, after all, thou art but a miserable inn-keeper, not to put thyself forward as a brave and learned teacher; but to speak and think respectfully of our invincible Emperors, who have the power of life and death over thee."

"And I would advise you, O Theotecnus," replied the Martyr, "that you see to it, that your officers attend better to the commands you give them; for I perceive that they perform this business of torturing me in a very awkward manner; do not wonder, then, that I turn away my head. As to the amount and violence of your torments, know that I care not for them—no, not in the least. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gives me strength and courage, enables me to despise your tyranny as that of a vile slave, and to defy the power of your wicked Emperors. Were I guilty of any crime, I would have cause for fear, but as I suffer for the truth of my Religion, I am ready to undergo cheerfully whatsoever you may think proper to inflict."

Thereupon, the Governor, filled with rage, and disappointed in his expectations, commanded that the Martyr's jaws should be beaten with stones and his teeth struck out.

“Were you to tear out my tongue,” said Theodotus, “and deprive me of speech, still my God would graciously listen to the voice and prayer of my heart.”

As the executioners were now altogether tired out, Theotecnus gave orders that the Martyr should be loosed from the rack and taken to prison, that he might again be put to the torture at some future time. When he was led through the public place, many of the people drew near him, that they might see his ghastly wounds. Theodotus looked at them with a cheerful countenance, and said :

“Now you can all be witnesses, my friends, to the wonderful power of our Lord Jesus Christ. You see how He imparts strength to them who suffer for His sake. Old and feeble as I am, it was His grace that enabled this poor body of mine to overcome fire and steel. He gave courage to my spirit, so that I could despise the threats of your Governor, and spurn the impious edicts of your Emperors. Our God is no respecter of persons. He manifests His wonderful works in all, whether they be poor or rich, bondmen or free, Greeks or Barbarians, whensoever He thinks it proper so to do for His glory.” Then displaying before them the bloody marks upon his body, he added : “Such is the sacrifice which it behooves all, who believe

in Jesus Christ, to offer to Him, since He first sacrificed Himself for the salvation of every one of us."

After five days had elapsed, the Governor ordered his tribunal to be fitted up in the most public place of the city; for, in spite of the opposition which he met with on the part of Theodotus, he would not give up all hope of conquering his firmness in the Faith, but, on the contrary, he flattered himself that, by some means or other, his continued efforts must at last prove successful. Wherefore, the Saint was taken from prison, and again led before Theotecnus, who was seated on his tribunal surrounded by his attendants, and an immense concourse of people of every rank—whose curiosity had been greatly increased by the proceedings of the former trial.

As soon as the Martyr stood in the Governor's presence, Theotecnus assuming a tone of unusual kindness, said:

"Come nearer, Theodotus, and fear nothing. We are glad to hear that, since thou didst experience the effects of our anger a few days ago, thou hast laid aside thy pride, and art become quite tractable. In truth, hadst thou listened more to thy own good sense, and to the advice of thy friends, none of these hard things would have



befallen thee; but we were forced, contrary to our own feelings, to employ them. Let us forget the past. We are ready to repair the harm thou hast received, by using our best endeavors to treat thee well. We will keep faithfully the promises made the other day, and may add others, if it be desired. Now, therefore, be no longer headstrong; go, offer sacrifice to the immortal gods; acknowledge their supreme power, and, behold, thou becomest at once the happiest of men. Remember, that obstinacy is unbecoming in every man, and especially in one so wise as thou art. In short, consult thy own well-being; for we must again give thee warning, that, unless thou shalt choose for the better and avail thyself of our proposals, the torments which thou didst suffer lately will appear as a mere shadow, compared to those which most certainly await thee."

Unmoved by either promises or threats, the fearless Confessor replied:

"Think you, O Theotecnus, that, with all your cunning, you are able to invent any new torments so fierce and cruel, that the power of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot render them bearable and pleasant? Although, as you may yourself see, you have so torn and racked this poor body, that it is but one wound, yet, if you feel so inclined, give it another trial; that you may be convinced, how, in

so holy a cause, sufficient strength is always given to resist the powers of darkness."

The Governor immediately directed the executioners to stretch him again upon the rack, and to open all his old wounds. The more they tortured him, the more loudly the Saint raised his voice to praise our Lord Jesus Christ. He was then taken from the rack, and his body was rolled upon pieces of tiles made glowing hot. This torture was so excruciating, that the Martyr exclaimed: "Lord Jesus, if it be Thy will, allay the sufferings which I endure for the sake of Thy holy Name." At the very instant he felt relieved. Upon this he was put a third time upon the rack. Every part of his body had now been repeatedly tortured, except his tongue; this had been left sound in the hope that the Martyr would use it to renounce the Faith. But the expectations of the tyrant were doomed to disappointment.

Wherefore, being at a loss to invent new tortures, and seeing that even the executioners were exhausted, Theotecnus pronounced this sentence: "By the authority vested in us, we command that Theodotus be beheaded, for having declared himself the defender of the Christians; for being the enemy of our gods, and for refusing to obey the edicts of our Emperors, ever victorious,—as well as

our own. Moreover, we ordain, that, after the execution of this sentence, his body be burnt, lest the Christians carry it off, and bury the same according to their custom."

No sooner was this sentence pronounced than the Saint was hurried off to the place of execution. An immense crowd of people, Christians as well as Pagans, accompanied him. When arrived at the appointed place, Theodotus, kneeling down and raising his hands to heaven, uttered this prayer :

"Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of heaven and earth, who forsakest not them who hope in Thee, I thank Thee for deeming me worthy to be a citizen of Thy heavenly City, and a partaker of Thy Kingdom. I thank Thee, for having given me strength to overcome the infernal dragon, and to crush its head. Grant peace to Thy servants, and let the violence of their enemies be appeased by my death; give peace to Thy Church, and free her from the tyranny of the devil. Amen!" As he finished the word, Amen, he cast his eyes on the surrounding multitude, among whom he descried a great number of his brethren and acquaintances. All were bathed in tears; many cried and sobbed aloud. The Saint said to them: "Weep not, my brethren, but rather give praise and thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath given me grace to overcome the enemy,

and to finish my course by a glorious triumph. Henceforth, I will pray for you with greater confidence in heaven."

He had hardly uttered these last words, when, with one blow, the executioner severed his head from the body.

Thus died the humble and glorious champion Theodotus.

The executioners raised a very large funeral pile to burn the body of the Martyr, in accordance with the orders of the Governor. But they had no sooner placed the body upon the pile, than the whole mass of combustibles became suddenly enveloped in rays of light of so dazzling a brilliancy, that no one ventured to approach. The body meanwhile remained untouched. The officers went forthwith to acquaint the Governor with this marvelous occurrence. Theotecnus directed them to place a strong guard of soldiers around the place, so as to render useless any attempt of the Christians to carry off the remains of the Blessed Martyr.

Meanwhile, on the very day of the Martyr's death, Fronto, the Priest, had left Malos for Ancyra, to obtain from Theodotus, according to agreement, the promised relics. He had with him the ring given by the Saint at their late meeting. He was leading an ass laden with two skins of old wine,

from a vineyard which he himself cultivated. This he intended as a present to his friend Theodotus. It was growing dark as he was nearing the city. When arrived at the place where the soldiers were guarding the funeral pile, the animal, fatigued with the long journey, on a sudden lay down, and could not be induced to advance any further. The soldiers, who were looking on from a distance—whether moved by the prospect of another night of terrors, or by the sight of the wine-skins, may be conjectured, although it is not certainly known—seeing that the obstinate beast was putting the venerable old man to great trouble, went to his assistance, and said to him :

“Whither art thou going, venerable stranger? It is now too late in the evening to reach the city. Come, stay with us here to-night; thou canst resume thy journey early in the morning. If the ass feel inclined to sup, there is an abundance of grass on the place: or, if he prefer to take a stroll into the wheat-fields, no one will object, so long as we are here. Come, good friend, stay: thou shalt find a more hearty welcome in our hut than in the unaccommodating inns of Ancyra.”

Fronto suffered himself to be persuaded, and entered the soldiers' hut. Here he found a comfortable fire, and supper ready. When the cravings

of hunger were dispelled, the men addressed themselves to a huge wine-jar, which they did not spare, at the same time inviting the stranger to follow their example. Fronto thought it but right that he should, in some way, repay the hospitality of his rude entertainers. He went out, therefore, and returning with one of the wine-skins, asked for a cup; then filling it to the brim, he presented it to the nearest soldier, smiling as he said, "Taste this, my friend, I trust thou wilt not find it hard to take."

The soldiers seeing the wine sparkling in the cup, and perceiving the sweet aroma which perfumed the hut, exclaimed as with one voice :

"Ah! the delicious wine! Venerable stranger, please, tell us, how old is it?"

"It is of my vintage of five years ago," replied Fronto.

"Then we should all taste it. The very thought of so generous a wine makes one thirsty," said the soldiers.

"Welcome to it, my friends," said Fronto, "do not spare it."

A young soldier, named Metrodorus, after disposing of a cup, smacking his lips, cried out : "O the delicious beverage! it makes me almost forget that frightful night which we passed near the lake, whilst guarding the bodies of those Christian

women. I thought that all the waters of Lethe should never be able to efface from my memory the horrors and blows of that night."

"Take care," said another, named Apollonius, "lest it make thee forget that we are watching over the body of the man of brass, who stole the women out of the lake."

"I made a mistake," said Fronto, "by not bringing with me an interpreter to explain your riddles. Who are those women taken out of the lake? Who is that man of brass of whom you are speaking? Is it some brazen statue? Or, perhaps, are you amusing yourselves at the expense of an old man, who lays no claims to being very sharp-witted?"

Thereupon, one of the soldiers, Glaucentius by name, said to Fronto: "What my comrades are telling thee, is all perfectly true. Whether the man, whom we are guarding, was made of brass or of steel is quite immaterial; for he was harder than either of these metals, since fire can soften them. But neither fire, nor water, nor iron, nor stones, produced the least effect upon him."

"I am still as much in the dark as ever," said Fronto. "Speakest thou of a man or of a phantom?"

"That I do not know myself," replied Glaucentius,

“the whole subject is even now a mystery to us; I should not call him a man, for I do not suppose that a mere man could stand firm under tortures as he did. We, indeed, pretend to believe that he was a fellow-citizen of ours; that the whole city knows his name and family; but, for all that, facts prove that he was something more than human. Stranger, believe me when I tell thee, that he was scourged, racked and burned, yet his body seemed not to suffer any thing; for he never uttered a word of complaint: he stood like a rock in the midst of the waves, insensible, immovable. Perhaps thou desirest to know his name. He was called Theodotus; by profession a Christian, as that kind of people are called. By some skilful practice or other, he managed to carry off the bodies of seven women drowned in the lake; and that, too, whilst several of us were watching, night and day, to prevent the theft. Many persons belonging to his profession were daily arrested on suspicion of being concerned in that work. So, finally, he gave himself up to the magistrate, that he might be dealt with according to law. The Governor, admiring his good qualities, offered him every imaginable inducement to make him renounce his Religion. But he, rejecting every proposal, laughed at the power of our gods, spurned the edicts of our

Emperors, and hardly deigned to give an answer to our chief magistrate. He was, then, scourged and tortured, but no amount of torments seemed to affect him in the least. He was as lively and cheerful as if he were seated at a banquet with his friends; he sang canticles of joy, and defied the power of our Governor. This, however, did not last long, for his excellency waxed very wrathful, and ordered that his head should be struck off without any further delay, deeming this the only method of silencing the tongue of the man of brass. Orders were also given that the body should be burned, so that nothing might remain of him: but—” Here Glaucentius seemed to grow somewhat uneasy, and looked slyly through the crevices of the hut, in the direction of the place where lay the body of the Martyr.

“But what?” enquired Fronto.

“It is not unlikely,” resumed the soldier, “that something might happen to us here, on his account; for we have not yet forgotten what befell us at the lake. Thou shouldst know that, when the body was placed upon the funeral pile, so great a light surrounded it on a sudden, that no one ventured to approach, or to set fire to the pile. So we are ordered to watch over it here, lest the Christians might come and steal it away.”

So saying, Glaucenius led Fronto to the spot where lay the Martyr's body, covered with boughs and dried grass.

Fronto satisfied by what he had heard and seen, that the body was really that of his friend, the blessed Theodotus, thanked God; and implored His help to enable him to carry off in safety the sacred remains. Wherefore, disguising his intention, he returned to the hut, and began to entertain the soldiers with various interesting anecdotes. At the same time, he invited them not to be sparing of his good wine. They repeated their draughts so frequently that, after a while, the fumes of the generous liquid began to produce drowsiness; and soon the whole band, forgetting all about the object of their watchful care, lay snoring in the hut. Fronto did not neglect this favorable opportunity. He arose immediately, and, quietly removing the Martyr's body, placed it carefully upon the beast of burden. Then putting the ring on the finger of Theodotus, he addressed him as if he were still alive:

“Holy Martyr, the time is come to fulfil thy promise; behold the ring thou gavest me of late; let me not be deprived of the precious relics.”

As soon as the ass was let loose, he took the road in the direction of Malos. Fronto, after

replacing the boughs and the grass, so that it could not be perceived that anything had been disarranged, reëntered the soldier's hut, and composed himself to sleep during the remainder of the night. When they awoke in the morning, Fronto pretended to look after his beast of burden, but it was nowhere to be seen. He assumed a show of the greatest uneasiness, so as actually to excite the sympathy of the soldiers. They endeavored to console him in the best way they could, regretting, perhaps, less the loss of the beast than of the remaining wine-skin—the companion of which had procured them so comfortable a sleep, that neither fear of ghosts, nor apprehension of blows, on account of the man of brass, had been able to disturb them.

Meanwhile, the aged Priest, still affecting to be very sad at the loss of his animal, bade farewell to his honest entertainers with mutual expressions of good-will. He had not gone far before he met some of his friends who were coming from Malos. They informed him, that they had seen his beast of burden standing alone in a place which they described. Fronto became satisfied that now everything was safe. He hastened to the spot; and found that it was the very same where, a few days before, he had met the blessed Martyr, and where

the Saint had said to him: "This place seems to me exceedingly well adapted to receive some relics of Martyrs." By his zealous efforts a church was soon erected in honor of St. Theodotus; and God glorified His Saint by the many wonders which were wrought at his tomb.

The Martyr suffered in A. D. 303; his festival is kept on the 18th of May.





IV.

ST. CYRILLUS.

THE practice of virtue is not limited to any particular age, since, if we are faithful to duty and to principle, we must needs give our whole life to the service of our Maker. We are told, that “it is good for a man when he hath borne the yoke from his youth;” what then shall we say of the youth, who, in his tenderest years, surrounded by all the advantages of wealth and station—tempted by every allurements of the world—not only resists the one and tramples under foot the other, but lays down his life for the defense of his Faith? Such is the noble example which we admire in that heroic youth, the blessed Martyr Cyrillus.

Born in a country which, according to the Greek proverb, was looked upon by antiquity as distinguished for its wickedness, Cyrillus seemed called in a special manner to verify the truth that

“God is not a respecter of persons,” but that by His wisdom, in His own good time, He chooses the little and the weak to confound the great and the strong, and calls them to the true Faith “without which it is impossible to be pleasing to Him.” Like many children in every age and country, Cyrillus was kept in his childhood from the contamination of vice, not so much by the careful watchfulness of parents, as by their high position in society—which keeps them from the company of the vicious and corrupt. His father, a man of great wealth, was distinguished among the inhabitants of Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, for that stern virtue and adherence to principle, which characterized many of the ancient families of Greek or Roman descent, who clung to the superstitions of their forefathers, not because their reason and good sense approved of them, but because their great ancestors had not rejected their absurdities. The virtues of Pagan morality constituted the standard of his idea of social worth and excellency, and national pride prevented him from pushing his inquiries beyond the limits he had thus set to himself. It was his desire and ambition, that his son,—the future heir of all his possessions,—should be trained according to his notions of merit and greatness. But God, whose fatherly care watches with an unceasing

solicitude over the children of men, chose the youthful Cyrillus as a child of predilection, and called him to a knowledge infinitely surpassing the philosophy of his earthly parent—the knowledge of the truths of Christianity.

From the lips of the humble domestics of his father, the future Martyr learned to know Jesus, and the mysteries of salvation. The virtues and good example of those that surrounded him, when a child, produced that lasting impression which neither time nor circumstances can efface. Cyrillus was a Christian, and practiced every virtue of his Religion, almost before he knew what was meant by vice or wickedness. His father admired his artless simplicity, his dutifulness, his wisdom far beyond his years; he knew not the source whence flowed the noble disposition and excellent qualities of his son. At last, it was whispered that his Cyrillus, the object of all his hopes and affections, was in very deed a Christian, a follower of a Religion abhorred by men, proscribed by the laws of the Empire. His indignation knew no bounds; he considered himself disgraced and undone. There was an immense struggle going on in his breast; what should he do? could he cast off his only child? should he permit him to follow his inclinations? False friends were not wanting to bring

him to a determination—a resolve which rendered vain all his expectations in life, his peace of mind, his happiness on earth. Hoping that, possibly, his pretended friends might have been misled by envy or induced by secret malevolence to undermine his peace of mind, he called his son, that thus he might learn from his own lips the whole truth.

Cyrillus, knowing that the God whom he served would best defend his cause, stood calm and self-possessed before his father.

“Can it be true, my son,” said the father, “that, unmindful of a father’s love, thou hast dared to disobey his will and commands?”

“I have never been knowingly and wilfully disobedient to a father, whom I love with all the affection of a dutiful son,” replied Cyrillus.

“What! hast thou not turned recreant to the worship of thy fathers?”

“Herein I cannot reasonably be said to have transgressed a father’s will; since, again and again, he has protested that he desired his son to be virtuous and happy.”

“Thou art then a Christian?”

“I am a Christian, by the grace of the God of heaven and earth.”

This firm reply so aroused the anger of the father, that for some moments he was unable to give

utterance to his feelings. Yet his stoicism soon mastered his passion; he thought it unbecoming in a man of his age and condition, to pour forth the full tide of indignation that rankled in his breast. Looking sternly upon his son, as if he expected that his own excitement might have produced some emotion in him, he said:

“Knowest thou, my son, that this step which thou hast so imprudently taken, brings disgrace upon myself as well as upon all the long line of thy ancestors, who were so distinguished for their virtue and firm adherence to principles.”

“I have not been imprudent, dear father,” replied Cyrillus, “nor do I think it possible that my ancestors, if they valued virtue more than everything else, could deem it unworthy in their descendant, that he should aspire to the very perfection of virtue. Had they lived in our day, and had they known that there was a nobler, a sublimer knowledge than that which they possessed, they would, doubtless, have endeavored to make it their own.”

“Cyrillus, thou hast been misled by what appears good and praiseworthy; thou art not of an age to judge for thyself.”

“The God of truth, the common Father of us all, can make known His will to the little and the weak,

as well as to the great and the powerful. I have done what reason and conscience persuaded me to do; I feel that I have secured happiness for myself not only for this present life, but, above all, for the life of the hereafter."

"So thou art already turned philosopher! What madness has seized thee? Where is now that obedience which, as a dutiful child, thou wast wont to yield to my behests? Cyrillus, thou must give up that folly; thou must renounce forever a superstition, which is abhorred throughout the Empire."

"If truth and virtue be persecuted by men, must we blindly join in the general outcry against them? Should we condemn that which we do not know?"

"Obstinate youth! Art thou wiser than our sages, than our great and invincible Emperors?"

"True wisdom comes from God and leads us unto Him. The Divine Founder of our Religion gave thanks to His eternal Father, because He had hidden the mysteries of His kingdom from the wise and prudent of this world, and had revealed them to the little ones. I am but little, yet I know the way that leads to everlasting life. Oh! that God would remove the veil of darkness from the eyes of a father whom I love so much, that he too might behold the light of truth and salvation."

These words of the youthful Confessor seemed strongly to affect the father. A great struggle was going on in his breast. But alas! pride, human respect, the opinions of the world, choked the nobler sentiments of nature. At last his pent-up anger burst forth :

“Cyrillus,” he said, “for son I will call thee no more ; bethink thyself. Thou knowest my will. Obey my commands, or, if thou hesitate, consider thyself this very hour banished from my sight and from my house. Begone! I cannot endure the presence of an ungrateful boy, who, for a foolish notion, for the vain hope of a future life, whereof he has no knowledge, foregoes honor, wealth and greatness. Go: thou art disowned by me.”

So saying the angry father withdrew to devour, as it were, his own vexation and disappointment.

The youthful Christian was now an outcast from his father's house. He might have found ready assistance among the friends of his family ; but the father was a man of great power and authority in Cæsarea. The citizens heard with surprise that he had resorted to measures so severe. Every one expressed his opinion, according to the particular view which he chose to take of the matter. Some praised the conduct of the father, because they regarded him as a faithful supporter of the traditions

and the worship of their forefathers. Others admired him, because he had acted as a sage, who sacrificed his natural affections upon the altar of duty—who considered the maintaining of the religion of the Empire as an obligation, to which every private feeling should be made subservient. The more liberal-minded did not approve the harsh treatment, and suggested that other means might have been adopted to overcome the resistance of the son. Meanwhile, although the youth was the general subject of conversation, no one ventured to take a step in his favor ; because all dreaded to incur the displeasure of the father—even by exercising the privilege of hospitality in favor of Cyrillus, for which, however, they might have claimed the right of common humanity.

Accustomed to the surroundings of ease and plenty, it was a sore trial for the young Cyrillus to be thus cast off, and left to the cold charity of a world afraid of showing that he, who once had been the envy of many, had now become an object of pity. He, however, felt by no means disheartened, for he knew that He that “giveth food to the young ravens who call upon Him,” would not forsake them who, for His sake, are rejected by men. He remembered that, after all, the sufferings of this life—even as its joys and pleasures—are only mo-

mentary; and that, by the loss of every earthly possession, he had become the more assimilated to his divine Master, who, by giving up the splendor of the everlasting mansions, had dwelt poor and despised among men, thus sweetening the bitterness of want and destitution.

Meanwhile, the Governor of Cæsarea was informed of all that had occurred. Imagining that, by his authority, he might be able to obtain from the youth a compliance with the wishes of the father, he sent some soldiers to arrest him. When Cyrillus was brought before him, the Governor was astonished to behold a mere child, instead of a full-grown youth. He concluded at once, that it would be no difficult task to settle all matters by frightening the boy. Wherefore he said to him :

“Dost thou know, Cyrillus, that disobedient children deserve severe punishment? How comes it that a youth of thy station makes bold to give an example so wicked?”

“I make no show of boldness, but simply fulfil the first of all duties, when I give due honor and reverence to the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, and of all things contained therein,” answered Cyrillus.

“But reason and the laws command thee to yield obedience to thy father.”

“That I have always done, in everything reasonable and lawful.”

“Yet I learn that thy father has cast thee off, and disowns thee, for acting altogether contrariwise. How is this?”

“Because he bids me do what is neither lawful nor reasonable.”

“Explain thyself, boy.”

“God is the Supreme Lord and Master of all. His law is reasonable and just and true. If men ordain aught contrary thereto, they act unreasonably, unjustly, falsely. We must obey God rather than man.”

“Aha! I perceive thou hast picked up the doctrines of the new Religion.”

“The Religion which I follow is the doctrine of truth; if the truth appears something new to certain men, they are to be pitied; the truth is ever the same.”

This answer somewhat upset the calculations of the Governor; he knew not what to reply; wherefore, with an angry look at the youth, he said:

“We are not here to reason together. I am here to give commands; thou hast but to hear them and obey. Listen to me. I have spoken kindly to thee, hoping that by so doing I might persuade thee to be wise. But thou art rash and



obstinate. If fair means cannot win thee back to conduct thyself as a worthy son of a noble father, there remains a stronger argument to overcome thy stubborn will. I will have thee stretched upon the rack, until every bone in thy body be broken or dislocated. If this is not enough, I will bind thee to the stake, and burn thee with a slow fire. Now, tell me, art thou willing to return to the worship of the gods? or art thou ready to undergo tortures?"

"I am ready to suffer every torment, rather than abandon the service of the one, true God," replied Cyrillus.

"Thou knowest not what is meant by tortures. But come with me," said the Governor.

Thereupon he led him into an apartment of the Governor's dwelling, where all the instruments, employed in torturing persons accused of crimes, were displayed in dread array. The sight of these instruments caused an involuntary shudder in the young Christian. The Governor explained to him the different uses to which all these implements could be put; he warned him to take his advice, before actually experiencing, that the application of them bore no comparison to the horror which the very sight of them inspired. But the thoughts of Cyrillus had already taken another direction. He recalled to mind what he had learned concerning

the endless tortures of the reprobate, the shortness of this life, the instability of human affairs. He remembered the immense sufferings of his loving Redeemer, and the magnificent promises held out to them that forsake all to follow His steps, whether in the ordinary walks of life, or in the royal way of suffering.

The Governor, aware that a great struggle was going on in the breast of the youth, but mistaking its purport, resolved to make another attack.

“My child,” he said to Cyrillus, “I am willing to forgive, and to forget everything thou hast said; for I know that thy age and want of experience are a sufficient excuse for thy improper behavior. Thou knowest that, as the chief magistrate of Cæsarea, I have a right that my words be not disregarded. Furthermore, to prove that I have the greatest regard for thy noble father, and that I feel a special interest in thy well-being, I am ready this very moment to take it upon myself to restore thee to thy father’s favor and affection, and to reinstate thee in all thy rights. To secure so desirable a termination of all thy troubles, one word will suffice. Say that thou art willing to renounce the superstition that has misled thee.”

“That word I will never utter,” said the youth, “how could I prove false to my Religion, to my



God and Redeemer? You ask me to do that, which no earthly power shall ever persuade me to do. Your reproaches and your threats are alike thrown away. In life and in death, I am resolved to be faithful to my God. If, on this account, I must incur the displeasure and condemnation of men, I know in whom I have placed all my confidence. If my earthly father banish me from his presence, and refuse me shelter beneath the roof where I was born, my Father in heaven will receive me into His everlasting dwellings. I willingly forego all earthly treasures and possessions to secure those of heaven, which are infinitely greater, and perish not. I am not afraid to die for a noble and just cause, since by so doing I secure for myself an endless life and immortal bliss."

Whilst Cyrillus pronounced these words, he appeared inspired with a supernatural enthusiasm. The Governor felt convinced, that the young Christian possessed an intelligence and a wisdom far above his years, and hence was the more unwilling to adopt extreme measures. Nevertheless, lest he should compromise his dignity and authority, assuming a severe tone, he said to the youth :

"Cyrillus, I see full well that words have no effect upon thy stubborn spirit; I will now try the power of deeds. The funeral pile awaits thee."

“Thanks be to God,” replied the bold Confessor.

Thereupon, the Governor called in the executioners and ordered them to bind the youth, and take him to the ordinary place of execution. At the same time, however, he gave secret orders to one of his officers to see that no harm should befall the child, because the whole proceeding was merely intended to terrify him.

Cyrillus was exceedingly rejoiced, because he was at last enabled to make a public profession of his Faith. He called to mind the noble band of Martyrs, of every age and condition, that had preceded him in the glorious path of suffering, and he besought them to make intercession for him, that God might deign to accept the sacrifice, which he was about to consummate.

They arrived at the place of execution. The youthful Martyr was bound to the stake; the fire was kindled; he believed himself at his journey's end; when, to his unutterable disappointment, the officer, sent by the Governor, forbade the executioners to go on with their task.

It was indeed a sorrowful way for the youthful hero, when he was led back to the palace of the Governor. So near to the goal of his desires, he was to fight over again the battle of truth; and this time it was not impossible that his constancy might

be shaken. However, his hope lay not in his own strength, but in the protecting arms of the Lord of might.

The Governor soon learned, that the terrible display of his power had not caused the least uneasiness in the breast of the undaunted youth, but that, on the contrary, the sight of the funeral pile had filled him with the greatest joy. Cyrillus was summoned again.

“My child,” said the Governor to him, “thou hast now seen what sort of punishment awaits the wicked and the obstinate. Art thou resolved to be wise henceforth? Wilt thou hearken to my commands? Wilt thou be obedient to thy father, and strive to regain, by a dutiful submission, his affection and all the favors, which he is still desirous of bestowing upon thee?”

“You have already received my answer,” replied Cyrillus, “my resolution cannot be changed; the hopes of my everlasting happiness depend on my fidelity to my conscience and to my God. You have disappointed my expectations, and endeavored to make a mockery of what, doubtless, you call justice.”

“It is enough,” said the Governor, bursting with rage, “thou shalt find this time that I am in good earnest. Unless thou promise at once to worship

the gods of the Empire, neither thy age or condition, nay, not even the influence and respectability of thy father shall save thee from the flames. Speak, infatuated boy!"

"Must I again repeat my answer?" said the brave youth, "you have already done me a great wrong, when you supposed, that a true Christian is so feeble-minded as to forego, through fear of torments or of death, the inheritance that awaits him after this fleeting life. I long for the moment which shall destroy this mortal frame, that my spirit may be free, and stand, faithful in all things, before the Maker that gave it being. Him alone do I humbly adore. Before Him I long to appear."

The Governor was now convinced, that it would be useless to make any further attempts to prevail upon the youth to forsake his Religion. Wherefore, he ordered that he should be immediately put to death.

An immense multitude, drawn together by curiosity or by anxiety to witness the final triumph of the youthful Martyr, accompanied him as he was again led to the place of execution. All wept, when they beheld one so young, so beautiful,—one born to possess whatsoever the world loves and esteems, dragged to a death of torment and ignominy, which would have filled with terror the most fearless

spirit. In that vast assembly of horror-stricken spectators, Cyrillus alone appeared unmoved. When arrived at the place of execution, he was again fastened to the stake. As he cast his looks around him, and saw the crowd around shedding tears, and heard them wailing aloud, he said to them :

“Friends, Brethren, weep not over me. If ye love me, rejoice rather at my happy lot. I have been faithful to my God ; He is waiting to welcome me into His glorious mansions. Now raise ye a hymn of joy and exultation around this funeral pile, whilst my spirit is born into the company of the redeemed.”

The flames soon freed his generous soul from all the trials of earth, and the youthful Martyr found repose in the bosom of his Saviour.


His memory is kept in the Church, on the twenty-ninth of May.





V.

ST. AGNES.

 HOW beautiful is the chaste generation with glory," exclaimed the Wise Man; "the memory thereof is immortal, because it is known both with God and with man." It is the triumph of the Church of God that, in all ages, she can point to those among her children who passed through this world blameless and undefiled—who, upon earth, prepared themselves to be, in heaven, of the number of the Elect, that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and sing before the Throne the Canticle which none but they can sing. Great, indeed, is the praise of chastity: admirable are they, even among the Saints, in whom this virtue shines with special brightness; but when, at the same time, it accompanies every generous quality that ennobles human nature, it challenges our highest admiration. The Angels of heaven gaze with

delight upon chaste souls, and love to associate with them; the Heart of Jesus, "who feedeth among the lilies," showers upon them His choicest favors. Hence the marvels of grace whereof we read in the lives of the holy Virgins; hence that mysterious and ecstatic union with her heavenly Bridegroom, which characterized the sweet and lovely Saint of whom we are about to speak—the Blessed Agnes, Virgin and Martyr.

Born in Rome of an ancient and illustrious family, all the advantages which wealth can secure were unsparingly used by her parents to educate her for that high position in society which, it was hoped, she would one day adorn. But the views and intentions of men are not always those of heaven. The divine Lover of chaste souls had chosen her as His own. He gave her special graces to draw her to Himself: her youthful heart corresponded to these great designs. Innocence and purity marked the days of her childhood, and her conversation even then seemed ever in heaven rather than upon earth. The name she bore, she verified in her daily walks—blending the purity of the lily with the innocence of the lamb. The love of Jesus was in her heart, and to keep it there was the sole aim of her life. To Him she consecrated herself, to Him she promised that, as a Virgin, she would

never cease to be faithful. How grand a promise this was, and how strong must have been her resolve, we cannot duly appreciate unless we reflect, that it was made by a tender maiden, living in the midst of the splendors of the imperial city. But “the grace of God and His mercy is with His Saints, and He hath respect for His chosen;” hence, what might appear rash, under ordinary circumstances, in one so young and so much exposed to the dangers and temptations of this world, becomes discreet and worthy of every commendation in one so highly favored.

When she entered upon her thirteenth year, she was a perfect model of a Christian young lady. Prayer and other religious exercises were to her not so much duties to be fulfilled, as an attractive charm and a sweet relaxation—born of the divine love that glowed in her bosom. Religion was to her in very deed the bond which united her to her Maker, in whose presence she delighted to abide forever. Modest, gentle, and reserved, she sought not after the company of them, that seem to have no other reason for their existence here below, than a restless anxiety to vie with each other in displaying their rich and gaudy finery. Nor was she, on the other hand, so squeamish as to obtrude upon others her unadorned simplicity, whensoever custom

and Roman hospitality required that social entertainments should be given at the mansion of her noble father. Whilst present in body at these festivities, her spirit still held uninterrupted communion with her God. Her high rank hindered her not from exercising, in person, the duties of charity to the poor. For how could she be the favored Bride of the heavenly King, unless she recognized Him in them, to whom especially the glad tidings of His gospel had been preached? Guiltless herself, and unsuspecting of evil, she was clad with the armor of righteousness, and spent her days in gathering treasures for heaven.

He, however, who, in the garden of Eden, robbed our first parents of their innocence and bliss, could not bear that beauty and virtue, combined in the person of our Saint, should grace unharmed and unassailed the streets of Rome. Wherefore, he projected the most artful devices to lure the angelic maiden into his snares.

Agnes, according to the custom at that time existing in Rome, attended school with other maidens of her own age and rank. One day, as she was returning home, a young nobleman, the son of Symphronius, Governor of the city, chanced to see her at a distance. Struck with the extraordinary loveliness of her appearance, he determined at once

to seek her in marriage. He began by making inquiries about her, and soon learned that she was of a noble and wealthy family. On the following day, he went to visit her parents, taking with him a casket filled with jewelry, and other ornaments of every kind calculated to excite the admiration of almost any young person, upon whom the sight of the treasures of this earth can make an impression. As the son of the Chief Magistrate, he was respectfully admitted; but, when he mentioned the object of his coming, the parents of Agnes—thinking that she was too young to settle for life—were by no means inclined to encourage the proposal of the young nobleman. Nevertheless, they permitted him to have an interview with their daughter, in their own presence. Agnes apparently listened to his words, and looked at the presents placed before her, but, in reality, was quite unconscious of both; her thoughts were with her heart and treasure far beyond the skies. The disappointed suitor stood astonished at the unimpassioned indifference of the Virgin. Pagan as he was, he could not understand, how precious stones could be looked upon as empty toys, by those who possess within themselves a jewel of priceless value—the knowledge, the love, and fear of God.

The unsuccessful result of this first interview did

not discourage the son of the Governor. Thinking that the display of riches which he had made was the cause of his failure, he resolved that there should be nothing wanting in this respect, if he had once more the good fortune of addressing the object of his affections.

Meanwhile, he had recourse to his own friends and to those of the family of the maiden. He induced them to take his cause in hand, and to endeavor to prevail on her parents to make her listen to his suit. They believing that such a union would redound to the advantage of all the parties concerned, neglected no opportunity of pressing the claims of the young nobleman. His good qualities and accomplishments, his boundless wealth, his influence, in consequence of the distinguished position of his father, the benefits even that might accrue to Religion—all these were put forward; but the parents of the Saint, inspired from above, returned invariably the same answer, that nothing should be done in this matter, without the free and full consent and choice of their daughter, whose welfare and happiness were chiefly concerned in such an alliance.

The young Symphronius, whose affection, far from diminishing, was only increased by this anxious delay and unexpected opposition, obtained

a second interview with Agnes. He told her of the happiness that awaited her, the influence and power of his illustrious family, his own devotedness and love, his future prospects and aspirations—all which he placed at her feet, that she might dispose thereof, and reign as supreme mistress over his heart.

When the maiden heard this language, she appeared as awakening from a trance: never had she known the use of the word love, except as connected with her heavenly Bridegroom. Indignant at the audacity of the young man, she addressed him thus:

“Depart from me, thou fuel of sin, aliment of evil, food of death; depart from me; long since have I been won by a far nobler Spouse, who has presented me with more precious gifts than thine. With a ring He has pledged me His troth; my wrist He has encircled with a bracelet of inestimable price. He has adorned me with a necklace of precious stones; He has ornamented me with earrings of peerless gems. My whole body He has bedecked with glittering pearls and sparkling diamonds. He placed His seal upon my brow, that I might never admit a rival. He clothed me with a state-robe woven of gold, with a collar of matchless perfection. He showed me treasures great

beyond expression, and promised me, again and again, that to me he will give them all if I continued faithful to Him. How, then, could I, without insult to my first love, so much as look upon another? How could I abandon Him to whom I am united with the strongest bond of affection? There is no other so noble by birth, none so strong in power, none so beautiful in person, none so sweet and lovely, none so possessed of every grace. By Him even now the bridal chamber has been prepared for me; the melody of His voice comes whispering to my soul. I hear the canticle of the Virgins that attend Him; the rapturous strains of their music fill my heart with joy. With milk and honey He hath nourished me. The mark of His blood is an ornament upon my cheeks. His Mother is a pure Virgin; His Father knows not woman. The Angels are His ministers; the sun and moon admire His radiant beauty. The odor of His perfume restores life to the dead; His cheering touch gives health to the sick. His possessions never decrease; His treasures never fail. For Him alone do I keep my plighted faith; to Him alone do I intrust myself with perfect devotion. If I love Him, I am chaste; if I touch Him, I am clean; if I accept Him, I am a Virgin."

This language, so strange and mysterious, filled

the young nobleman with amazement. It did not, however, produce any change in his sentiments. He returned home, crushed with disappointment. Jealousy now added another string to his already tortured feelings. Spoiled, as he had been, by an indulgent father, it was the first time that his will met with opposition. So great and worrying was the struggle going on within his breast—between the suggestions of reason on the one hand, and of passion on the other—that he fell dangerously ill. The physicians, who attended him, soon discovered the nature of his malady. They made known to the father what they had learned, telling him, at the same time, that there was but one remedy which could be effectually applied in disorders of this kind, namely: the realization of the young man's hopes.

Symphronius, thereupon, undertook to try what he himself might be able to do in this delicate matter. He went in person to the residence of the holy maiden, and renewed every promise made, heretofore, by his son, holding out besides many inducements, prompted by his anxious desire for the welfare of one designed to be the heir of his wealth, probably his successor in office. To all the promises and entreaties of the Governor of Rome, the youthful Agnes made the same reply:

“The word which I have pledged to the Bridegroom of my choice, I neither can nor will break.”

Symphronius was by no means pleased with this answer, he said to her :

“Thou shouldst reflect that, after having made a choice, it is not at all unbecoming to make a better.”

“It is impossible to make a better choice,” replied the maiden.

“How is this?” said the Governor, “if we except the divine Emperor himself, no one surpasses in dignity the Governor of Rome. To reject his proposals, when made with due respect and honor, were assuredly the very height of folly.”

“The Bridegroom of my choice far excels in dignity all the rulers of this world,” answered Agnes.

When the Governor heard this, he was greatly perplexed ; for he seemed to think, that a person of so great a dignity could have no existence, except in the imagination of an innocent girl. He did not, however, neglect to make enquiries, as earnestly as if he believed it all a reality. But none of his friends, no more than those of the family of the maiden, could enlighten him on the subject ; for it was a secret between Agnes and her Divine Master. Nevertheless, the devil, afraid lest the storm, which he had excited, might blow over

without doing any harm, stirred up an officious individual to give to the Governor the desired information. He presented himself before Symphronius, and said to him :

“Why does your Lordship give himself so much trouble concerning this person? Know then, that the girl is a Christian. From her very childhood she has been taught the art of magic, as it is practised among that sort of people.”

“But how does that account for her infatuation in believing herself espoused to a person of boundless wealth and surpassing dignity?” asked the Governor.

“In the simplest manner possible,” answered his informant; “their young maidens are taught, that, if they refuse to be given in marriage to a human suitor, they may, by leading the life of Virgins, choose Christ, who is their God, for a Bridegroom. This exalts them wonderfully in the eyes of their fellow-believers; and they are supposed to obtain, in consequence, an extraordinary skill in magic.”

Symphronius was greatly rejoiced, when all the strange conjectures he had formed in his mind were so easily explained away; and he had no doubt that, either by his influence or by his promises, he should be enabled to overcome the obstinate resistance of a mere child. Wherefore, he sent an