

“MESSENGER SERIES,” No. 5.

THE ACTS

OF THE

EARLY MARTYRS

BY

J. A. M. FASTRÉ, S. J.

THIRD SERIES.

PHILADELPHIA :

PETER F. CUNNINGHAM & SON, 29 SOUTH TENTH STREET.

1876



PERMISSU SUPERIORUM

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1873, by
PETER F. CUNNINGHAM,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER.	PAGE.
I.—ST. TARACHUS AND HIS COMPANIONS.....	5
II.—SS. THEODORA AND DIDYMUS.....	56
III.—ST. BLASIUS AND HIS COMPANIONS.....	72
IV.—ST. EULALIA	109
V.—ST. VINCENTIUS.....	122
VI.—ST. CLEMENT.....	147
VII.—ST. SUSANNA	223
VIII.—SS. FAUSTINUS AND JOVITA	243
IX.—ST. POLYEUCTUS.....	273



THE MARTYRS.

I.

ST. TARACHUS AND HIS COMPANIONS.

AMONG the acts of the Martyrs, there are few which excite our admiration to a greater degree than the authentic record of the trials and sufferings of the blessed Tarachus and his two heroic companions, Probus and Andronicus. Though differing in age and nationality, the generous confession of the same Faith, and the similarity of the tortures inflicted upon them, have united them forever by the bonds of a common brotherhood, in the esteem and devotion of the faithful. By the cruelty of the Governor of Cilicia, they were dragged from city to city, that their sufferings might terrify the Christians, but in the designs of Providence this circumstance produced a quite contrary effect; for the constancy and

superhuman fortitude of the valiant champions of the faith everywhere awakened the zeal and courage of their brethren. They that seemed faint-hearted before, were made to see that the weakness of human nature, when upheld by the grace of our divine Master, is capable of gaining the most glorious victories: the strong and resolute were taught to prepare themselves, by the practice of every Christian virtue, to emulate the example of the three heroes—if it were God's will that they too should glorify His name by a similar confession.

The three Confessors were arrested at Pompeiopolis, but the Governor, to make a greater display of his power and authority, ordered them to be taken to Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia. When it became known in the city that Maximus, the Governor, was to hold a public interrogatory, a vast crowd of people soon gathered around the tribunal. The greater number of these spectators were there simply to gratify an idle curiosity, but others came through a feeling of sympathy, and to make a faithful record of all that might be said or done during the trial. These latter were Christians. It was on the twenty-fifth of March. Maximus, surrounded by his attendants, seated himself on his tribunal. The deepest silence prevailed throughout the assembly. Demetrius, the Cen-

turion, pointing to three prisoners and addressing the Governor, said: "My lord, there stand the three persons who were brought before your Excellency at Pompeiopolis, by the spearmen Eutolmius and Palladus. They are wicked and impious Christians, resolved to disobey the commands of the Emperors."

The Governor, turning to Tarachus, said to him:

"What is thy name? For we will begin with thee, as thy looks show that thou art farthest advanced in years."

"I am a Christian," answered Tarachus.

"Do not mention before us thy impious profession," said the Governor, "give us thy name."

"I am a Christian," again replied Tarachus.

"Strike him on the mouth," said Maximus to his attendants, "and tell him not to answer one thing for another."

"I am giving you my true name," said Tarachus. "But if you ask me for the name whereby I am commonly known, I will tell you, that my parents called me Tarachus, and that, whilst I was in the military service, I was known by the name of Victor."

"What avocation dost thou follow?" inquired Maximus.

"By profession, I am a soldier," answered the

Confessor. "I am of a Roman family, and born at Claudiopolis, in Isauria. Being a Christian, I have now left the military service."

"Ah, I understand," said the Governor; "on account of thy impiety, thou wast no longer allowed to be a soldier. How didst thou obtain thy discharge?"

"I asked it of my tribune, Fulvio. He gave me an honorable discharge."

"And I also," said Maximus, "in consideration of thy gray hairs, am willing to treat thee kindly, and to secure for thee the favorable regard of the Emperors; but thou must be obedient. Come, then, follow the example which our princes give to the world: offer sacrifice to the gods of the Empire."

"By so doing they deceive themselves: it is Satan himself who leads them into so great an error," replied Tarachus.

"Break his jaws," said the Governor to the executioners, "for saying that our Emperors can be deceived."

"I said, and I say it again, that, as men, they are deceived."

"Offer sacrifice to our gods," insisted Maximus, "and give up thy foolish notions."

"I serve the God of my fathers," rejoined the

Confessor: "To Him I offer sacrifice, not indeed of blood, but that of a clean heart and of a conscience undefiled; bloody victims my God does not demand."

"I still feel some pity for thee on account of thy gray hairs," said the Governor, "wherefore give up thy folly; honor the Emperors, show some respect to myself, and observe the laws of our fathers."

"I do not depart from the law of my fathers," replied Tarachus.

"Draw near then, and sacrifice to the gods."

"I cannot do that which is impious; did I not say, that I keep the law of my fathers?"

"What! is there any other law than that which we observe, thou miserable wretch?" asked the Governor.

"Yes, there is," answered Tarachus; "and you do wickedly transgress it by adoring stocks and stones, the inventions of men."

"Give him a blow on the neck," said the Governor to the executioners, "and tell him not to make a fool of himself."

When they struck him, the Martyr said:

"I will never give up what you call my foolishness, for I know that it is precisely that which secures my salvation."

“Yet I will teach thee how to give it up,” said Maximus, “and to become a man of good sense.”

“You may do with my body whatsoever you please,” replied Tarachus, “it is wholly in your power.”

Whereupon the Governor ordered him to be scourged. The executioners took off his garments and gave him the legal number of stripes. The Martyr bore the punishment without uttering a word, although, to a person of his age and profession, this treatment appeared exceedingly disgraceful. When it was over, he said:

“I must acknowledge that your stripes have improved my good sense: they have greatly strengthened my confidence in God, and in the power and goodness of Jesus Christ, His only Son.”

“Thou impious wretch!” cried out the Governor, “how canst thou refuse to worship our gods also, since but now thou didst confess that thou servest two gods?”

“I confess and serve as God, Him who really is,” answered Tarachus.

“And didst thou not speak of a certain Christ as being also God?” said Maximus.

“And truly so,” replied the Confessor; “for this Christ is the Son of the living God. He is the

hope of us Christians. He saves us, even by means of the very sufferings which we endure for Him."

"Let alone all that idle talk," said the Governor. "Come forward, and sacrifice at once to the gods."

"I do not talk idly," said the Martyr; "I am speaking the truth. I am now over sixty years of age. I was taught from my childhood ever to cling to the truth. I have never departed from it."

Demetrius, the Centurion, then said: "Be persuaded by me, my good friend; spare thyself, offer sacrifice."

"Begone, minister of Satan," said Tarachus. "Keep thy advice for thyself."

The Governor, seeing that he met with no success, said to the executioners: "Take him away, load him with heavy chains, and send him back to prison. Bring in the next in age."

The Centurion, Demetrius, immediately led forward the second prisoner, and said to the Governor: "Here he is, my lord."

Maximus, addressing the prisoner, said to him: "I give thee warning beforehand. Do not waste time by useless talk; answer directly to the point. What is thy name?"

"My first and most honorable name is that of Christian; men, however, call me Probus."

“Of what country and family art thou, Probus?” asked the Governor.

“My father was a Thracian; I was born at Side, in Pamphylia; I am of plebeian origin, but a Christian.”

“That will do thee no good,” said Maximus. “Follow my advice: go, and without more ado, offer incense to the gods; thus wilt thou secure the favor of our Emperors, and enjoy my friendship.”

“I need not the favor of the Emperors,” replied Probus, “and I care not for your friendship. The estate, which I formerly possessed, was not small; yet I gave it up, that I might with more freedom serve the living God through Jesus Christ.”

The Governor said to the executioners: “Take off his garments, gird him, stretch him out on the ground, and lash him with raw bull-hide thongs.”

Whilst the Martyr was undergoing this punishment, and the blood was streaming from the many deep wounds inflicted upon his body, Demetrius, the Centurion, who could not withhold his advice, said to him: “Spare thyself, my dear man; seest thou not how thy blood is flowing upon the ground?”

“My poor body is in your power,” answered Probus. “Yet your blows seem to me no more

than if sweet and perfumed ointments were poured over my limbs."

"Wilt thou never have done with thy folly? What art thou waiting for, thou wretch?" said the Governor.

"So far from being foolish," replied the Martyr, "I am much wiser than yourself, for I do not worship devils."

"Turn him over," said Maximus, "and strike him on his stomach."

When the executioners had turned him over, and began with new vigor to apply their lashes, the sufferer raised his eyes towards heaven, and said: "Lord, help thy unworthy servant."

"Strike him more vigorously," said the Governor to the executioners, "and, at every blow, ask him, where is He who helps thee?"

"He is helping me," answered the Martyr; "and will help me still. For, as you see, I despise your tortures, and am as far as ever from obeying your wicked commands."

"Look at thy mangled body," said Maximus, "thou miserable wretch; seest thou not how the ground is covered with thy blood?"

"You should know," replied Probus, "that the more my body is made to suffer for Jesus Christ, the greater health and vigor are granted to my soul."

The Governor, seeing that he could not subdue the brave spirit of his victim, said to the executioners: "Put him in irons; then place him in the stocks and stretch his legs to the fourth hole. Do not allow any one to come near to dress his wounds. Bring the third prisoner to the bar."

Demetrius, the Centurion, immediately said: "Here he stands, my lord." The Governor asked: "What is thy name?"

"I am a Christian," answered Andronicus; "I know that this is what you chiefly desire to know, therefore, I say it at once."

"As that name has proved of no advantage to them who have gone before thee, give me the name I ask for, without wasting time by useless circumlocution."

"Men call me Andronicus,"

"Of what family?"

"I am a son of one of the noblest families in Ephesus."

"Do not make a vain display of elegant words, but hearken to me as to a father, who feels the greatest interest in thy well-being. They that have gone before thee have chosen to act like madmen—they have gained nothing by their folly. Follow, therefore, my advice; obey the orders

of the Emperors; offer sacrifice to our paternal gods, that it may go well with thee."

"You do well to call them your paternal gods," said the youth; "for you have Satan for your father, and are become like unto him, since you do his works."

"Thy youth makes thee insolent, but it will only increase thy punishment," said the Governor.

"I may appear to your excellency a youth in years, but I am old in spirit, and ready for the worst you can do."

"Give up all that empty talk, and offer incense to the gods."

"Think you that at my age one has not yet sense enough, or that I possess less courage than my brethren? I am prepared for whatsoever you may deem fit to do with me."

The Governor then said to the executioners: "Take off his garments, gird him, and put him upon the rack." Whilst they were engaged in doing this, Demetrius approached the youth, and said: "Comply with the orders of his Excellency, poor wretch! before thy body is torn to pieces and made to perish miserably."

"It is better that my body should perish than my soul," replied Andronicus.

The Governor said again: "Obey my commands and sacrifice, young madman, before we begin thy utter destruction."

"I have never offered sacrifice to devils, not even in my childhood; think you that I would begin now?"

"Apply the scourge to his body," said Maximus.

Whilst they were scourging the Martyr, Athanasius, the Secretary, went up to him and said: "Obey the Governor. I am old enough to be thy father; follow the advice of prudence and experience."

"Begone!" replied the youth; "old as you are, you show that as yet you have but little sense. Do you counsel me to sacrifice to stones and to devils?"

"Wretch!" said Maximus, "are not these torments sufficient to cure thee of thy madness? Have pity on thyself, and give up thy folly."

"This folly," answered Andronicus, "is necessary for those who hope in Christ; but the wisdom of this world draws down upon its possessors everlasting destruction."

"Who has taught thee such foolishness?"

"The Saviour, the Word, by whom and for whom we live and shall live, having in heaven God Himself as the pledge of our resurrection."

“Let alone all that nonsense, lest I order more cruel tortures to be applied.”

“My body is at your disposal,” said the Martyr. “You have the power; do as you please.”

“Twist and tear his legs more violently,” said the Governor to the executioner. When this terrible torment was inflicted, the sufferer looked up towards heaven and said:

“May God behold this, and judge you soon. I have done no evil, and yet you torture me as if I were a murderer.”

“Thou art full of impiety towards the gods and the Emperors; thou despisest my tribunal, and thou sayest thou hast done no evil?”

“I struggle for that piety which is due to the One, True God.”

“Thou wouldst have real piety wert thou to honor the gods whom the Emperors worship.”

“Not to worship the true God, and to adore stocks and stones, is not piety, but impiety.”

“Sayest thou that our Emperors are impious men, thou hangman?” asked Maximus, in a rage.

“Yes, I think so,” answered the Martyr. “You, too, if you use your good sense, will see and say, that it is impious to worship demons.”

“Turn him,” said the Governor to the executioners, “and pierce his sides.”

“Do with my body whatsoever you will; I am in your hands.”

Maximus then ordered his men to take salt and rub it into the wounds of the sufferer; after which he made them scrape his body with potsherds. When this cruel treatment was over, the Governor looked at the Martyr, as if asking him how he felt after that. Andronicus seeing this, said: “Now, at last, you have given some refreshment to my poor body, and I feel much stronger than before.”

Maximus was furious. “I will make thee perish by degrees, slowly but surely,” he said.

“I fear not your threats,” replied the youth; “my resolution is stronger than all the inventions of your malice. I despise your tortures.”

Being at a loss what to do to give vent to his wrath, the Governor ordered heavy chains to be put about the neck and the legs of the Martyr. After which he was cast into a deep dungeon.

The second interrogatory of the Martyrs was held at Mopsuestia.

Maximus, the Governor, being seated on his tribunal, said to Demetrius, the Centurion :

“Call in the impious followers of the religion of the Christians.”

“Here they are, my lord,” said the Centurion.

Addressing Tarachus, the Governor said: "I have no doubt, Tarachus, that many persons have a great respect for thee on account of thy old age—which is generally attended by good sense and prudence; do not, then, make to-day an ill-use of these gifts; but, following the counsel of true wisdom, give up thy former sentiments. Come, therefore, offer incense to the gods, and receive the reward which piety and wisdom secure.

"I am a Christian," replied Tarachus, "and I desire nothing more than that yourself and your Emperors would endeavor to secure that very same reward by abandoning your blindness and by embracing the truth, which leads to everlasting life."

"Strike him on the mouth with a stone," said the Governor to the executioner, "and tell him to give up his foolish nonsense."

"Did I not possess true wisdom," said Tarachus, "I should be like yourself, a fool."

"Now that they have loosened all thy teeth, take pity on thyself, miserable wretch."

"You could not persuade me to obey your wicked commands were you even to cut off by degrees all my limbs, for I cling to Him who strengthens me—to Christ, my Saviour."

"Believe me, it is for thy own interest that thou shouldst sacrifice," said Maximus.

“If I knew that it would be of advantage to me, think you that I would prefer to undergo these torments.”

The Governor ordered him to be placed on the rack and to be lashed, as was usual. The Martyr suffered in silence. Maximus was vexed at this. He said to the executioners :

“Beat him again on the mouth, and tell him to cry out.” This was done.

“You have knocked out my teeth and broken my jaws, how can I cry out?” muttered Tarachus.

“And with all that, thou still refusest to obey?” exclaimed Maximus. “Come, take him to the altar, and let him sacrifice.”

“Although you have deprived me of the free use of speech, you shall, at least, not shake my firm resolution, for your tortures, thank heaven, have strengthened me therein.”

“We shall see about that presently,” said the Governor. Then he ordered the executioners to take burning coals, and put them into the Martyr’s hands. As the heat was scorching them, Tarachus said :

“I am not afraid of your fire, which does not last long; all I dread is to be condemned to everlasting flames, were I to obey your commands.”

“Behold!” said Maximus, “now that thy hands

are so well baked, wilt thou still refuse to burn incense to the gods?"

"You speak to me as if I had at last yielded to your cruelty," answered Tarachus. "You should, now at least, be convinced that I am strong enough to resist all your attacks."

"Bind his legs, hang him up by the feet," said the Governor to the executioners, "and raise a great smoke under his head."

"I cared not for your fire," replied the Martyr, "do you imagine that I am afraid of your smoke?"

"Now that thou art hanging there," said Maximus, "promise that thou wilt sacrifice, and thou shalt be taken down."

"Go, do it yourself, Governor, since you are accustomed to offer incense to men. As for myself, God preserve me from doing so wicked a thing." These words aroused the wrath of the Governor. He said to the executioners:

"Take strong vinegar, salt it well, and then pour it into his nostrils." This was done immediately. Tarachus, however, was not subdued, but said:

"That vinegar is quite sweet—the salt is weak and insipid."

Maximus then ordered them to mix strong mustard with the salt and vinegar, and put it to the nose of the Martyr.

After they had been applying the mixture for some time, Tarachus said:

“Your officers must have made a mistake, Governor; it seems they are giving me honey instead of mustard.”

Maximus was furious at being thus baffled in every one of his ingenious experiments; at last he said:

“That is enough for the present; I will try to invent something more effective to overcome thy obstinacy.”

“I hope to be ready to try your new inventions,” replied Tarachus.

Thereupon he was put in irons and again taken to prison.

“Where is the next one?” asked the Governor.

“Here he is, my lord,” answered the Centurion, Demetrius.

“Tell me, Probus,” said the Governor, “hast thou made up thy mind to free thyself from further torture, or art thou still as much as ever given to thy foolishness? I would advise thee to follow the worthy example of our invincible Emperors, who are wont to sacrifice to the gods for the common safety of all men.”

“I am to-day better prepared,” replied Probus, “and stronger than ever—such is the result of the

trial which I have before undergone. Try me again with all your cunning inventions, for I assure you, neither you, nor your Emperors, nor the demons whom you serve, nor your father, Satan himself, shall induce me to become guilty of so great an impiety as to worship gods whom I ignore and despise. My God is the living God, who reigns in the heavens—Him I adore; Him I serve.”

“And ours, then, are no living gods? villain that thou art.”

“They that are made of stone and of wood, the workmanship of men, how can they be living gods? You are greatly mistaken, Governor, and it is an exceeding stupidity to worship them.”

“And sayest thou, thou blackguard head, that I am mistaken because I worship the gods?”

“Perish your gods that did not make the heavens and the earth, and all they who worship them; for whosoever sacrifices to strange gods shall be exterminated. It is to the Lord of heaven and earth that we must offer sacrifice—not indeed of blood, but of praise, with a clean heart that knows Him in truth.”

“Give up thy wicked folly, Probus,” said the Governor; “sacrifice to the gods, and save thyself.”

“I worship not several gods,” replied Probus; “I serve and adore the one God, who truly is.”

“Well, then, come to the altar of the great god Jupiter, and sacrifice to him, if thou art unwilling to worship many gods.”

“There ~~is~~ a God in the heavens; Him alone I fear. As for those whom you calls gods, I neither acknowledge nor worship them.”

“I repeat my command,” said Maximus; “sacrifice to the great and mighty Jupiter, who sees all things.”

“To that husband of his own sister; to that lewd and profane libertine; to one proved guilty of every crime by your own poets! Are you so impious and unjust as to force me to offer sacrifice to him?”

“Beat him on the mouth,” said the Governor to the executioners, “and say to him: Blaspheme not the gods.”

“Why do you ill-treat me thus?” asked the Martyr. “I have but repeated what their worshippers say of your gods: I have uttered no falsehood; you know very well that I have only spoken the truth.”

“I perceive that I encourage thy folly by not punishing thee,” said Maximus. “Men, do your duty; heat some iron bars and make him stand thereon.”

“Your fire is cold,” said Probus, as he was

standing upon the bars; "at least, I do not feel its heat."

"Make the bars glowing hot," said Maximus, "and hold him whilst he is standing upon them."

This was done accordingly, but the servant of God appeared insensible to the torture, for he said:

"Your fire is as cold as ever; I believe, Governor, that your servants are laughing at your orders."

"Stretch him upon the rack, whip him with raw leather thongs until you lay open his back; say to him: Give up thy folly and offer sacrifice."

"I did not dread your fire, and I care not for your other tortures. If you have invented something new, bring it forward, that I may show you the power of God, who strengthens me."

"Shave his head," said Maximus, "and then put burning coals upon it."

When this had been done, Probus said:

"You have burnt my feet and my head, and you have received but another proof that I am God's servant, and that I despise all your threats."

"If thou wert the servant of the gods, thou wouldst show thy piety by sacrificing to them," said Maximus.

"I am a servant of the true God, not of your

gods, who bring destruction upon all who worship them," replied Probus.

"Dost thou not see all these men here standing around my tribunal? They worship our gods, and, in return, they are rewarded and honored by them and by the Emperors. All these look upon thee, wicked wretch, and upon thy miserable companions, with utter contempt."

"Believe me," replied Probus, "they shall all be lost forever, unless they repent of their evil deeds, do penance, and serve the living God."

"Smite him on the face," said Maximus, "that he may learn to say the gods, not God."

"Because I speak the truth, you order me to be struck on the face; is this your justice?"

"I do not only command thee to be struck on the face, but I will order thy blaspheming tongue to be cut out, if thou do not stop thy foolish talk and offer sacrifice to the gods."

"Even should you cut off the organ of my speech, I still have within me an immortal tongue wherewith I will answer you," replied the Martyr.

The Governor could with difficulty contain his rage. After awhile he said:

"Take the wretch to prison, and call in Andronicus."

"Here he is, my lord," said the Centurion.

Maximus, having learnt by experience that it was not likely that his plan would meet with success if he continued in his endeavors of bringing about the apostasy of the Confessors by force, now resolved to employ deception as a means to gain his end. Wherefore, with an air of great benevolence, he said to Andronicus:

“Thy companions have drawn upon themselves, to no purpose whatsoever, various torments; for, after much suffering, they yielded at last to our arguments, and willingly offered sacrifice to the gods, whereby, also, they have become entitled to receive great praise and distinction from our Emperors. Wherefore, follow the good counsel of one who wishes thee well; spare thyself the pain and disgrace of being put to the torture; offer sacrifice, as they have done, and secure for thyself the honors which will be the reward of thy obedience. If, however, thou refuse to comply with our commands, I swear to thee, by the gods and by our invincible Emperors, that I will make use of such means as will force thee to obey.”

“Do not falsely accuse my brethren of a criminal weakness of which they are not guilty,” replied the Martyr; “nor flatter yourself that, even if they had been subdued by your cruelties,

their example could persuade me to act cowardly. Clad with the armor of Faith, and firm in the hope I have in God, I fear neither you nor your invincible Emperors, nor your gods. Make, therefore, the best use you can of all the torments wherewith you threaten me."

"Tie him to the stakes and scourge him with raw thongs," said Maximus. Thereupon, the executioners seized the Martyr, and lashed him until the blood ran streaming from his body. Far from being subdued, he said to the Governor:

"Is this all the effect of that great oath which you swore just now by your invincible Emperors and by your gods? It is but a small affair."

Athanasius, the Secretary, said: "Thy whole body is but one continued wound, and thou callest that little?"

"They who love the living God make little account of such trifles," replied Andronicus.

"Rub salt into his wounds," said the Governor. This was done.

"Salt me somewhat more," said the Martyr, "that I may be so well seasoned as to become incorruptible, and the better able to resist your malice."

"Turn him over," said Maximus, "and beat him on the stomach, so as to open afresh his

former wounds, that the pain may penetrate the very marrow of his bones."

"You might have seen, when I appeared before you awhile ago," said Andronicus, "that all the wounds which I received at the first trial were perfectly healed. He who healed me then, is able and ready to do so again."

"Ye villanous fellows," said the Governor, addressing the soldiers who had guarded the prison, "did I not command you to allow no one to enter the prison or to dress their wounds, knowing that it was the best means of overcoming their obstinate resistance to our will?"

"By your greatness," answered Pegasus, the jailer, "no one has dressed their wounds; neither has any one entered their prison. I have kept them chained in the deepest apartments of the dungeon. If your Excellency finds that I speak falsely, here is my head; you have the power."

"But how, then, did his wounds altogether disappear?" inquired Maximus.

"By your nobility, I know not how they were healed," answered Pegasus.

"Senseless men," said Andronicus, "great and compassionate is our Physician. He heals them who hope in Him—not by the use of medicines, but by His mere word. For, although He dwells

in the heavens, He is present everywhere; but ye know Him not."

"All that idle talk will avail thee nothing," said Maximus; "but come, sacrifice to the gods, lest I do utterly destroy thee."

"To that I have no answer to make," replied the Martyr, "except what I have said before. Do you imagine me a mere child, and that you can persuade me either by threatening or by coaxing?"

"Neither shalt thou overcome me, nor despise my authority."

"You ought, ere now, to be convinced, Governor," said Andronicus, "that we dread neither you nor your tortures. You shall ever find us valiant athletes of God, who strengthens us through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Against Him all your wicked attempts must ever prove vain and powerless."

The Governor then said to the executioners: "Prepare as many new kinds of tortures as you can invent for the next sitting. Meanwhile, load this man with chains; put him in the deepest dungeon, and have a care that no one, whosoever he may be, be admitted to see him."

The third interrogatory was held at Anazarbus. Tarachus was again the first to be summoned before the Governor. Maximus said to him:

“After enduring the lash and the rack, and tasting the hardships of imprisonment, art thou finally resolved to give up thy impious profession, which has brought thee nothing but ill-luck? Now, then, Tarachus, listen to me: go at once, sacrifice to the immortal gods, from whom all things receive existence.”

“Woe betide you and them, if the world be ruled by those for whom fire and everlasting torments are prepared. And what must we suppose is in store for them who do their bidding?” replied Tarachus.

“Wilt thou never cease blaspheming, insolent wretch?” said Maximus; “thinkest thou to overcome me by thy impudence? I will put a stop to thy foolish prating by striking off thy wicked head.”

“If you do me this favor, my struggle will soon be over. But, pray, grant me the chance of a long combat, that the reward of my faith may be the greater before the Lord.”

“Other criminals, who are punished by the laws, might say the same thing.”

“Therein lies your error, O Governor,” replied the Martyr. “They who do evil are deservedly punished; but we who are innocent, and are tortured for the sake of Christ, we shall receive a reward from Him.”

“Impious rascal! what reward dost thou expect for dying a miserable death?”

“It is not for you to inquire about this,” answered Tarachus, “nor to understand what reward has been prepared for us in heaven; therefore, we willingly endure your insolent threats.”

“Thou speakest to me, villain, as if thou wert my equal,” cried out the Governor.

“I am not your equal,” said Tarachus, “and am very far from desiring to be so; but I speak out freely what I think, and no one shall hinder me from doing this, so long as He upon whom I rely gives me strength.”

“But I will soon put a stop to that freedom whereof thou boastest,” said Maximus.

“No one can deprive me of this freedom; neither you, nor your Emperors, nor your father, Satan, nor all the demons whom you worship.”

“Because I condescend to speak to thee, it seems thou growest more and more insolent.”

“It is then your own fault; keep your condescension to yourself; as for me, the God whom I serve knows that your very look fills me with disgust. It would afford me great pleasure not to be obliged to answer you.”

“To be brief: make up thy mind to escape further tortures. Come, sacrifice,” said Maximus.

“At my first trial, at Tarsus, and at my second, at Mopsuestia, I have publicly declared that I am a Christian; I am the same to-day.”

“When I crush thy body with tortures, knowest thou not, miserable wretch, that it will then be too late to repent?”

“If there were a reason for my repenting, I would have done so at my first or second trial, and I would have yielded to you. Now I am strong, and, with God’s grace, I defy your worst inventions.”

“I make thee more and more impudent by not torturing thee at once,” said Maximus.

“I say it again,” replied Tarachus, “you have full power over my body, do as you please.”

“Bind him and hang him up,” said the Governor to the executioners, “that at last he may cease to make a fool of himself.”

“If I were a fool,” rejoined the Martyr, “I should be like yourself; I would not resist your impious commands.”

“Whilst thou art hanging there, resolve to obey before I order greater tortures to be applied.”

“Although I might allege in my favor the decree of Diocletian—whereby you are forbidden to put me to the torture on account of my military condition—I waive my privilege. Employ whatsoever tortures you choose.”

“A soldier who honors the Emperors, sacrifices to the gods for their prosperity, and thus gains promotion. But thou art without any piety, and art, perchance, dishonorably dismissed from the army, hence, prepare thyself for the most cruel torments.”

“Why are you still threatening? why not set to work at once? I am ready.”

“Do not imagine that I am about to despatch thee with one blow; I will torture thee by degrees, and whatever shall remain of thy vile body thereafter, I will throw to the beasts, to be devoured by them.”

“Still threatening? Why not do what you have a mind to do?” said Tarachus.

“Do not flatter thyself, wretch, that after thou art dead, Christian women will embalm thy body and wrap it up in perfumes; I will take care that little indeed shall remain of thee.”

“Do with my body what you please, not only now, but also after my death.”

“Sacrifice to the gods, I command thee,” said the Governor.

“Are you so dull,” replied Tarachus, “as not to understand me when I repeat, that I sacrifice not to your gods, and worship not your abominations?”

“Beat his cheeks, cut and tear his lips,” said Maximus to the executioners. This was done.

“You have disfigured my face, but you have added new strength and beauty to my soul,” said the Martyr.

“Thou forcest me, wretch, to employ other means than I have hitherto done.”

“Think not to frighten me with your words; I am ready for everything, for I am clad in the armor of God.”

“What armor dost thou wear, thou wretch? Do I not see that thou art naked and covered with wounds?”

“That is above your understanding, and, being blind, you cannot see the complete armor I wear.”

“I endure thy folly with patience; all thy impertinence shall not induce me to put thee to a speedy death.”

“What harm is there in saying that you cannot see the armor I wear? You are unable to see it, because you are not clean of heart; for you are an impious murderer of the servants of Christ.”

“I suspect that heretofore thou hast led a bad life, and that thou wast addicted to sorcery before coming here.”

“I never have been, nor am I now given to such wickedness, for I do not worship demons, as you

do. I serve the one true God, who gives me patience, as well as words, to answer you."

"These reasonings will avail thee nothing; sacrifice, that thou mayest free thyself from these sufferings."

"Think you that I would be so stupidly foolish as to abandon the service of my God, who will give me everlasting life? And why? to befriend you, who might give a momentary comfort to my body, yet who would destroy my soul forever."

"Heat some spits," said Maximus to the executioners, "and apply them to his breasts."

"Were you to do even worse than that," said Tarachus, "you could not force a servant of God to worship demons."

"Take a razor," said the Governor to his men, "and cut off his ears; after that, shave his head and take off the skin; then put burning coals upon his crown."

When his ears were cut off, the Martyr said: "You have cut off the ears of my body, but those of my spirit are beyond your reach." As they tore the skin from his head, he added: "Were you to flay my whole body, I would not for a moment withdraw from my God, who gives me strength to triumph over all the cruelties, which your malice devises against me."

“Take the spits again,” said Maximus to the executioners; “make them glowing hot, then put them under his armpits.”

While this was being done, the Martyr said: “May God look down and judge you this day!”

“Upon what God art thou calling? tell me, thou impious rascal,” said the Governor.

“Upon Him whom you know not, although He is present everywhere; who will render to every one according to his works,” replied Tarachus.

“I will cause thee to perish in such a way that the women, as I said before, shall find it impossible to embalm thy remains, and wrap them up in fine linen, with ointments and perfumes; I will burn thee and scatter thy worthless ashes to the winds.”

“I say it again—do with me as you please; you have power over my body in this world.”

“Take him back to his dungeon,” said Maximus to his men, “guard him well; to-morrow, I shall have him exposed to the beasts. Call in another prisoner.”

In a moment Probus stood before the Governor. Maximus said to him:

“Have a care of thyself, Probus, lest thou fall again into thy former miseries, like the wretch who

was here a while ago. I am certain the past must have taught thee a lesson of wisdom; come, then, show thy good sense and piety by offering together with us a sacrifice to the gods, that we may reward thee with honors and distinction."

"My sentiments, and those of my brethren, are the same," replied Probus; "we serve the same God. Do not expect to hear from me any expression different from those which you have already heard. Neither flattery nor threats will avail anything. I am to-day more resolved than ever to resist all your impious proposals. Why, then, do you delay to show your evil designs against me?"

"It would seem that you have agreed among yourselves obstinately to refuse to honor the gods?"

"Although you have uttered many falsehoods, Governor," said Probus, "this time you speak the truth. Yes, we are all resolved to struggle for justice, and to confess our Faith. Therefore, with the help of God, we have so far successfully resisted your malice."

"Before some evil fortune befall thee," said Maximus, "listen to me, as thou wouldst to thy father: give up thy foolish nonsense, and offer sacrifice to the gods."

"In everything you say, Governor," said Probus, "I see that you are an infidel. You should, however, believe me when I make a solemn profession of my Faith. Neither yourself, nor the devils whom you worship, nor they who have given you power over our bodies, can change the faith we have in God, or turn us away from that love which we have for Him."

"Bind him," said the Governor to the executioners, "and hang him up by the feet."

"Will you never cease, cruel tyrant," said the Martyr, "to do the work of demons, to whom you have rendered yourself similar?"

"Believe me," replied Maximus, "have pity on thy body, before it is too late. See, what torments are being prepared."

"Whatever you do against my body," said the Martyr, "will prove of advantage to my soul; so do what you please."

"Heat the spits again," said the Governor to his men, "apply them this time to his side, that he may learn to become wise."

"The more foolish I appear in your eyes, the wiser I become in the sight of my God."

"Make the spits red-hot," said Maximus, "and put them on his back."

"My body is in your power. May God behold

my sufferings, and may He judge between you and me."

"The God upon whom thou callest, miserable wretch, hast given thee up to me, that I may punish thee as thou deservest."

"The God whom I serve is good; He loves men; but every one—being free and possessed of reason—knows what is best for himself."

"Take from the altar some of the wine and of the meat that has been offered to the gods," said Maximus, "and force it into his mouth."

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, look down from on high," exclaimed the Martyr; "see the violence they offer, and judge my cause!"

"After suffering so much, wretch," said Maximus, "thou hast, at last, tasted of our sacrifice, what wilt thou do now?"

"You have not done anything very wonderful by forcing these abominations into my mouth against my will."

"Nevertheless, thou hast now tasted what had been offered to the gods; promise to do so again of thy own accord, and I will release thee."

"Woe to you, wicked tyrant," said Probus; "but you are not powerful enough to shake my resolutions. For, were you to force me to swallow all the unclean offerings of your altars, I should

not be defiled. God sees the violence I am made to suffer against my will."

"Heat the spits again," said the Governor to the executioners, "and this time apply them to the calves of his legs."

"Neither your fire, nor your tortures, nor your father, Satan himself, as I have repeatedly said, can induce a servant of the true God to forsake his religion."

"There is not a sound spot on thy body, poor wretch; dost thou still persevere in thy folly?"

"I gave up my body to you," answered the Martyr, "that I might keep my soul sound and undefiled."

"Make some sharp-pointed nails red hot, and pierce his hands with them."

As he was being tortured in this manner, Probus exclaimed: "Thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, for granting me the favor of suffering this for the sake of Thy holy name."

"The more thou art tormented the more foolish thou art becoming, it appears," said Maximus.

"Your great power and your wickedness," replied the Martyr, "have not only rendered you foolish, but blind as well; for you know not what you are doing."

"Impious wretch!" cried out the Governor,

“darest thou call me foolish and blind, when I am combating for that piety which is due to the gods?”

“Would to God that your sight were blinded rather than your heart!” said Probus; “for now, whilst you imagine that you see, you are involved in utter darkness.”

“Maimed as thou art in all thy limbs, thou seemest to blame me for not having deprived thee of sight.”

“Even were your cruelty to deprive me of the eyes of the body, those of my heart no one can take away.”

“Well, then, to show what I can do, I will have thine eyes put out, thou madman!”

“Do not think to frighten me with your talk. Yet, should you execute what you threaten, you are unable to reach the eyes of my spirit.”

Thereupon the Governor said to his men:

“Prick his eyes, but slowly, so that whilst remaining alive, he may, by degrees, lose his sight.”

When this had been done, the Martyr said:

“You have deprived me of the eyes of the body, but those of my soul are as good as ever.”

“Thou art now wholly placed in darkness, miserable wretch! and dost thou still talk?” said Maximus.

“If you knew the woful darkness in which you are yourself, cruel tyrant, you would call me happy.”

“Thy whole body is wellnigh dead, and dost thou still continue to talk boastfully, contemptible wretch?”

“So long as my spirit abides in this poor crippled body of mine, I will not cease to give glory to God, who gives me strength so to do.”

“After all the tortures which I have made thee undergo, thinkest thou still to live? or dost thou flatter thyself that I will permit thee to die at thy ease?”

“I fight only that my confession may be perfect; for the rest, I care not in what manner you bring about my death,” answered Probus.

“I will make thee succumb by degrees beneath the blows which thou deservest.”

“You, as the servant of pitiless tyrants, have the power to do it,” replied the Martyr

“Take him away from my sight,” said the Governor to his attendants; “put him in chains and keep him in his dungeon. Let none of his friends come near, lest they congratulate him for persevering in his folly. At the first public shows, I will expose them to the beasts. Let us hear again that worthless fellow, Andronicus.”

At the summons of the Governor, Andronicus stood again before him. Maximus said:

“Art thou at last resolved, Andronicus, to have pity on thy youth, and to worship the gods? or art thou still determined to persevere in that foolishness which cannot possibly be of any use to thee? Harken to me! honor the gods and our Emperors, and receive the reward of thy dutifulness. If not, look not to me for mercy. So now, secure at once thy safety and happiness.”

“I have before now endured your wrath and cruelty,” replied the youth; “do you expect to persuade me to commit evil? No, I will never, by word or deed, depart from that confession which I have already made. With God’s help, I am ready to show you that the vigor of my youth and the firmness of my soul can defy all your assaults.”

“It seems to me thou art raving mad, and hast a devil in thee,” said the Governor.

“If I had a devil in me,” answered Andronicus, “I would obey you; but you are a demon yourself, and do the works of the devil.”

“They, who were here before thee, talked after the same manner, until they felt the persuading power of various tortures; then, however, they became quite pious towards the gods, and sub-

missive to the Emperors. Now they are sound and safe."

"You do nothing that is not in keeping with your wickedness," said the Martyr, "when you utter these falsehoods. They whom you worship did not themselves abide in the truth. You lie, like your father Satan: may God judge you."

"I see very well," said Maximus, "that, unless I treat thee as an impious rascal, I shall not overcome thy impudence."

"If God be my helper, I fear neither you nor your wrath."

"Take some rolls of paper," said the Governor to the executioners, "and burn them upon his naked body."

"Were you to burn my whole body," said the Martyr, "so long as breath remains in me I will defy your wickedness."

"Still as obstinate as ever," said Maximus; "at least thou shouldst ask to die soon, thus to be relieved from further torments."

"So long as I live, I triumph over your barbarity; but when I die, a crown of glory awaits me."

"Take some bodkins," said the Governor to his men, "make them glowing hot, and put them between his fingers."

"Impious tyrant!" said Andronicus, "do you

suppose that I fear any of the tortures which Satan suggests to you? Jesus Christ is my protector, and I despise all your inhuman contrivances."

"Knowest thou not, contemptible villain, that the Christ of whom thou speakest was an evil-doer, put to death by Pilate, the Governor."

"Be silent, unclean spirit," replied Andronicus, "you are not worthy to pronounce so holy a Name, you who have no hope in Him; but who, like a reprobate as you are, endeavor to withdraw His servants from their allegiance."

"And thou, madman, what advantage findest thou in believing and hoping in the man called Christ?" asked Maximus.

"The greatest advantage," answered the Martyr, "and the certain assurance of the highest reward for all these sufferings."

"Thou art not going to receive that reward very soon," said the Governor, "I will throw thee to the beasts, that they may devour thee limb by limb."

"The beasts are not more ferocious than yourself, for you treat as murderers, persons who are not only innocent, but not even accused of any crime. Do your worst, therefore, that I may show you what courage and strength there is in one who loves and serves Christ."

“Open his mouth,” said Maximus to his men, “force him to eat and drink of the meat and wine offered to the gods.”

“Lord, my God,” exclaimed the Martyr, “behold the violence they offer me!”

“What wilt thou do now, evil spirit?” asked the Governor; “thou hast tasted of the sacrifice offered to the gods!”

“Senseless tyrant,” answered Andronicus, “the soul is not defiled by what is forced against my will into my mouth; the Lord sees my heart, and knows how I loathe your abominations.”

“How long wilt thou continue in thy folly? All this nonsense will not save thee.”

“I have a reason for my willing perseverance in these torments, a motive which you cannot understand.”

“That is another foolish extravagance,” said Maximus; “I will have thy tongue cut out to stop thy prating, for my patience and kindness make thee only the more impudent.”

“Do me the favor, pray,” replied the Martyr, “of cutting off my tongue and my lips, which have been forced to touch your abominations.”

“How long, O wretched madman, wilt thou suffer thyself to be tortured, especially after having tasted of the sacrifices?”

“Infamous tyrant!” said Andronicus, “may evil luck betide yourself and them, who have given you power to worry and torment the servants of God.”

“Worthless villain, darest thou speak insultingly of our mighty princes, who have given so glorious a peace to the world.”

“I despise those drinkers of human blood who overturn the world. May God arise in His might, and make them feel what they have done to His servants.”

“Put a piece of iron into his mouth,” said Maximus, to the executioners, “strike out his teeth and cut off his blasphemous tongue, that he may learn to respect the Emperors. Then take his teeth and tongue, burn them, and scatter the ashes to the winds, lest some of his impious companions, or some foolish women, gather them and preserve them as something precious and holy. As for himself, put him again in his dungeon, and keep him safely, that, with his fellows, he may be exposed to the wild beasts at the first public show.”

After this third trial of the Martyrs, the Governor sent for Terentianus, the Chiliarch of Cilicia, who had the care of the public games, and ordered him to prepare, for the following day, a show of

the wild beasts. Terentianus immediately set to work, and, although the time was very short, the next day the gladiators, the beast-fighters, and the animals themselves were ready. The amphitheatre was about a mile distant from the city. Early in the morning, all the inhabitants, men, women and children, began to flock thither. At noon, Maximus himself made his appearance, surrounded by his numerous attendants. The games began. Soon the arena exhibited the disgusting spectacle of rivulets of blood flowing in every direction; gladiators, beast-fighters, wild beasts, lay bleeding and dying everywhere. The shouts of the multitude filled the air and drowned the groans of the victims of this barbarous amusement. When Maximus perceived that the excitement began to flag, he sent a body of soldiers to bring the three Christians from their dungeon. The repeated tortures which they had undergone had so disabled them, that they could no longer stand up, much less walk so great a distance. The soldiers had them carried to the amphitheatre, and threw them down in the arena, near the place where sat the Governor and his friends. At the sight of the poor helpless victims of the Governor's cruelty, the people could not withhold the expression of their indignation. "What

a barbarian we have for Governor," said some. "What justice can be expected from one who treats the accused so cruelly," said others. Many, unwilling to view the sad spectacle that was now to be presented, left the amphitheatre and returned to the city. This did not escape the watchful eye of the tyrant. Immediately he gave orders to the soldiers to guard carefully every entrance, and to permit no one to leave the place. At the same time he charged his attendants to note down the names of all persons showing any displeasure, that he might be enabled to call them to an account for their conduct.

Meanwhile, at a signal given by the Governor, the grates of the cages were removed, and a great number of the wild beasts bounded into the arena; they ran madly in every direction, but could not be induced to take the least notice of the three Martyrs. Maximus was furious; he sent for the chief keeper of the beasts, and, holding him responsible for the tameness of the animals, ordered him to be cudgelled. After this the keeper set loose an enormous she-bear, which that very day had torn to pieces three men. She rushed into the arena, but soon slackened her step, and, passing by the other Martyrs, she lay quietly down by the side of Andronicus, and

began to lick his wounds. The Martyr leaned his head upon her, as if he invited her to despatch him, but the animal remained equally gentle. The Governor forthwith ordered her to be killed where she lay by the side of the heroic youth.

Terentianus, the Chiliarch, now began to grow uneasy, fearing lest the Governor might take a notion of holding him responsible for the ill-success of the games. He, therefore, requested the keeper to let loose a huge lioness, which had lately been presented to him by Herod, the Chiliarch of Antioch. As she left her cage and entered the arena, she set up so deafening a roar that it made the spectators shudder. Seeing the Martyrs prostrate upon the ground, she drew nigh, and quietly crouched down at the feet of the Blessed Tarachus. The Martyr stretched forth his hands, and, seizing her by the mane and ears, tried to pull her towards him, but she remained as gentle as a sheep, and began to lick his feet. The Governor, foaming with rage, commanded the keeper to prick her with goads; this angered the beast, and she returned to her cage. The grates, however, having been let down by order of Maximus, she tore them to pieces with her claws and teeth, roaring fearfully the while. All the people were frightened, thinking

that she was going to make her escape, and, with tumultuous cries and threats, obliged the Governor to secure the ferocious beast. This put an end to the games. Being now disappointed in his expectations, Maximus gave orders to Terentianus to bring in the gladiators, and to despatch the Martyrs with their swords. Thus, after countless sufferings, Tarachus, Probus and Andronicus went to receive a crown for which they had so nobly struggled.

Their triumph had been witnessed not only by the Pagans, who in vast numbers had attended the interrogatories in the different cities, but also by some of their brethren, who were desirous of making a full and faithful record of all that was said and done. On this day they had also seen everything that had occurred in the amphitheatre. Having stationed themselves upon a neighboring mountain, which overlooked the place, they hid themselves behind the rocks and shrubs, and anxiously watched the final issue of the glorious combat. When all was over, and the crowd had dispersed, the Governor commanded the bodies of the Martyrs to be huddled together with the mangled remains of the gladiators and beast-fighters who had been slain in the arena, with orders to have them removed on the following

day. A guard of ten soldiers was detailed to watch over the unsightly mass. The shadows of night had already spread over the scene of blood and excitement, and the silence of death reigned all around.

When the night was somewhat advanced,—say the Christians, in their relation of the martyrdom,—we slowly descended the mountain, and, kneeling down, begged of God to show us the ways and means of rescuing the sacred remains of His blessed servants. We approached the amphitheatre, and, to our utter surprise, perceived that the soldiers had kindled a large fire in the middle of the arena, and now were making merry, eating and drinking, and boisterously singing. Thereupon, we drew back a short distance, and again betook ourselves to prayer, entreating our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us His help, that we might free the bodies of His generous champions from the contact and defilement of the profane. Soon we were made aware that our earnest prayer had been heard. For, suddenly, flashes of vivid lightning began rapidly to succeed each other. The rumbling sound of thunder was heard, at first afar off, then near by, until peal after peal made the very ground tremble where we stood; next the clouds seemed to burst open, and torrents of rain

poured down. Convinced that heaven favored our undertaking, we ran forthwith into the arena. The soldiers had fled for shelter, we knew not whither; the fire was extinguished. The night was so exceedingly dark that we could not distinguish one body from another. Simultaneously, and, as it were instinctively, we raised our hands to heaven, beseeching God, with silent prayer, to help us in our difficulty. All at once, we saw that the bodies of the Martyrs became luminous, as if a ray of light from above had fallen upon them. Immediately we took them up, and hastened with our precious burden toward the mountain.

After we had climbed some distance up the mountain, being well-nigh worn out with the cares and fatigues of that eventful day, we laid down the bodies, and asked our Lord to favor us once more by giving us a sign whereby we might know the place where He wished us to deposit the remains of His servants. He heard the prayer of our faith and humility. Not far from the place where we were, we beheld a brilliant light; we went towards it, and beheld a large cave in the side of the mountain. Here we reverently deposited the three Martyrs, shedding tears of joy and devotion whilst engaged in the holy occupation. After carefully shutting the cave, we

St. Tarachus and His Companions. 55

returned to the city. During three days we kept ourselves hidden; for the Governor, not satisfied with punishing the soldiers for their carelessness, had been doing everything in his power to discover the persons who had carried off the remains. Seeing, however, that he was unsuccessful, and suspecting the inhabitants of favoring, in secret, the bold act of the Christians, he left the city in disgust. All danger now being passed, we sang a hymn of thankfulness to God for the great mercy He had shown to us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Lastly, three of us—Marcion, Felix and Verus—resolved to spend the remainder of our lives near the tomb of the blessed Martyrs, in the hope of being also buried there, that through their merits and intercession with God, we may become partakers of their bliss and glory in heaven.

The Martyrs suffered A. D., 304; the Church keeps their festival on the 11th of October.





II.

SS. THEODORA AND DIDYMUS.

IN the reign of the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian, a decree was published, whereby all Christians within the limits of the Roman Empire were commanded to sacrifice to the idols, under threat of various punishments if they refused to yield compliance. In consequence, many of the most distinguished among the faithful saw themselves deprived of liberty, and thrown into loathsome dungeons; for they chose to obey the voice of conscience and the commands of God, rather than the unjust enactments of wicked men. At that time, Eustratius was Governor of Alexandria, in Egypt. By his orders, the prisons of that great city were soon filled with Christians of every rank and condition. These he summoned separately before him, finding it a special delight to annoy or torture those among them who were

possessed of wealth, until by bribes or confiscation he was enabled to gratify his avarice. It was with this expectation that he sent a band of soldiers to bring before his tribunal the Virgin Theodora, who already during several days had been detained in prison.

The Governor began the interrogatory in the usual form, by asking her what rank she held in society. To this Theodora replied :

“I am a Christian.”

“Art thou free-born, or a bond-woman?” asked Eustratius.

“I said just now that I am a Christian,” answered the young lady; “Christ by His coming among us hath set me free. Moreover, in the language of this world, I am born of noble parents.”

The Governor thereupon sent for the bailiff of the city, and said to him: “Tell us what thou knowest about the lady Theodora.”

Lucius, the bailiff, replied: “By your own nobility, my lord, I can testify that she is free-born, respectable, and of one of the best families in the city.”

This answer satisfied the Governor, and he said to Theodora: “Since thou art of noble birth, how comes it that thou art not yet married?”

“On account of my love for Jesus Christ,” answered Theodora. “For when He came into this world, being Himself born of a Mother, who is ever a Virgin, He withdrew us from corruption and promised unto us life everlasting. Wherefore, I trust that, so long as I continue faithful to Him, He will keep me from every defilement.”

“Nevertheless,” said Eustratius, “it is the will and command of our Emperors, that those among the Christians, who are Virgins, should be forced to offer sacrifice to the gods, or else be exposed in places of infamy.”

“I suppose,” replied the maiden, “that you know well enough that God sees our hearts; if, then, He beholds my desire and will to remain pure and undefiled in His sight, no violence, whatsoever, which may be done to me, can deprive me of that which I have consecrated to Him.”

“Knowing the nobility of thy birth, and seeing the beauty of thy person, I cannot but feel pity for thee. Yet, all this shall not save thee; for, I swear by all the gods, the Emperors have issued their commands, and they must be obeyed.”

“I have said already, that God sees our will: He reads our very thoughts. If you cut off my head, or my hands and feet, will you deny that it is the work of violence rather than of my will?

In like manner, whatsoever else I am made to suffer, I cannot thereby become guilty. By vow I have consecrated my chastity to God. He has accepted the gift; I am firmly resolved to continue faithful to Him. He is the Lord and Master: He can and will preserve the gift offered unto Him, but He will do it in the manner which he Himself chooses."

"Do not bring upon thy name and kindred an everlasting disgrace. Thou hast heard how the city officer spoke of thy family, they are among the first and noblest in Alexandria."

"I confess, before all, the Lord Jesus Christ. He has bestowed true honor and nobility upon me. He too knows how to guard His dove against the attacks of rapacious vultures."

"What foolishness to believe in a God who was crucified!" exclaimed the Governor. "Thinkest thou that He will be able to protect thee, especially when thou fallest into the hands of men who will look upon thee as a crazy woman?"

"I believe in Jesus Christ, who suffered under Pontius Pilate," answered Theodora; "He will free me from the hands of lawless men, and keep me pure and sinless, if I continue faithful to Him; and this I am firmly resolved to do."

"I do not know," said Eustratius, "what keeps

me from putting thee to the torture, as if thou wert but the vilest of slaves, instead of listening patiently to thy impudent nonsense. The orders of our Emperors are positive; so prepare thyself to comply with them, or I will soon make an example of thee as a warning for all other silly women."

"I am ready to suffer whatsoever you may choose to inflict upon my body," replied the Virgin, "for you have it in your power. My soul, however, you cannot touch, for it is in the power of God alone."

"Blindfold her," said the Governor to his men; "give her a few blows on the face, saying at the same time, do not be foolish, but come and offer sacrifice to the gods." Whilst they were executing the Governor's orders, Theodora said:

"God is my witness, that I am determined never to sacrifice to your devils. O Lord, be Thou my helper."

"Thou seest now," said Eustratius, "how thou hast forced me to treat thee with indignity, although thou art a lady of high rank. Listen to me: give up thy foolishness, lest thou oblige me also to give thee up to the crowd of ruffians who are awaiting thy sentence."

"I am not foolish when I confess the Lord, who

is my Protector. As to the indignity which you offer me, it secures for me honor and glory forever."

"I can endure this no longer," said the Governor. "I had patience with thee, so long as I thought there was a chance of bringing thee over to better sentiments. Now, however, seeing thy obstinacy, I should deem myself guilty of negligence in executing the orders of our august princes, were I still to trifle away time in this foolish manner."

"You are afraid of displeasing your Emperors," replied Theodora, "and you hasten to obey their commands. How can you blame me for refusing to disobey my Lord and Master, who is the supreme Ruler of the universe?"

"Darest thou despise the commands of our immortal Emperors, and treat me as a man unfit for my position? Beware lest I begin to make thee feel the effect of my power. Meanwhile, I give thee three days to consider this matter; but if, after that, thou do not obey and offer sacrifice, I swear by all the gods of Olympus, I will have thee taken to a place of debauchery, that all women, seeing or hearing it, may learn a lesson from thy example."

"He who is God, is the same now and forever," said Theodora. "He will not permit me to deny

Him. You have power over my body: my spirit you cannot subdue. After three days I will speak and think as I do now; there is no need, therefore, for this delay. If, however, you think it proper to grant me these days of respite, I ask it as a right, that, during this time, I be not exposed to the insults of lawless persons."

"This request is but fair," replied Eustratius. Wherefore he said to his officers: "Take the lady Theodora to a place of safety, keep her under guard for three days, and let no one say or do anything to molest her, but treat her as befits a person of her rank."

After three days she was again summoned before the Governor, who said to her: "If thou art now resolved to obey, offer sacrifice to the gods, and go thy way. If not, take it for granted, thou shalt not remain unharmed."

"I have already said it before," replied Theodora, "and am willing to repeat it, that I have consecrated my chastity to Christ, our Lord. To preserve me unsullied belongs to Him; I place myself in His holy keeping: He knows best in what manner He will save His handmaid from being defiled."

"By all the immortal gods," said Eustratius, "I will not incur the anger of the Emperors by refus-

ing to condemn thee. If thou art unwilling to worship our gods, the blame of being sentenced rests upon thyself. Therefore, I give sentence, as I promised to do. Thou shalt be taken to a place of infamy, then we shall see whether Christ, for whose sake thou perseverest in thy obstinacy, can save thee from ruin and disgrace."

When the Martyr heard her condemnation, she exclaimed: "O Lord, who knowest the secrets of all hearts, who also until now hast preserved me unsullied, suffer not that Thy servant be this day made unclean in Thy sight. In Thee, O Lord, have I trusted, let me never be put to shame."

Thereupon the servant of God was immediately hurried off to a house of lewdness. As she was pushed into it, she raised her eyes to heaven, and said: "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, help me and take me hence: O Thou, who didst free the Blessed Peter from his prison and from the malice of the Jews, deliver me from this abode of sin; that all may know that I am Thy handmaid."

Meanwhile a crowd of infamous wretches had gathered about the house, and, like hungry wolves, were watching for a chance to devour the innocent lamb. But the good Sheperd of souls was not forgetful of his own. A young Christian, hearing how the noble and virtuous Theodora had been

condemned, felt within him a sudden inspiration to rescue her from the danger to which she was exposed. He dressed himself in the garb of a soldier, and commending his charitable undertaking to God, he went forth boldly. The shadows of evening favored his generous design. Passing hurriedly through the crowd of the unmannerly loungers that were loitering about the place, he entered the apartment of the servant of God—which no one had as yet ventured to do. At sight of him, the chaste Theodora was filled with alarm; she endeavored to hide herself in a corner of the room. But the youth, respectfully standing at a distance from her, said in a tone of voice expressive of the greatest kindness:

“Fear not, sister, I am thy brother; the God who hears the prayer of the innocent is our Father. If I come to thee in the clothing of the wolf, it is not to cause thee any harm, but to bring safety. Make haste, therefore; put on these garments, and leave this place without delay. I will remain here in thy stead, and gladly will I receive, as coming from God’s hand, whatsoever may befall me.”

Theodora at first hesitated, but, after a moment’s reflection, she felt convinced that her heavenly Bridegroom,—who of old had stopped the mouths of lions when Daniel was cast into their den,—had

sent a friend and brother to free her from the imminent danger which threatened her virtue. Wherefore, taking the military cloak, she wrapped it carefully around her, and putting the hat upon her head, according to the suggestion of her deliverer she drew it down over her eyes, that she might appear like a person ashamed of being seen or recognized by any one, after visiting a house of bad repute. The stratagem met with complete success. No one seemed to have the least suspicion that the handsome young soldier, who was hurrying so swiftly through the midst of them, was not the same that had entered the dwelling some time before. Soon she reached a place of safety, and kneeling down, she returned most fervent thanks to God, who had protected her in so wonderful a manner.

Meanwhile, the devoted youth, whom charity had prompted to sacrifice himself for the preservation of the chastity of a sister in Christ, was beginning to receive the reward of his noble generosity. About an hour had elapsed since the escape of the Virgin Theodora, when one of the crowd ventured to enter the house. Great was his astonishment when, instead of the timid and bashful maiden whom he expected to find, he saw standing before him a comely and able-bodied young man. "How

is this?" he said, rubbing his eyes, "am I awake, or is it all a dream? Does the God of the Christians so suddenly change women into men?"

"It is as thou seest," replied the youth. "What dost thou desire of me?"

The man, however, did not give any answer, but immediately left the apartment, for he was greatly frightened. When they who were on the outside saw him return so soon, and in so great a hurry, they began to laugh at him and make sport of his terrified looks. But he said to them: "It is easy enough for you to treat me with derision; yet, did you know what I have seen, you would confess that your merriment is altogether out of place. I had heard, as well as yourselves, no doubt, that the God of the Christians had changed water into wine, and I thought it all a fable; but, on this very day, I really believe, a young maiden has been changed into a stalwart young man. Judge now, whether I had no reason to fear that I myself might suddenly be transformed into a woman, had I continued somewhat longer in that awful place."

The crowd, thereupon, began to discuss among themselves the possibility of such an event, and whether they should give credit to what had been said. But their discussion soon came to an end, for the noble-hearted deliverer of Theodora,

—thinking that, perhaps, false rumors might be spread through the city, to the detriment of the Christian Religion,—came boldly forward and said to the multitude:

“The God whom I serve has not transformed me. If fear, and may be, the voice of conscience had not bewildered the poor wretch, who was intent upon a very grievous wrong, he might have learnt something to his advantage, which, perchance, might have induced him to become a better man. That which has happened is simply this: The one whom you thought to have, you have not; and you have instead one whom you did not think to have, and him you may keep. A twofold crown has this day been secured: a Virgin has remained a Virgin, and a soldier has become a champion of Christ.”

The people admired the generous action of the young man, who, for the sake of protecting the virtue of an innocent maiden, had not hesitated to expose himself to the greatest danger. But the spies and informers, employed by the Governor, hearing what had happened, reported the matter to him, and he immediately gave orders to arrest the generous Christian. When brought before his tribunal, Eustratius said to the youth:

“What is thy name?”

“My name is Didymus,” he answered.

“Who induced thee to interfere in this affair, to prevent the ends of justice, and to draw contempt upon me?”

“God inspired me to do what I have done,” replied Didymus.

“Before I put thee to the torture,” said the Governor, “confess what thou knowest; where is the lady Theodora?”

“Where she is I do not know,” said the youth, “but this I know with certainty, that she is a true servant of God; that she boldly confessed our Lord Jesus Christ, and that God, in His goodness, has preserved her undefiled. Wherefore, I claim no credit whatsoever for what has been done by me: I thank my God, however, for choosing me to be His instrument in bestowing a favor upon one of His Elect. He hath rewarded her according to her faith and trust in Him: this you will yourself acknowledge, if you are willing to give testimony to the truth.”

“Tell me, Didymus,” said Eustratius, “of what condition art thou?”

“I am a Christian,” answered Didymus, “ransomed by the blood of Christ.”

“Stretch him upon the rack,” said the Governor to the executioners, “and apply the torture

with twofold severity for the insolence which he shows."

"I beg you to inflict upon me, without delay, whatsoever your emperors have commanded you to do."

"Do not press me to make haste, for, I swear by the immortal gods, the double torture will come upon thee soon enough, unless, this very moment, thou offer sacrifice; on this condition thy first offence shall be forgiven."

"By what I have done," said Didymus, "I have sufficiently shown that I am a champion of Christ, and that in Him alone I put my trust. I had a twofold object in view: to save a Virgin from dishonor, and to give a proof of my Faith. If God gives me strength to continue steadfast in this Faith, your torments cannot deprive me of life. Know, then, that I do not sacrifice to devils, and I fear not your greatest cruelties."

"On account of thy impudence," said the Governor, "thy head shall be struck off; and because thou disregardest the orders of our mighty and glorious Emperors, thy body shall be cast into the flames."

"Thanks be to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," replied the Martyr, "He hath not rejected the longing desire of my heart. He grants

me a double crown: He preserves the chastity of Theodora, His handmaid, and he permits me to lay down my life for the confession of His holy Name."

Thereupon sentence was pronounced, and the executioners hurried him away.

When the blessed Martyr arrived at the place of execution, he was not a little surprised on beholding before him the Virgin Theodora, who was awaiting his coming.

"Begone, Theodora," he exclaimed, "and save thyself; the sentence which condemns me to die, pronounces thy acquittal."

"Not so," replied Theodora; "I was willing that thou shouldst save me from dishonor; but how can I permit thee to take from me a Martyr's crown? If I suffer thee to die in my stead, how can I think myself guiltless? I was arrested, and was condemned; thy generosity gives thee no right to take upon thyself the punishment which was decreed against me. At thy request, so noble and magnanimous, I fled from the danger which threatened my virtue, but I did not flee from death. When death alone is to be feared I cannot allow a substitute to take my place; I am willing to suffer tortures, I am ready to die for Christ."

In this manner they vied for some time with one

another, both anxious to secure the crown that lay well-nigh within their grasp. After a while an order came from the Governor condemning both to be beheaded, unless they were willing to sacrifice to the idols. Thus they were not divided in death; and both received the twofold crown of charity and of steadfastness in the confession of the Faith.

They suffered in A. D. 304.





III.

ST. BLASIUS AND HIS COMPANIONS.

THE blessed Martyr Blasius was a native of Sebaste, in Armenia. His parents belonged to one of the noblest families in that province, and were highly respected by its inhabitants, on account of their own many virtues; but the great charity and Christian generosity of the son increased, to a wonderful extent, the esteem in which they were held by all. It was his delight to seek out and comfort the poor and the afflicted; he endeavored to make himself all to all; and to render his good deeds more effective, he applied himself with unwearied zeal to the study of the art of healing. Thus, after a time, it came to pass that, whilst alleviating the bodily sufferings of his brethren, he was enabled to pour the balm of spiritual consolation into their souls—wounded by the daily conflict which they had to sustain against the secret as well as the open enemies of the Christian religion.

The Emperor Licinius, who commanded in the East, had shown himself, if not favorable, at least not hostile to the Christians, so long as he remained on good terms with Constantine, whose sister he had married. Success, however, had awakened his ambition, and induced him to make the bold attempt of obtaining for himself the sole mastery of the Roman Empire. He began by declaring himself the champion of the gods of Rome, and stirred up a furious persecution against the Christians. His wicked designs were eagerly seconded by the Governors of the Asiatic Provinces, especially by Agricolaus, Governor of Lesser Armenia, a man of a rapacious and bloodthirsty disposition. To add to the distress of the Faithful, it happened at this very time that the Church of Sebaste was without a Bishop. In this emergency the eyes of all were turned to Blasius, whose wisdom and holiness, whose learning and fearless courage, were known everywhere. A choice was soon made, under the guidance of Providence; and the Saint showed himself as watchful a shepherd as he had hitherto been a skilful physician. His presence cheered up the fainthearted, the example of his self-sacrificing charity aroused the zeal of the clergy; he infused his own spirit of fortitude into the hearts of the people.

The Governor soon perceived that it would be impossible to carry out his plans, so long as the Christians were guided by leaders who feared neither torments nor death. Wherefore, he directed all his wrath against the clergy, well knowing that it would not be difficult to scatter the flock, when the shepherds were slain. It was then that all the Faithful united in beseeching the Bishop to withdraw, at least for a time, from the city. The Saint, after praying and consulting the will of his Divine Master, secretly left Sebaste and sought for himself a place of shelter, in a lonely cave, on Mount Argæus. Here, far removed from human society, he found rest and happiness by constantly communing with his God; here his soul was refreshed with heavenly visions, which strengthened and prepared him for future struggles. Nor was he in his solitude wholly deprived of all exterior consolation. The companionship of his fellow-men—which the wickedness of the persecutors would not suffer him to enjoy—was in a marvellous manner supplied by irrational creatures. For the wild beasts of every description, that roamed through the forests of the mountain, no sooner became aware of the presence of the Saint among them, than, far from showing any signs of fear or displeasure, they came in great numbers to

the cave wherein he dwelled. And, as formerly Daniel had been spared by the lions and Elias fed by the ravens, so these animals, laying aside their ferocious instincts in regard to each other, seemed to unite in exhibiting their affection for the Servant of God. In return for this mark of confidence on their part, and to repay them for the food wherewith they supplied him, Blasius healed their wounds, made peace among them when they were at variance, and bestowed upon them his blessing. Such was the life of this holy Bishop, whom the cruelty of the enemies of the truth kept separated from the flock intrusted to his keeping.

Meanwhile, the time for the public games was near. Agricolaus gave orders that they should be celebrated with more than ordinary display. The hunters of wild beasts were sent in every direction. They to whom was assigned that part of Mount Argæus where was the cave of the Saint, wondered exceedingly at their want of success in the chase, and were about to give it up as a useless task, when suddenly they came in sight of a vast multitude of animals there assembled. "Assuredly," they said one to another, "there must be some reason for so strange a spectacle. Let us try whether we may not discover its cause." Accordingly, they began a careful search around the

neighborhood, and soon came to the mouth of the cave which sheltered the Bishop. They beheld the man of God kneeling, absorbed in prayer, and unaware of their presence. So astonished were they at the sight that they did not venture to enter, lest they might disturb him; but, after consulting among themselves, they resolved to return to the city and acquaint the Governor with all they had seen. Agricolaus, after listening to them, instead of being struck by the marvellous things which they related, grew very angry. He upbraided them for their want of duty, and threatened them with severe punishment if they did not forthwith return to the spot and make Blasius a prisoner. Wherefore, accompanied by a band of soldiers, the hunters went back to the cave, where they found the Saint still engaged in prayer. Standing at the entrance, they addressed him:

“Blasius, friend of God, come out; the Governor sends for thee.”

Immediately the man of God arose, and presenting himself before them, with a firm and cheerful countenance, said:

“You are welcome, my beloved children. If the Governor calls me, let us at once go to him, in the name of the Lord. Your coming is to me a cause of great joy: it was not unexpected.

The Lord has been very gracious to me; and I know that He desires me to come to Him. Thrice during the past night did He call me, saying: 'Arise, O Blasius, and, as is thy custom, offer to Me sacrifice.' Let me thank you, therefore, my dear children, for the good tidings you bring. Let us go without delay; and may the good Master, whom I serve, be with us all."

Thereupon, they began their weary journey. The news of their coming preceded them. The pagans, to whom the sanctity of the servant of God and the numerous miracles which he had performed were well known, were anxiously waiting for him in the different towns and villages through which he had to pass. Some brought their little children and besought the Saint to bless them. Others placed the sick and helpless along the streets and roads, that the sight of the friend of God might bring them some comfort in their sufferings. Blasius, seeing their faith and confidence, took pity on them; he begged of his Divine Master to heal them, that all might know and confess His holy name. Nor was his charity satisfied by bestowing these miraculous favors upon the people—many of whom had been the persecutors of his Brethren in the Faith—it extended even to flocks and herds. Several

of these were infected with various diseases; the owners did not neglect to avail themselves of the presence of the Saint in their midst; they made an appeal to his charity. The holy Bishop blessed their cattle in the name of the Lord, and every sign of sickness at once disappeared from among them. Thus it was that God glorified the zeal of His servant in the sight of his persecutors; very many of whom, forsaking the worship of idols, embraced the true Faith.

As the Saint was passing through a certain village, it happened that a little boy, whilst taking his meal, had swallowed the bone of a fish whereof he was eating. Every remedy which the urgency of the case suggested was immediately applied, but without success. The little sufferer was at the point of death, when the mother learnt that Blasius, the Bishop of the Christians, was in the neighborhood. She felt within her a sudden inspiration to have recourse to him. Taking the child in her arms, she ran into the street, and rushed through the band of soldiers who guarded the Saint. She laid her dying son before him, and kneeling down beside him, she cried out in a loud voice:

“Friend of God, servant of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ have pity on me. Have

pity on my child; cast us not off, even if we belong to an unworthy race. Save my son from death; he is my only one."

She then explained in a few words what had befallen. Blasius was moved with compassion. Immediately he placed his hands upon the head of the boy, and made the sign of the cross on his throat. After which, raising his eyes toward heaven, he prayed aloud, saying:

"Lord Jesus Christ, for whose sake I am led to death, Thou who seest the hearts and knowest the desires of them that hope in Thee, reject not my supplication, but graciously listen to my prayer. If I am thy servant, although unworthy, have mercy on a poor mother, and restore this child safe and sound to her love, that all may see and confess that Thou alone art the true and Almighty God, who givest life and salvation to them that confide in Thee. And since Thou art rich in Thy mercies and givest abundantly of Thy inexhaustible treasures, grant, I beseech Thee, that all they who, in ages to come, after the example of Thy servant, shall call upon Thee when they are laboring under similar afflictions, may receive the reward of their faith and trust in Thy power and goodness, and bless and thank Thee for obtaining their requests." When he

finished his prayer, the Saint took the child by the hand and presented him perfectly recovered to his weeping mother.

The fame of this miracle granted to the prayers of the holy man soon spread through all the places which they had to pass. The nearer they approached their destination, the greater became the outward manifestations of respect and veneration which the people felt for the Saint. His skill, as a physician, had become known far and wide, whilst he lived peacefully in his own city; his disinterestedness had won the hearts of all who had had any dealings with him; yet the supernatural gifts which God had bestowed upon him, were looked upon by most men as simply the effect of superior science. But they who understood the holiness of his life, and viewed him as the minister of God, did not hesitate to apply to him with the utmost confidence in their distresses, even in those which the worldly-wise would consider as too trifling to deserve the interference of a supernatural power. This was shown in the following manner. As they were travelling, a very old woman, dressed in the garb of the greatest poverty, presented herself before him, and, with tears in her eyes, said: "Servant of our Lord, pity me; I am poor and helpless.

The only possession I had on earth was a young pig; but alas! yesterday a wolf came from the neighboring forest and cruelly stole away my only treasure. What shall I do, O friend of God, if thou help me not?"

Blasius pitying her, and addressing her with kind words, said: "Grieve not, my good woman; God hears them who believe and hope in Him. Thy lost treasure shall be thine again. See, the wicked wolf is bringing it back unharmed to the place where yesterday he took it. Thank God for His goodness." At that very moment, the savage thief made his appearance, and placed his prey near the woman, to the astonishment of all who witnessed this strange sight.

On their arrival in Sebaste, as it was late in the day, the Governor gave orders that the Bishop should be taken to prison, and that none, under any pretext whatsoever, should be admitted to see him. Early the following morning, Agricolaus sent his officers to bring the Saint before his tribunal. When he saw him coming near, the Governor, assuming an expression of great kindness and regard, said to Blasius:

"I bid thee welcome, Venerable Blasius, friend, beloved of the gods."

"I also greet you, noble Governor," replied the

holy man, "and wish you happiness of every kind. But I beg you to remember that God only, who rules the universe, can bestow real blessings upon us. These, however, you will not deserve if you honor, with the name of gods, those idols of gold and silver, or of wood and stone, which you worship. They have nothing divine in them; they are merely the lurking places of vile demons. As they are the work of man, they who make them, as well as they who serve them, shall one day be doomed to everlasting fires. Wherefore, call me not a friend of your gods, for I have no desire to be consigned to unquenchable flames."

These words made the Governor very angry.

"Thinkest thou," he said, "that I have invited thee to teach me that our gods are, after all, no gods? Thou mistakest altogether the object of thy coming. But I will show thee what is the consequence of reviling us and our gods; for gods we call them, and gods they are. Darest thou contradict us?"

"I mean not to give offence; I pity your fatal blindness," answered the Saint.

"We shall soon see," resumed Agricolaus, "whether it would not be better to have kept thy pity for thyself."

He then ordered his attendants to beat him with

clubs; but, although this punishment lasted long and was very cruelly inflicted, the Martyr uttered not a word of complaint, nor did he show in his countenance the least sign of suffering. His torturers were greatly astonished; and the Governor, seeing that he gained nothing by this manner of proceeding, said:

“Blasius, if thy God felt any interest in thy well-being, He would not suffer thee to be treated after this manner.”

“I am quite surprised, O Governor,” replied the Martyr, “that you are so ignorant as to flatter yourself that you have discovered a means of drawing me away from the love of my God, and from the boundless confidence which I have in my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. You may have unfortunately misled, by these false arguments of yours, some poor and simple souls, but you deceive yourself, if you think that you can force me to yield to them; for I am certain, that neither your torments, nor death itself, shall be able to separate me from the love of my God. It is not upon my own strength that I rely, but upon the mercy and power of Christ, my Saviour, the Son of the living God.”

The Governor seemed satisfied, at least for the present, that the words of the Martyr would prove

true; wherefore, he ordered him to be taken back to prison, with the strict injunction of permitting no one to give him either food or comfort.

This command of the Governor was a source of grave affliction to the Christians of Sebaste; all were anxious to see and hear once more their Chief Pastor, and ready to make the greatest sacrifices to be enabled to relieve him in his distress. In vain they made every effort to be allowed to approach him. The poor woman, however, to whom the pig had been restored in so wonderful a manner, was resolved to show her gratitude to her kind benefactor. In spite of the warning of her neighbors that the attempt would prove useless, she had the pig killed, and taking some of the best portions, she carefully prepared them with different herbs, and set out towards the prison. It was late in the night when she arrived. The guard and the keeper were unwilling to give her admittance. But she was not to be put off. After using, to no purpose, prayers and entreaties, sobs and tears, she remembered how great a power of persuasion money possesses; she had not much, but she cheerfully offered what she had. Her perseverance was crowned with success. As she entered the prison, she said:

“Holy Father, give your blessing to me un-

worthy. Forgive me my boldness; it was our merciful Lord who inspired me with the thought, and gave me courage to carry it out. He knows that you are hungry, and He sends you food."

"Thanks be to God for His goodness!" replied the Martyr; "may His blessing come upon thee, and abide with thee forever."

Blasius then, praising the charity and devotedness of the good woman, thankfully partook of the food she had brought. When he was refreshed, he blessed her again, and said:

"Know thou, my daughter, that my dissolution is near at hand. In a short time, I shall have fought the good fight, and sealed with my blood the Faith I have confessed and taught. Our Lord will also, according to His promise, admit me into His everlasting dwellings. When I am gone hence, be not forgetful of me nor of my words. Thou hast been kind to me, and visited me in this my prison; thou hast given me food when I was hungry, and, by doing this unto the least of His servants, thou hast done it unto the Lord Himself. Wherefore, continue, according to thy means, to give freely to the poor and the needy. For, believe me, as formerly to the widow of Sareptha, because she had fed the Prophet of the Lord, the barrel of meal wasted not, nor was the cruse of oil

diminished, so, what is needful shall not again be wanting in thy house; but, on the contrary, the Giver of all good things will bless thee with never-failing abundance; and may He, in like manner, bestow His favors upon all who, after thy example, are mindful of His suffering servants, and reward them with life everlasting."

After comforting her with these consoling promises, he bade her farewell, sending her home rejoicing, and thanking God for His mercies.

On the following day the Governor sent again for Blasius, and said to him:

"Blasius, I give thee the choice: either worship the gods of the Empire, and be our friend; or reject our kind offer, and be ready to suffer a most ignominious death."

"I have already said, O Governor," replied the Martyr, "that the images which you worship are no gods at all. How can you be so unreasonable as to suppose that what you make with your own hands, can have made out of nothing yourself and the whole universe. Great, indeed, is the insult, which by so doing you offer to the Almighty Creator and Preserver of all things; therefore, also, they who do such wickedness, shall miserably perish, together with the work of their hands. As to your tortures, you know I fear them not; for,

although they may be painful for a while, they are the means by which I may the sooner obtain never-ending happiness."

"I see very well," said Agricolaus, "that promises have no power to persuade thee; let us now try what torments can effect."

He then ordered him to be stretched upon the rack, and his whole body to be torn with iron combs. The executioners forthwith began their barbarous work; soon the blood flowed, and pieces of the flesh fell upon the ground. The torturers themselves were moved with shame and pity; the savage tyrant, however, did not suffer them to desist, but with alternate threats and sneers kept up their cruel occupation, until he became afraid lest death might too soon deprive him of his victim. Wherefore, addressing the Martyr in a tone of affected kindness, he asked:

"How do we now feel, friend Blasius? Are our arguments sufficiently persuasive?"

"Now, at last, O Governor," answered Blasius, "I have obtained that which was the object of my ardent longings; that with my mind raised above the things of this earth, my body also might be uplifted. Now the flesh agrees with the spirit, and the spirit lusteth no longer against the flesh. The nearer I draw to heaven, the more I despise all

that is of earth, even these tortures. O how good and sweet is the Lord Jesus, who so strengthens and cheers me, that the effects of your cruelty seem wholly to disappear! I have even now within me a foretaste of those ineffable delights which await me hereafter. Do not spare my body; the greater its present sufferings, the brighter shall be the reward through endless ages."

When Agricolaus heard these words of the Martyr, and saw—by the joy which shone in his countenance—that what he said appeared really true, he was at a loss what to do. Not having a mind to increase the strange satisfaction of the servant of God, and unwilling to confess that his constancy was superior to the inventions of his own hatred and cruelty, he gave orders that he should be taken from the rack before life was extinct, and dragged once more to his dungeon.

As the Martyr was thus led back to prison, he was followed all the way by a great number of persons. Among them were seven women, who seemed especially devoted to the Saint; for, whenever the least opportunity presented itself, they would, in spite of the opposition of the guards, go close to the Saint, and wipe away with linen cloths the blood which was flowing from his numerous wounds. The soldiers drove them off, and threat-

ened them with severe punishment if they did not desist. But they resolutely replied, that neither the Governor, whose cruel disposition was well known to them, nor the violence which he had it in his power to use against them, would deter them from showing their veneration to the servant of God, and from giving him the little comfort which they were able in this manner to administer.

When the guards perceived that neither threats nor blows had any effect, they took them prisoners, and sending them back to the Governor, related to him what had occurred.

Agricolaus, seeing these seven women brought before him, felt by no means in a pleasant humor. He would gladly have availed himself of the least pretext to dismiss them. Wherefore, in the hope that some of them might be frightened, when they knew to how great a danger they had exposed themselves, especially if they were Christians, he said to them:

“I know, that with women it is a natural feeling to pity those whom they suppose to be suffering, and to afford them consolation, even if they do not share the sentiments of the sufferers, nor, in fact, have any regard for the cause which subjects them to the penalties of the law. I would fain suppose that this is your case. None of you, I

feel convinced, would seriously dare to avow that you sympathize with the Christians, those enemies of our gods.

“Yet we are Christians, and are not ashamed nor afraid to confess openly that we are,” they all exclaimed.

“Do not, for the sake of so useless and odious a name, expose yourselves to lose your possessions and, perhaps, your lives,” said the Governor. “Be guided by my good advice: go, offer sacrifice to the immortal gods; do not depart from the practice and customs of your parents and relatives.”

On hearing these words, they consulted together for a while, after which one of them said to Agri-colaus:

“You know, O Governor, that it is not customary for women to offer sacrifices, unless they have been previously purified. Permit us, therefore, to go to the neighboring pond for this purpose. Send along some of your best gods, and see how we will worship them.”

The Governor, overjoyed at the easiness with which he flattered himself to have overcome the opposition which he had expected from the women, immediately ordered several images of the gods to be placed at their disposal, and sent a band of soldiers to follow and watch them at a distance.

When they arrived at the place, the women advanced into the water until they came to a part of the pond which they knew to be very deep, and, having beforehand tied some heavy weights to the idols, they cast them conjointly into the depth. The soldiers were filled with amazement at the boldness of the act, and making the women prisoners, led them back to the Governor. Agricolaus seeing them return so soon, and perceiving that the soldiers treated the women as prisoners, was exceedingly astonished; but when he learnt what had been done, his fury knew no bounds. He was no less incensed against the soldiers than against the women themselves; foaming with rage, he addressed the former:

“Fool that I was,” he said, “in sending such brainless dolts, as you are, to accompany them. Why did you not prevent so monstrous a profanation? Could you stand by and permit seven foolish women to throw our gods into a pond?”

“Your Excellency will please consider,” answered the soldiers, “that we did not deliver our gods into their hands. If others made such a mistake, it is certainly not our fault. If the women have acted deceitfully, it was not our duty to foresee that it was their intention so to do.”

“Do not accuse us, O Governor,” said the

women, "of deceiving you ; it would be the height of presumption in us poor ignorant persons to pretend to impose upon one so wise and wakeful as your Excellency. Doubtless, you deceived yourself when you supposed that we would be so foolish as to offer sacrifice to your ridiculous idols. We Christians are not taught to deceive our fellow-men, but, on the contrary, to bear patiently every sort of injustice for the sake of Christ. But how can you complain of deception, you who worship demons, whose very images are falsehood and deception?"

Agricolaus was too enraged to make a reply. Turning to his attendants, he ordered them to prepare a red-hot furnace, large iron combs, and to heat brazen tongs in the fire. Then he made them stretch upon the ground, in a straight line, a long rope, and said to the women :

"Now, let us see. Words cannot bring you to your senses, deeds perhaps may be more effective. To prove that you are upright in your belief, let me see each of you walk in turn upon this line ; she who makes the first false step, shall be the first put to the torture, unless, perhaps, there be some one among you who refuses to submit to this experiment."

No sooner, however, had he said this, than he

saw one of the women boldly coming forward. Before he had time to ask any questions, she seized the rope, tore it up, and threw the pieces into the blazing furnace.

“Thus, O Governor,” she said, “God will full soon tear from this earth all those who refuse to adore our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ; thus He will cast the worshippers of idols into everlasting flames.”

At that very moment two little boys were seen making their way through the crowd that surrounded the tribunal of Agricolaus. As they drew close to the heroic woman, they threw their arms around her, and cried out:

“Mother, beloved mother, do not forsake thy children. Are we not thy sons, ready to die for the Faith thou hast taught us? Leave us not upon earth; suffer us to accompany thee in thy triumph.”

So moving a sight, it might be supposed, would have subdued the most obdurate heart, but upon the Governor it had no other effect than that of arousing him to greater hatred and cruelty. Immediately he commanded the executioners to tear away the children from their mother's embrace, to stretch her, and the other women, upon the rack, and torture them with iron combs. Great, indeed,

was the astonishment of the executioners and of the spectators when, amidst all their sufferings, the Martyrs uttered not a single word of complaint, nor even a groan; but more still did all wonder, when they saw that from their countless wounds there flowed not blood, but a clear and snow-white substance, as it were, of purest milk. As, however, in spite of this prodigy, they were not taken from the rack, suddenly a dazzling light surrounded them. The spectators were struck with terror, and hurriedly fled in every direction. Then it was that the sufferers with one accord lifted up their voices and exclaimed:

“Deliver not up unto beasts the souls that confess to Thee, O Lord; and forget not the end of the souls of Thy poor.”

At that moment they heard the voice of an Angel, saying to them:

“Bravely have you begun the good fight. The time is short. Gather in the harvest by persevering unto the end; the Master even now awaits you with the reward.”

No sooner did the voice cease than they perceived that all their wounds were perfectly healed.

Although the Governor was, at first, frightened by all the wonderful things whereof he had been an eye-witness, yet, when he perceived that nothing

harmful had befallen him in consequence, he suffered his savage disposition to goad him on to new deeds of cruelty. By his orders, the Martyrs were taken from the rack, melted lead was poured into their mouths, and they were clad with the brazen tunics made glowing hot. These torments, far from causing immediate death, seemed, on the contrary, to give them greater strength.

“There still remains the blazing furnace,” said Agricolaus, “let us see whether their magic art will be proof against that.” Thereupon they were all seven cast into the flames. But He who had hitherto preserved them safe and sound, was not unmindful of His faithful servants. No sooner were they thrown into the furnace than the flames were extinguished, and a gentle and refreshing dew took their place, so that, with grateful hearts, the Martyrs at once began to sing the canticle of the three Babylonian youths.

So overcome by rage and shame was Agricolaus, that he could with difficulty dissemble his feelings, yet, unwilling to acknowledge the divine Power which overthrew his wicked designs, he said to the Martyrs :

“I know very well that your Christ has taught you these magical arts. I would advise you, therefore, to put aside all that foolishness, and to act

like rational beings. Promise me now, that you will sacrifice to our immortal gods before it is too late; if not, I will have your heads struck off, that you may perish like miserable outcasts."

"Christ our Lord," they replied, "does not teach His followers any magical arts, nor have they anything to do with such wickedness; yet, in favor of His servants, and by their means, He frequently works wonders, which the wicked are unwilling to understand. Your threats we fear not; and the sooner you begin to put an end to our struggles, the more ready you shall find us to undergo whatsoever torment you may choose to inflict upon us. Your gods and the impious worship of them, we utterly abhor. Wherefore, tempt us no longer in vain, but do whatever you have resolved against us, and delay not the moment which is to witness our triumph."

The Governor, now fully convinced that all his efforts to make them renounce the faith would prove unavailing, gave sentence that they should be beheaded. This sentence filled the Martyrs with so great a joy that they exclaimed, as with one voice:

"Glory and thanks be to Thee, O Lord Jesus, who, in Thy mercy, callest us unto Thee, after deeming us worthy to suffer for Thy name. We

rejoice at the things that are said unto us; we shall go into the house of the Lord."

Thereupon they were hurried off to the place of execution. But the two children, who had been left to themselves, were unwilling to be separated from their mother. They hastened after her, and, when they were near enough to make themselves heard, began to cry out:

"O mother, holy mother, dost thou abandon thy children? Suffer us to accompany thee; if not, tell us what we must do."

"Go, my dearest children," replied the mother, "go to your holy Bishop, Blasius, who awaits you in his prison. Tell him what has happened; he will receive and protect you, and you will accompany him in his triumph."

When they arrived at the place of execution the Martyrs asked and obtained a few moments' delay. Then, kneeling down and lifting their hands toward heaven, they prayed aloud, saying:

"O God of infinite mercy, who, by the teaching and example of Thy servant, our beloved Father Blasius, didst lead us from the darkness of idolatry into the admirable light of the Gospel, we thank Thee; we praise and bless Thy holy name. Deign to receive us this day among the number of those who have glorified Thee upon earth; and give

another proof that Thou rejectest not the weak and lowly who trust in Thee, but, in them and through them, makest known among men the power of Thy grace. Into Thy hands, O Lord, we commend ourselves."

As soon as they had ended this prayer, the executioners struck off their heads, and the seven blessed spirits entered into the joy of their Lord.

After this the Governor again summoned the blessed Blasius before his tribunal, and said to him:

"I gave thee time, O Blasius, that thou mightest seriously consider what it were best for thee to do. I am ready to forgive and forget the past, if now, freely and willingly, thou consent to sacrifice to the gods. But shouldst thou refuse to comply with my commands, remember that my patience must also come to an end."

"I cannot but wonder, O Governor," replied Blasius, "when I see how great and wilful is your blindness. The light of your own reason must certainly show you that, when you put up a block of wood or marble, and say, this is my god, you are guilty of the greatest absurdity. Throw such an object into the fire, and what becomes of it? But I perceive that I am wasting words to no purpose. Know, then, that whilst I struggle for

truth and justice, I have not the least fear of your tortures. You have my body in your power, you may destroy it by the means which you have at your disposal; but my soul you cannot reach. And Christ, the Lord and Master whom I serve, has said: 'Fear not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him that can destroy both soul and body into hell.' Yet, if it be pleasing to Him, the Omnipotent God can hinder you from doing even the least harm to my poor body, and keep me safe and sound, in spite of all the cruelties you may choose to inflict upon me."

"I am aware, said Agricolaus, "that the skill thou hast in the use of magical arts may possibly enable thee to escape destruction by fire; but we have other means of punishment. Thinkest thou that even thy Christ could save thee from the waters, if I ordered thee to be thrown into the depths of a pond?"

"O foolish man!" exclaimed the Martyr; "you, when you are in trouble, call upon your idols, or rather upon the demons, and you appear to expect help from them, who cannot help themselves; and shall I doubt the power of the one true God, whom I serve? Take your idols and cast them into the waters, and see what will become of them. But I,

if I call upon my Lord and Saviour, shall not even be threatened by the waves; for He commands the waters, as well as all the other elements. Nay, more: we know that He sanctified the waters for our regeneration; that He walked upon them and bade them be still; that He permitted His Apostle to tread them under foot. Moreover, we know that He has said: 'He that believeth in Me, the works that I do he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do.' Wherefore, that which He granted to His Apostle, He may likewise grant to me, the least among His servants."

"If such be thy belief and confidence," said the Governor, "it is not difficult to make an experiment." Then, addressing his attendants, he said: "Go, take that obstinate despiser of our gods, fasten a heavy weight to his body, and throw him into the pond, then let me know whether his magic charms are proof against the watery element."

The soldiers immediately seized upon the servant of God, and hastened with him to the same place where the seven martyred women had defied the cruelty of the Governor, and shown the powerlessness of his idols. When arrived at the pond, the soldiers, according to the orders they had received, tied a heavy block of marble to the Saint's body, and, advancing into the waters as far as was

safe for them, threw him into the deep. But Blasius, making the sign of the cross upon himself and upon the water, instead of sinking, remained quietly seated upon the surface, as if he were upon solid ground. The vast multitude of spectators were filled with astonishment at the wonderful sight. The Martyr did not neglect the opportunity of giving glory to God, but cried out to them:

“O men of Sebaste, in me you witness this day the power of the One true God! If ye have any confidence in your gods, call upon them and see whether they can enable you to walk upon the waters, and join me here. If not, candidly confess that they are false and deceitful, and that the only true God is He whom the Christians serve and adore.”

These words of the holy Bishop stirred up the fanatic zeal of several idolaters who stood looking on. Calling upon their gods to display their power in presence of all assembled, they boldly advanced into the water; but, no supernatural power coming to their aid, they all, with very few exceptions, soon perished in the waves.

Meanwhile, the Martyr continued in his position seated upon the waters, and all the people beheld him surrounded by a great light, but heard not the angel's voice saying to him: “Arise, faithful cham-

pion, hasten to receive the crown prepared for thee." Immediately he went to the shore, and the soldiers led him again to the Governor. The crowd of people following them expressed their different feelings by shouts of pleasure at the wonders they had witnessed, or by threats of vengeance against the despiser of their gods. But the more they cried out against him, the more fervent were the prayers wherewith the Saint thanked his Divine Master for having chosen one so unworthy as himself to make known His mercy and power in the sight of all. When they stood again in the presence of the Governor, and the attendants had explained what had taken place, the multitude began again to shout vociferously:

"Away with the magician! by his wicked arts he has caused our brethren to perish in the waves. He insults our gods and provokes them to anger. He seeks the ruin of our country. Away with him!"

Agricolaus, whose anger needed no stirring up, after the many disappointments he had met with, was only too glad to yield to the clamors of the people. However, in the hope of inducing the two children to apostatize and thereby increasing the sufferings of the Martyr, he ordered them to be taken from the prison—wherein they had been confined—and brought before him. As soon as

they arrived he looked upon them with a stern countenance and said:

“You are, perhaps, too young to understand for what cause you are here, but it matters not. It may well be that you do not yet know that your parents and acquaintances are bad people, who do not obey the laws, who speak ill of the gods, and are guilty of all manner of wickedness. Therefore, too, we punish them severely for their evil doings. Hence, my little boys, we want you to be good, dutiful, and obedient to our commands. To prove that you are what we expect you to be, you will now take some incense and burn it before our great and powerful god, Jupiter, who will then protect you, and you shall also be our friends.”

“But we are Christians,” replied the children.

“You Christians!” exclaimed the Governor; “you are much too young for that.”

“We are little and young indeed,” they said, “but not too young to know that we are Christians, and must serve the One true God, who made us, and the heavens, and the earth, and the seas and all things.”

“Who made you Christians, and taught you all that?” asked Agricolaus.

“Our blessed father and Bishop, Blasius, who instructed and baptized us,” they answered.

“What!” cried out the Governor, “that wicked man! do you know him, do you believe him?”

“We know that he is not wicked, but very good; he is a true servant of Christ, our Lord; he knows what is right and good, and teaches others to be good also.”

“Is this the manner in which thou pervertest children?” said Agricolaus to the Martyr. “No wonder that they become obstinate and rebellious.”

“We teach all, young and old, to serve the true God, to be good to all men and to injure no one—even in thought,” answered Blasius.

“Now I call to witness,” said the Governor, “all them who worship our great and immortal gods, that unless you do at once willingly and readily offer to them sacrifice, as I command, the sword will soon put an end to your lives. If your Christ can save you from my hands, let Him do so. If hitherto you have relied upon your skill in magic, we will show you that we know the means to render its power ineffective against our authority.”

As no reply was made to these words of the Governor, he continued, addressing the two children:

“Be not afraid of answering for yourselves; say freely what you think; only do not forget what I said just now; unless you agree to worship our

gods, you cannot hope to escape a cruel and disgraceful death."

The two boys looked at the holy Bishop, and besought him to answer in their stead. Blasius thereupon replied:

"It is altogether useless, O Governor, to expect that we would defile our souls by sacrificing to your deaf and dumb idols! we worship Christ our Lord, the Redeemer of men. We are ready to undergo every hardship, and the greatest torments you can invent, for His sake, and the faith we have in Him. Bold and constant in this confession, we despise and utterly abhor the false and abominable gods whom you worship. Christ Jesus, the Son of the living God, whom we humbly adore, is our hope and our salvation."

"Amen, Amen!" answered the children in a loud voice.

Agricolaus now fully understood that it was beyond his power to overcome the constancy of the Martyrs; wherefore, without making any further efforts, he pronounced against them the following sentence:

"Blasius, who contemns our gods, disregards our authority and that of our invincible Emperor,—and the two boys, who profess to be Christians like himself, are hereby ordered to be beheaded."

“Thanks be to God for His great mercy,” replied the three Martyrs.

“The executioners immediately led them forth to the place of execution outside of the city. An immense concourse of people of every rank and condition followed them, as usual, who seeing the joy and happiness which shone in the countenance of the servants of God, candidly acknowledged that this journey was one of triumph rather than of sadness. When arrived at the place, the children said to Blasius:

“Beloved father, we are weak and fatigued. Pray to our Lord for us, that we may have sufficient strength of body to stand up boldly for the Faith.”

“Fear not, dearly beloved,” said the holy Bishop, “if the body be weak, let the spirit be strong. Your crowns are prepared; a few moments more and our Divine Master will place them upon your brows in the sight of the elect. Lift up your hearts to heaven and behold the bright company there assembled, ready to bid you welcome.” Then, raising his hands heavenward, he prayed aloud: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, be propitious to us Thy servants; keep away the evil one, whom, by Thy grace, we have trampled under foot; send Thy holy angels to our aid, and

bid them guide us into Thy presence, that we may sing Thy praises forever."

"Amen," answered the children.

"Now, dearly beloved," resumed Blasius, "let us sign ourselves with the sign of Redemption, and kneel down in lowliness of heart, for the Lord is nigh indeed. He gave us life, He cleansed our souls in the waters of Baptism, and He invites us to enter into His joys. Let us be ready."

Then, smiling, he looked once more at his two companions who were kneeling at his side, and exclaimed:

"Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit, and those of these sweet innocents."

"Amen, Amen," they said. At this very instant the swords of the executioners took off the heads of the Confessors of the Faith, who, though so different in years, were yet not unequal in innocency of life and manners—a pleasing sacrifice to their heavenly Father.

When it was night, a holy matron, Elissa by name, came with her servants, and taking away the bodies of the three Martyrs, buried them reverently, not far from the place where they had received their crown. The person who had visited Blasius in his prison, learning where his sacred remains were deposited, called together her ac-

quaintances, and, carrying with them great quantities of fruits and provisions of every sort, went to the tomb of the Saint as to a place of pilgrimage. There, after satisfying their devotion, they distributed them, in honor of the Martyr, among the poor. This pious practice was kept up for many years after, and God rewarded this devotion to His servant by numberless miraculous favors.

They suffered on the 3d of February, A. D., 316.





IV.

ST. EULALIA.

BORN of noble and wealthy parents in the city of Barcelona, this holy Virgin passed the greater part of her life at a residence belonging to her family, and situated at a considerable distance in the country. Here, removed from the vanities and distractions which usually surround persons of their position in society, her truly Christian parents devoted their fond care and attention to the education of their daughter. Nor did their pious efforts fail to produce the desired effect. From her very childhood, Eulalia gave undoubted tokens that she was a child of benediction, and that God had called her to give glory to His holy Name in the sight of the people. She seemed to find no delight except in the things that belonged to the service of her Maker: her very pastime and innocent amusements partook of the holiness of divine worship. When her youthful

companions gathered around her, she led them, less by words than by her sweet example, to her own apartments, where they would spend whole days in conversing about heavenly things, and singing the praises of Him whose love for men had induced Him to become a little child, and, at last, to die upon the Cross for their salvation.

Eulalia had attained her fourteenth year, when the blood-thirsty Dacianus arrived in Barcelona, as Governor of Hither Spain. He began his rule by offering solemn sacrifices to the gods, and ordered all the inhabitants to join him in his sacrilegious worship. The Christians, who were very numerous in that part of the country, refused to comply with this impious command. The Governor immediately issued a proclamation to make them know that they must either willingly obey, or prepare themselves to feel the effects of the most terrible vengeance. The whole city was filled with consternation. Spies and informers soon overran the country; confiscation of property, tortures and death, were the constant threats heard everywhere. The cruel tyrant seemed to have no other aim in his administration than to bring ruin and desolation upon the citizens of a Province hitherto looked upon as one of the most flourishing of the Roman Empire. When the report of this state of things

reached the parents of Eulalia, they were struck with terror, not indeed on their own account, but through the deepest anxiety for their sweet and delicate child—whose tender years and innocent life, it might appear, had left her unprepared to encounter the dangers of so inhuman a persecution. But God watches with a fatherly solicitude over His own, and draws His praise and glory out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. When Eulalia became aware of what was taking place in the city, far from being frightened, she became unusually cheerful, and, secretly rejoicing in her heart, she said again and again:

“I thank Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, and give glory to Thy Holy Name, because that which I have so long and so eagerly desired is nigh at hand. Do with me according to the faith I have in Thee, and grant me grace that this danger may be to me a means of fulfilling Thy holy will.”

Her parents were at a loss how to account for this more than ordinary cheerfulness which they perceived in the countenance of their daughter, and questioned her on the subject. She ingenuously made answer: “Have you not yourselves taught me to be ever joyful in the Lord? If it is His will that we suffer tribulation for His sake, should we not gladly do His bidding?” Her