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THE ACTS

OF THE

EARLY MARTYRS

BY

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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

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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?"

St. Tarachus and His Companions. 35

"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."

St. Tarachus and His Companions. 37

"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

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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 Agricolaus:

"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 innocence 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

youthful companions, also, whom the dreadful news had greatly distressed, she endeavored to cheer up, encouraging them with the consoling thought, that now perhaps, they might have a chance of giving a token of their sincere love for their Divine Master—securing thereby even a Martyr's crown.

Meanwhile, she gave herself with the greatest fervor to prayer and other practices of piety, beseeching her heavenly Bridegroom to perfect in her the desire wherewith He had inspired her loving heart, and to guide and direct her in the way she should follow to accomplish His holy will. Many of the Christians, fleeing from the persecution, came to hide themselves in the neighborhood, and gave the most alarming accounts of the shocking barbarity of the Governor. These tidings confirmed the holy maiden in her resolution. Wherefore, when the darkness of night prevented her from being seen, and all the family had retired to rest, Eulalia secretly left the paternal mansion, and took the road to Barcelona. Regardless of every obstacle of danger and fatigue, borne as it were on the wings of divine love, she hurried on, so that in the morning she found herself near the gate of the city. Here she heard the voice of the herald announcing to the people that

the Governor would sit in judgment, and award condign punishment to the enemies of the gods. This circumstance she held to be a favorable sign that the object of her journey would be attained that very day. By following the crowds of people thronging the streets, she soon arrived at the forum. There she beheld before her a spectacle whereof she had never yet formed an adequate idea. Dacianus had just taken his place on the judgment-seat; a great number of attendants stood beside him, and further on, a large body of soldiers in full armor preserved order, whilst they terrified the citizens. In front of the Governor were the Christians, destined that day to fall victims to his iniquitous sentence, if they continued faithful to their God. This sight aroused the brave spirit of the noble maiden. Commending herself to the protection of her heavenly Bridegroom, she made her way through the vast multitude of spectators, who looked with wondering eyes at one so young, so fair, as she boldly advanced, until she stood fearless before the tyrant. Then raising her voice, she addressed him thus:

"Hear me, O Dacianus, you heartless and iniquitous judge. Seated on high as you are, think you that you have no reason to dread the wrath of God, the Most High? He is above you, and above

all your princes,—whom indeed He created to His own image, not that you might tyrannize over other men, but that, like the lowliest of your subjects, you might serve Him only. And dare you, inspired by the wicked demon, inhumanly torture and unjustly condemn your fellow-beings?"

The Governor was thunderstruck, and for some moments gazed at her in silence. Then he exclaimed:

"And who art thou, girl or phantom, who comest thus unbidden before my tribunal? How darest thou utter such insults against our divine Emperors, and that in the very presence of me, who hold their place in this city?"

"I am Eulalia," answered the Virgin, without betraying the least sign of fear; "I am a servant, although unworthy, of Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Safe under His protection, I was not afraid of presenting myself before you, O Dacianus, that you might hear the words of truth and turn from your evil ways. How can you be so wicked as to refuse to adore the one true God, and so foolish as to worship the devil, who seeks your everlasting ruin? Besides, not satisfied with being yourself impious, you endeavor by means of the most cruel and disgraceful torments to pervert the servants of God, and drag them into

the endless miseries which await you, and will be your portion hereafter, unless you repent before it is too late. This is what I came to tell you, and it will be well for you if my words have not been spoken in vain."

These words so incensed the Governor that he ordered his attendants to seize the maiden and whip her, after the manner in which this punishment was wont to be inflicted on children for their misdeeds. Thinking it not sufficient thus to disgrace her in the eyes of the public, he sneeringly said to her:

"Unfortunate damsel, where now is that mighty God of thine? why does He not come to thy rescue?"

"Because He knows," answered Eulalia, "that I cheerfully undergo this punishment for His sake, and am now enabled to give a proof of my sincere love for Him. Nor does this diminish in the least the perfect confidence which I have in His power and greatness. But your power over me is weak and short-lived; you possess it to-day, to-morrow your masters may take it away; nay, death will full soon show that not even theirs is lasting. Why then, should I fear you or them?"

"Really, my sweet and noble maiden," said Dacianus, "I do indeed pity thee. It is quite unbecoming to see a young lady of thy condition

brought to such a pass. Do but acknowledge that thou hast been guilty of all this foolishness, because thou didst not know the power of a Governor, and I will at once dismiss thee, with an apology for having been obliged, for the maintenance of public decorum and our authority, to treat thee in so unworthy a manner."

"Would you advise me to tell a falsehood?" replied the maiden. "No, Dacianus; I know the power you possess for the present; I would be a dishonor to my parentage and to my religion, were I to say what is not true. As to the stripes which I am made to suffer, they do not disgrace me; they rather ennoble me, because I willingly endure them for the sake of Christ, my God and Redeemer. Besides, let me confess it for the glory of His name, He so strengthens and consoles me in this hour of trial, that all your blows cause in me not the least feeling of bodily pain."

"Let us put a stop to all this foolishness," said Dacianus. "Eulalia, be wise whilst it is yet time. Deny thy Christ, and worship the great and immortal gods, who can save thee."

"Save me!" she exclaimed. "It were well for them if they could save themselves from the torments of hell, which they shall endure forever. Your gods are only devils; they and their wor-

shippers suffer miseries without end. Jesus Christ, whose servants we Christians are, is the true Saviour. He only gives endless bliss to them that love and serve Him."

Filled with rage on hearing this reply, the Governor ordered the executioners to stretch her upon the rack, and to tear her delicate body with iron hooks. The generous Virgin bore this torture not only patiently, but with the greatest cheerfulness, and prayed aloud, saying :

"Lord Jesus Christ, graciously hear me ; pardon the offences I have committed against Thee. I am not worthy to be called Thy handmaid, yet, for the glory of Thy holy name, so strengthen me this day with Thy grace, that the devil, with his ministers, may be put to confusion."

"Where is He whom thou invokest?" asked Dacianus. "Listen to me, thou foolish and miserable girl ; sacrifice to our gods, and thou shalt live ; believe me, there is nothing else that can save thee from death."

"Be silent, you minister of Satan," promptly replied the Martyr. "How dare you, wretched man, give me an advice so infamous? He upon whom I called is with me ; but, on account of your unclean heart and blinded understanding, you cannot know this. Go on with all your threats and

tortures, they are to me as trifles too ridiculous to deserve the least attention."

Dacianus, foaming with rage, made the executioners burn her sides with lighted torches until nothing should remain of the body. When Eulalia heard this order given, she was so transported with joy, that, with a loud and clear voice, she sang part of a psalm, wherewith she had been familiar from her early childhood:

"Behold, God is my helper; and the Lord is the protector of my soul. Turn back the evils upon mine enemies; and cut them off in Thy truth. I will freely sacrifice unto Thee, and will give praise, O God, to Thy name; because it is good; for Thou hast delivered me out of all trouble; and mine eye hath looked down upon mine enemies." (*Psalm liii.*)

Whilst she was thus joyfully singing, the flames of the torches could not be made to injure the Martyr's body, but they kept on always burning toward the executioners. Perceiving this, she knew that the time of her dissolution was at hand. Wherefore, she again prayed aloud:

"Lord Jesus Christ, hear the voice of my humility; perfect in me Thy mercy. Show me a token for good, and command me this hour to be received among Thine Elect, into the repose of everlasting

life, that they who believe in Thee may praise and glorify Thine infinite goodness."

As she finished this prayer, the executioners, having replenished their lamps with oil, were about to apply them anew to the body of the Martyr, when suddenly they were all extinguished. This so frightened the men that they fell prostrate upon the ground, as if they had been struck dead. That very instant the great and noble spirit of Eulalia, under the form of a snow-white dove, left its earthly habitation and soared to heaven. All the people were filled with admiration; the Christians gave thanks to God, because He granted them a new Patroness.

The Governor, however, seeing that the issue of this glorious struggle had turned against him, was resolved to gratify in some manner his revengeful disposition. Wherefore, he said to his attendants:

"Let the body of that obstinate young girl be fastened to a cross, and there let it hang until the birds of the air devour its very bones. Let a guard be placed near, so that no Christians steal it away."

This was accordingly done. But no sooner were the sacred remains of the Virgin Martyr raised on high, than they were encompassed by a dim mist, so that they could not be distinctly seen. This marvellous event induced the guards to take their

position at a respectful distance, not without some misgivings that there might be danger in standing near. Many of the citizens of Barcelona and of the neighborhood, especially the Christians, went to witness the wonderful phenomenon, and all gave thanks to God, who glorified His youthful servant in the sight of the people. Her parents also, and her companions came, even as their neighbors, to satisfy their pious devotion; and it was only then they learnt that the glorious Martyr was their own beloved Eulalia. With mingled tears of joy, grief and fondest affection, they gazed upon her whom they were to meet no more on earth, whose blissful spirit, in the company of Virgins, was following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

The third night after the martyrdom was very dark; the Christians did not neglect to avail themselves of this favorable opportunity, for which they had been anxiously waiting. They repaired to the spot where was the body of the Saint, and, unperceived by the guards, took it down from the cross. How great was their joyful surprise, when they found that not even a mark of the countless wounds remained; and that it was as fair and flexible as if it were full of life. One of the Christians, Felix by name—who at a later period became also a martyr, and who had watched her throughout the trial and

afterwards—was especially filled with an ecstatic delight at being allowed to carry off the precious burthen. Addressing the Saint as if she were still living, he said: “My sweet lady, how couldst thou, whilst yet so young, be so bold as to secure the palm of victory before me?” At which, Eulalia was distinctly seen to smile. After this they wrapped the body in fine linen with aromatic spices and precious ointments, and laid it in the tomb amidst canticles of triumph, sung by the crowds of the faithful who had assembled to do honor to the friend of God.

St. Eulalia suffered on the 12th of February, A. D. 302.





V.

ST. VINCENTIUS.

THIS glorious Martyr was born at Osca, in Spain, of an illustrious family. He had been carefully educated, and was possessed of all the accomplishments which a youth of his condition in life should possess. But God had called him to a far greater distinction than that which the honors of this world can bestow. Obedient to this call, he placed himself under the guidance and instruction of Valerius, the learned and venerable Bishop of Saragossa. The holy prelate, knowing the happy disposition of the noble youth, took especial care to prepare him, by the acquisition of whatsoever appertains to sacred knowledge, for the high station which, it was confidently hoped, he should one day occupy. In consequence, after a time, he ordained him his Archdeacon, with the charge of instructing others by the ministry of the word, as he himself suffered from an impediment in his speech.

Meanwhile, a decree had been published by the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian, which was chiefly directed against the Christian clergy. Dacianus, the Governor of Spain, showed himself exceedingly zealous in its enforcement. The holy Bishop and his Archdeacon were arrested and made to undergo various torments at Saragossa, but, as they were persons of great distinction, Dacianus ordered them to be brought to Valencia, that he might himself preside at their trial. Their journey was not only long and tedious, but scarcely endurable, on account of the harsh treatment which they received from the guards. When arrived at Valencia they were cast into a horrible dungeon. Here, laden with heavy chains, in utter darkness, and deprived even of the food necessary to sustain life, they lingered for a long time; because the Governor hoped that, after having in this manner subdued their bodies, he should find it no difficult task to conquer their spirits. When, however, he at last summoned them to appear before him, he was greatly surprised to see that all his expectations had been frustrated; for he found them strong and vigorous in body, firm and unshaken in their constancy. Filled with anger and disappointment, he turned to his attendants:

“What!” he said, “are these the men you have

guarded so long? Did I not command you to reduce them by starvation? and what do I behold? Is it thus my orders are executed?"

"Your Excellency," replied the keepers of the prison, "will please consider, that we have faithfully complied with your orders. If these men are not starved to death, it is no fault of ours. If, besides, they can live and grow strong on nothing, that is a secret which we ourselves cannot understand."

"Well, that may be so," replied Dacianus. Then addressing the Bishop, he said to him:

"What art thou doing, Valerius? what secret plots art thou devising against our princes under the cloak of religion? Knowest thou not that they who despise the imperial edicts expose their lives to imminent danger? Our Emperors, the lords and masters of the world, have decreed, that it is their will and good pleasure that all you Christians shall offer sacrifice to the gods of the Empire, and that none shall presume to profane the holiness of our ancient worship by new and hitherto unheard-of practices. Hence, hearken respectfully to what we say, and, without further delay, set an example which they who look upon thee, Valerius, as their guide and teacher, may willingly imitate. And thou also, Vincentius, give heed to my words; do

not hesitate to act at once, as a young man worthy of thy noble birth and great influence should do. So now, agree among yourselves, and let me have a favorable answer, which may entitle you to the highest honors; but force me not, against my inclination, to have recourse to tortures to bring about your compliance with the laws."

As the Bishop, on account of his slowness of speech, made no reply, the Archdeacon said to him:

"Holy Father, if you command me, I will speak."

"My beloved son," said Valerius, "long ago I charged you with the ministry of the word: now also I command you to vindicate the Faith, in defence of which we stand before this tribunal."

Then Vincentius, addressing the Governor, said:

"The obvious meaning of your words was to advise us to deny our Faith; but you should know that true Christians consider it a crime to entertain, even for a moment, a thought so insulting to the Deity. Now, we openly and boldly confess that we are Christians, worshippers of the One true God, and witnesses to the truth of the Christian Religion. God, whom we adore, gives us understanding to know the artful devices whereby you would endeavor to deceive us, and strength and

courage to defy all your threats and tortures. Indeed, to suffer death itself at your hands we look upon as a great blessing, since it opens for us a passage into life. Wherefore, do not flatter yourself that we are prepared to listen to your iniquitous proposals, because we know too well that, through you, they come from that wicked enemy who is ever seeking to hinder men from attaining, by humility and obedience, to that happiness which he lost by his pride and rebellion. That same archfiend is the author of your sacrilegious worship! It is he who induces you to give to the creature the honor which belongs to the Creator only; it is he who prepares for them over whom he exercises his power at present a miserable existence in endless torments hereafter. Him and his worship we Christians detest and abhor; and we joyfully lay down our lives for the confession of the Faith which we were taught by Jesus Christ, our Lord."

The Governor could with difficulty suppress the rage that rankled in his breast as he listened to the words of the bold Confessor, and as soon as Vincentius ceased speaking, he cried out to his attendants:

"Take Valerius hence; send him away to such a distance that I may never again hear of him. As

for this rebellious young man, I will show him what is the consequence of incurring our displeasure and defying the majesty of the laws. We shall see full soon whether his courage is equal to his presumption, and whether our power of punishing does not surpass his vainglorious boasting. Put him at once upon the rack, and give him a foretaste of what is to come—unless he change his mind and become obedient.”

The executioners seizing the Martyr, stretched him upon the fatal engine; then binding his hands and feet with cords, they pulled them with such violence that his bones became dislocated. The tyrant stood looking on, chuckling as he beheld the victim of his cruelty writhing in pain. He could not, however, enjoy his triumph in silence, for he soon addressed the sufferer:

“Thou sayest nothing, friend Vincentius,” he said, “how feels the body? do the limbs ache?”

The Martyr smiled, and feeling himself strengthened by a supernatural power, cheerfully answered:

“This is what I have so anxiously longed and prayed for, O Dacianus. I am afraid it is contrary to your intentions that you prove yourself my best and kindest friend. You alone gratify my most ardent desires; for now I feel truly raised on high, and can look down upon the world and upon your

mighty Princes themselves. Pray, do not diminish the glory of my triumph, nor envy my happiness. As a servant of God, I am aware that I could not do anything greater than willingly endure these things for His Name. Wherefore, O Governor, do not spare me; let us see who is the stronger—you in torturing, or I in suffering. The God whom I serve strengthens and consoles me, in Him I trust; hence I boldly defy you to do your worst."

Whilst the Governor listened to these words of the Martyr, and read in the serenity of his countenance that what he said appeared really true, he worked himself up into a state of such excitement that he seemed no longer conscious of what he did. He foamed with rage; unmindful of the dignity of his office, he leaped from his tribunal, took up a club, and, as if actually possessed by an evil spirit who goaded him on, began indiscriminately to belabor the executioners, who were struck dumb by the strange behavior of their irascible master. "I will teach you," he cried, "how to execute my commands, you lazy villains!"

During this scene, the Martyr had a few moments of respite; he was the first to call the Governor to his senses: "What are you doing, O Dacianus?" he exclaimed. "Are you forgetting me, and punishing my tormentors? Give them

another chance; they will do better the next time."

And so it was; for they began to rack and tear him with redoubled cruelty, and kept at their bloody work, until worn out with fatigue they at last desisted, full of wonder that so marvellous a strength and courage could exist in a human body. The Governor, who had now regained his self-possession, did not again give way to his unbounded wrath, but, assuming a composure which he did not feel, endeavored to arouse the executioners:

"How is this, my men?" he said. "What has become of your former energy and perseverance? Heretofore, I relied upon you to bring the greatest criminals to a confession of their guilt. Where is your skill? Were our Princes to know that I employ such inexperienced hands as yours, they would dismiss me in disgrace, and punish you for contempt. Do you not hear how this miserable Christian defies you? Cannot you silence him, or hinder him, at least, from making us the jesting-stock of the people? However, rest yourselves for a few moments and gather your strength, that, like valiant soldiers, you may assault your enemy with new vigor."

The executioners could not make out whether

the words of the Governor were spoken in earnest or in irony; nevertheless, stung with the reproach, they applied themselves with so extraordinary a zeal to their task, that the very bones of the Martyr were soon laid bare. They seemed resolved that the innocent victim of their fury should, at least by a sigh or a groan, express that their inhuman work was done to the satisfaction of their barbarous master; but in this they were again disappointed. Vincentius said to them with a smile:

“This day, alas! are again verified the words of our Lord: ‘Seeing, they see not, and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand;’ for I confess Christ the Lord, Son of the Most High, the Father, the only Son of the only Father; and I confess that He is one and the same God with the Father and the Holy Spirit. And, because I confess the truth, you, O Dacianus, say that I deny it. If I were to assert that your Princes are gods, I should say what is false, and you would have a reason to punish me. But keep on with your tortures, that even so you may be forced to acknowledge, if not in words, at least in your mind, wicked as it is, what is the truth, and that I am its unconquerable champion. As to the gods that you command me to worship, they are idols of wood and stone. Be you, if you choose, a witness to them; become the

dead high-priest of their lifeless godships: as for me, I offer sacrifice to the One and Living God, who is blessed forever."

The Governor made no reply, but stood looking on, gratified at the sight of his victim, whose blood was flowing in copious streams, not only from his sides, but from every part of the body; for, by the uninterrupted use of the lash, the flesh had been torn away from almost every bone. He had no longer any cause to complain of the remissness of the executioners, but, with a smile of approval, he expressed himself satisfied with their zeal. Nevertheless, so long as the courageous sufferer gave no signs of yielding to his commands, he felt persuaded that the spectators would think that his cruelty had gained for him but an empty triumph. Wherefore, again addressing the Martyr, he said:

"Have pity on thyself, O Vincentius. Thou art young; many years of happiness are in store for thee. Why wouldst thou foolishly throw away what others covet with the greatest eagerness? Burn incense to the gods; or, if thou art unwilling to do this, deliver up the writings of the Christians, that they may be burnt according to the edict of the Emperors. Do this, and all will be well."

The heroic Confessor, inwardly comforted and refreshed by the Holy Spirit, replied:

"O venomous tongue of the wicked demon, what darest thou not do against me, since thou didst even venture to tempt our Divine Lord Himself! No, Dacianus, I fear not your wrath nor your torments, howsoever long and fierce they may be. If I feared anything, it would be your false and insidious sympathy. Invent new punishments, exhaust all the arts and tricks of your mad devices. He who says in His gospel, 'Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul,' He is the source of my strength. Spare not then your tortures, until you are forced to acknowledge yourself completely vanquished."

"We shall soon see," said Dacianus, "whether it is not in our power to put a stop to the insolent taunts of this miserable madman. Let him be put to the legal torture, that he may try how that agrees with him. I am determined to see him torn limb from limb, if he continue obstinate; and then he may boast that he has conquered me."

"O happy me!" exclaimed Vincentius. "You threaten me with additional glory. And, whilst you imagine that you display your anger against me, you show in reality your affection for me. For this I am truly thankful."

The Martyr was then taken from the rack.

Weak and bleeding as he was, he walked joyfully before the executioners, as if he were going to a place of rest and refreshment. The present instrument of torture was in the form of an iron bed, the bars of which, shaped liked a saw, were filled with sharp spikes. This horrible engine was placed over a strong fire, so that all the parts thereof were made glowing hot. The executioners themselves shuddered at the sight. The servant of God, signing himself with the sign of the Cross, cheerfully mounted the horrid instrument. Then the torturing began: the parts of the body not broiled by the fire were torn with the lash and burnt with red-hot plates of iron; the fatty substance that dripped from the bleeding limbs increased the fire; salt was constantly thrown into the gaping wounds; and this cruel work was repeated again and again, until the executioners, weary and disgusted with their task, began to give signs of unwillingness to proceed.

The Governor perceiving this disposition of the executioners, would gladly have put a stop to all further proceedings, but he was ashamed of confessing himself overcome in this unequal and barbarous contest. Withdrawing to a distance from the place, he sent messenger after messenger to report to him everything that was said or done.

These represented the Martyr still as bold and unconquered as ever before—although his body, owing to the ghastly wounds, could hardly be known as that of a human being, and his voice could no longer be heard above a whisper.

“Well,” said Dacianus, “we must confess that so far we are overcome. However, we have yet another instrument of torture; if we cannot subdue his body, we must now endeavor to subdue his rebellious spirit. What do you say to that?”

His attendants answered, that they considered the latter undertaking more difficult than the former. “For,” they said, “his bruised and helpless body is in our hands, but his spirit seems already to have taken flight to another world.”

“We shall soon put that matter to the test,” said the Governor sullenly, speaking to himself. Then, addressing his attendants, he said: “Now hearken, my men, go, look out for a place wherein we may confine this obstinate Christian. Let it be a spot deep in the bowels of the earth, where the light of day is never known; as filthy and hideous as can be—a dungeon among dungeons. Strew the floor with fragments of broken crockery, so that his body, wherever it lies or turns, may not find a moment’s repose. Bind his arms, and put his feet in fetters; thus let him taste the sweets of stiff-

necked resistance to our will. Have a care that no one visit him, or even presume to address him. Watch him closely, however, and report to us if, perchance, he should return to better sentiments, or, better still, if the miserable wretch should die in his comfortable abode."

The orders of Dacianus were promptly and faithfully executed, and the servant of God soon lay agonizing in the horrible dungeon.

It was now night. The keepers of the prison, convinced that no human power could tamper with their charge, had fallen asleep. Vincentius himself, weary and exhausted after all the pains he had endured, was overcome by a sort of lethargic unconsciousness, and found, as it were, a dull relief in the very intensity of his sufferings, when suddenly he felt that some one touched him on the shoulder. He startled and awoke. Great was his surprise as he saw his dungeon brilliantly illuminated; the potsherds had disappeared from the floor, and in their stead he beheld it thickly covered with flowers, the fragrant perfume whereof imparted a sweet and exhilarating strength to all his senses. At the same time he perceived that the cords and fetters were gone, and that his wounds gave him no pain. He thought it all a dream, or, perhaps, an illusion of his overstrained

fancy. Filled with gratitude and awe, he fell on his knees and sang a hymn of joyful thanks to God, who showed Himself so good and merciful to His unworthy servant. As he finished, a heavenly voice addressed him:

"Thou hast conquered, O Vincentius; thank Him for whose name thou hast so bravely fought. Thy crown is even now prepared: we are waiting to welcome thee, and to see it placed upon thy brow. Fear not, thy reward is secured; soon thou shalt join our blissful company."

As the voice ceased speaking, a heavenly symphony of other voices united with it, singing a canticle of triumph—which left the Martyr rapt into an ecstasy of delight.

The sweet melody of the angelic music awoke the guards. At first, they knew not whence it proceeded; they gazed around in utter astonishment, until some of them approaching the dungeon looked through the chinks of the door. Here they beheld a spectacle which staggered their senses: the prison so loathsome before, was radiant with a dazzling light, the floor strewn with flowers, and the prisoner freed from chains, standing with hands uplifted, praising the goodness of God. At the marvellous sight they felt that their hearts were changed, and all exclaimed as with one

voice: "Great, wonderful, and exceedingly to be praised is the God of the Christians!" A great number of the Faithful were spending the night, watching and praying near the dungeon. These were at once admitted, and, together with the guards, presented themselves before the servant of God. Vincentius, a ray of glory beaming from his countenance as he spoke, said to them:

"Fear not, brethren; the Lord has made known His gracious power. Do ye also thank Him with me, since He permits you to bear witness to the greatness of His love for those that love Him. Enter without fear, convince yourselves that here there is no illusion. See what has been done by the ministry of angels. This brilliant light, these fragrant flowers, my chains broken, my strength restored—is it not all real? Give glory to God, and confess that, by the most unworthy of His servants, He has overcome the enemies of truth and all their cruel designs. And you, my friends, who hitherto were ignorant of the Faith, begin in good earnest to prepare yourselves to walk henceforth in the newness of a Christian life. Let the Governor be made acquainted with what has happened. Tell him, that if, perchance, he has invented some new kind of torture, I am ready to make a trial thereof. For, my friends,

if I have within me any uneasiness, it is that he may be inclined to treat me with leniency, thereby depriving me of the pleasure I feel in suffering for my Lord. May His holy will be this day accomplished in me."

Thereupon, one of the guards repaired to the Governor and related to him all that he had heard and seen. Dacianus turned pale, and trembled in every limb as he listened to the wonderful account given him by the messenger. For a time he remained speechless and incapable of deciding what was to be done. At last, he arose and said :

"What more can we do? That man is made of steel, and there is no power which he will not defy. However, I have still one resource left; of this I will now make use. Let the prisoner be forthwith brought hither."

The attendants hastened to the dungeon, and soon returned with the Martyr. The Governor said to him :

"We admire thy unyielding perseverance, Vincentius. But we think it a pity that men of thy courage should recklessly throw away their lives."

"Men like myself, O Dacianus," replied the Martyr, "do not recklessly throw away their lives. They are indeed ready to die in defence of the

truth, for, by so doing, they know that, when they lose their life, they shall find it."

"How is it possible that a man of noble birth, learned and distinguished, can be willing to be treated as a vile criminal? Is it not a disgrace to thy friends and kindred?"

"We account it the greatest honor, and the highest nobility to be true servants of Christ our Lord, who, being the God of majesty, chose to become poor and despised for our sake. He taught His followers to seek after true greatness, which exalts them forever in glory."

"Well, I did not call thee to discuss this matter," said the Governor. "Tell me, art thou willing to give at least due honor to the gods of the Empire?"

"Never," answered the Martyr. "Your gods are wicked devils, who deceive men blind and foolish enough to worship them."

"With all my good-will," said Dacianus, "I see no way of subduing thy stubborn disposition."

"Not so long as you advise me to do so wrong and absurd a thing as to worship wicked demons," replied Vincentius.

"That is enough," said the Governor. "And now, to prove that I am not so hard-hearted as thou wouldst fain make others believe, my men

will place thee upon a soft couch, and permit thy friends to attend to thy wounds without any hinderance." This he said in a loud voice, so that all who were present might hear it; at the same time he gave private instructions to his officers, directing them to watch the prisoner closely, and, as soon as his wounds were dressed and bound up, to put him again to the torture. "For," he added, "you should know that it is my fixed determination that he shall either submit to the law or die upon the rack."

But the designs and expectations of the tyrant were alike frustrated. No sooner was the Martyr placed upon his couch than his Divine Master called his great and generous spirit to receive the glorious crown for which he had so bravely fought. The Christians who had assembled in large numbers to minister to their noble champion, had only the sad consolation of wiping and kissing his wounds, and dipping cloths in his blood, which they carefully preserved as a blessing to their families.

When Dacianus learnt how he had been disappointed, he raved like a madman, and not knowing whom to blame, or on whom to wreak vengeance, he said: "If I could not subdue him when he was alive, I will have the satisfaction of perse-

cutting him after his death. Now at least his stubborn spirit cannot oppose my will. Throw his vile carcass upon the open field, there let it lie unburied and exposed until the birds of prey and hungry wolves devour its very bones. See that none of the Christians know where it can be found, lest, in their folly, they honor it as the remains of one of their Martyrs."

The order of the Governor was strictly complied with, and the body of the holy Levite lay un-honored upon a plain, at some distance from Valentia. A guard of soldiers was stationed not far off, so that no human being, whether by day or by night, was allowed to approach the spot. But the least of His creatures may become in God's hand the instrument of His wonder-working power. A raven coming from a neighboring forest drew nigh to the remains of the Martyr, and appeared to take upon himself the duty of watching over them. Birds of prey came soaring around, but were frightened away; a large wolf sallying forth from his mountain den, slunk away at the sight of the terrible sentinel. This continued during several days, until the soldiers, impressed with the idea that there was something preternatural in all this, thought it proper to give to the Governor a detailed account of the strange occurrence.

Dacianus felt quite uneasy when he understood that new troubles were arising before him, and said to his men :

“I do not see what can be done under these circumstances ; for I begin to believe that, now that he is dead, he is resolved to cause me as much annoyance as when he was alive. The more I labor to put him down, the more successful he is in defeating my plans. However, if we cannot do away with him on land, we must try to rid ourselves of him by water. Let him be cast into the depths of the sea ; then at least he will not present himself in sight of the people. Who will render us this service and take a liberal reward ?”

None of the attendants offered themselves to engage in the undertaking ; for, after all the wonders which they had witnessed, they were inclined to consider the matter as rash, and beset with dangers, against which they knew no way of protecting themselves. This backwardness by no means surprised the testy Governor, and, having but few friends in whom he trusted, he could not afford to sacrifice them to his fanciful notions. When, however, the proposition became more generally known, an old and stout-hearted soldier, Eumorphius by name, said that he was desirous of securing the reward. Dacianus then cautioning

him, said: "It will not be sufficient, my man, simply to throw the body into the deep; the business must be so managed that the waves cannot again cast it ashore. Therein lies the difficulty; but, with the aid of a few fishermen, this may be easily accomplished."

"Give yourself no uneasiness about the matter, your Excellency," replied Eumorphius. "If it is only a human body, you shall never again hear of it; but, if it belong to some superior being, I cannot in fairness be held responsible for the failure, and I will even then deem myself justly entitled to a reward for attempting, in order to please your Excellency, to do what is in fact impossible."

"Leave all that to me," said the Governor; "if, with some chosen companions you take the proper care, there can be no doubt of success. And, should the worst happen—should the waves drive the body ashore—even then it must soon perish among the rocks on the coast."

The soldier thereupon set out, and, first selecting some of the most daring fishermen of the town, went to take possession of the Martyr's body. They sewed it up in a sack and tied it to a very heavy stone; then placing their mysterious burthen in a fishing boat, they put out to sea. How

they managed to keep up their courage we may readily imagine; for, belonging as they did to a class of men much influenced by superstitious notions, there was great need of it, since, in this particular case, the marvellous things which had really taken place had not been lessened by public report. They pursued their course until the shore could no longer be descried, and even the summits of the lofty mountains were vanishing out of sight. The sun was going down, not a zephyr ruffled the smoothness of the sea. "Now is the time, and here is the place," they softly whispered one to another. Cautiously and timidly they lifted the body of the Martyr overboard, and gently sank it into the deep. When they had finished their task, they hurried away with as much expedition as if they had committed some great crime, and the officers of justice were in pursuit. Anxious to communicate to Dacianus the happy result of their bold undertaking, they went immediately to the palace, and related to him all they had done—not without boastfully adding many things which, perhaps, they might have done, had circumstances been favorable. "But, in short," they said, "your Excellency may now be at ease; none shall ever again be troubled by that man. And should you again need a service of this kind—where prompt-

ness and courage are the chief requisites—we are the men to do it.”

However, the poor men did not know that long before they were thus extolling their merits in presence of the Governor, even before they had left their boat, the Blessed Martyr's body had reached the shore—the huge stone itself with it—and was lying free from the water and from prying eyes, because lightly covered with dry sand. Thus, we may say, it had already received the honors of sepulture on land before it was announced that it lay buried beneath the waves.

But since it is written of the saints that “their bodies are buried in peace, and their name liveth from generation unto generation,” God, who glorifies also in the sight of men those who glorify His Name upon earth, did not leave His faithful servant unknown and forgotten. The following night the Martyr appeared in a vision to a holy servant of God, who, living altogether secluded from the world, was unaware of the things that had been done in the city. Considering the apparition as a mere phantom of the imagination, he gave no further attention to the matter and made no inquiries. Then the Saint appearing to a venerable widow, said to her: “Ionica, the body of Vincentius, the deacon, lies neglected on the sea-shore; thou

shalt find it between two cliffs; see that it want not the rites of sepulture." Obedient to this warning, the holy matron immediately arose, and going to the Christians who dwelt in her neighborhood, related her vision to them. They gladly agreed to accompany her to the sea-shore. Although she had never before seen the place, she conducted them without the least hesitation straight to the spot where lay the remains of the glorious Martyr. They reverently took them up, and—as on account of the watchfulness and enmity of the Pagans, they were afraid of burying them with due honor and solemnity—they privately deposited them for the time in a little chapel near the coast. Afterwards, when the persecution had ceased, the sacred body of the Saint was buried beneath the high altar of a large church, outside the walls of Valeneia, where God has continued to glorify His servant by numberless miracles. He suffered in A. D. 304.





VI.

ST. CLEMENT.

THIS glorious Martyr was born at Ancyra, in Galatia. Both his parents belonged to a very ancient and noble family, and had very large possessions. His father, however, was a Pagan, and, in spite of the prayers and the good example of his holy consort, lived and died in his errors, leaving his only son, whilst yet an infant, to the care of a mother who was a pattern of every virtue. Euphrosyna devoted herself with unwearied zeal to the education of her beloved child; she taught him above all to know and serve God, and to look upon wealth and the things of earth as merely transitory commodities, which are good only inasmuch as a proper use is made of them. The youthful Clement entered into the views of his holy mother with a spirit far beyond his years, and proved himself in all things a pupil worthy of so admirable an instructress. The solid principles thus instilled into his mind became in time

the fruitful source of that wonderful courage and endurance which distinguish him among the greatest Martyrs.

He had not yet attained his twelfth year when death deprived him of the loving guardianship of his excellent mother. As she felt her last hour drawing nigh, she called him to her and spoke as follows :

“Child of my fondest affection, the time is near at hand when I must bid thee a last farewell. Hearken to the words of a mother, who loves thee more than her own life, and often call to mind what I am about to say. I indeed brought thee into this world, but by the grace of Christ, our Lord, thou wast born again into a new life. Cling, therefore, to Him; for in Him alone thou canst find happiness here, and salvation hereafter. The days in which we live are evil; dangers of every kind will beset thee: dangers from the enemies of the Christian name, dangers from the world, but above all, from the prince of this world, whose sole aim is to ruin souls ransomed from his tyranny by the Sacred Blood of Jesus. Wherefore, my child, strengthen thyself in the love and service of Christ; never hesitate to confess His Holy Name, even in the presence and beneath the threats of the judges and rulers of this earth.

Love God supremely, and strive to bring men to the knowledge of His immense love for them. Often and earnestly have I prayed that He, in His all-wise Providence, would so ordain that I might have an occasion of shedding my blood for His glory; and now I pray, that what has been denied to me may be granted, if it be His holy will, to the son of my love. Should this wished-for blessing be bestowed upon thee, my child, mayest thou be the crown of all my joys forever. O, the blissful thought! How it comforts me even now, when I am about to go before thee into a better life! If a Hebrew mother had the happiness of seeing her seven sons dying for the faith of their fathers, how can God refuse to listen graciously to the prayer of a poor widow, who desires to sacrifice for His glory her only one? Night and day will I watch over thee from on high, O my beloved; my spirit will still continue united with thine. Prostrate before the throne of Christ, our Saviour, I will implore Him to clothe thee with His strength, that thus, in Him and by Him, we may triumph together."

Then pressing her son to her maternal heart, and kissing his eyes, his lips, and his hands, she exclaimed: "Lord Jesus Christ, listen to the prayer of Thy lowly servant: grant that, this day,

I embrace the members of one of Thy Martyrs." Shortly after, still holding the hand of her darling son, she breathed forth her pure spirit, and Clement, her child, was an orphan.

After he had reverently paid the last duties of filial affection to his saintly mother, the youthful Clement began to think seriously of abandoning the world altogether, and giving himself wholly to God, by embracing the life of a solitary. For, at the age of twelve, he was thoughtful and sedate far beyond his years. His relatives and friends looked upon him not as a child, but as a man whose judgment was already matured by age and experience. The eye of his heavenly Father, however, was also upon him, and, in His provident care, He gave him a second mother, worthy of the first. A wealthy lady, Sophia by name—belonging to the celebrated Roman family of the Anicii—who spent her days in religious exercises and works of charity, not having any children of her own, adopted the future Martyr. This wise and valiant matron, knowing the happy disposition of the youth, began at once to cultivate it with the most affectionate tenderness. Whilst she herself superintended his religious training, she procured for him the best instructors in all the branches of human learning. She was not disappointed in her hopes. Clement returned

her love and care with all the affection of his ardent nature, and made so wonderful a progress in virtue and in knowledge, that he excited the admiration of the Pagans, as well as of the Christians of his native city.

Meanwhile a great famine laid waste the Province of Galatia. The greatest misery prevailed everywhere. During this calamity, Clement displayed unceasingly the wonderful spirit of charity which animated his breast. He went about doing good to all; but chiefly devoted himself to the care of orphans. Great numbers of these he gathered together, provided for their wants, and, by word and example, instructed them in the fear and love of God. His kind protectress encouraged him in this pious undertaking, and liberally supplied him with the necessary means to continue the work he had begun—thanking God the while for that He had thus unexpectedly made her, who was childless before, the joyful mother of many children. These little ones were not again thrown upon the cold charity of the world; for when plenty had succeeded to want, the generous Sophia still kept them with her, and enabled the good seed, which had been sowed in their hearts, to spring up and bring forth fruit in due season. To them she proposed Clement as a model of every

virtue, desiring that all should endeavor to imitate him in all things, except in his abstemious and penitential life, which was wholly extraordinary and a special gift of God, granted to few individuals.

At that time the number of Christians in Ancyra was very small. Among them Clement shone as a brilliant light; yet hitherto he had, as it were, been hidden under a bushel. Now, however, Providence willed that he should be placed upon the candlestick, that he might give light unto all who belonged to the household of the Faith. In consequence, he was ordained a Deacon, and, not long after, he was raised to the dignity of the Priesthood. As in his youth, so in his early manhood, he showed that venerable old age is not that of long time, nor counted by the number of years; but that a "Spotless life is old age." No wonder then that, after two years, when he was little more than twenty years of age, he was raised to the Episcopal see of Ancyra. This new charge brought with it new labors. His responsibility was increased, and with it his unwearied zeal. But among all his duties he considered none greater than the proper training of youth—the future hope as well as the glory of the church. Wherefore, he continued as far as possible, per-

sonally to superintend the schools which he established, and caused them to be so highly esteemed by the public, that not only the Christians, but, above all, the Pagans deemed it a great privilege to be allowed to send their children to them. In this manner the holy Bishop was successful in saving a vast number of straying sheep from the grasp of the infernal wolf, and in bringing them into the fold of the one Shepherd.

Whilst the Saint was thus engaged in his peaceful conquest of souls, Diocletian had gained possession of the Roman Empire. Under this wicked prince, many Governors of the different Provinces, hoping thereby to secure his favor, undertook, of their own accord, the office of persecuting the Christians, by reviving the edicts of former rulers. The enemy of mankind soon stirred up some of the idolatrous agents, who denounced the Bishop to the Governor of Galatia as a despiser of the gods, and a zealous teacher of a Religion forbidden by the laws. Domitian, the Governor, therefore ordered the arrest of the Saint.

When, a few days after, the servant of God was summoned before the Governor, Domitian was so surprised at the noble and majestic appearance of the accused that, at first, he was at a loss what to say. After a while, however, in

as gentle a tone as a person of his character could command, he said to him :

“Thy appearance, venerable Clement, agrees not at all with the accusations which have been laid before me. Thy very countenance, it seems to me, bespeaks a man of superior intelligence and refined manners ; whereas the charges against thee would go to show quite the contrary. But, I suppose, thy own words will be the best proof of thy prudence and wisdom ; what hast thou to say in self-defence ?”

“If we have any prudence or wisdom,” answered the Bishop, “it is that of Christ, the Son of God, who is the intelligence and the Word of the Father—by whom all things were made, and from whom we also receive whatever there is of wisdom in us.”

“Thy words take me not a little by surprise,” said the Governor. “I was not prepared to hear such nonsense from a person of thy prepossessing appearance. But come, do not trifle with us : say at once that thou art willing to worship our immortal gods. Call to mind their everlasting power, and reflect how they punish them that despise their greatness ; and, on the other hand, how they reward the good and obedient. This thou mayest learn from our own example : see what power they have bestowed upon us, both to reward

and to punish. For this we thank them with our whole heart."

The holy confessor could not but smile at the thought, that Domitian imagined that there was nothing greater upon earth than honors and riches, and replied: "We Christians are altogether of a different way of thinking concerning the matter your Excellency was just mentioning. The gifts which you can bestow, we look upon rather as an evil than a blessing; your honors as a disgrace; your magistracy as a slavery. And again, threats, insults, torments, when suffered for the sake of Christ, our divine Master, we choose as delightful pleasures, because they unite us more closely to Him. Knowing this, you will readily understand, that neither by threats nor promises, no more than by rewards or punishments, can you prevail upon us to swerve from the dutiful fidelity we owe to God."

"I made a great mistake," said the Governor, "in treating thee so mildly, for thou art become quite insolent. But no wonder; if a man spends his days in the company of children, he is apt to become like them—wilful and silly. Yet mark, I pray thee, unless thou worship the gods, and thereby gain our good will, death awaits thee. Nor will it be an easy death, remember, but a slow

and lingering one, so that thy tortures may serve as a warning to them that are as foolish as thyself."

"As you object to me that I have spent my time among children, I willingly plead guilty to that charge; and I may add, that by so doing I have been enabled to instil into their youthful minds those principles of virtue and that wisdom which are wholly unknown among you, and which your philosophers and sages have sought for in vain. For the things which are hidden from the wise and prudent, God has revealed to the little ones. As to offering sacrifice, I have this to say, that I daily offer to God a sacrifice which you know not; and that I am ready to offer to Him myself as a living, reasonable sacrifice, pleasing unto Him, although it is infinitely below that which He offered for me, to redeem me from sin."

"Since thou art unwilling," said Domitian, "to follow my prudent advice, I will force thee to yield to my power of punishing. Before we begin this experiment, I counsel thee, once more, to deny Christ, lest afterwards, when thou art forced to do so by dint of suffering, thou become the laughing-stock of the spectators."

"I hope that Christ, whom I confess, will be my helper," said the Saint. "I have never hoped in Him in vain. Do not delay your torments; I

desire nothing so much as to prove my love for Him by confessing His holy Name."

"Do not flatter thyself," resumed the Governor, "that the punishment which I inflict shall soon have an end. I am resolved to put off thy death as long as possible, and make thee an example of what must be expected by all others who spurn the imperial edicts."

"I have been taught," replied Clement, "to give to every one his due; I spurn no one, neither am I accused of having done so. But when I am asked to deny Christ, the only Son of God, I reject the absurd request with scorn."

Then Domitian said to the executioners: "Stretch the prisoner upon the rack, and let him have a taste of the iron combs; repeat to him the while: 'Renounce thy Christ, and obey the Emperor.'" Whilst the executioners were tearing the flesh from his bones, the Martyr uttered not a groan; but, with a placid and cheerful countenance and his eyes turned toward heaven, he prayed aloud at intervals: "Glory to Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, my light, my life, my joy. I thank Thee for this great favor bestowed upon me, a poor sinner. How my heart exults when I am thus allowed to testify my love for Thee! Thou art unto me a protector, and a place of strength: Thou

deliverest me from the hands of Thine enemies. How sweet it is to suffer for Thy dear sake!"

After a time, the executioners, fatigued with their exertions, stopped to take breath. The Governor was by no means pleased when he saw it, but instead of rebuking them, he addressed the Martyr:

"Thinkest thou that thou hast already triumphed over me, because an hour's labor has broken down these lazy fellows?"

"I have no thoughts about the matter," answered Clement; "but this I know, that in me Christ conquers, and that He will triumph."

Domitian thereupon ordered another band of executioners to take the place of the former. Although they obeyed the command of the Governor, they showed by their manner of acting that the task was not at all agreeable to them. And, indeed, they could not see what more could be done, unless they were permitted to put an end to further tortures by causing at once the death of the sufferer. This, however, was not the intention of the tyrant. Seeing, therefore, the perplexity of his men, he ordered them to take the Martyr from the rack. When the victim of his barbarous cruelty stood before him, he seemed ashamed of his own work; the spectators shuddered at the sight, and retired

in disgust; the executioners themselves refused to touch a body which presented a spectacle too hideous for human eyes: it was, in fact, neither more nor less than a blood-drenched skeleton.

Convinced that violence was not the proper means whereby he might attain his object, the Governor thought fit to have recourse again to persuasion. Knowing, after all he had heard and seen, that his victim was not an ordinary man, and that, under such circumstances, skill can often do what brute force cannot effect, he began to reason thus:

“Two things, O venerable Clement, are for thee the source of all thy misfortunes—obstinacy and ambition. When fortune does not favor a man, because she chooses him not as her favorite, he strives to attain by his obstinacy, in spite of her, the object of his ambition, and failure is invariably the consequence. A prudent man follows the lead of fortune; he does her bidding, and succeeds in his undertaking. The self-willed man, on the contrary, relies upon himself, goes his own way, pursues constantly that which he is not destined to attain, and at last perishes miserably. Such is thy own case. Fortune offers thee, through us, everything worthy of a noble ambition—wealth, honors, greatness; but by thy obstinacy thou art prompted to seek imaginary advantages, and reason is unable

to turn thee from the fatal course upon which thou hast entered. Reflect upon this, whilst we allow thee a little time to recover the exhausted strength of thy body, and come to a wholesome and reasonable conclusion. Do not foolishly reject the fair promises we make; yield to our advice; accept the favor of the Emperor; let it be thy ambition to obey his commands, and enjoy in peace the good things which fortune prepares for thee."

"To all your sophistical reasoning," replied the Martyr, "it is sufficient for me to reply, that your views are altogether material, and concern the body only; but, if I have any ambition, as you suppose, it is to secure everlasting happiness for my soul. Your promises might indeed procure a momentary enjoyment for the body, but your torments are to me the certain pledge of a blissful immortality, whereof my soul as well as my body will partake: my reason does not permit me to hesitate what choice it is proper to make."

"And herein," said Domitian, interrupting the Martyr, "is the folly of all you Christians made especially manifest. You appear not to know that the gods made the sun to shine, so that all might enjoy his cheering light; and so you prefer an obscure and cheerless life, in the vain hope of being recompensed hereafter. But, believe me, as

for thee, it will be better for thy soul and body to avail thyself of this chance which is offered."

"Your Excellency knows my former answers," said the Martyr, "I have nothing to add. I cling to Christ, my Saviour: nothing that you can do against me, will be able to shake my firm and unchangeable resolve."

The Governor, thus foiled in all his attempts to overcome the constancy of the holy Bishop, was at a loss what to do. Turning to his attendants he said: "By Jove, this man is a most ambitious animal, determined to conquer. But, I perceive, I had forgotten to have his face bruised as well as his body. You there," he cried to his executioners, "come, you forgot to break the jaws of this despiser of the laws and of the gods. It would not be fair to leave that part of his body unpunished. Let us see whether you cannot put a stop to all this freedom of speech."

The executioners, taking hold of the Martyr, did as they were bidden. Some of them, however, were so moved with pity for the innocent sufferer, that it was only the fear of being subjected to a similar treatment which made them strike him slightly with their hands; but others buffeted him without mercy, and even used stones to make their blows more effective. The Saint bore his torments

not only patiently, but even cheerfully, and said to Domitian:

"I look upon this treatment, O Governor, as an honor, rather than as a punishment. If my Divine Master was dealt with after this manner, why should not His unworthy servant glory in being thus rendered similar unto Him: Stephen, also, the first Martyr, was killed with stones." Then raising his eyes toward heaven, he exclaimed: "Everlasting praise and thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, for that Thou permittest me to become a partaker of Thine own sufferings, and of those of Thy glorious First Martyr."

The Governor, seeing that tortures had no terror for the fearless champion, but that he rather coveted them as something that gave him a special delight, being unwilling to put him to death, at once gave order that he should be taken to prison. As he was exceedingly weak and supposed unable to walk, the executioners, seizing him by the arms, offered to support him on his way. But he refused their assistance, saying, "It is written: 'Let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head;'" and he walked boldly before them, leaving the road marked with bloody footprints.

Domitian stood looking after them until they were out of sight, then, turning to his attendants,

he exclaimed: "Ye gods! I admire the spirit and perseverance of that Christian. If our Emperor had an army composed of such men, it would be irresistible. Indeed, I do not think it proper that he should again be tried before my tribunal. I will send him to the Emperor himself, even to Rome. He will be delighted when he finds in him a subject worthy of his skill."

Wherefore, he ordered a faithful record to be made of all that had been done, and sent it to Rome by the officer who had charge of the prisoner. After the lapse of a few days, when the holy Bishop was deemed sufficiently restored to begin the long journey, they led him secretly out of Ancyra. As he was leaving the city, Clement, raising his hands toward heaven, blessed its faithful people, and said: "Lord God of heaven and earth, who art present everywhere, to Thy holy keeping I commit this city. Suffer not that the wolves injure Thy little flock, whilst the shepherd is far away. Grant that he may return again, to strengthen their faith and lead them in the paths of truth and justice; that all may glorify Thy holy Name, praising and thanking Thee upon earth, and in heaven forever."

After this he cheerfully set forward, wholly resigned to the Divine will.

When they arrived in Rome, the officer, who had accompanied the Saint, having obtained an audience of the Emperor, presented to him the letters which contained a full account of the trial at Ançyra. Diocletian—for he was at that time in Rome—felt deeply interested in all he heard, and appointed a day for an interview with the wonderful prisoner. On the day named, therefore, the Blessed Clement appeared before the Emperor. When Diocletian saw him, he was much surprised to find the man perfectly sound in body, with no sign whatever of former sufferings; he was so struck with his mild and noble appearance, that he became at once desirous of gaining his good will. Without manifesting his ulterior designs, he said:

“Art thou that famous Clement whose name has become so celebrated for courage and endurance? A brave and generous mind, like thine, should engage in a cause worthy of its greatness, not in schemes ruinous alike to private individuals and the common welfare. For, thou shouldst remember, that the greater the gifts which the gods bestow upon any one, the greater becomes his moral obligation of doing what is right. It makes me angry to think that a person of thy ability should provoke the displeasure of those

kind divinities that have favored thee above ordinary mortals. Yet it was, no doubt, on account of that strong and lofty character which thou didst show in the midst of suffering, that they took pity on thee in the hope of seeing thee, sooner or later, come to a sense of the duty which thou owest to them."

Thus spoke the Emperor; then, pointing to a table upon which lay, in all their richness, various badges of office and letters patent, raising the favored individual to the rank of a Roman Patrician, he said: "With these we reward our friends, and the friends of the gods." Next, directing the attention of the servant of Christ to numberless instruments of torture, scattered through the room, he added: "These are for them that disobey us—for the wicked and impious despisers of the gods. Make thy choice, venerable Clement; what sayest thou?"

"If I acknowledge, O Prince," answered the Saint, "that your engines of torture are dreadful to the sight, and even to the thought of one who has had some experience of their terrific power; and, on the other hand, that your promised rewards are truly magnificent, and gratifying to whomsoever can find pleasure in obtaining honors and distinction upon earth, I state, no doubt, what

you yourself consider as self-evident. But what are imperial promises and gifts, when compared with the glorious and everlasting rewards which the Ruler of heaven and earth bestows upon them who continue faithful in His service, and disregard, for His sake, all that poor mortals, in their blindness, love and esteem? Moreover, the punishments which He threatens against the perverse and disobedient are neither slight nor temporary, but most severe, and endless in duration. If you understood and viewed these things as I do, would you, my Lord, deem it the part of wisdom to incur the displeasure of the one, true, eternal God, in order to enjoy wealth, honors, pleasures for so short a time, that, when it is passed, they appear at best more like the illusions of a dream than a reality. And, truly, what is all the splendor and pageantry of earth? It dazzles the eyes of men for the moment; yet it is the work of their own hands, made of materials dug out of the earth, or taken, perhaps, from irrational beings and worms. No wonder, therefore, that all becomes soon the prey of moths and of rust, and leaves not even a vestige of its having existed. But the rewards which God bestows upon His servants are altogether different—they are genuine, permanent—neither moth nor rust corrupts

them; ever new, varied and delightful, eternity itself will not wear them away.

"Thou speakest words full of wisdom, admirable Clement," said Diocletian, "but thy judgment is wholly erroneous. For, although thou sayest well that the immortal should be preferred before that which is mortal, thou seemest to forget the truth of thy doctrine. This I wish to correct, by inducing thee to worship and serve the immortal gods only. Was not Christ, the God whom thou adorest, tortured, and at last killed by the Jews? Our gods, on the contrary, are forever immortal, and cannot undergo any sufferings whatever."

The Martyr smiled, and replied: "You speak certainly the truth, my Lord, when you are pleased to say that your gods cannot die, nor suffer—for how can that die which never had life, or how can that suffer pain which never had feeling? Yet, you must confess that it is not without many a rude stroke, and with much rough treatment, your gods are brought into existence. And then, after all their hard labor, what does the smith, with his hammer, what does the sculptor, with his mallet and chisel, produce? A feeble and lifeless imitation of the human form. Such are your gods, my Lord. But Jesus Christ, whom I adore, is the eternal God, the Son of the eternal Father; to

redeem man from sin and death, He assumed the human nature, that He might suffer and die for us; and as He did so by His own will, so in like manner, by His own power, He arose from among the dead, and, in the sight of a multitude of witnesses, returned triumphantly to heaven. This is the true and living God whom we Christians worship. Moreover, we know, that as He delivered Himself up for our sins, and rose again for our justification, so we who have borne the image of the earthly, shall also bear the image of the heavenly, and rise again after our earthly struggles to a life of glory forever."

The emperor, not knowing what answer to make to the undaunted Confessor of the Faith, ordered him to be placed upon the wheel and most cruelly scourged, whensoever the instrument was turned more slowly. In this manner was not only the flesh torn from the bones, but the bones themselves were broken with such violence that the cracking sound, as they snapped asunder, was distinctly heard, even at a great distance, by the spectators. Whilst he was thus tortured, the Martyr prayed aloud:

"Lord Jesus Christ, be my protector in these my sufferings; lighten the burden of my pains; for the sorrows of death have compassed me, and

the perils of hell have found me. Look Thou upon me, and have mercy on me. Deliver me from my distresses, and grant me strength to bear these torments, that so Thine enemies may be put to confusion, and be forced to confess the power and glory of Thy holy Name."

When he finished this prayer, the wheel suddenly stopped, nor were the executioners able to put it again in motion. Wherefore, they loosened him from the horrible engine, and upon examining his body, found, to their inexpressible astonishment, that not only no bones were broken, but that the flesh itself was perfectly healed. Very many of the Romans who had stood looking on, now approached the Martyr, and personally ascertaining by the sight and the touch, that what they deemed impossible had really taken place, said one to another:

"All the gods together, if called upon, could not have wrought so astounding a prodigy, and this poor Christian has simply invoked Christ!" Thereupon they all cried out, "Great is the God of the Christians!"

The Saint, hearing this exclamation of the bystanders, was filled with great joy, and again prayed aloud:

"I thank Thee, O Lord, for conducting me to

this great and glorious city, that I too, although so unworthy, might proclaim by my sufferings, if not by my words, Thy holy Name, where Thy great Apostle Peter whilom delivered the Faith, where Paul preached, where also my namesake, the blessed Clement, taught and confessed the doctrines of salvation. Glory to Thee, O infinite God, who even now by these Thy servants continuest to draw countless numbers into the bosom of Thy Church. Grant that the time may not be far distant when the rulers also of this vast empire will humbly bend before Thee, and when all the nations Thou hast made shall come and adore before Thee, O Lord."

Diocletian grew very angry when he heard this, and commanded the executioners to beat him on the mouth until they had broken the jaw-bones and knocked out all his teeth. Nevertheless, the Martyr could not be silenced, but continued to address the multitude, exhorting them to embrace the saving doctrines of Christ. The Emperor then gave orders that he should be taken to prison. Here he was laden with heavy chains and carefully guarded, so that he might find no means of escape. But this was an unnecessary precaution, since the Martyr entertained no thought of avoiding future conflicts, and besides, received from his Divine

Master those consolations which most of all please the heart of His zealous servants. For no sooner had the darkness of night overspread the city, than a great number, both men and women, of those who had witnessed the miracle of the Saint's wonderful restoration to soundness after the torture on the wheel, came to the prison and asked to be instructed in the doctrines of Christ. Clement cheerfully acceded to their pious request. No opposition whatever was made by the guards, since they also were anxious to hear and understand what was taught by so remarkable a man. The blessed Martyr explained to all, in a concise and simple manner, the sublime doctrines of the Christian Faith. He made them see the dangers and persecutions which would probably attend the profession of religion, then unknown and rejected by the vast majority of their fellow-citizens; but, at the same time, he encouraged them by recalling what many of the noblest as well as of the lowliest of the Romans had undergone for its sake—whose heroism far surpassed that of their greatest and most venerated warriors.

To this, all replied: "Servant of God, we firmly believe thy words; enable us to obtain the pardon of our sins, and we solemnly promise that, if once we are made partakers of thy Faith and hope in

Christ Jesus, no earthly power shall ever prevail upon us to forsake the allegiance which we vow to Him."

Seeing their faith and the eager sincerity of their desires, the Saint, after explaining to them again the nature and effect of the sacrament of regeneration, baptized them all, as well as their little children, whom they had brought along. After which all joined him in prayers of thanksgiving for the signal favor vouchsafed to them in so sudden and marvellous a manner.

Whilst they were thus engaged in this holy occupation, about the middle of the night, the prison became suddenly illuminated by a light of dazzling splendor, and they all beheld the form, as it were, of a man, who, drawing near to the Martyr, presented him a chalice containing wine, and a small quantity of unleavened bread; after which he suddenly and mysteriously again vanished from their sight. The Holy Bishop knew at once the meaning intimated by this strange apparition. He explained to the new converts the mystery of the holy Eucharist, and after celebrating the sacred Mysteries, granted them the inestimable favor of receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord. Strengthened by this heavenly food, they issued forth and began to impart to their friends and ac-

quaintances the wonderful graces God had bestowed upon them; and in a short time so many were converted to the Faith, that the prison of the Saint became, as it were, a Christian Church. This could not long remain a secret, and after a while some of the guards gave information to the authorities of what was going on. When the Emperor heard of it, he gave orders that all who held communication with his prisoner should be seized and tried. In consequence, many of the new converts were taken and put to death—thus showing, by their generous confession of the Faith, that the labors and sufferings of the Martyr had not been unprofitable to them amongst whom he had come an unknown and manacled stranger.

Many days were allowed to pass by before Diocletian sent again for his distinguished prisoner. When Clement stood once more in the imperial presence, he was urged by every argument thought capable of influencing him, to yield to the wishes of Diocletian, and offer sacrifice to the gods of the Empire. But in vain, for the Saint gave no other answer to all the threats and promises that were made, except this: "I worship the God of heaven and earth, and confess Jesus Christ, His only Son." At last, one of the Emperor's favorites, Amphion by name, said to his master: "Pray,

have done with this wicked fellow. He stirs up the Roman people; for he proclaims the same doctrines that were formerly taught here by Peter and Paul, who, for this reason also, were put to death. Remember, O Prince, how many of your subjects have perished miserably, because they had been misled by this man."

This aroused the wrath of Diocletian, and he immediately ordered his attendants to seize the Martyr and scourge him with thongs of leather. The blood soon flowed in streams from his lacerated body; but the Saint stood unmoved, and as absent-minded as if he felt not the least pain. The Emperor, noticing this, said:

"I know, O Clement, thou hast a wonderfully tough frame, and naturally a most obstinate will; but withal I cannot suffer thee to set at naught my power. There remain still for thee iron hooks; they may perhaps be able to stir up some life and feeling in thy soulless carcass. I positively believe thou art standing there asleep."

"You say well, O Prince," replied the Martyr. "It is a favor which Christ, my God and Saviour, grants me, that I can sleep whilst I am suffering for His sake; thus I rest and refresh myself, to be again ready to confess His name, and preach His saving doctrine."

Diocletian then gave the signal to the lictors to stretch him upon the rack, and tear his body with iron hooks until the bones were laid bare. The Martyr looked at his torn and mangled frame, and turning to the emperor, said with a smile :

"This poor body, which by your orders, my Lord, has been torn to pieces, I do not call my own. When on a former occasion I had been similarly treated, Christ, my Saviour, clothed my bones with new flesh, as with a garment. If you deprive me of it, He will do so again ; for the clay will not be wanting to the potter." Thereupon they applied lighted torches to his shattered limbs ; but the servant of God, far from wincing, seemed, on the contrary, to derive pleasure from this torture, so calm, and even cheerful was his countenance.

Diocletian was now fairly at a loss, and turning to his attendants, said : "I have heretofore dealt severely with several of those miserable Christians, but never yet did I meet with one endowed with a spirit so indomitable, and a body so tough and unmanageable. I will send him to Galerius Maximian, that he may, in turn, admire this marvellous individual."

Wherefore, he gave orders that the Martyr should be taken to Nicomedia, directing that let-

ters should be sent to the Cæsar, giving him an account of what had occurred at Rome, with a request that if he should overcome the stubborn spirit of the Christian, he might be sent back; if not, that he should be thrown to the wild beasts, or despatched in some other way. When the day arrived for the Saint's departure, a great number of Christians accompanied him to Ostia; before leaving, however, he blessed the city, saying: "May the Almighty Father increase and preserve in thee the Christian religion; may He, at last, establish in thee rulers who confess His name. May Christ Jesus strengthen in thee His own, grant them perseverance in good deeds and amidst sufferings for the edification of the Faithful throughout the world; that thus, in peace and freedom, all may glorify him upon earth as He is blessed and glorified in heaven forever!" And the vast multitude, weeping and sobbing, answered, Amen.

The ship which was to convey the holy Bishop to Asia, lay ready for him. No sooner had he, and the guard of soldiers in whose keeping he was, gone aboard, than they set sail with a favorable wind. The treatment which the Saint received from the soldiers and seamen during the voyage was not only mild, but very kind; for they had

formed a high opinion of his merit and sanctity. Hence, they gave him full liberty to dispose of his time, and give himself without interruption to prayer and other devotional practices. This was a source of great consolation to the holy man; but God had reserved for him a still greater comfort.

When, some time before, several of the new converts were seized by order of Diocletian to be put to death, many, especially of the young men, succeeded in effecting their escape. One of these, named Agathangelus, a Roman Patrician by birth, a youth of uncommon talents, had become greatly attached to the Martyr—the more so, as he had been the first at Rome to receive holy baptism at the hands of the blessed Clement. Thinking that now he was about to be separated from him forever, he resolved secretly to accompany his beloved friend and father. Wherefore, having first privately ascertained on what ship he was to embark, he secured the good-will of some of the seamen, and found no difficulty in inducing them to take him aboard. On the following day, seeing the soldiers engaged in various occupations, and the Saint at prayer, Agathangelus timidly drew near, and kneeling before him, said:

“Holy Father, do you know Agathangelus, your son in Christ? Whithersoever you go, I must

go. Your trials and sufferings shall also be mine. Let not a father discard his devoted child."

The holy Bishop arose, and, shedding tears of joy, affectionately pressed the noble youth to his bosom. For a moment, he was so overcome that he found no words to express his feelings, but soon recovering himself, he exclaimed :

"Everlasting thanks to thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, the wonderful comforter of Thy servants. Was it not sufficient to uphold and strengthen me on land, that Thou shouldst gladden my heart even now? For, behold, Thou sendest unto me, in very name and in deed, a good angel, who is also the bearer of glad tidings, since Thou hast blessed my poor labors. Grant, O Lord, that this my beloved son and brother may faithfully do Thy holy will; glorify him by enabling him generously to confess Thy sacred Name; that Thou also mayest be glorified in him and by him on earth and in heaven."

The joy of the two servants of God was so great, that in the happiness and delight of each other's company they seemed to forget all privations and bodily sufferings. To commune with God, and to converse on heavenly things, was their sole occupation. They appeared to have wholly forgotten that the body as well as the spirit had a claim on

their attention; and consequently, had it not been for the kindness of the soldiers, they would have been totally destitute of food. For, seeing that their prisoner was poorly provided for, and that his companion was equally unfortunate, they agreed among themselves to supply them with whatever was needful. But the Saint, thanking them for their good intentions, said, "that he could not accept of their charitable offer, as he knew that the Master whom he served would not permit His servants to suffer for want of food." And so it was. For an angel of the Lord daily supplied them with whatever was necessary for their sustenance.

After many days they arrived at the Island of Rhodes. Here the passengers were allowed to lay in a new supply of provisions. The commander of the vessel went ashore, but would not permit the prisoner intrusted to his charge to land. Nevertheless, the Saint entreated his guard to allow him the privilege of going on land, that he might enjoy the happiness of being present at the Sacred Mysteries. It happened to be a Sunday. The soldiers made no objections, and thought it not contrary to their instructions to gratify the ardent wish of the captive Bishop; yet they hesitated for a time to give their consent. Meanwhile, it became known that a Confessor of the Faith was on the vessel in

the harbor, and the Christians of the island, though few in number, at once determined to give hospitality to the servant of Christ. Accordingly, headed by their Bishop,—a most worthy prelate, Photinus by name—they repaired to the ship, and besought the soldiers not to refuse to them the favor of expressing their sympathy for a poor fellow-being in distress. Upon this, Clement and his companion were permitted to land. Amidst canticles of joy and every gladsome display in which the unexpected occasion permitted them to indulge, the inhabitants led the servant of God to the small church which they possessed on the island. Here they were again welcomed by their Brethren, and an eloquent address was delivered on the text, “Fear not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul.” The Saint was so overcome on seeing the affectionate charity which existed among the Brethren, that he was unable to express his feelings, except by shedding an abundance of tears. The Bishop, however, having requested him to offer up the holy sacrifice, he did so with so great a devotion and spiritual consolation, that the hearts of all present were inflamed with the fire of divine love. God even deigned to manifest in a wonderful manner how pleasing in his sight was the blessed Martyr. For, whilst

Clement was proceeding with the sacred mysteries, there was seen hanging above his head, as it were, a ball of fire, which by degrees descended upon the altar, and sent forth such brilliant rays, that the worshippers, unable to gaze on its glorious splendor, fell prostrate upon the ground. Many of the Rhodians, who were Pagans, witnessed this marvellous spectacle, and in consequence begged to be instructed in the religion of the Christians. Nor was this the only blessing which flowed from the presence of the Saint on their island. Persons afflicted with various kinds of diseases were brought before him; these he blessed and restored to perfect health. The concourse of people was so great that the soldiers, becoming afraid lest in some way their prisoner might make his escape, resolved to manacle him again, and take him back to the ship. Thither he was preceded by the faithful Agathangelus, and followed by an immense crowd of persons, of every age and condition, who bade him farewell amidst tears of joy and regret.

The winds favoring them during their voyage on the *Ægean* sea, they soon landed at Nicomedia. The Cæsar Galerius Maximian read the letters sent by Diocletian, and ordered the blessed Clement and his companion to be brought before him. Judging by the venerable and determined appear-

ance of the servant of God, that he was indeed no ordinary man, and that he should gain but little credit by trying to make him submit to his wishes—frequent practice having made him expert in such matters—he prudently refused to begin the usual interrogatory, giving as an excuse that important military affairs required his whole attention. Nevertheless, being unwilling to dismiss the accused, he ordered him to be tried by Agrippinus, the Governor of the city. Agrippinus was much flattered by this token of esteem given him by the Prince, and proceeding at once to interrogate the holy Bishop, said to him :

“Art thou that Clement of whom so many strange stories are told?”

“I am Clement,” replied the Martyr, “a servant of Christ.”

The Governor was angry, and said to one of his attendants : “Strike him a heavy blow on the face. He should call himself not a servant of Christ, but of the Emperors.”

“Would to God,” answered Clement, “that your lords and masters, the Emperors, were servants of Christ; then they might rule the different nations subject to them in peace and happiness, and do away with impiety and injustice.”

Agrippinus, whose evil temper was now fully

aroused, made no reply to the words of the Saint, but turning to his companion, he said:

“And who art thou? there is no mention made of thee in these letters.”

Agathangelus looked first at the Bishop, and then raising his eyes toward heaven, he answered:

“My name is Agathangelus: by means of this holy man, God has bestowed upon me the happiness of being a Christian.”

“Then,” said the Governor, “he has been for thee the means of leading thee into error, and the cause of an untimely and cruel death.” And immediately he ordered the Saint to be hung up and scourged with rods, whilst his companion was whipped with thongs of leather. Both cheerfully underwent this torture, and Clement continued to pray in a loud voice: “Lord Jesus, who didst promise the joys of Paradise to the good thief who suffered by Thy side; Thou, who didst call publicans and sinners to penance and salvation, grant me patience, and to Thy servant, Agathangelus, strength and courage, that he may fight a good fight. Make us both worthy to receive the inheritance of Thine elect.”

Agrippinus seeing that this kind of torment was not sufficient to make them renounce their Faith, sent them to prison, at the same time giving them

warning that on the following day they should be publicly exposed to the beasts. As soon as the servants of Christ were in prison, they gave themselves to prayer with so much fervor, that, forgetting all bodily wants and sufferings, they seemed wholly absorbed in divine contemplation. They were, however, not alone in their dungeon, for as their great struggle was so near at hand, they had been confined in the common jail of the city. The other prisoners observing the extraordinary behaviour of the two holy persons, felt themselves, as it were by some supernatural impulse, drawn towards them. Gently approaching the Confessors, they fell at their feet, and besought them to teach them how to pray, that they too might become pleasing to God. The zeal of the blessed Clement was forthwith aroused. He began at once to instruct them, spending the greater part of the night in this sacred duty. Convinced of their good dispositions, and knowing that the time was short, he yielded to their eager desires, and baptized them all. After which they united with him in fervent prayer; and, whilst they prayed, the doors of the prison were suddenly thrown wide open. Thereupon, the Saint said to them: "My children, Christ has made you free from sin: serve Him in freedom and with fidelity."

When the Governor heard what had happened in the prison, he was so enraged that he would scarcely allow his officers sufficient time to make the necessary preparations for the public show in the amphitheatre. He insisted, especially, that the most savage beasts should be let loose; since it was his pleasure that the two Christians should have no chance by the long continuance of their punishment to interest the spectators in their favor. He did not reflect that the power of a tyrant does not always equal his wickedness. For no sooner did the two Martyrs stand in the arena than two huge lions were let loose against them; but the beasts, though at the outset they bounded furiously forward, seemed suddenly to forget their natural ferocity as they approached the servants of God, and fawning on them and licking their hands, at last laid themselves quietly down at their feet. By order of Agrippinus, several other animals were lashed into madness and successively sent out, but always with the same result. This so exasperated the tyrant, that he swore he himself would take the matter in hand. Wherefore, he commanded the executioners to take long awl-shaped instruments of torture, made red-hot, and run them through the hands of the Martyrs from between the fingers up to the elbows. When the spectators

heard the hissing sound, and saw the smoke arising as this inhuman torture was inflicted, they turned away in disgust, and shouted unanimously, "Stop your barbarous work, brute of a tyrant, and let the poor men go free!" This manifestation of displeasure on the part of the people served only to make the Governor more wrathful. To prove that he defied their opposition, he made his men heat even larger instruments than the former, and putting them under the armpits of the sufferers, run them upwards so as to pierce their shoulder-blades. Although the multitude were astonished at the patient courage with which the Martyrs endured this horrible torture, they were too indignant calmly to witness so inhuman a cruelty, and taking up stones and whatever other missiles they could lay hold of, hurled them at the Governor and his attendants, until they forced them to hurry away from the amphitheatre, and seek safety in the city. Whilst the excited people indulged in this tumultuous display, and continued to shout, "Great is the God of the Christians!" some of the Faithful carried off the two Confessors, and taking them to a neighboring mountain, called Pyramis, concealed them there—in a temple of the idols.

During several days, the spies sent out by Agrippinus were unable to discover the place of

their concealment; at last, however, some of the Pagans, induced by the rewards held out for their apprehension, revealed the hiding-place. Wherefore, on the day after receiving this information, the Governor, taking with him a large body of soldiers, repaired to the temple of the idols. Nor had he neglected to invite the worshippers of the gods to accompany him. Thus attended, he found it quite easy to seize the two Martyrs, the more so, as they made not the least resistance, and had strictly forbidden that the Christians, or those among the Pagans who were friendly to them, should make even the least demonstration in their favor. When, therefore, they were again brought into the presence of Agrippinus, he said to them:

“How dared you, by your magical arts and bewitching ways, excite our people to riot and rebellion? Was it not enough that you brought contempt upon our person, the chief magistrate of the city? Must you also induce the rabble to insult our gods, by making them proclaim aloud the greatness of the God of the Christians?”

“Your accusations against us, O Governor,” answered Clement, “are altogether false. We have done no evil; we have not even uttered a word against you or your idols. But the people,

who know our innocence, and beheld the wonders wrought by the true and living God in favor of His servants, freely and of their own accord gave testimony to the truth. If, then, you have any designs against us, as Christians, do not delay to carry them into effect, for we are ready. He who has hitherto protected us is able to do so again; and if so it is pleasing to Him, He will save us from your hands."

Agrippinus thereupon ordered them to be cruelly beaten with clubs, until he felt satisfied that well-nigh all their bones were broken. After which they were, by his command, sewed up in sacks partly filled with stones, and taken to a side of the mountain which was very steep, and looked toward the sea; hence they were rolled down into the waters below. The Governor, thinking that now, at last, he was fairly rid of them forever, rejoiced at his success, and as night was fast approaching, returned to the city. But, as it is written, the desire of the wicked shall perish.

As soon as it became known in the city what had been done with the two servants of God, some of the Christians hastened to that side of the mountain whence the Martyrs had been precipitated. Having engaged the services of some fishermen in the hope that perhaps the waves might

cast the bodies ashore, they watched and prayed that God might favor their pious wishes. They had not to wait long, for when they arrived at the place, they saw a brilliant light, as it were, floating upon the waters. Drawing near with their boats, they found the two sacks, and on opening them beheld with inexpressible wonder that the two servants of God were not only alive, but perfectly healed of their wounds. Filled with thankfulness to God for their miraculous deliverance, they exclaimed: "We praise and thank Thee, O Lord, because Thou savest them that believe in Thee from the hands of Thine enemies; we extol Thy Holy Name, because when we cried unto Thee, Thou didst heal us."

Unwilling that the Governor should boast of his supposed success, they resolved to return immediately to the city. When they again entered Nicomedia, so great a multitude of people joined the brethren that their progress soon assumed the appearance of a triumphal entry. As they were passing one of the public buildings, two blind cripples, hearing that the Saint was near, cried out aloud that he might have pity on them. Clement gave them his blessing, and they were perfectly healed on the spot. This was the beginning of numberless other miraculous cures wrought by

the servants of God, and the means of converting a vast number of idolaters.

When the Governor was informed of all that had taken place, he became greatly alarmed. Not knowing what measure to adopt, and convinced that all his punishments would only prove that he was powerless against these wonderful men, he resolved to leave the matter to the decision of the Cæsar. Galerius was at that time with the army, at some distance from Nicomedia.

Agrippinus sent to him a full account of all he had done, and with what results, beseeching him to take himself the matter in hand. Maximian was by no means disposed to undertake a business of which he foresaw that failure would be the consequence. Learning, however, that Clement originally belonged to Ancyra, the metropolis of Galatia, he said:

"It is but fair that the land which gave them birth should keep, judge, and punish its children."

Wherefore he gave orders that the Martyrs should be taken to Curicius, the military commander at Ancyra.

The blessed Clement was greatly rejoiced when he heard that, no doubt by a special disposition of Providence, he was to see once more his native city. This happiness he had prayed for, years

before, and now the desire of his heart, after so many sufferings, was to be granted in so wonderful a manner. The journey was long, and in itself exceedingly wearisome, but for him and his faithful companion it was a holy pilgrimage full of consolation, because they delighted in sufferings endured for the love of their divine Master. When at last they entered Ancyra, the Saint could no longer contain the joy that filled his bosom, and exclaimed:

“Glory to Thee, O my God, who always and everywhere hearest the prayer of my humility. Glory to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, who restorest me to the land that gave me birth, and holds the remains of my beloved and saintly mother. Grant that I, as well as my loving companion, may at last find repose in a place so dear to me.”

On the day after their arrival they were summoned before the military Commander, who was residing at a place called the Grotto. Curicius showed himself very kind and affable, and said to them:

“As soon as I began to read the documents concerning yourselves, which have been handed to me, I felt at once the deepest interest in your affairs. It is really astonishing how you have

been enabled to endure so much: what dangers, what deaths; I may say, you have escaped! The mere reading of these things makes me shudder with horror, and forces me to sympathize with you, insomuch that I almost felt as if I had been a sharer in your misfortunes. For this reason, also, laying aside my character of magistrate, I choose to advise you, as a friend and well-wisher, and thee especially, O great and admirable Clement, who art a native of this fair city, and who seemest to have been unwilling to honor the gods in any other place, that thou mightest glorify thy own beloved Ancyra by an action so worthy of thee and so pleasing to them. Do not, then, delay to gratify our desires and those of the whole city. The noble Agathangelus will be pleased to follow thy example."

The holy Bishop, with an expression of surprise on his countenance, looked at Curicius and replied:

"We thank you, noble Commander, for your words of kindness, but you appear to have altogether misunderstood our position. If the mention of our sufferings has awakened within you feelings of commiseration, we beg leave to assure you that we deserve by no means to be pitied on that account. The hardships and tor-

ments which we have undergone were inflicted upon us because we adore the true God, and refuse to worship idols: hence those things which to others seemed cruel punishments, were, in reality, to us the sweetest delights. Therefore, we ought not to be pitied by any one, but rather envied by all who have the happiness of knowing how great a blessing it is to suffer for the sake of truth and justice; and truly, we have reason to pity those who are so blind as to worship idols without life or feeling, when they should acknowledge the power and goodness of the true and living God."

Curicius, no longer disguising his real intention, said:

"Since you profess such sentiments and find your delight in suffering for your God, I will liberally supply you with the means to gratify your desires."

Whereupon he ordered his attendants to put red-hot plates of iron under the arm-pits of the Saint, and after binding the arms against his sides, to tie him to a stake. But Agathangelus was hung up, and his sides and legs torn with iron hooks. Whilst the Martyrs were enduring these torments, Curicius said to them:

"What good does your bad opinion of our gods

do you now? Do you not think it foolish to spend the best years of your life in such unprofitable amusement? How do you feel now, my worthy friend?"

"Though our outward man is afflicted," answered Clement, "yet the inward man is hereby renewed."

By order of the Commander, an iron helmet, glowing hot, was then placed upon the head of the Saint. At this torture smoke was seen to issue from the mouth, the nostrils and ears of the Martyr, and the intensity of the sufferings made him exclaim:

"O Jesus, Fountain of living waters, refresh me with Thy healing dew, lest this tabernacle of my spirit perish."

At that very moment the iron helmet became quite cool, and the men who were tormenting Agathangelus protested that they were unable to proceed. Curicius and his attendants were filled with wonder; and, not knowing what next to do or say, he sent the Martyrs to prison.

No sooner had the darkness of night overspread the city, than the excellent lady Sophia made her appearance before the son of her adoption. She embraced him with a mother's affection, and after kissing repeatedly his wounds, tended him with

the fondest care. Knowing so well all his habits and likings, she loved to anticipate every desire of her now glorious and heroic son. Nor did she neglect the beloved companion of his toils and sufferings. When she had heard the story of his conversion and generous friendship, Agathangelus became doubly endeared to her. Who could tell the happiness and consolation experienced by this charitable and noble-minded woman, whilst engaged in ministering to the wants of these friends of God! The example of her disinterested devotedness produced so wonderful an effect upon the minds and hearts of many of the inhabitants of Ancyra, that they embraced the Christian Religion, in spite of the persecution to which they became exposed by so doing.

Meanwhile, Curicius had been racking his brain to discover some means sufficiently powerful to overcome the constancy of the two Martyrs. Unable to come to any satisfactory conclusion, he resolved to send them to his lieutenant, Domitius, who resided at Amisus, near the Euxine Sea. When the noble Sophia heard what had been decided upon by the Commander, she immediately determined that, if it were at all in her power, her beloved son should not again be torn away from her sight. Wherefore, she purposed at once to follow him

whithersoever he went; and on the day fixed for the departure, taking with her several of the children whom the charity of the Saint had put under her care, she stood ready to accompany the Martyrs. This was an unexpected accident not foreseen by Curicius, who thought it of sufficient importance to write about it to the Cæsar, that he might receive advice what was to be done under the circumstances. Maximian replied, that he should try to induce the children to abjure the teachings and the Religion of Clement and send them home; but if they could not be easily persuaded to do this, he should without further trouble put them to death where they were. This cruel suggestion was forthwith acted upon. The children clung to the Martyrs with so much affection, that no violence used by the soldiers was able to tear them away. Accordingly, they were all mercilessly slain. When the last of them received the stroke of death, the holy Bishop exclaimed: "Receive, O Lord Jesus, this youthful and innocent portion of Thy little flock; place them in the rich pastures of Thy Paradise. Let them make intercession with Thee for us, who are still fighting the battles of the Faith." This occurred outside of the city of Ancyra, in a place called the *Campus*. The pious Sophia now bade farewell to the two friends of God, but not without

expressing the firm hope that she should meet them again. After which she gave her first care to the proper burial of the youthful Martyrs, whose happy lot she did not indeed bewail, but whose cheering presence she missed, and whose merry and innocent voices she sighed for with all the feelings of an affectionate mother.

Five days after their departure from Ancyra, Clement and Agathangelus arrived at Amisus. They were soon informed that Domitius was at present engaged in the examination of other Christians, and that their own trial should take place on the following day. Hearing this, they immediately knelt down and resolved to spend the intervening time in prayer, forgetful of the hardships and fatigues which they had undergone.

The next day, when they stood before Domitius, the intrepid Clement boldly addressed him, and made him understand the awful judgment that awaited him at the end of his life; he spoke to him of the torments of hell and the bliss of heaven with so great a power and eloquence, that Agathangelus was so moved that he dropped down at the feet of the holy Bishop. Clement at once ceased speaking, and raising his companion, fondly embraced him. Domitius seeing this, said:

“It is of no use to attempt to play your magical

tricks before me. I am too well skilled in all those collusions and secret contrivances by which you practise your impositions upon the common people. If, as appears from the documents I have received, you have been able to deceive elsewhere even the most distinguished personages, do not flatter yourselves that you can also hoodwink Domitius. He is too old a hand at this kind of business. Wherefore, all you have to do now is to lay aside your character of impostors, and honestly worship our gods, so that you may save yourselves from the direst misfortunes."

"You are altogether mistaken, good Sir," replied the blessed Clement, "with regard to our character. We practise no imposition; we stand before you as champions of the truth and of justice; therefore, too, we despise your gods, who mislead their blinded worshippers, and bring upon them ignorance and disgrace during this life, and everlasting ruin hereafter."

Domitius thereupon ordered the two Martyrs to be separated, so that he might interrogate them one after the other. The result, however, was the same. After using in vain all his skill, he was forced to avow that he had gained nothing. Wherefore, being very angry, and anxious to dispose of them in the shortest way, he commanded

them to be thrown into a large lime-kiln. A guard of soldiers was stationed near the place, lest the Christians might carry off their remains during the night. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when the Saints were cast into the kiln; yet so far from being killed instantly, as was expected, they continued joyfully to sing the praises of God. When night came on, a brilliant light was seen to encompass the place, the sight of which so astonished the soldiers that two of them, inwardly moved by the spirit of God, renounced the worship of the idols, and confessing Christ, besought the Martyrs to permit them to join their company.

When, in the morning, Domitius made his appearance, he was filled with amazement on hearing what had happened. Nevertheless, instead of giving glory to God, who had so marvellously protected His servants, he ordered the two soldiers to be forthwith crucified: a punishment which they underwent with the greatest cheerfulness. Their names were Phengon and Eucarpus. Not knowing what he should do to overcome the persevering constancy of the two Martyrs, the Lieutenant thought proper to delay for awhile his vengeance; at the same time he ordered them to be tied up and severely scourged.

Meanwhile he continued to think; and the result of the working of his inventive genius was a sort of double couch made of large iron plates, between which his victims could be placed. This instrument of torture was immediately put to the test. The two Confessors were put between the two plates, and whilst a great fire was kindled beneath the lower, pitch, oil and sulphur were poured upon the upper plate. The heat and smoke were so intense and suffocating, that Domitius, certain that he had been successful, told the executioners to wait till the engine of torture should grow cold, and if there should remain anything of the bones of his victims, to cast them into the river which flowed past the city. But, by another miracle of Divine Providence, the expectation of the cruel tyrant was wholly frustrated. When the upper plate of the couch was removed, the Martyrs were not only found alive, but uninjured, fresh and vigorous. For, they said, they had enjoyed a sweet and refreshing repose, whilst men thought them dying in the midst of tortures; they had seen angelic visions, and even the Lord of Angels had said to them, "Fear not, I am with you."

Domitius, convinced by all the wonders he had heard and seen that it was not in his power to overcome the constancy of the Martyrs, deter-

mined to send them back to Galerius Maximian, who, according to the latest accounts, had come to Ancyra. The Saints were guarded by a large body of soldiers. A great number of Christians also chose to accompany them, that they might minister to them and encourage them in their struggle for the Faith. The time of the year was very unfavorable for a journey, since, being the dry season, it was almost impossible to obtain water. After several days of travelling they came to a vast and sandy plain, where they should certainly have perished with thirst had it not been for the charity of the Servants of God. Seeing the sufferings of that great multitude, Clement knelt down and prayed thus:

“O Lord, whom all the elements obey, look in mercy upon the distress of these poor men. O Thou, at whose word the waters were separated from the land, give refreshment to our bodies, that whilst glorifying thy goodness, our souls may the more thirst after the fountain of living waters springing up into life everlasting.”

No sooner had he finished this prayer than a stream of cool and limpid water was seen to issue out of the ground, near the place where he was kneeling. All the people joyfully returned thanks to God, and now began to look with increased

wonder and reverence upon the holy Bishop. When, afterwards, the inhabitants of the neighboring districts heard of this miracle, they resorted in crowds to the spot to drink of those waters, and the lively faith of many of them was rewarded with the wonderful cure of various diseases.

It was during this journey that the blessed Clement learnt, in a heavenly vision granted him, how long his life of suffering was to last. For, as he was offering himself to his divine Master, begging of Him to accept the sacrifice of his life, and to make it a continued martyrdom, he was answered by a voice from heaven: "What thou askest, O Clement, is granted. Act manfully and be strong. The whole course of thy martyrdom will be eighteen years."

On their arrival at Ancyra they were informed that the Cæsar had just left for Tarsus, where he intended to remain for a considerable time. Hence it was resolved to take the two prisoners at once to that city.

Galerius Maximian was not at all pleased when he was told that the two persons, whom he had formerly seen at Nicomedia, were again to appear before him. He seemed, however, to think that he might use this occasion to show his superior skill in judicial matters. Wherefore, when, on the

following day, the two prisoners stood before him, he assumed a look of kind interest and said:

"It appears to us, that it was so ordained by fate that you should continue to resist the desire and will of others, in order that you might have an opportunity of showing your submissiveness in the presence of a person of imperial dignity. Experience has taught us, that the simple majesty of power is more capable of influencing noble and high-minded men than threats of force and violence. If, then, we mistake not your character, we feel persuaded that, as you have now the honor of standing in our presence, so you will at once resolve to secure the marks of our benevolence and friendship by worshipping the gods, the preservers and guardians of men."

To this the blessed Clement replied:

"We also, O mighty Cæsar, have reason to be well pleased, since at last it has been granted us to stand in your imperial presence; but, permit us to say, we deem this a great honor only because we stand before you as prisoners in chains for Christ. For thus we hope to be enabled to appear with confidence before His dread tribunal, and we pray, O Prince, that you may so live and act that the same favor may be granted to you. For He is the King of kings, and through Him the rulers

of this earth have power. He destroys nations, and raises them up again. He too has given power to the empire of the Romans, whereof it had been foretold by the Prophets, that it would rule people with a rod of iron. Moreover, after you, He will set up Emperors who will fear and obey Him; and they shall mete out judgment to the people in uprightness."

Maximian was struck with the earnest manner of the Saint, no less than with his calm and fearless answer:

"What fateful and mysterious books," asked he, "have you been reading, wherein you can find such amusing nonsense?"

"Do not call them fateful, but prophetic books, O Cæsar," answered Clement, "wherein it is also written, that in the last days 'a King shall reign in justice, and princes shall rule in judgment.'"

"Of course," said Maximian, "those books speak of us, when they say that; for our devotedness to the gods is so true and earnest, that we suffer no one to disobey them, as you two are about to experience."

This threat did not frighten the Martyr, for he continued:

"If a great change had come over you, O Prince, and you had trampled under foot your idols, that

you might worship the One true God, this ancient prophecy might, no doubt, be accomplished in you. But, seeing how idolatry and every kind of iniquity still continue to prevail everywhere, it is evident that the days of those virtuous rulers, whereof the inspired Seer speaks, have not yet come."

So bold an answer had never before been made in the hearing of the tyrant. He was so incensed that he ordered a large furnace to be heated, and the Martyrs to be thrown into it, in his own presence, lest, as he said, some deceit might be practised. On the following day, being told that the two Christians were still alive, and had been heard all night singing and praying aloud, he would not believe the strange report, until he had seen with his own eyes that it was really so. Convinced that the flames seemed not even to have touched their garments, nor injured a hair of their heads, he was lost in astonishment. Soon, however, he said to the servants of God:

"In this, at least, you can gratify my curiosity; by what magical arts are you enabled to render the fire powerless?"

"We have nothing to do with magical arts, O Cæsar; but our God, when for His sake we pass even through fire and water, brings us out into a place of refreshment," replied the Martyr.

Seeing that he could have no power of persuasion over such men, he ordered them to be dragged through the city as far as the imperial palace. There he condemned them to be cast into a dungeon, saying: "If we cannot subdue them now, we will give them four years time for reflection."

This long imprisonment was not considered by them as a time uselessly squandered. They knew that they were doing the will of God—which is the perfection of virtue; and again, they were not without opportunities of doing good to their neighbor; for many of the inhabitants of Tarsus visited them in their prison. These, when Christians, they edified by their cheerful resignation and wholesome counsels; when Pagans, they instructed them in the truths of Christianity. The number of the converts became so great, that the priests of the idols began to murmur against the Cæsar himself, and complained that he had brought an unconquerable enemy into their camp. Galerius Maximian, however, seemed resolved to let the Confessors die where they were, giving as a reason, that since they had been tried before an imperial tribunal, it was not proper they should be summoned before an inferior court. Nevertheless, consistency was not one of the qualities in the

character of the Cæsar. Hence it happened that, after a while, he yielded to the importunities of several Governors of Provinces—who were then in Tarsus making court to their master—and gave orders that the two prisoners should be delivered up to Sacerdon, the newly appointed Governor of Galatia—a man distinguished for the cruel severity with which he had, on many occasions, treated the Christians.

When the Martyrs were brought before this personage, he said to them with no little display of self-importance :

“You should know, my good fellows, that you stand now before Sacerdon, a person, I have reason to think, not unknown to you Christians. None of them, whether in Pontus or Galatia, have ever escaped my hands. And, I may as well tell you this, I have rewarded many of them with wealth and honors after I have persuaded them to become my friends; and, what is still more, the friends and worshippers of the gods: on the other hand, those who were obstinate and disobedient, I have exterminated with fire and the sword. Wherefore, I would now advise you to follow the example of the former, that so, at last, after years of suffering, the gods may bestow upon you rest and happiness.”

“We look for no rewards from men,” replied the servants of God. “If we are faithful to Him, as we trust to be, Christ our Lord will crown us with bliss—a reward so great that, to deserve it, we consider all the pains and torments of this life as nothing.”

Sacerdon then commanded them to be tied up, and so cruelly scourged and torn with iron hooks, that the flesh hung in shreds on their backs. Confused and enraged at the sight of their cheerful constancy, he had scarcely time to order them to be taken down and sent back to their prison, before he fell from his judgment-seat, foaming at the mouth, and writhing in his death-struggle. The spectators were horror-struck when they beheld this awful punishment of the wicked tyrant; and all, but especially the Christians, vied with each other in ministering to the wants of the two Martyrs, whose fidelity Heaven had that day so visibly approved. When the Cæsar was informed of the sad fate of the wretched Sacerdon, he burst into a fit of laughter, and exclaimed:

“And is that the end of the famous Sacerdon, whom all proclaimed the most cunning of judges! Well, as he is gone to the other world, he will not be vexed when we joke about his bad luck.”

After what had happened, it may be supposed that it would have been difficult to find any one rash enough to undertake to torment the friends of God. Yet, there appeared such an individual in the person of Maximus, one of the military Commanders then at the court of the Cæsar. Seeing that Maximian was in good humor, he said to him:

“I think it disgraceful to our gods, that two miserable Christians cannot be induced, by mildness nor by severity, to worship them. With your leave, O Prince, I would gladly undertake this business.”

“Go,” said Maximian, “do as thou pleasest: thou hast my full authorization.”

Maximus, aware that violence was the worst means that could be employed to overcome what he considered obstinacy, repeatedly visited the two Confessors of the Faith in their prison. He professed to feel a great interest in their well-being, took care that they should be kindly treated, and endeavored to gain their friendship and confidence. For many weeks he continued to act in this manner. At last, when he thought that all his plans were now well matured, he sent for them, and with a show of much good will, said:

“I bid you welcome, my friends; the more

so as I know that you are also the sincere friends of the immortal gods, who have, again and again, made known to me that you are dear to them, and under their special protection. Nay, even last night the son of the great Jupiter, Bacchus, appeared to me and said, 'Bring the two men unto me.' Wherefore, I thought it proper to prepare an altar, as you see, that you might burn incense thereon, as a thank-offering to all the gods."

The holy Bishop, speaking for himself as well as for his companion, replied:

"You committed a great blunder, good Sir, when fabricating that story, by forgetting to give it the appearance, at least, of probability. We, of course, do not deny that your gods can talk as much by day as they do by night; but, how can you hear and understand them, when they always say—nothing? Then, as regards that precious son of your Jupiter, who, you say, appeared to you—you should have told us whether he was a wooden or a brazen one; or, perhaps, was his godship made of stone? At all events, of whatever material he was made, it could not have been used for a worse purpose than that of deceiving men."

Maximus, seeing that dissimulation could effect

nothing, now showed himself in his true character. He ordered sharp iron-pointed stakes to be put in the ground, and Clement to be placed upon them. He made the executioners beat the Martyr with heavy clubs, until the points were seen piercing through every part of the body. The barbarous torturer himself was astonished that this treatment did not cause the immediate death of the sufferer, and expressed himself to that effect. But the servant of God hearing it, said:

“There is One whose will it is that our spirits shall still continue to dwell in this poor body; therefore, you should confess, as well as admire, the power of Christ, our Lord.”

Whilst the venerable Bishop was tortured in this manner, his friend and disciple, Agathangelus, was made to undergo a similar agony of pain, by having a continued stream of melted lead poured upon his head. He showed a courage and constancy which greatly consoled his heroic master, who, amidst his own sufferings, did not forget to cheer him on from time to time by a look and a smile of approval.

Maximus, convinced that he too had failed in his undertaking, gave directions to his men to convey the Martyrs again to prison, in the hope that

they might soon die of their wounds, whilst he himself repaired to the palace to give to Maximian an account of what had been done. The Cæsar was quite pleased to hear that the boasting Commander had failed where he himself had been unsuccessful; and approved the suggestion of letting the Confessors linger in prison until they should die a natural death. But this was not to be.

Among the courtiers there was a Persian, Aphrodisius by name, who in his own country had become notorious for the unrelenting hatred with which he had persecuted the Christians. This man knew very well that, in spite of what he said, Galerius was anxious that some one should rid him of the two Martyrs. He found, therefore, no difficulty to obtain his consent that another attempt should be made to effect this purpose. Having carefully arranged the plan he intended to pursue, he prepared a splendid banquet, and had the prisoners taken to his house—as if he were desirous of expressing his sympathy, and thereby gain their good-will. But they refused to touch any food in his house, saying that they were content with a spiritual food which God had provided for them, which also was to them the pledge of an everlasting banquet when their days of trial should be over. Aphrodisius was very angry

when he heard this, and, as he had now reason to suspect that they saw through his designs, said: "To-morrow, then, I will send you off in magnificent style to the enjoyment of that everlasting banquet."

Wherefore, on the following day the Martyrs, with a mill-stone tied to their necks, were by order of the tyrant dragged through the principal streets of the city, a herald preceding them, and crying aloud, "Thus are they treated who disobey the imperial will, and despise our immortal gods." By trying to incite in this manner the prejudices of the people, Aphrodisius hoped to induce them to despatch, by some act of violence, the two Confessors of the Faith. But so public a display of cruelty produced the contrary effect. For, when the innocent victims were returned to their prison, many citizens went to visit them, and begged to be instructed in the Christian Religion; and thus what was intended for their disgrace and downfall became for them a source of conquest and triumph.

After this, it was again decided that they should be made to languish in prison until death released them. Under this sentence the Martyrs continued for a long time, cheerfully enduring every privation for the love of Him, whose will and good pleasure they humbly adored in every event of their life.

The soldiers, however, who were appointed to guard them, after a time began to grow weary of the dull duty which they had to perform—the more so as it had become a standing jest and by-word throughout the city, that they were watching over the “Blessed immortals.” In consequence they made an earnest appeal to the Cæsar, beseeching him to employ some effective means to free them from the trouble of guarding two poor prisoners.

Maximian was greatly annoyed, and said: “If our gods were of any account, they would mind their own business, and not bore us forever with keeping up for them the respect they claim. Whence did those two men originally come?” he asked.

“From Ancyra, in Galatia,” it was answered.

“Well,” he said, “send them thither immediately. Lucius, the new Governor, is a clever fellow, and will know what to do with them. At all events, let me hear no more about them.”

The Martyrs, when informed that they were to return to Ancyra, rejoiced in spirit, and Clement giving thanks to God, said:

“Praise and glory to Thee, O Lord, who dost not cast off them that trust in Thee. After long and weary wanderings in the land of the stranger, we may again behold the place that gave us birth.

Grant that there, also, we may glorify Thee, and find at last a place of rest."

On their arrival at Ancyra, they were by order of Lucius put in the stocks. On the morrow, however, Agathangelus was separated from his beloved master, and taken to the palace of the Governor. Lucius said to him:

"I have discovered, by reading the various documents sent to me, that on account of no crime or wickedness of thine own, thou hast been made to undergo so many hardships. Thy simple and guileless nature has been imposed upon by the cunning of thy companion. Thou didst not suspect this; neither didst thou know that dripping water wears away the hardest stones; yet the result has been verified in thyself. Now then, listen to my advice, and say that, as thine eyes have been opened to what is for thy good, thou art sorry for the past, and resolved to comply with whatever the laws and the imperial will require of thee. Moreover, I can assure thee, Clement himself will approve thy good sense, since, it cannot now be doubted, that he is about to cheer the hearts of all his fellow-citizens by worshipping the gods of the Empire."

"You are quite mistaken," replied Agathangelus, "if you suppose that I was misled by any one.

When I was in darkness and ignorance, even as you are, God, in His mercy, made use of His servant Clement to bring me unto the light and knowledge of the truth. You say that I am not guilty of any crime. This I believe, for I should not deserve to be called a Christian—neither could I have been able to endure so much for the love and defence of truth and justice—had I not endeavored, according to the teaching and example of the blessed Clement, to conform my life to the precepts of our holy Religion. Nay, more: I dare say, if your Excellency were to learn of the same Clement how foolish it is to worship idols—the work of your own hands—and how wise and worthy of a man to confess and adore the One true God—the Creator of the universe—you might enjoy happiness in this life and secure for yourself unending bliss hereafter.”

This frank and modest reply of the Martyr made the Governor understand that it would be a useless undertaking to make any further attempts to bring about his apostasy. Wherefore, he ordered the executioners to stick into his ears long iron bodkins made glowing hot, and at the same time to burn his sides with lighted torches. In spite of the pain caused by this barbarous punishment, Agathangelus remained cheerful, and prayed aloud:

“Lord Jesus Christ, I gladly endure these torments for love of Thee. Grant me strength and patience, that I may suffer in a manner worthy of my beloved master, Thy glorious servant, Clement—that with him, and all Thy Martyrs, I may receive the inheritance of Thy promises.” And perceiving that his strength began to fail, he cried out: “O Jesus, my God, the body is weak, but the spirit is willing; in Thee I trust, help Thou me.”

Lucius, seeing that his victim was about to escape him before he had undergone all the tortures intended for him, immediately gave orders that his head should be struck off. Thus the blessed Agathangelus received his crown on the fifth of November.

The lady Sophia bought the sacred remains, and deposited them in a beautiful crypt, near the entrance of a church which she had built not far from her mansion.

When the great athlete, Clement, heard that his companion had gone to his reward, he poured forth his thanks to God with many tears of joy and consolation. Forgetting, as usual, his own sufferings, he seemed for many a day to have no thoughts or words except to cheer up the Christians who visited him, and to speak in glowing terms of his beloved and faithful Agathangelus.

Nevertheless, during all this time he was enduring excruciating torments: confined in the stocks, as he was, his neck had been chained to a huge stone, so that he had to continue always in a stooping position; besides, by order of Lucius, he received daily one hundred and fifty lashes with a heavy whip. Whence it happened, that not only the stone to which he was chained, and the stocks wherein he was confined, but the pavement all around him was stained with gore—the sight of which inspired his visitors with mingled feelings of pity, horror and disgust. Every night a brilliant and mysterious light illumined the dungeon of the Martyr; and in the morning all the ghastly wounds of the previous day were perfectly healed.

It was now during the octave of the Epiphany of our Lord, and the noble Sophia felt herself inspired to celebrate at least a part of so holy a time with becoming solemnity. Wherefore, making a good use of her skill in the art of persuasion, and taking advantage of the power which money possesses over the minds of most men, she gained the good will of the keepers of the dungeon. She came, therefore, during the night, attended by her servants and the children, both boys and girls, whom she had under her care, and, freeing the holy Bishop from his chains,

had him vested with his episcopal robes, and led in solemn procession to the little church. There, after the doors had been made secure, that no intruder might disturb them, the blessed Martyr, seeing the crowd of the Faithful assembled for the occasion, amidst the sobs and tears of his beloved little flock raised his hands toward heaven and prayed:

“Lord Jesus, who at the early dawn of the day of Thy resurrection didst appear to the holy women; who, by glorifying thy ever blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, hast given a model to all the female sex, bless the zeal and charity of my beloved mother, Sophia: bless her during this life, that she may be enabled to minister faithfully to the wants of Thy poor little flock, and, after this life, reward her with the crown of prudent virgins, who have stood ever faithfully watching for Thy coming. Bless all the members of the flock once intrusted to my keeping; drive away the ravenous wolves, that, at last, in peace and in freedom, they may worship Thee and glorify Thy holy name by the practice of every virtue.”

After he had thus prayed, he knelt down and spent the remainder of the night in meditation, whilst the Faithful were singing hymns of praise and thanksgiving. At the earliest dawn, the

Martyr celebrated the holy Sacrifice, and gave to all present the divine Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord. The hearts of all seemed filled with joy, yet the faithful Shepherd well knew that there was some uneasiness among his beloved flock. Accordingly, to cheer them up and to prepare them at the same time for what was to come, he said:

“Be not troubled, my beloved children: my time is not come, though it is not now far off. When, however, the Divine Master calls His poor servant, two from among you will accompany him. After that, the fire of persecution against the Christians shall be extinguished. Then, throughout the Roman Empire, grand churches will be built in honor of the true God, whilst the temples of the idols shall be closed. Many of you who hear me now, shall live to see fulfilled what the Lord bids me announce to you, in order that your sorrowing hearts may be comforted. When I am gone from among you, I will not forget you; but I will continue to pray the Divine Shepherd, that He may grant you grace to remember my teachings, and to serve in holiness of life Him who is the Blessed God forever and ever.”

These words of the Martyr-Bishop so encour-

aged the Christians, that their tears of grief and anxiety were changed into tears of gladness and consolation. Nor was the generous Sophia unmindful of the bodily wants of those who were so dear to her admirable Son. She had prepared a bountiful repast, and all were welcomed to her unsparing hospitality. This was continued during the twelve succeeding days, whilst they enjoyed the happiness of having the Saint in their midst.

On the twelfth day, the twenty-third of January, which was a Sunday, the Martyr again celebrated the Sacred Mysteries. He had just given the Holy Communion to the Faithful, when the doors of the Church were suddenly burst open. A body of soldiers, led on by Alexander, an officer under the orders of Lucius, the Governor, rushed into the sacred place, and before any one could interfere or utter a word, struck off the head of the holy Bishop as he was standing at the altar. Thus died the illustrious champion of the Faith, whose intrepid courage and heroic constancy had astonished the most cruel enemies of the Christian name. After this sacrilegious murder, the ruffians profaned the consecrated elements, and as the two deacons, Christopher and Chariton, endeavored to prevent this horrible impiety, they were both slain. Thus were fulfilled the prophetic words of

the martyred Clement, that he should be accompanied by two members of his devoted flock.

As soon as the soldiers had withdrawn, the saintly Sophia, followed by her beloved children and a multitude of Christians, returned to the little church, and, laying aside every token of sadness and mourning, prepared the remains of her incomparable son, and those of his two companions, for burial. After which, amidst canticles of joy and triumph, she had them placed in the crypt, by the side of the Blessed Agathangelus. When the precious remains had disappeared from sight and the tombstones were sealed, Sophia knelt down, for the last time near her beloved Clement, and prayed aloud:

"I, who am your handmaid, your nurse, and your mother, I place you in this crypt—a place of concealment; but Christ Jesus, whom you have glorified upon earth by long sufferings and heroic struggles, will glorify you—even before men, as well as in the sight of the angels of heaven. And now, my dearly beloved, pray for poor me, that I may faithfully practise the lessons I have been taught, that, when my hour comes, I may not be deemed unworthy of being admitted into your glorious company—where there shall be no parting for evermore."



VII.

ST. SUSANNA.

IF the allurements of the world possess sufficient power to draw men away from the allegiance which they owe to their Maker, it cannot be denied, that it must have been a miracle of divine grace which enabled this holy Virgin to resist successfully the temptation held out to her. Wealth, and honors, and power have at all times so great a charm for men, that there are few who ever care to reflect that certain ruin frequently lurks behind the dazzling appearance which they present, unless, indeed, the fire of divine love, which purifies the heart, also illumines the understanding and places before them the things of earth in their true character. In the Blessed Susanna, therefore, we see a bright example of the power of grace triumphing over the powers of this world.

By blood she was nearly related to the Emperor Diocletian, being in fact his grandniece, and her uncle, St. Caius, Pope and Martyr, as well as Gabi-

nus her father, who, after the death of his wife, had been ordained a priest, illustrated the Church of God by their shining virtues and their glorious confession of the Faith. Although the Emperor held no familiar intercourse with his two nephews, on account of their profession of Christianity, he nevertheless did not disown their relationship. Hence it came to pass that after he had raised Galerius Maximian to the rank of Cæsar, and adopted him as his son, he was anxious to bind him still more closely to his interests by giving him his grandniece, Susanna, in marriage. The wily politician seemed never to have doubted that so advantageous a settlement could meet with the least opposition from the person most interested in the matter. Accustomed as he was to consider that his will became a law for every one to whom it was made known, he felt convinced that it needed only a hint to see himself obeyed. Yet, through regard for his kindred, he did not deem it proper to proceed altogether in a summary manner. Wherefore, that the matter might be transacted with due formality, Diocletian sent his kinsman Claudius to make known his intention and wishes to Gabinius, the father of the maiden. Gabinius received the imperial envoy with the greatest respect, and in presence of his brother,

Pope Caius, replied that although so honorable an offer deserved his thankful consideration, still the subject could not be proceeded with, until the mind of the young lady herself had first been consulted in a matter of so vital an importance to her future position in life. Claudius at once approved this course of action, and promised to return after three days.

In the meantime, Gabinius called his daughter and explained to her the proposals made by the Emperor. Susanna, as might have been expected, was indignant at the thought that her state of life should be an object of solicitude to one whose hatred of the Christians had caused so much suffering throughout the Empire, and said to Gabinius:

“You know, my beloved father, that long since, with your consent, I have consecrated myself by vow to my God and Saviour. Can you imagine, even for a moment, that your daughter, who, by a free and deliberate choice, has become a bride of Christ, should prove faithless to Him, to become the disgraced bride of a man, a prince indeed in the eyes of the world, but an idolater, a worshipper of impure and wicked demons? No; neither promises of being exalted to the highest station on earth, nor threats of torments and death itself, shall ever induce me to forget that I am the

daughter of the noble Christian Gabinius, and a niece to the Holy Pontiff Caius. This is my answer, this is my fixed resolve."

Gabinius embraced his daughter, and with tears of joy praised her generous resolution, encouraging her to persevere, in spite of all that the powers of earth and of hell might do to shake her constancy. Her uncle, in like manner, approved her determination, and exhorted her to rely confidently upon the protection of her heavenly Bridegroom, whose grace would enable her to accomplish what the weakness of human nature had no power to do.

After three days Claudius returned, and was kindly received by his kinsmen. When, however, Susanna was sent for, and he, according to custom, wished to embrace his kinswoman, the noble Virgin said:

"Do not touch me, Claudius."

"How is this?" asked Claudius. "Do not kindred and friendship justify us to show this mark of good-will and mutual affection?"

"Whilst you are defiled with the abominations of idolatry, how dare you presume to touch a bride of Jesus Christ, even if she has the misfortune of being a near relation of yours?" answered the maiden.

"Pardon my ignorance," said Claudius; "not for worlds would I give offence to so fair and virtuous a kinswoman of mine. Yet, permit me to ask, what must I do to remove the defilement of which you complain?"

"If you desire to be cleansed of your iniquity," replied Susanna, "you should repent of your crimes, and do penance, that afterwards you may be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Claudius, then addressing Caius, the Bishop, said:

"I pray you, holy father, cleanse me at once after this manner, if so be that a man who believes in Christ is more clean than one who believes in the gods, whom I have hitherto worshipped, and before whom our princes also humble themselves."

"Brother Claudius, listen to me," said Caius. "In giving you advice, I have no object in view except that of promoting your true happiness. It appears to me, that in the choice made of you to press this suit with the young lady, our relation, I can distinctly see the hand of God, who wishes to bring another member of our family to the knowledge of the saving truth. You, indeed, have strayed far from the path of duty and rectitude;

but the ways of Providence are mysterious and truly wonderful. In His holy Gospel, our Lord says: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you, and you shall find rest unto your souls.' There can be no greater burden for man than the yoke of idolatry, since it weighs down the body as well as the soul, and makes him the slave of every passion. How it degrades the noble nature of man! of man, for whose sake the Son of God came down from heaven, suffered and died; for whose sake He also arose from the dead and returned to the bosom of His heavenly Father, after pointing out to us the way we should follow to attain at last to everlasting bliss. Are you willing to learn and follow this path?"

"Most reverend Servant of God," answered Claudius, "I am ready to do whatever you tell me; only do not forget the wishes of the Emperor, our august sovereign."

"Brother," said the Pontiff, "attend first to the wishes of our hearts, and everything will be done according to your desires."

"Tell me at once what I am to do," replied Claudius, "and I pledge you my word that I will obey your commands. But what is to be done as regards the answer I am to bring to the Emperor?"

“Listen first of all to the counsel of a loving brother,” said Caius. “Neglect not the present opportunity: make your peace with God, whom you have so grievously offended. If you had committed no other crimes, you cannot deny that you have shed the innocent blood of the servants of God: repent, therefore, and do penance, until by the regenerating waters of holy Baptism you may be washed from your iniquities and cleansed from your sins. After that, you shall find no difficulty in making a suitable answer to the Emperor; for our Lord Himself says: ‘When you are brought before kings and rulers, I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay.’”

“And, when I receive Baptism, shall I obtain the remission of all my sins?” asked Claudius.

“All your crimes shall be washed away by the virtue of this holy Sacrament,” answered the Pontiff.

At that moment the blessed Susanna entered the room, and casting herself at the feet of the venerable Caius, said:

“My lord and holy Father, I beseech you, for the sake of Christ our Lord, do not delay his Baptism, that he may the sooner be purified from

his sins, and become a pleasing sight in the eyes of the divine Majesty."

"Be not uneasy, my child," said Caius; "we must allow him a short time of probation, that he may be ready to believe with his whole heart."

"According to the promises made to me this day," said Claudius, "I believe with my whole heart, that I may obtain the remission of my sins."

"In the name of the Almighty God, and Jesus Christ His only Son, all your sins will be forgiven," returned the Pontiff.

Thereupon, Claudius prostrating himself upon the ground exclaimed: "Lord, my God, eternal light, forgive me, wretched sinner, all the crimes I have committed against Thee, and against Thy servants: for Thou knowest I was blind and ignorant. The dumb idols, which in my folly I worshipped, I now detest and abominate. Enlighten my mind with understanding, that I, as also my wife and children, may know that Thou savest all them that believe and hope in Thee."

Caius, perceiving these happy dispositions, received him as a catechumen, and, after encouraging and blessing him, bade him return to his dwelling.

As soon as Claudius arrived home he imme-

diately communicated to his wife what had happened, in consequence of his being sent to obtain the consent of his niece Susanna to her marriage with the Cæsar Galerius. "And thus," he added, "whilst I was using my best efforts to put upon her the yoke of a man, whose manners and habits would probably be a life-long torment to her, she has brought me to the knowledge of Christ the Lord, whose yoke is so sweet and whose burden is so light, that I cannot express in words the happiness which fills my heart."

"And who has worked so great a change in you?" asked Præpedigna, his wife.

"My brother Caius, the Pontiff of the Christians, and my brother Gabinius, the Priest," replied Claudius. "Yet, I must confess, that the conduct of the lady Susanna was chiefly instrumental in changing me; for she appeared to me not as a human being, but like an angel from heaven."

"God be praised," said Præpedigna. "Long and earnestly have I prayed for this: the God of mercy has at last heard the voice of my supplication." Forthwith she ordered her sedan chair and hastened to the dwelling of her brother-in-law. There she found Caius, the Bishop, and casting herself at his feet and shedding many tears she said:

“Save thy servant, my husband, and me unworthy, as well as my children. Many a day have I longed for this happy moment, but alas! the dread of displeasing him whom I had promised to love, kept me in darkness and misery, Thanks be to God, who has at last regarded my tears and the desires of my poor heart. Holy Father, delay not to receive us into the fold of Christ, that our souls may be at rest.”

The blessed Susanna, entering at that moment, and hearing the wonders which God had wrought in favor of her relatives, embraced her aunt with the greatest affection, and besought her not to leave the house until her pious desires had been gratified. Later in the evening, Claudius made his appearance, accompanied by his two sons, Alexander and Cutias. Kneeling before his brother Gabinius, he said:

“For the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord, in whom I believe and hope, delay no longer my Baptism; and grant also the same blessing to my wife and children.”

Gabinius, after spending the greater part of the night in more fully instructing the catechumens, baptized the father. After which, the holy Bishop Caius baptized Præpedigna and her two sons, Gabinius being their sponsor; and next he adminis-

tered to them the Sacrament of Confirmation. As it was now early morning, the holy Father offered up the Holy Sacrifice, and the neophytes received the Sacred Body and Blood of our Lord, that priceless boon which completed their happiness.

From that day Claudius was altogether a new man. He sold the greater part of his immense possessions, and distributed the price among the poor. He visited in person the haunts of sickness and misery, and with a liberal hand brought relief everywhere. He went to the prisons, and as not a few were confined therein on his account, he cast himself at their feet, begging their forgiveness, after which he obtained their freedom and made a generous provision for them. Night and day he was thus engaged in works of mercy, that he might repair, to the best of his power, whatever evil he might have done whilst he walked in the darkness of idolatry.

Meanwhile, a month and a half elapsed since first he was sent by the Emperor to the house of Gabinius. Diocletian grew impatient at his non-appearance, and upon inquiring after him, was told that he was detained at home by sickness. Thereupon, he forthwith sent Maximus, the superintendent of the imperial household, to express to him the sympathy of his Sovereign, and at the

same time to learn how matters stood in regard to the proposal made to his niece. Maximus, who was also a brother of Claudius, was at once shown into the apartment of his brother. How great was his astonishment when, instead of finding him stretched upon the bed of sickness, as he expected, he saw him in a kneeling posture, and engaged in prayer! The austere life of penance led by the new Christian, had as much changed his outward appearance as it had improved his interior sentiments and inclinations.

“O my beloved brother,” exclaimed Maximus, as he perceived his altered look, “what dreadful malady has produced this great change?”

“If thou art willing to listen to me, brother,” said Claudius, “I will gladly satisfy thy curiosity.”

“Keep me not in suspense,” replied Maximus, “for it is possible that I may be able to afford thee some relief; at least, doubt not that I am most anxious to do all that a brother’s love can suggest.”

“Know then, O my affectionate brother,” said Claudius, “that I am doing penance for all the crimes I have committed. I have been ever ready to do the bidding of our Sovereign; his will was my law; in consequence, I have again and again shed the innocent blood of Christians. May the God of mercy forgive me all. I was blind and

ignorant, and knew not at the time what I was doing."

"I am here by order of the Emperor," replied Maximus, "to know what has been settled with regard to our niece, the lady Susanna. He desires to give us a new proof of his esteem for our family by thus raising our kinswoman to the most exalted dignity. How canst thou talk to me in a manner so strange and unbecoming?"

"Brother," answered Claudius, "I did not neglect to urge the request of our Prince with the holy Susanna. I found her every way worthy of the high station to which our uncle wishes to raise her; but I found her also prudent, holy, and consecrated to God, to whose knowledge she led me, that I might obtain the pardon of my sins, and begin to lead a new life. However, that thou mayest be able to judge for thyself, and perhaps, experience how earnestly the Omnipotent and Eternal God, whom I now humbly adore, desires all men to obtain salvation, let us go to-night to the dwelling of our worthy brother Gabinius."

"Whatsoever thou thinkest proper that I should do," returned Maximus, "therein am I ready to oblige thee."

That very night the two brothers repaired to the dwelling of Gabinius, near the Salarian gate.

Gabinus received them with open arms, and as soon as they had entered the house, all knelt down, whilst he offered this prayer: "O Lord our God, who bringest together that which is scattered and keepest united that which was divided, graciously look down upon the work of Thy hands, and illumine with Thy holy grace all them that believe in Thee, Thou who art the true light forever and ever." To which prayer all answered, Amen. After this, the brothers conversed together in the most affectionate manner. Maximus, having proposed all his troubles and difficulties, was soon convinced of his errors, and prepared to embrace the truths of Christianity.

The vanities of the world having lost their hold of him, he was only anxious to be baptized; but Caius, who had been sent for, thought it better to wait a few days, that he might the better prepare himself for the reception of the Sacraments.

After five days they all met again at the house of Gabinus. When Maximus saw his brother, the Bishop, he knelt down before him and said:

"Holy Father in God, I entreat you, for the love of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of men, remove from my soul the weight of sin which oppresses me, that I may see the light of salvation. In the bitterness of my heart I have wept, both night and

day, over my past transgressions; make me, at last, a partaker of the blessings which you enjoy by your faith and hope in Christ."

"If thou art now ready to renounce forever the devil and his works, and to confess fearlessly our Lord Jesus Christ, and His saving doctrines, we will no longer refuse thy request," said Caius.

"I have already renounced the demon," answered Maximus; "I renounce him again, as well as all his works; with my mouth and with my whole heart I confess Jesus Christ, and believe in all His teachings, and I will, to the best of my power, whether in joy or in sorrow, cling to the holy Religion professed by yourself and my excellent brothers."

Then Gabinius took him aside, and during the greater part of the night explained to him more fully the mysteries of the Christian Faith. Towards morning, the Pope baptized and confirmed the fervent catechumen, and celebrated the Holy Sacrifice, during which Maximus and all they who were present received the holy Communion. From that time the life of the new convert was as edifying as that of his noble brothers.

Nevertheless, so great a change of conduct could not long be hidden from the knowledge of the Emperor: soon one of the imperial offi-

cers, Arsitius by name, having made himself well acquainted with all that had been done, reported his discovery to his master. Diocletian was so incensed that he immediately gave orders to Julius, another of his officers, to put to death Maximus, together with Claudius and all the members of his family, unless they would renounce their faith. Accordingly, they were taken to Ostia and burnt alive; after which their ashes were thrown into the Tiber. Gabinius, however, and his daughter Susanna, were ordered to be kept as prisoners in their own house, in the vain hope that time might induce the young lady to reconsider her first resolution. Two months had nearly passed away when Diocletian requested the Empress Serena to invite Susanna to the imperial palace, and use every effort to persuade her to consent to her marriage with the Cæsar. The noble maiden was in great dread when she received this message, yet, when she had commended herself to the protection of her heavenly Bridegroom, she became calm and resigned. On entering the apartment of the Empress, Susanna knelt down as if to implore the kind interference of that illustrious lady in this hour of trial. Serena embraced her with great affection, saying: "May Christ our Lord triumph in thee, my daughter."

These words, as unexpected as they were consoling, inspired the maiden with confidence, and she exclaimed :

“Thanks and praise be to the Lord our God : in every place He is known and adored.”

Susanna abode with the Empress for several days, and spent all this time in devotional exercises, encouraged and cheered on by Serena, who herself was a Christian, as were also her personal attendants. At last, however, Diocletian demanded a direct and final answer to his proposals. The holy maiden returned a respectful, but resolute reply, that, as of her own free desire she had consecrated herself to God, she could not and would not prove faithless to her vow.

The Emperor, thereupon, sent her again to her father's dwelling, where some days afterwards the Cæsar himself once more attempted to shake her resolution ; but being frightened away by a visible interposition of divine power, he gave up all further attempts.

Diocletian seeing his designs thwarted, and his imperial will opposed by the constancy of a Christian virgin, grew very angry. Resolved to have his revenge, he sent an officer named Macedonius, a cruel and savage individual, with orders to force Susanna to deny her religion, or to put her to

death, but privately, lest so brutal an act might create a bad feeling among the people, whose good opinion the tyrant looked upon as the chief support of his government.

Macedonius, taking with him a small golden statue of Jupiter, immediately repaired to the house of Gabinius. Placing the statue upon a pedestal and putting a censer upon a tripod before it, he said to the maiden:

“Susanna, by order of the Emperor, our mighty sovereign, I command thee to burn incense in honor of Jupiter, the protector of the empire.”

Susanna, without looking at the idol, fell down upon her knees and prayed: “Lord God of heaven and earth, suffer not the eyes of Thy handmaid to be defiled by the sight of an image of the demon, but shield me in this hour of trial.”

“Arise, and do my bidding,” said Macedonius, as he raised her up and drew her toward the tripod. At the same moment lifting up his eyes, he perceived that the idol had disappeared. This took him by surprise, but soon recovering himself, he said: “The love of gold has tempted thee, yet I am not displeased, for unless thou didst love the gods, thou wouldst not steal their image.”

“Thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ,” exclaimed Susanna, signing herself with the sign of

salvation, "who, doubtless, hast sent Thine angel to keep this abomination from my sight."

Whilst the wicked Macedonius stood undecided what to do, one of his servants entering the house, said that the golden statue of Jupiter was lying in the street before the Sallustian palace. When he heard this he was still more perplexed, and sending one of his attendants to report to the Emperor what had occurred, he endeavored in the meantime to persuade Susanna, by promises and threats of every kind, to comply with the commands of the Emperor. The noble maiden rejected with scorn his promises as well as his threats, and replied: "I offer no sacrifice except to Jesus, my God and Redeemer; if He deign to accept also the sacrifice of my life, I gladly offer to Him that which is long since consecrated to His glory; besides, if it is His good pleasure, I am ready to glorify His holy name by laying down my life for the faith which I have in Him."

Soon the answer of Diocletian arrived, and, in compliance with his orders, Macedonius struck off her head; and thus the noble virgin went to receive the crown prepared for her by her heavenly Bridegroom.

The Empress Serena hearing that her beloved Susanna had received the crown of martyrdom,

secretly left the imperial palace as soon as the darkness of night screened her from being observed, and after she had with her own hands wrapped the sacred body in fine linen, filled with sweet spices and precious ointments, she directed that it should be buried in a place called the *sand-pits*, in a crypt by the side of the tomb of the blessed martyr Alexander. The blood of the virgin Martyr she carefully gathered up with a veil, which she placed in a silver casket, and took with her to her private oratory in the imperial palace, where she spent nights and days in prayer, imploring the Almighty, through the intercession of the blessed Susanna, to grant mercy, safety, and prosperity to the empire. The blessed Pope Caius, also, so long as he was at liberty, daily offered the holy sacrifice in the room sanctified by the death of his niece.

Afterwards, to commemorate her martyrdom, as well as that of her father, and of her three uncles, a station was established in the house of Gabinius.

The precise day of her martyrdom is not known, but it was most probably the 11th day of August, A. D., 295.





VIII.

SS. FAUSTINUS AND JOVITA.

THE cruel persecution begun by the Emperor Trajan, was continued during several years by his crafty successor, Adrian. Among the many champions of the Faith who laid down their lives for the truth, the blessed Faustinus and Jovita were especially distinguished. They were brothers, born of illustrious parents, in the city of Brescia. Their position in society, their zeal for religion, but, above all, the holiness of their lives, exercised so great an influence over the minds and hearts of their fellow-citizens, that they had the happiness of drawing great numbers of them from the darkness of idolatry and bringing them into the admirable light of the Gospel. The Bishop of the city, Apollonius by name, had been compelled by the violence of the persecution to escape from Brescia, and keep himself concealed in the neighborhood. From his hiding-place he watched with anxious care over the safety of his beloved

flock, and, by means of faithful ministers, he was enabled not only to guard them against the ravages of the infernal wolves, but to add daily new children to the household of the Faith. Great, indeed, was his consolation in the midst of all his tribulations, on the day when he had the happiness of raising Faustinus, the elder of the two brothers, to the dignity of the priesthood, and Jovita to the order of deacons. The two servants of God proved themselves worthy of their sacred station; for, if before they possessed the gift of persuasion, they now had, besides, the power of authority to teach and direct the faithful, and to gather the straying sheep into the rich pastures of salvation. Their zeal was not confined to the narrow limits of their native city, but extended far and wide into the surrounding districts; and a rich harvest of souls rewarded their unwearied labors. But the evil one did not long permit them to make these peaceful conquests.

At that time, the Governor of that part of Upper Italy was a certain Italicus, a person filled with every sort of superstitious notions, and stubbornly addicted to everything that could promote the worship of the idols. Himself enveloped in darkness, he seemed resolved to use every expedient to keep the people subject to his sway from receiv-

ing the light of truth. Unforeseen circumstances appeared suddenly to favor his designs. Adrian, on his march against the barbarians of the North, was to pass through the province of Italicus. The Governor hastened to meet the Emperor, near the river Adda. As soon as he had paid his addresses to his master, he communicated to him what was uppermost in his mind:

"Invincible Prince," said he, "whilst you are about to subdue your distant foes, do not neglect to secure the Empire against your enemies at home. Not only is the State in danger, but the very worship of the gods is to be abolished. There are men in the city of Brescia who publicly proclaim that there is but One true God, who reigns in the heavens; and that our gods are nothing whatever. Many of the people, misled by their words, are forsaking our temples."

When the Emperor heard this, and saw the earnestness of the fanatical Governor, he was greatly incensed, and said:

"It is our will and command, that these men be forthwith apprehended, and forced to offer sacrifices to the gods of the Empire. If they refuse, let them be tortured and put to death." And he gave a rescript to this effect.

Armed with this document, Italicus returned

joyfully to Brescia. When arrived there, he immediately sent his counsellor Tiberius to Faustinus and Jovita, to acquaint them with the orders of the Emperor. The two brothers replied:

“Tell thy master, that, in these matters, we do not obey his commands; for it is both absurd and impious to adore idols of wood and brass and stone—that possess neither feeling nor understanding.”

On receiving this answer, the Governor sent a band of soldiers to seize the brothers and bring them before his tribunal. When they stood before him, he endeavored, as far as possible, to conceal his real sentiments, and said:

“Our divine Emperor, in his solicitude for the welfare of all his subjects, has issued his decree whereby he commands all Christians to return to the worship of our gods. Should any of them be unwilling to obey of their own accord this imperial order, their obstinacy will be made to yield to the argument of tortures. Wherefore, O Faustinus and Jovita, let me have the pleasure of hearing you say that you gladly abandon this new superstition, and embrace once more the religion of your fathers, which the State upholds as the best means of its safety and dignity.”

To this the two brothers replied: “We see that the hour has come for us rather to rejoice, than to

allow ourselves to be influenced by fear. Know, therefore, that no amount of force or torment can induce us to forsake the Faith, which we have received through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; we will, under no circumstances, yield obedience to the unjust and wicked order whereof you speak."

Italicus—aware that men of their character ought not to be trifled with, and unwilling to take upon himself the risk of incurring the displeasure of the citizens of Brescia, by whom they were highly esteemed—gave orders that they should be taken to prison, and kept there until the arrival of Adrian.

Some time after, when the Emperor had entered the city, the Governor reminded him of the imperial decree; and said that he had imprisoned two of the citizens who disregarded his commands.

"What kind of persons are they who are so bold as to disobey our will?" asked Adrian. "Knowest thou not that none, save men of distinction, should have the honor of being tried by us?"

"They belong to an illustrious family, my gracious Sovereign," answered Italicus. "Their father presided over the senate in this city; he was a zealous worshipper of the gods of the Empire,

insomuch that he suffered no Christians to dwell here, and pursued them wheresoever they might hide themselves. I cannot understand what madness has seized these two men, that, forsaking and despising the gods whom their ancestors worshipped so devoutly, they should adore Christ, who, as it is said, was crucified by the Jews."

"These are the very men I stand much in need of at the present time," said the Emperor. "I have an idea that, by making an example of them, I shall induce many of the despisers of our gods to become again their faithful worshippers." After which he ordered the two prisoners to be brought before him. When they stood in his presence, he said to them:

"Is there any god more excellent than the Sun, that, instead of worshipping him, you should look for another, as if there were a better one?"

The blessed Jovita replied: "We worship the true God, the Creator of the universe. He created the sun, and made him to shine by day, as He also made the moon and the stars to shine at night."

"You would do better," resumed Adrian, "if you were to comply with our bidding, that thus you might obtain a distinguished position in our palace, instead of exposing yourselves to an infamous death by persevering in your folly."

"By doing your bidding, O Emperor," said the brothers, "we should do a wicked action, which would lead us to everlasting destruction."

"You do a wicked action," rejoined Adrian, "by avowing yourselves to be Christians, and setting aside the peace and happiness which would result from enjoying our friendship. Now you disgrace yourselves with the stain of infamy."

"We can do nothing more excellent," said Jovita, "than publicly to confess the Christian Faith. By so doing we escape the snares of your friendship and favors, and secure for ourselves the favor of the eternal King."

"You are hard-hearted indeed," said the Emperor, "since our words and promises cannot move you. And yet, we feel so great a pity for you that we cannot help using every means to persuade you to become wiser and better, and worthy of finding employment in our service."

"We have a service," answered Faustinus, "than which there is none more honorable—to which Christ Himself has called us. The dignities which you bestow are short-lived and uncertain, since they are limited by time—to which the very power which you possess is also subject; but the service of Christ, its honors and rewards endure forever."

"Is it not enough," said Adrian, "that I suffer

you in this manner to weary out my patience? Make up your minds at once, either to sacrifice to the immortal god, the Sun, or prepare yourselves to undergo the most cruel torments."

"We offer sacrifice to the living God only," replied the brothers. "He placed the sun as an ornament in the heavens, and gave him command to be the servant of man; do you imagine that we would adore that which is inferior to ourselves?"

The Emperor now became very angry, and ordered the servants of God to be dragged to the temple of the Sun. In this temple there was a gilded statue of the sun, the top of which was adorned with long rays of purest gold. When they stood before it, Adrian said to the brothers:

"Here you behold the majesty of the glorious Sun. Go now, burn incense before him, that he may deem you worthy of standing in his presence, and free you from the torments which await you."

"Now you shall in turn behold the glory and power of the living God, whom we adore," said the blessed Faustinus; "that all may see and confess, that what you worship is no god at all, but only a statue, without life and power." Then the Confessors pronounced together these words of the Psalmist: "The sun knoweth his going down. Thou hast appointed darkness, and it is night."

When the Emperor heard this, he said to them:

"What is that charm which you are uttering? I understand you not. Nevertheless, draw near and sacrifice to our great god."

Thereupon, Jovita, turning toward the statue, said:

"We adore the eternal God who reigns in the heavens: He hath appointed the sun to give light to His creatures. Thou art but a statue, the likeness of the sun: for the confusion of them that worship thee as a god, be thou changed into the semblance of night."

No sooner had he spoken these words than the statue turned as black as pitch, and the rays which were above it fell to the ground, presenting the appearance of charred wood. The people were struck with wonder. Adrian himself, unwilling to believe what he saw, exclaimed: "What is this I see! or do my eyes deceive me!" Italicus, however, more self-possessed than the rest, ordered some of the attendants to cleanse the statue with a sponge; but, at the first touch, it crumbled into ashes. Then Faustinus, addressing the Emperor, said:

"You see, O mighty Prince, what misfortune has befallen the god whom you worshipped. Confess

at last, that the Maker of the universe is the only true God, and that the idols are powerless to save themselves."

In spite of what he had witnessed, Adrian was resolved to disregard the testimony of his senses. Filled with anger and confusion, he said to the Governor :

"The impudence of these two men knows no bounds. Our clemency causes them to become more obstinate. Let them be exposed to the wild beasts, and then we shall see whether their God can save them from our vengeance."

On the following day they were led to the amphitheatre. As they stood in the arena, expecting the wild beasts, the Emperor again addressed them :

"Faustinus and Jovita, listen once more to what I have to say. You are soon to be torn to pieces, unless you change your minds and follow good advice. You refused yesterday to sacrifice to the Sun, do not to-day refuse to burn incense in honor of the great and good Saturn and Diana. If you consent to do this, you shall be rewarded with wealth and honors; if not, you will be the cause of your own destruction."

Faustinus replied: "Was not Saturn, whom you call great and good, a person who so disgraced

himself by every wickedness as even to devour his own children,—as your poets say? And was not Diana a virago, with no womanly instincts, whose delight it was to hunt the beasts of the forest? Do you suppose that we can dishonor our reason and manly feelings by worshipping as divinities those real or imaginary personages, whose character is said to have been far below the level of ordinary men.”

“You are at the point of death,” exclaimed Adrian, “and dare you still speak evil of our gods!” Whereupon he ordered four lions to be let loose against the Martyrs. The huge beasts bounded into the arena, sending up such deafening roars that all the spectators were struck with terror. When, however, they came near the two brothers, as if suddenly changed into harmless lambs, they lay down before them and began to lick their feet. After this several leopards were let out against them; but these also refused to hurt them, and quietly couched down close to the Martyrs. The people who witnessed these wonders, instead of glorifying God, who so marvellously protected His servants, cried out :

“Away with the magicians! they insult the power and majesty of our gods!”

The Emperor seeing that all his threats came to

nothing, became furious, and calling his attendants, said:

“We have still some ferocious bears in reserve, these brutes are my favorites. Bring them out, but first apply burning torches to their sides; the pain will make them raving mad. Let us see whether the magic of those wretches is proof against the treatment which they will receive from my friends.”

The attendants hastened to comply with this order. Adrian felt satisfied that the last hour had come for the two Christians, but he was soon terribly disappointed. The bears indeed ran madly through the arena, but the lions and leopards, hitherto so quiet and listless, suddenly started up and sprang upon the attendants with such rapidity, that, before they could reach a place of safety, most of them were torn to pieces. The horror-stricken spectators shuddered at the sight, and remained silent, for different sentiments were struggling in their breasts. The Emperor, doubtless, judging by his own feelings what were the thoughts of others, was unwilling that the spectacle just witnessed should turn to the glory of the true God. Wherefore, studiously concealing what he really felt, he said to the Martyrs:

“Faustinus and Jovita, are you not now con-

vinced that our god Saturn is a very kind god? Although but recently you spoke so ill of him, he has not the less preserved you from the fury of those wild beasts."

"Shame upon you, persecutor of Christians," answered Faustinus. "You know very well that it is not your wicked and powerless Saturn who has saved us; the Omnipotent God, whom the Christians adore, has this day deigned to manifest His power in the sight of all the people that surround us. Where now are the threats wherewith you attempted in vain to frighten us? Behold these wild beasts, so ferocious as you thought them, what are they now? Submissive to the will of their Creator, they glorify Him by doing His bidding. How dare you refuse to acknowledge His divine Power? Yet, if you still continue hard-hearted, do not delay to bring against us whatever your cruelty may suggest; we can assure you beforehand, that all your wicked attempts against us will turn to your own confusion."

"Do not provoke us by words so full of confidence," said Adrian. "We shall soon see whether the preparations we have made are sufficient to satisfy your foolish desires of suffering."

Meanwhile, Orphetus, a priest of the idols, and kinsman of the Emperor, approached him and said:

“If your kindness will permit us, we will take our great god Saturn and carry him with due solemnity to the spot where these men are standing, surrounded by the wild beasts. If in this manner we free them from the danger wherein they are at present, they will, no doubt, acknowledge the power of our god, and gladly return to the worship which they have abandoned.”

“Do whatever seems proper,” said Adrian; “for I admire the courage of these men, and I am quite anxious to gain them over in some way or other to our cause.”

Whereupon, Orphetus, accompanied by several other priests and by Italicus, the Governor, took the statue of Saturn, and apparently full of confidence in the power of their idol, entered the arena. No sooner, however, did these misguided men draw near the middle of the arena, than the beasts rose up, and, springing upon them, in an instant tore them all in pieces. “O great Saturn, save thy servants!” shouted the horrified spectators; but they shouted in vain; the broken statue of the god, covered with gore, lay trampled in the dust.

Afra, the wife of Italicus, hearing what had occurred, hastened to the amphitheatre, and pressing through the throng that surrounded the Emperor, presented herself before him. Her

sudden appearance and haggard looks startled Adrian, and before he could recover his composure, she cried out:

‘Are these the gods you worship, O Adrian? Why do you call them great and powerful, if they are unable to protect their priests? Nay, more; tell me, can they save themselves from the fury of wild beasts? Am I not this day a widow, because my poor deluded husband trusted in their power? Away with so manifest an imposture, which leads to the ruin of all our hopes!’

These words produced a wonderful effect on the minds of all who heard them. A great number of the spectators, and among them several of the officers of the Emperor, confessed that the God of the Christians was the only true God. Adrian, perceiving that there was something wrong, and fearing a tumult among the people, thought it high time to divert their attention from the subject, and, addressing the Martyrs, said to them:

“Faustinus and Jovita, hearken to me. If the God whom you worship is the true God, free yourselves from the wild beasts.”

“Herein also will we show you the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,” answered the brothers. Then, turning to the beasts that were lying around them, they said: “In the name of our Lord, we

command you all to go hence without injuring any one."

Obedient to these words, the animals immediately arose and went away.

Adrian, however, more relentless than the savage brutes, ordered the Martyrs to be taken to prison, there to await his further good pleasure.

On the following day the Emperor went to the palace of the Governor, where he had ordered a tribunal to be prepared; for he seemed determined that no amount of disappointments should hinder him from attaining, at last, the object he had in view. When the Martyrs stood again before him, he said:

"Faustinus and Jovita, I am desirous to set you free. Yesterday you refused to sacrifice to Saturn; I trust that to-day you will not be unwilling to worship Jupiter, the father of the gods."

"Why, O Prince," said Jovita, "would you compel us to worship a senseless idol? Your Jupiter is as powerless as your Saturn. Strike him on the mouth, he gives you no rebuke, for he feels it not; bend the knee before him to ask a favor, he neither hears nor sees you. What folly, to worship a deaf and dumb lump of metal! Adore the true and living God, who by His word created all things. He alone has the power to

bestow everlasting rewards upon those that serve Him: He also consigns to unending punishments the demons who rebelled against Him; and will condemn, in like manner, their followers, not excepting you, unless, indeed, being converted, you serve Him in truth and in justice."

Adrian was very angry when he saw that his words had in nowise influenced the mind of the Martyrs. He ordered a large fire to be kindled, and, as soon as it was in full blaze, he said to his attendants:

"Let us see what power of persuasion there is in fire. These men will not understand our reasoning, nor accept our fair offers. Now cast them into the flames."

The command was forthwith obeyed. The flames, however, did not in the least injure the servants of God; for they stood erect in their midst, with their hands raised toward heaven, and sang with a cheerful voice: "Blessed art Thou, O God of heaven and earth, who keepest Thy servants from all evil; praise and glory be to Thy holy name for evermore."

This visible display of divine power had no effect whatever on the obstinate mind of the Emperor. He contented himself with acknowledging that, although he had devoted himself much to

the study of magic, the practical use of the art was much better understood by the Christians than by himself. But the spectators were far from agreeing with the imperial believer in the black art. Calocerus, one of the chief officers of Adrian, after witnessing the miraculous preservation of the Martyrs, exclaimed:

"Great is the God whom Faustinus and Jovita adore; He truly can save and protect those who believe in Him!"

"Art thou mad, Calocerus?" cried the Emperor. "Let me hear no more of this, or thy blood will pay for thy folly."

"Truly great and mighty is the God of the Christians!" repeated Calocerus, as he rent his military cloak. "You, O Adrian, may deny this, and persecute those who faithfully serve Him; but you rage in vain against the friends of the Omnipotent."

"Calocerus, thou hast lost thy senses," said the Emperor; "let me hear no more of this foolishness."

"What sense must he have," replied the officer, "who worships as god the work of human hands, and refuses to confess the power of the God of heaven, who has created all that exists?"

Not knowing what answer to give, Adrian or-

dered him to be removed by force, and at the same time remanded the Martyrs to prison.

The next day the imperial tribunal was erected before the temple of Mars. In order to produce the impression that he had quite forgotten what had passed on the previous day between him and Calocerus, Adrian requested that officer to bring the Martyrs from their prison. Calocerus proceeded at once to execute the order. Accompanied by all his subordinate officers, he went to the prison, and soon returned thence with the Martyrs, to whom himself and his men paid military honors, as if they were the greatest dignitaries in the state. When the Emperor saw this, he was very wroth, insomuch that he seemed unable to give expression to his indignation. He rose suddenly and returned to the palace of the Governor. Nevertheless, when arrived there, he ordered the two brothers to be brought secretly before him. He said to them: "Think you that by your magic spells you can delude me, even as you have deluded the ignorant vulgar? If you do not offer sacrifice as I command, I will have you put in chains and dragged from city to city, until at last you are made to expire amidst the most excruciating torments. Then we shall see what is the consequence of your deceitful and obstinate behavior."

"Whithersoever you may lead us, O Prince," said Faustinus, "we shall everywhere find our Protector present. In His name, and by His power, all your attempts against us shall be turned to your own confusion."

"Of this we shall have the proof," said Adrian, "when we see the effect of the punishments which we have still in reserve."

"Inflict upon us whatever punishments your cruelty can invent," replied Jovita, "we fear them not. The Lord, our God, for whose love we cheerfully suffer all things, will support us."

Whereupon, they were again sent to prison, to await the time appointed for the Emperor's departure from Brescia. Strict orders were issued that no one, under any pretext whatever, should be permitted to visit the prisoners; and, for the greater security, the imperial seal was affixed to the door. The Martyrs, however, glorying in their sufferings, were filled with great inward consolation, and raising their voices, joyfully sang: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Meanwhile, Calocerus was not idle. As soon as he returned to his dwelling, calling together his subordinate officers, and all the members of his household, he said to them:

"Hitherto, my friends, I have served demons; but from this moment I renounce their service forever. Listen to me, and let me hear you say that you become my companions. The God of the Christians is the only true God; Him I propose to serve henceforth; for what will it avail us to have served the princes of this world, if in the latter end, instead of being rewarded with happiness, we perish miserably? Let us, therefore, swear allegiance to the Great Ruler of heaven and earth, and devote ourselves to His service, that He may deem us worthy to be received among His soldiers."

They all answered that they were fully convinced of the truth of all he had said. "But how," they asked, "can we be admitted among the servants of the God of Heaven?"

"If you are ready to follow me," said Calocerus, "I will show you that He who invites you to come to Him has not made it difficult to find Him."

"Lead us on," they all replied, "for we long, with our whole hearts, to know and embrace the truth."

Thereupon, under the guidance of Calocerus, they set out that very night. The brave soldier had already been instructed where to find Apol-

Ionius, the Bishop, who lay concealed in the mountains. When they came to the place, Calocerus related to the venerable servant of Christ how God had manifested His power and mercy during the trials of the blessed Faustinus and Jovita, and how his own eyes had been opened to the truth. Apollonius, after giving thanks to God, requested Calocerus and his companions to follow him to a still more retired spot on the mountain, and there he briefly explained the principal doctrines of Christianity. As he knew the imminent dangers which threatened all those who embraced the Faith, and saw with how great a fervor they had received his words, he hesitated not to baptize them all. After which he exhorted and encouraged them to prove themselves worthy soldiers of Christ, under whose glorious banners they were now enlisted, and besought them to be ever mindful of the grace they had received—which was to them a pledge of the crown, which, in all probability, they should soon receive. He again blessed them all; and, as the first light of morning began now to appear, they hastened back to the city.

In spite of the care they had taken to avoid observation, their journey by night and its purpose had not escaped the watchful eye of some enemy

of the Christians. It was not long before it became known to the Emperor, that Calocerus and all his officers had embraced the religion taught by Faustinus and Jovita. Adrian was exceedingly angry, and vowed that his vengeance would soon overtake those despisers of the gods. As that day public games were to be exhibited in honor of his farewell to the city, he gave orders that Calocerus and his men should be put in chains, and thus ignominiously dragged to the circus. When they appeared before him he actually foamed with rage, and cried out:

"Calocerus, what madness has seized thee? How canst thou thus disgrace our service, and lower thyself beneath the vilest of our slaves?" And, without waiting for a reply, turning to the officer, he said:

"Tell me, you food for worms, how dare you abandon the worship of our gods? Dread you not the death of the lowest criminals, which you are about to suffer?"

"We fear not to die for the love of Him who died that we might live forever," they all answered. "God, who reigns in the heavens, is our helper."

Adrian then said to his attendants:

"Take these men, lead them around the circus; let all the people see them and take warning.

After that, strike off their heads, and let their vile carcasses lie unburied, to be food for the birds of prey. As regards Calocerus, he being the chief offender, put him in prison with his two friends, and to-morrow we shall take him along to grace our imperial retinue."

All these orders were promptly executed. The bodies of the Martyrs, however, did not become the food of birds of prey; for Apollonius himself, accompanied by a great number of Christians, came during the night, and taking away the precious remains, buried them in a suitable manner.

The following day the Emperor set out for Milan. Chained like criminals, the Martyrs proceeded on their weary journey, not, however, without receiving the sympathy of their brethren; for the Bishop and many of the Christians accompanied them as far as the river Mella, where, after comforting one another with cheering words, and every token of brotherly affection, they bade them a long farewell.

After three days they reached Milan. Immediately upon his arrival, Adrian ordered his tribunal to be prepared at a place called the Bath of Hercules; for he imagined that the Confessors of the Faith, faint with fatigue and the hardships of the journey, would at last be willing to yield to his

threats. Wherefore, summoning them before him, he said :

“We have removed you from your own city, because we think that it is natural for all men to love to distinguish themselves for good or for evil in a place where they are known. Being now among strangers, who feel no interest in your doings, are you ready to sacrifice to the gods of the Empire, and secure, by so doing, their approval and our good will ; or do you still persevere in your obstinate resistance to our commands?”

“We offer sacrifice to our God, the Creator and Lord of the universe,” they answered. “To the gods, or rather the demons, whom you worship, we will not sacrifice. For the promises which you make we care nothing, since we have the certain promises of everlasting life, if we continue faithful to the end.”

No sooner had Adrian heard this answer than he commanded the executioners to stretch the Martyrs upon the ground, with their faces turned upward, and pour melted lead into their mouths. But, in spite of the efforts made by the executioners, the lead was scattered about in every direction, without touching the mouths of the friends of God. Seeing himself disappointed in this, the Emperor ordered them to be placed upon the

rack, and iron plates, made red-hot, to be applied to their sides. When this torment was inflicted, Calocerus exclaimed :

“Pray for me, O blessed Martyrs of Christ; this fire burns me fearfully.”

“Take courage, beloved Calocerus,” said Faustinus; “these sufferings are but momentary; look up to heaven. Behold, He for whom we endure these tortures is nigh.”

At that very moment Calocerus, freed from all pain, cried out :

“Thanks to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, who never forgettest those that trust in Thee; my pains are changed into feelings of delight.”

“Tell me, O Calocerus, is it true that thou dost not feel the fire?” said Adrian.

“It is true indeed,” replied the Martyr, “all your tortures cause me not the least pain.”

Adrian then directed the executioners to put a large quantity of resin and oil around the racks, so that the very instruments of torture might be consumed, together with the victims of his cruelty. When this order was executed, and the flames rising high, so as to hide the Martyrs from view, the tyrant insultingly cried out to them :

“We have surrounded you with a blaze of glory :

what think you now of the power of our immortal gods?"

But from amidst the raging flames the Martyrs were heard to sing the praises of God, in so joyful a manner, that it became manifest to all the spectators that the fire had been deprived of all power of injuring them. Amazed at what they witnessed, the people shouted, as with one voice: "Great is the God of the Christians!" Their astonishment was still greater when the flames subsided, and it was seen that the bodies of the three Martyrs had been nowise injured. In consequence, a vast multitude of the citizens of Milan believed in Christ. Adrian, however, was unwilling to avow himself conquered. He ordered Faustinus and Jovita to be kept in prison until his own departure for Rome, and gave Calocerus in charge to Antiochus, Governor of the Cottian Alps, commanding him to compel the Martyr to renounce his religion, or to put him to death in whatever manner he might choose. But the next day the Emperor changed his mind, and desired Antiochus to accompany him to Rome, in order to have the help of his experience in subduing the Christians. Wherefore, Calocerus was put into the hands of Sapritius, the lieutenant of Antiochus. This wicked man led the noble prisoner from place to

place, and made him undergo every kind of torture he could invent, until, at last, he ordered him to be beheaded at Albenga.

Before leaving Milan, Adrian called Antiochus, the Governor, and said to him :

“I resign those two men to thy keeping. On the way to Rome, see to it that in every town through which they pass they be made to undergo some harsh treatment; for it is my will that their sufferings serve as a warning to all those persons who may feel inclined to abandon the worship of the gods.”

This order was not given in vain. Antiochus, who was by nature of a cruel disposition, made the Martyrs endure every indignity which his wicked mind could invent. In consequence, at the end of their journey they appeared completely exhausted. Nevertheless, when they came to the Milvian bridge, and saw the immense concourse of people, their zeal gave them new strength, and they began at once to proclaim to the multitude the doctrines of salvation. A great number of their hearers, moved by the eloquence of their words, and still more by what they had learnt of their trials and heroic sufferings, yielded to the inspiration of divine grace, and boldly exclaimed :

“We believe and confess that there is but one true God, whom these, His servants, announce to us. False and senseless are all the idols, whose deluded worshippers we have hitherto been.”

From that moment God glorified the Martyrs, by numberless miracles which they worked among the people—healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, and casting out devils. Thus their journey, which had been one of suffering and disgrace, ended in a glorious triumph.

The Emperor, however, had not brought them to Rome to give them rest and freedom. He made them undergo several interrogatories, he put them repeatedly to the torture, and took them from one temple to another, until the whole city became acquainted with their trials and sufferings for the Faith, and began to take a lively interest in their doings, as well as in their teachings. This did not suit the imperial policy. Afraid of giving offence to the people, and at the same time anxious to get rid of the two brothers, whose fearless constancy had caused him so much annoyance, Adrian resolved to send them back to their native place.

Wherefore, calling Aurelian, one of his chief officers, he said:

“Take these two despisers of the gods, return

with them to Brescia, and there, if they still persevere in their obstinacy, put them to death."

Aurelian, obedient to the voice of his master, immediately set out with the Martyrs. Their entrance into Brescia had all the appearance of a glorious triumph; for not only the Christians, headed by Apollonius, their Bishop, but most of the citizens came to welcome the servants of God. When Aurelian saw in how great an esteem his prisoners were held by the people, he was greatly perplexed. Unwilling to take upon himself the responsibility of an act so odious to the people, he made known the order he had received from the Emperor. Addressing the Martyrs, he asked them whether they would now obey the laws of the Empire. But they answered: "Never will we obey the unjust laws made by the enemies of God. We are ready to die for Christ our Lord, who died for the salvation of men."

Thereupon they were taken outside of the city, on the road which leads to Cremona, and there beheaded; thus receiving the crown of a glorious martyrdom, for which they had been prepared by a life of suffering patiently endured.



IX.

ST. POLYEUCTUS.

IN the reign of the Emperor Decius there lived at Melitene, the capital of Lesser Armenia, two Roman officers, distinguished for their noble birth and great wealth, but more admirable on account of their virtues. Nearchus was a Christian whose actions were regulated by the precepts of his holy religion, while Polyeuctus, his brother officer, though still a pagan, won the esteem of all by his natural uprightness of character and generous deportment. So closely were they united by the bonds of friendship that the two seemed to have but one soul. For many years it had been the constant prayer of Nearchus that the eyes of his friend might be opened to the truths of Christianity, and, by example rather than by words, he had endeavored to bring him to the knowledge as well as the practice of its teachings. Hitherto, however, all his efforts had apparently proved unsuccessful! Polyeuctus continued in good faith

to be a pagan as heretofore. When, therefore, under Valerian, the persecution against the Christians was renewed with great violence, Nearchus was deeply afflicted at the thought, that, whereas he himself should probably enjoy the happiness of shedding his blood for Christ, his beloved companion might still remain involved in the darkness of paganism, and thus expose himself to the misfortune of being separated from him forever. This gloomy foreboding affected him so sensibly that he lost all his wonted cheerfulness, and found it well nigh impossible to bear the company of his friend.

Polyeuctus soon perceived the great change which had taken place in the once open-hearted and affectionate manner of his friend, and was both grieved and astonished. Frank and sincere as he was himself by nature, he was unwilling to believe that in the present feelings of his brother soldier, there could be anything unworthy of his noble character, much less that himself could unwittingly be the cause of this distress. Resolved, however, to discover the wound, and apply to it, if possible, the healing balm of consolation, he said to him:

“Is it not the duty of friendship to share the sorrows as well as the joys of one another? How, then, beloved Nearchus, can I see thee in affliction,

and not proffer the relief which I am ready to give? Tell me what has happened? Whence this sadness?"

"Is it not possible that there may be occasions wherein it were better that a friend should suffer alone, rather than afflict the heart of his friend by sharing his burden with him?" replied Near-chus.

"I know not when or how this may happen," answered his friend. "If the same thoughts and feelings are the foundation as well as the bond of true friendship, it appears to me, when they begin to differ, sincere friendship must also cease to exist."

"Alas! beloved Polyeuctus, what thou sayest is but too true. There may come a time, if not in this life, assuredly in the other, when they that seemed to have but one mind and heart must submit to an endless separation; this thought oppresses me; this is the true source of my present affliction."

"Thou speakest to me the language of mystery," said Polyeuctus. "I understand not the secret which thou keepest concealed from thy friend. Have I been unknowingly a cause of offence? Is it of such a nature that it is beyond the hope of pardon? Wherein have I displeased thee?"

"In nothing," replied Nearchus. "But is not the thought of our being forever separated—and such a separation!—sufficient to break the heart of an affectionate friend?"

"Have we not sworn, if not in word, at least by our actions, that our friendship should endure forever? Thinkest thou that Polyeuctus can ever prove faithless, and cease to be thy loving companion? Or can it be possible that I should mistrust thee?"

"No, never. Yet hear me, Polyeuctus. We may live and die together, and in aftertimes, perhaps, some one may say of us, as the prophet king of Israel said of them over whom he wept: 'Saul and Jonathan, lovely and comely in their life, even in death they were not divided.' But, unfortunately, he speaks only of their temporal death, and there still remained a life which perishes not."

The ingenuous mind of Polyeuctus was unable to seize the hidden meaning contained in the words of his friend. On a sudden, yielding to the influence of his ardent and affectionate nature, he threw his arms around the neck of his brother soldier and exclaimed:

"I will not let thee go, unless thou tell me clearly what is to cause this lasting separation."

Thereupon, no longer able to resist the earnest

appeal of his friend, Nearchus drew forth a copy of the imperial edict against the Christians.

"This edict of the Emperor, O my Polyeuctus," he said, "is the beginning of our eternal separation."

The officer took the decree, and turning to his friend, asked:

"Art thou not a Christian, Nearchus?"

"Thou knowest that I am."

"Is not a true Christian brave and fearless? Does not he consider it a favor to be called upon to lay down his life for the Faith?"

"He deems it the greatest blessing that God can bestow upon him on earth."

"Whence then this grief, my Nearchus? Are Christians sad when they are about to exchange the miseries of this life for the endless joys of the life of the hereafter?"

"No, Polyeuctus; but the affection which a Christian feels for his fellow-beings is charity,—a generous, a universal good-will, desirous to promote the real happiness of all. Hence, if he is obliged to love a stranger, and even an enemy, what must he feel for one whom year after year he has looked upon as another? Yet, this edict, if carried into effect, separates him forever from one who is not a Christian."

These words of Nearchus unveiled the eyes of his pagan friend. He became thoughtful, and for a while remained abstracted in mind, as if he were endeavoring to recall something that had occurred in the past. Whilst thus they walked together in silence, Nearchus, suspecting that, perhaps, at that very moment the power of divine grace was moving the heart of his companion, poured forth the desires of his soul to the God of all consolation, beseeching Him to enlighten the mind and strengthen the will of one whom he held so dear. He had not to wait long before he had reason to think that his prayer was heard. Polyeuctus, his countenance beaming with joy, addressing him, said:

“There is something, my Nearchus, which I should have told thee sometime ago. Thou mayest call it a dream or a vision, or whatever else thou thinkest proper; yet, it appears to me at present, if I apprehend correctly its meaning, that it may prevent this endless separation of which thou speakest, an evil which I dread as much as thyself. It is this: During my sleep, or rather while awake, I know not, so vivid is my remembrance of the fact, I beheld a personage of exceeding beauty and majesty. At the very moment I saw the apparition, I heard a voice

whispering to me, 'That is Christ, the Saviour of men, whom thy friend Nearchus adores.' I felt overwhelmed with awe and terror, and, to my greater confusion, I perceived that the garments I wore were soiled and disgusting to the sight. He said to me, 'Cast off that garment;' at the same instant he threw over me a cloak of wonderful richness and splendor, and fastened it over my shoulders with a broad golden clasp; then, pointing to a winged steed, that suddenly appeared before my eyes, He said, 'Mount this, and follow me.' Thereupon the vision vanished. Now, tell me, what does this mean?"

Filled with joy, and giving thanks to God, Nearchus exclaimed:

"And dost thou know Christ, O Polyeuctus; Christ, the Saviour, the true God?"

"And when did I not know Him, O Nearchus?" said his friend. "Did not my heart swell with emotion whenever thou spokest of Him? Was I not filled with delight and admiration when thou didst read to me His sublime discourses? Even before this vision was vouchsafed to me, unworthy as I am, my opinions and feelings were in harmony with thy own as a Christian; the name only was wanting to me. I cannot give as a reason to myself, why it is that I have not long

since openly and fearlessly professed myself a follower of Christ; for I always abhorred the worship of idols. Alas! my beloved Nearchus, too long have I delayed to avow my firm conviction; if it is not too late, may the future make amends for the past."

Though his friend was overjoyed at this happy disposition of his companion, he thought it prudent to try the strength of his resolution, by representing to him the difficulties which not rarely shake the constancy of a new convert. Wherefore, he said:

"Didst thou reflect that a Christian must be ready to sacrifice riches, glory, military distinctions, and all the dignities of this world, to lead a life of poverty, ignominy and humiliation for the sake of Christ? That he must desire to forego the joys and pleasures of this life for the love of Him who was despised of men, whom even His own received not?"

"Dost thou then despise the military rank to which thy bravery and distinguished service have raised thee?" asked the soldier.

"Thou seemest not to understand," replied Nearchus, "that in Christ only there is true dignity, and that His glory and blissfulness endure for evermore."

"I perceive," said Polyeuctus, after remaining silent for some moments, "thou hast but a poor opinion of me, and no wonder. Thou hadst good reason to think that I was all this time ignorant of the glory which is in Christ the Lord, and of the happiness which can be found only in His service. I have been a waverer and a coward. I knew full well that thou hadst received the splendid garment which was shown to me in the vision, yet I made no effort to secure it also for myself—the Saviour pardon my base cowardice! Now I begin to fear lest this delay deprive me of the happiness of being initiated into the Faith by the saving Sacrament, and then, ah, woe is me! I shall not be numbered among the soldiers of Christ."

Nearchus saw that there was need of cheering up his friend, and said:

"Be not discouraged: for, as it is written, 'God is able of the stones to raise children to Abraham,' and shall we say, that He cannot suddenly change a pagan into a soldier of Christ? The gate of heaven is open for all who are willing to enter, and none are excluded from the way of salvation. Moreover, a person who is really in earnest can, to a great extent, make up by present fervor for past carelessness. This we are taught by our

Lord Himself. The laborers who went into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, were made equal to them that had borne the burden of the day and the heats, by receiving the same rewards. Thus it may happen also to thyself, that, by the grace of the Saviour, being made perfect in a short space, thou mayest fulfil a long time. Dost thou require a still greater proof of the goodness of our Lord? Call to mind what I have so often told thee of the penitent thief. Although guilty of many crimes, he received, by reason of his faith and repentance, the promise of Paradise, secured for himself in a moment what others can only obtain by much sweat and labor, and without passing through the regenerating waters of Baptism, beheld himself suddenly enrolled among the soldiers of Christ."

After hearing these consoling words of his friend, Polyeuctus became quite cheerful, and said:

"From this moment the things of earth possess no longer any charms for me. At the same time, it appears to me, the divine goodness seems to call upon one of us to bear witness to the Faith by laying down his life. How gladly would I now follow Him, who spoke to me in the vision, if it be His holy will! Meanwhile, let us read the contents of this imperial decree."

The edict stated that it was the will and command of the divine Emperor, that all the subjects of the Empire should offer special sacrifices to the gods for its welfare and prosperity; and, above all, that the Christians should be compelled to comply with this order; and, if they refused, that their property should be confiscated, and they themselves put to the torture, and to death, if they persevered in their refusal. When the noble soldier read all this, he grew very indignant, he spit upon the document, and, tearing it to pieces, he threw it to the winds. "That much," said he, "do we care for the Emperor's will, when he orders us to worship his miserable demons."

As they were walking along they beheld a crowd of people who were carrying some idols to a temple, there to be exposed for public worship. Fired by his zeal at the pitiful sight, and forgetful of his prudence, Polyeuctus seized the idols, and breaking them, scattered the fragments through the street. "If these devils you worship," he said to the multitude, "had any power, they should be able to protect themselves."

This bold action of the fearless officer aroused the fanaticism of the idolaters. After consulting among themselves, they resolved to take in hand the cause of their idols. Wherefore, rushing upon

Polyeuctus, they made him a prisoner and dragged him before Felix, the Prefect of the city. Felix was the father-in-law of the Martyr, and had been specially commissioned to carry into effect the penalties set forth in the imperial decree against the Christians. When he saw before him his son-in-law, and heard him accused not only of being a Christian, but of having trampled under foot the gods of the Empire, he was exceedingly embarrassed, and exclaimed,

“Alas! this misfortune deprives me at once of my honor and of my children! O Polyeuctus, how couldst thou bring upon me so foul a disgrace! Neither men nor gods can pardon so great a crime; thou hast trampled under foot the very gods.”

“This fact,” boldly replied the undaunted soldier, “shows to me still more plainly how worthless and contemptible they are: it should be also a sufficient proof to persuade my father-in-law to despise and abhor them. However, if you have more gods of that sort, bring them forward, we will let you see how the servants of Christ can deal with them.”

“Do not thus hurry on to thy destruction, O my beloved Polyeuctus,” said the Prefect, shedding tears at the thought of losing his noble son.

"Consent, at least, to live until thy wife and children can see thee; their distress may prevail upon thee not to forsake them in their saddest hour."

"Why should I be solicitous about wife and children," asked the Martyr, "when, as a servant of Christ, persecuted and condemned, I can no longer help them with earthly possessions, since your Emperor deprives me of these? If your daughter be willing to follow me, this thought and hope will cheer her on; but if she still cling to your gods, she will also share their fate."

When the Prefect heard this answer, he understood clearly that it was useless to make any further attempts to change the mind of his prisoner; yet, blinded by his own foolish prejudices, he would not acknowledge that the sincerity of his son-in-law must place him above all suspicion of being guided by passion or ignorance in what he was now saying and doing. Wherefore, after muttering many unavailing lamentations, he said at last:

"Alas! who would think that the magic arts of the Christians could ever have ensnared my son-in-law?"

"Be not so foolish," answered Polyeuctus, "as to imagine that magic, which has no existence

among Christians, could have effected so great a change in me. No, the very thought is an absurdity. But when I read the public records of the sufferings of the servants of Christ, and of their unswerving fidelity to Him amidst all their torments, I was filled with admiration, and my heart was gently drawn toward them. At last Christ Himself, the Saviour of men, removed the veil of darkness and superstition from my eyes, and His grace softening my hardened heart, vouchsafed to admit me into the number of His soldiers. Blessed be His name forever, and may He give me strength to continue faithful to the end!"

Meanwhile, the executioners, for whom Felix had sent, were ready to do his bidding. "Since our words cannot persuade thee to look to thy own interest," said the Prefect, "we must have recourse to violence. Polyeuctus, tell us, art thou willing to renounce Christ and offer sacrifice to the gods in order to atone for the insults which, by thy words as well as by thy actions, thou hast heaped upon them?"

"Did I not tell you," answered the Martyr, "that Christ the Lord, the Saviour of men, has enlisted me among His soldiers? How could I renounce my allegiance to Him? To Him I look

with confidence for aid in this present struggle and for endless happiness hereafter. As to what you are pleased to call your gods, how could I insult or injure them, when you know as well as myself, that they have no real existence, or else that they are wicked demons—deceivers and destroyers of men?”

The Prefect then ordered the executioners to beat his face with their heavy gauntlets until the blood-stained and bruised countenance of the generous soldier presented but one continued wound. During this torture he uttered not a word, for he beheld, standing near him, Christ, the Lord, who for his sake had undergone similar sufferings. But a greater trial awaited him. For whilst he was in this sad condition, his wife and children were, by order of the Prefect, brought before him. The tears and lamentations of those who were naturally so dear to him moved the heart of the Martyr, but he saw at once the wiles of the wicked tempter. Perceiving that his father-in-law assumed also the appearance of sorrow, he became indignant and said to him:

“O wicked hypocrite and impious worshipper of vile idols which you despise in your heart, how dare you, by your false and affected tears, and by those of my wife, tempt me to draw myself from

the allegiance I have sworn to Christ, the God of truth? Why do you pretend to weep for Polyeuctus? Weep over your own miserable fate; for, after serving for a time the princes of this world, you are preparing for yourself an eternity of woe." Then turning to Paulina, his wife, he added: "If thou lovest me, rejoice at the endless happiness which awaits me after a brief struggle."

"O Polyeuctus!" she exclaimed, "O my husband, what madness has seized thee! How couldst thou so sacrilegiously break to pieces our gods?"

The Martyr smiled and replied:

"If I, alone and unaided, could trample under foot these gods, it should convince thee of their unreality and utter worthlessness. Follow the example of thy husband, O my Paulina; confess and serve the One true God, who is all-powerful and eternal, that, after this short and miserable existence upon earth, thou mayest enjoy endless bliss with me in the life that knows no death."

The Prefect perceiving that the heroic constancy of his son-in-law excited the admiration of the spectators, and that they who at first had clamored most against the Christians, began now to show themselves favorable to them, ordered the

wife and children of the Martyr to be removed. After this he endeavored once more by promises and threats to shake his fidelity to Christ; but he saw himself again disappointed. Wherefore he pronounced against him the sentence of death by decapitation. When Polyeuctus heard the sentence, his countenance became radiant with joy, and he exclaimed: "Thanks be to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, who grantest me the happiness of dying for Thee. Be merciful to me, and illumine with the light of Thy grace also those that upon earth are so dear to me."

As he was led to the place of execution a great multitude of people followed him. His faithful friend Nearchus did not abandon the companion who had become yet more endeared to him by his profession of Christianity. When the Martyr saw him standing in the crowd, he smiled, and affectionately addressing him, said:

"Farewell, my beloved Nearchus: remember our agreement." Having spoken these words, he raised his eyes towards heaven, and immediately after bending down his head, received the stroke of death. The Christians took possession of his sacred remains and buried them reverently in the city. Nearchus gathered the blood in a linen cloth, which he religiously preserved as a precious

memorial of the undying affection between himself and his martyred friend; and, to embalm the memory of the blessed Polyeuctus in the hearts of others as well as in his own, he afterwards wrote the Acts of his Martyrdom.

