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THE ACTS

OF THE

EARLY MARTYRS

BY

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THE MARTYRS.

I.

ST. MARGARET.

THE blessed Margaret was a native of Antioch, in Pisidia. Her father, Ædesius, was a man of great authority in the city by reason of the nobility of his birth, and the high rank which he held among the priests of the idols. As might be expected, he was obstinately addicted to the superstitions of Paganism, and bitterly opposed to the doctrines of the Christian religion. Nevertheless, God, who is no respecter of persons, but calls unto Him His Elect from among all classes of people, chose the daughter of this man to glorify his name before men by bearing witness to the truth.

When Margaret was yet a child, she was confided to the care of a nurse who lived in the country some distance from Antioch. This woman was a person of blameless life and conversation, and a devout Christian. Her virtuous example made so lively an impression on the tender mind of her youthful charge, that, almost unconsciously, the daughter of

Ædesius was led to love everything connected with the truths of the Christian Faith, and to abhor the worship and abominations of Paganism. Hence, when of a proper age, she requested most earnestly to be instructed in all the teachings and duties of Christianity, and from that moment resolved never to depart therefrom, in spite of the opposition she might have to encounter on the part of her parents and pagan kindred. On her return to her home in the city, when it became known that she was a Christian, and that she resolutely refused to join the members of the family in the worship of false gods, her father was furious. He made use of every artifice which fanaticism could suggest to make her abandon the Faith; but neither promises nor threats could shake her constancy. So long as her mother was living, the faithful maiden found in her, if not encouragement, some protection, at least, against the excessive and unnatural violence of her father; but when death had deprived her of this consolation, the fierceness of the persecution which she had to undergo would have become unendurable had not her heavenly Bridegroom strengthened her with extraordinary graces. To Him alone she made known her sorrows; to Him alone she looked for comfort. Nor was she disappointed in her confidence. For when, at last, Ædesius, regardless of

the sacred ties of parental affection, and listening only to the mad inspirations of the wicked demon, drove her from his dwelling and disowned her as his daughter, the Father of the fatherless forsook her not.

In her distressed condition she had recourse to her old nurse, and besought her to become once more her kind protectress. The faithful woman welcomed her foster-child with all the affection of a loving mother, assuring her that if she would forget the high social position to which she was entitled by her birth, she might secure for herself a peace and contentment which neither riches nor honors could bestow, and which the censures of an ungrateful kindred could not take away. It was well for the high-born maiden that in the daily exercise of every ennobling virtue she had especially devoted herself to the constant practice of humility—the only solid foundation that can permanently support the edifice of Christian perfection.

According to the custom of the country to which she had now returned, the tending of flocks was the ordinary occupation of young persons of her sex and age. At her own request this task was assigned to her. Like Rachel of old, she cheerfully joined her new companions, and carefully guarded the little flock intrusted to her keeping. This life of inno-

cence and drudgery by no means interfered with her love of prayer and retirement, since her employment enabled her, at all times, to commune with the great Shepherd of souls and find manifold subjects of delightful meditation. As she was uncommonly beautiful in person, and possessed of all the charms of character wherewith angelic modesty and genuine charity adorn the Christian maiden, she was the favorite of her simple-minded companions and their faithful counsellor in all their troubles. Among them the blessed Margaret was happy—if happiness can ever be said here below to be the portion of mankind. Her days of peace and tranquillity were not destined to last long.

Rumors of a new and most cruel persecution against the Church of God soon reached even the rugged regions of Pisidia. Diocletian and Maximian had sworn to root out the very remembrance of the Christian religion. The laws which they had enacted for this purpose were everywhere enforced with relentless ferocity. The meek and lowly shepherdess was alarmed at what she heard. Although she had now attained her fifteenth year, her bodily constitution was very delicate, and her natural dispositions and retiring manners were such as made her love solitude, and avoid, as far as possible, all intercourse with others. Hence, the mere thought

of appearing in public and confessing the Faith in the midst of tortures frightened her in the highest degree. In this perplexity she had recourse to Him who had hitherto guided her steps and led her from the darkness of Paganism into the admirable light of the Gospel. To Him she made known her fears and troubles, saying: "Lord Jesus Christ, the Consoler of the afflicted, the strength and support of the weak and helpless, deliver me not over to the will of Thine enemies. Thou knowest, Oh Lord, that they who should have upheld and encouraged Thy child have forsaken me, because I chose to obey Thy commands rather than defile my soul with the abominations of idolatry. But if it is Thy holy will that I glorify Thy Name by suffering tortures and death, Thou, Oh God of the strong, canst render Thy timid and feeble handmaid victorious over the powers of darkness. Give me courage and perseverance; for I have no other desire than to be Thine by doing Thy will now and forever."

The prayer of her humility was heard; it was not long before her earnest faith and confidence were put to the test.

The Prefect Olibrius, attended by a numerous train of followers, was on his way from Lydia to Antioch, to enforce the imperial edict against the Christians of that city. As he was passing through

the country where the daughter of Ædesius and her companions were feeding their flocks, he saw the noble maiden. He was taken with her surpassing beauty. Immediately calling some of his men, he said :

“Go, as quickly as possible, inquire diligently into the condition of yon maiden. If she is free-born, I will gladly make her my wife; but if she be a bond-woman, I will have her at any price.”

So saying, he pursued his journey. The men, obeying their master's command, seized the unsuspecting maiden, and, in spite of her struggles and entreaties, carried her off. As soon as they arrived at Antioch, they reported to Olibrius what they had done, and said :

“The maiden whom your excellency ordered us to seize was unwilling to tell us whether she is bond or free. She says, however, that she is a Christian, and that she abhors the worship of our gods. By no promises of wealth and honors, by no threats of punishment, were we able to induce her to accompany us. Knowing the mind of your excellency, we carried her away by force. Your wisdom can decide better than ourselves what remains now to be done.”

The wicked tyrant, assuming an air of sadness, as if he were offended because they had made use of violence, ordered them to bring the maiden before

him. As soon as the blessed Margaret stood in his presence, he said to her :

“Fear nothing, my child; let me candidly know thy condition, whether thou art free-born or bound to servitude.”

“My family is very well known in this city,” replied Margaret. “Their rank and position in society is not so ignoble that a citizen of Antioch could be ignorant thereof. As for myself, I owe service to no man; yet, I frankly confess that I am a poor and unworthy servant of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom I learnt to love and adore from my earliest years, and Him I will never cease to worship.”

“And thy name?” asked the Prefect.

“My name is Margaret,” answered the maiden, without hesitation.

Olibrius was very angry when he saw that he had to deal with a person altogether different from what he had expected. Not knowing what else he could do for the present, he ordered the virgin to be shut up in a dark dungeon, and forbade the keepers to give her any food or comfort usually allowed to prisoners. But the tyrant could not deprive her of the interior consolations wherewith her heavenly Bridegroom visited and strengthened His beloved; and the gloomy prison became for Margaret an abode of peace and happiness such as the world,

with its vain and transitory enjoyments, cannot realize.

Meanwhile, the Prefect was considering what course he should pursue; for, although he hated the Christians, and had determined to persecute them to the utmost of his power, in this case he sought rather to gain his end by terrifying his victim into compliance with his wishes, than by tormenting and killing the body. Wherefore, after deliberating for a long time, he, at last, concluded that the best means he could employ for this purpose was to interrogate the Christian maiden in public. "The thought of being thus humbled in the presence of a great multitude," he thought, "will do more to subdue her proud spirit than a long-continued imprisonment, or even the arguments of the rack." In consequence, he sent word to all the principal citizens of Antioch, requesting them to meet, on the following day, in the Governor's palace, that they might be present at the interrogatory.

Obedient to this call, not only the leading men of the city, but a vast crowd of the lower orders of the people repaired to the place appointed. The Prefect seated himself on his tribunal, which had been prepared with regal splendor, and summoned Margaret before him. Then, addressing her in a tone of voice meant to be soft and persuasive, he said: "We see,

Oh maiden, to our sorrow, that thou art walking in the way of destruction. Thy mind is led astray by some fatal error, which causes thee to reject our wholesome advice. We do not desire thy ruin ; on the contrary, we are anxious to see thee restored to freedom. Wherefore, without further hesitation, resolve at once to follow the path of safety which we point out to thee. Say that thou art willing to secure our favor by doing what we command. Make thy choice between pleasure and pain, between life and death."

"With the blessing of God," replied the young Christian, "I have long since entered upon the way of safety and of true happiness. When I devoted myself to the service of our Lord Jesus Christ, and promised to be ever faithful to Him, I resolved to have no other aim in life than that of honoring and glorifying Him, by doing in all things His holy and divine Will. This desire is the rich treasure which I keep locked up in my heart, and no power or violence of man shall deprive me thereof. Do not, then, trouble yourself, nor undertake to do that which neither your false kindness nor your threats can accomplish."

"It seems somewhat strange," said Olibrius, "that thou shouldst answer our well-meant suggestions with words so full of pride and obstinacy. We

cannot doubt but that some one else has taught thee to speak in so impertinent a manner. Some ignorant fellow, taking advantage of thy youth and simplicity, put all that stuff into thy head, so that now thou art unable to know the natural desires of thy own heart. Tell us, what impostor has beguiled thee into these vagaries?"

"Why, Oh earthly-minded Olibrius," answered the servant of Christ, "do you assert that I am misled by foolish imaginations, or by the deceptions of men? If you were willing to listen to reason, you yourself might learn to know the truth as it is in Christ."

"I will patiently, and even gladly, listen to whatsoever may be said by one so youthful and so fair," said the hypocritical Prefect.

"You need not wonder that my humble self can justly and readily account for what I say; for my convictions do not depend on human proofs. Whoever is a faithful servant of Christ our Lord, does not require the aid of worldly teaching in order to answer the objections of the enemies of the truth. He himself has promised to give us His Holy Spirit—the Spirit of knowledge as well as of fortitude—when we should stand before the rulers of this world to bear witness to the Faith that is in us. Hence it was by believing, not by studying, that I was

taught; for by believing I found a Teacher of infinite wisdom. By Faith I possess the knowledge of all that is needful to secure happiness here and hereafter; by Faith I can resist all the seductive arguments which the wicked demon may inspire you to employ."

"Stop there," said the Prefect, suddenly interrupting her; "we thought that thou wert about to bring forward something resembling truth, but thou tellest us a most impudent falsehood. We had heard ere now, that they who have once become infatuated with the doctrines of Christianity can never again be brought to their senses, neither by arguments nor by force. We learn this very moment by experience, that what we had hitherto disbelieved, because it seemed to us impossible, is after all nothing but the truth. Such a teaching could never have any influence on our mind. A doctrine which teaches its followers to despise the authority of princes, to make little of everything which makes this present life desirable and pleasant, and to love distress and tribulation, is not according to our taste. But thou knowest not, poor child, how great is the abhorrence of our Emperors of the very name of Christian; and, therefore, thou imaginest in thy ignorance that thou canst safely cling to what thou considerest right and holy. Be not deceived. There are questions here of life and death. I desire thee to understand, once

for all, that our invincible rulers have appointed me a Judge to pursue even unto death every one, no matter of what age or condition, who is unwilling to renounce his belief in Christ, and, as a proof of his sincerity, to offer sacrifice to our great and immortal gods. Wherefore, consult thy own safety, while it is yet time. Do not flatter thyself with the vain hope of moving us to pity when thou feelest the effect of our just indignation; no consideration will induce us to spare thee. Say that thou art ready to do what we command, or prepare thyself to die amidst the most cruel tortures."

"Why do you threaten me with tortures and with death, most impious man?" replied Margaret. "Do you think that such threats can terrify a Christian, and that there is no one to save us from them? If Christ our Lord were not God, then indeed your words might cause me to tremble; but, as He is the God of might, He can enable my weakness, if so it be pleasing to Him, to defy all your attempts, and to triumph over all the powers of hell. Hence, believe me when I say that I do not obey the unjust commands of the Emperors, that I fear not your threats, and that I utterly detest the worship of your false gods. You may cut to pieces, you may burn, you may kill my body: you cannot separate me from the love of Christ our Lord."

Olibrius grew furious when he perceived that his threats had made not the least impression on the fearless mind of the maiden. Without making any reply to her words, he ordered her to be hung up by the hair and cruelly beaten with rods. When the spectators, both men and women, saw the blood streaming down upon the ground from her delicate body, they were moved to pity, and began to exhort her to yield, for the present at least, to the command of the inhuman tyrant, that thus she might escape more barbarous torments. But the brave sufferer, far from yielding to their advice, said to them in a loud and clear voice :

“Do not endeavor, good people, to weaken me by your words of sympathy. I know what is best for me. You cannot understand the pleasure I feel in the midst of these torments. If the dark veil which now hides the truth were removed from your minds, you would not only encourage me to persevere in these sufferings, but you would be yourselves desirous of sharing my happy lot, and of becoming my fellow-sufferers for the name of Christ, my divine Lord and Master.”

As the Prefect became convinced that he was still far from having attained his object, he became more angry, and ordered his men to put her on the rack and tear her body with iron hooks. This work they

performed with so great a barbarity, that not only the spectators, but the cold-hearted tyrant himself, turned away their looks in utter disgust. Yet the Christian heroine, strengthened by the grace of her heavenly Bridegroom, bore these tortures without uttering a word of complaint. The people, wondering, said one to another: "How is it possible that one so youthful and so delicate can endure these torments, the mere sight of which filled the strongest men with horror?"

Olibrius, aware that his remorseless cruelty excited the indignation of the spectators, ordered the executioners to stop their bloody work. Unwilling, however, to acknowledge his defeat, he directed a herald to announce to the multitude that the proceedings were only interrupted for that day on account of the feebleness of his victim, and that they were invited to witness, on the following day, how the obstinate young Christian would be able to resist the power of persuasion there is in the torture by burning. The blessed Martyr was, thereupon, sent again to her dark and loathsome dungeon. During the night the Evil One attempted to frighten her by many horrid apparitions. This her heavenly Bridegroom permitted, no doubt, for the greater triumph of His beloved. She then remembered that they who are pleasing to God must be proved by temptations, and as she had been exceedingly afraid of confessing her

Faith in the sight of the public, she was now given to understand that all her daring courage and insensibility to pain proceeded from the grace and love of Him who had accepted her as His devoted bride. Her troubles and sorrows were only momentary. Enlightened from on high, she saw at once through the deceitful snares of Satan, and her faith and confidence in her divine Protector soon dispelled the hideous illusions conjured up by the foul fiend.

The following morning the Prefect ordered her again to be brought before him. When he saw that there remained on her body not even a scar of all the frightful wounds she had received on the preceding day, and that she was as cheerful as if she had been invited to partake of a pleasant entertainment, instead of confessing the supernatural power of Him who watched over His servant, he became excited with rage, and exclaimed:

“Oh most impudent of women! darest thou thus defy our power, and foolishly disregard thy own safety? But we know what remedy to apply to cure thee of thy insolent madness. We swear by the health of our unconquerable princes, unless thou promise this very instant to bend thy proud neck before our immortal gods and sacrifice to them, we will drag thy unyielding spirit with fire and the sword out of thy miserable body. Then we shall see what power there is in Christ to save thee.”

“Why, Oh wicked man,” said Margaret, “do you still attempt to intimidate me with the torment of fire? I am not afraid of your most excruciating punishments; why should I fear your threat? What are all your tortures compared with the endless rewards whereunto they most certainly will lead me? I am persuaded that neither fire, nor the sword, nor any manner of death, can hinder me from going to Christ, the beloved of my soul. Therefore, I love and adore Him, and I abhor with all my strength your abominable idols.”

Olibrius, mad with rage, immediately commanded the executioners to strip her of her garments, hang her up by the hair, and burn her chaste body with blazing torches. While the men were executing his orders, the unfeeling tyrant kept repeating, by way of derision :

“Now, fair Margaret, rejoice and be glad with Christ, whom thou art unwilling to deny. Such is the rest, such is the delight which He prepares for thee. If He can, let Him save thee from this warm entertainment we give thee. Art thou not yet convinced that it were better for thee to accept our honest proposals, and to secure the favor of our gods? If so, say but the word. Our fond care and attention will soon make thee forget the bitterness of this misadventure.”

‘You seem to look upon this momentary burn-

ing," replied the Martyr, "as if it were something dreadful, and you forget those everlasting flames which will be the portion of the wicked. No, Olibrius, flatter not yourself; you cannot induce a true Christian to turn away from the path of truth and justice by the promise of a short-lived happiness, which must be succeeded by unending misery. I have, at last, attained to that which I had long desired. By the grace of Christ my Saviour, I hope to conquer in this struggle, and to receive the reward which is in store for them that persevere in His love to the end." Then raising her eyes toward heaven, she exclaimed: "Lord God, Creator of all things, whom the elements obey, hear my prayer. Suffer not that this fire have power over thy servant."

No sooner had she uttered these words, than the burning torches were suddenly put out. The executioners, filled with wonder, declared that they were unable to proceed with this kind of torture, saying to the Prefect:

"Your lordship must fix upon some other method of punishing this enemy of our gods; fire cannot subdue her resolute spirit."

Olibrius, thereupon, ordered them to fill a large vessel with water, and after binding her hand and foot, to cast her into it. When the blessed Martyr was thrown into the vessel, she exclaimed:

"Burst my bonds, Oh Lord Jesus, that I may offer

to Thee a sacrifice of praise ; and that all this people may confess that Thou alone art the God who workest wonders, although the wicked world knows Thee not."

Instantly her bonds burst asunder, and the water had no longer any power over her. The people, seeing what had happened, began to cry out :

"Truly He is a great and mighty God, whom this maiden adores. Behold, we all can bear witness to the marvellous things He does at her request."

Margaret, hearing these expressions of wonder, said to them :

"Know ye, Oh good people, that Christ our Lord is really the God, Creator of all things that exist. You should, therefore, abandon the worship of false gods and serve your Creator, the Saviour of your souls, who gives you light to see the error of your ways, and calls you to a knowledge of the saving truth. By embracing the Faith which we Christians profess, and by observing our holy laws, you shall find rest to your souls, and rise again in the last day to receive the reward of life everlasting."

Her words had the desired effect. Very many of the spectators exclaimed that they also believed in Christ, the Redeemer of men, and abandoned forever the worship of the false gods, whom they knew to be wicked devils. All this so enraged the Prefect that he forthwith commanded his men to seize every

one of them that professed themselves Christians, and, without questioning them any further, to strike off their heads. No sooner had this been done than the ruthless tyrant, afraid that the now excited people might proceed to acts of violence and carry off his victim, ordered her, as privately as possible, to be taken beyond the walls of the city and there to be beheaded.

When they reached the appointed place, the Martyr, having obtained a moment's respite to commend herself to God, said, in a loud and firm voice :

“I bless Thy holy Name, Oh Lord Jesus Christ, and give Thee thanks. Thy grace has enabled me, notwithstanding my feeble body and entire unworthiness, to triumph over Thine enemies. I now beseech Thee, command Thy holy Angels to receive my spirit, that, in their blissful company, I may appear before Thee, whom I long to behold in the splendors of Thy glory, and praise forever and ever. Amen.”

Then, giving a sign to the executioner that she was ready, he, with one blow, severed the head from her body. The blessed Margaret received her crown on the twentieth of July. The Christians immediately took possession of her sacred remains and buried them in a manner worthy of one upon whom the chaste Lover of souls had bestowed so many special favors.



II

ST. EUDOXIA.

THE wonderful ways which divine Providence uses in leading sinners to repentance, whilst they excite our admiration, bear witness in all ages of the Church to the consoling truth that our Lord came into this world to save sinners. When with His visible presence He dwelt among the children of men, the Saviour's loving Heart was ever longing for the return to the fold of salvation of the lost sheep; for them He spoke those parables so full of tender compassion; for them He offered up His labors and sufferings, and shed His most precious Blood. Happy they that give heed to His kind invitations, and, taking up His sweet yoke, by bringing forth fruits worthy of penance, find at last peace and rest to their souls. Among the holy penitents who hardened not their hearts when the voice of grace spoke to their conscience, one of the most celebrated was Eudoxia of Heliopolis, in Phœnicia.

Born of a family that belonged originally to

Samaria, nature had endowed her with every gift of mind and body that might have made her an ornament of society, had she known how to make a proper use of the advantages which she enjoyed. But, unfortunately, she was not only a Pagan, but, what is worse, a very bad one. Pride and vanity having first led her to the worship of self, her beauty and accomplishments soon became so many toils to ensnare numberless wealthy votaries of sensual pleasures. In this manner she became the possessor of immense riches, and was enabled to indulge her most fanciful desires. Yet, as the gratification of the senses can never satisfy the cravings of the heart, nor restore peace and happiness when these have sped away, so it can never silence the voice of a conscience which is not wholly deadened. But whither could she turn, whence could she hope to derive comfort? Seated in darkness and in the shadow of death, disgusted with herself and weary of life, the present was to her an unbearable torment, the future a mystery whereof she understood nothing. Thus, amidst the surroundings of all that the world calls pleasant and enviable, she was hopelessly wretched—a pitiable victim of her own unbridled passions. However, the good Shepherd of souls was all this time in search of that straying sheep, ready to draw her out of the abyss into which she

had been cast by the wicked enemy. The manner in which He carried out this loving design was as follows :

It happened that a venerable Religious, called Germanus, while returning to his monastery, was passing through Heliopolis. As it was growing late in the evening, he went to ask hospitality at the house of one of the citizens who was a Christian, and dwelt not far from the city's gate. The house was contiguous to the residence of Eudoxia. After the holy man had taken some rest he arose, about midnight, to spend, according to his custom, the remainder of the time in pious reading and psalmody. The subject treated in the book from which he read was the general judgment at the end of the world. There it was said how the just shall appear, on that great day, bright and glorious in the sight of all mankind, gathered together from the uttermost boundaries of the earth, and how they shall be filled with ineffable joy; because all their struggles and sufferings are now passed, and they are to be placed in possession of the everlasting kingdom promised to them that persevere faithfully to the end. There too it was said how, on the other hand, the wicked, the voluptuous, the murderers of the souls of their fellow-beings, shall stand, trembling and mourning, before the judgment-seat of the all-knowing Judge,

and receive the final sentence which condemns them, without appeal, to endless torments, to useless regrets and racking despair; because they chose to lead a life of sin, and refused to avail themselves of God's mercy, again and again held out to them. All this the venerable old man read aloud in a grave and solemn tone of voice to impress more deeply on his mind the terrible reality of these awful truths.

That very night it chanced, no doubt by a special mercy of God, that Eudoxia, being alone, occupied an apartment in her dwelling whence she could distinctly hear every word that was read. The strange and peculiar modulations of the sacred chant first attracted her attention and excited her curiosity; next, the dread-inspiring verities, as novel to her as they were startling, caused her to meditate seriously on the evil consequences of her sinful career, and made her pass the night in restless anxiety.

Early in the morning, faithful to the motion of divine grace, she sent one of her attendants to her neighbor with the request to entreat the person, whose voice she had heard during the night, to be so kind as to visit her at her dwelling. The charitable man of God, without inquiring who or what she was who invited him, at once repaired to her house. When Eudoxia saw him, she addressed him with much warmth, saying:

“Tell me, I beseech you, venerable stranger, and hide not the truth from me, who and whence are you? what manner of life do you follow? what do you teach, what religion do you profess? What I heard you read last night has so unsettled my mind that I can find neither rest nor comfort: it was all so strange and wonderful, that I must confess there is nothing which has hitherto made so great an impression on me. If it be true, as you seem to think, that they who sin are to be condemned to everlasting torments, who can be saved from so great a misfortune?”

“Since you say that what I read was altogether unknown to you,” answered Germanus, “permit me, Madam, to ask you what religion you yourself profess?”

“As I came from Samaria,” she replied, “I belong, of course, to the so-called sect of Samaritans. I possess riches far beyond my heart’s desire, and am all the more uneasy on this very account. For I heard that the book which you were reading pronounced a special curse and a greater punishment against the rich. Nothing of the kind is contained in our books, so far as I remember. Hence, I am as much struck by the novelty of the threat as by the greatness of the woe uttered against the possessors of wealth.”

The blessed Germanus for a while remained silent, not knowing whether he should inquire more fully into her circumstances. After praying to our Lord for light to guide him, he said to Eudoxia :

“May I ask you whether your husband is still living, and whence come all the riches which, as you say, you possess beyond your desires?”

“There never was a person,” she replied, “whom I could call my lawful husband. The wealth which I possess has been given me by many men. Alas! if the rich are exposed to suffer such cruel punishments after their death, of what benefit is it to me to have hoarded up so much treasure?”

Then said Germanus to her: “Give me a true and straightforward answer to what I am about to ask,—for Christ, whom I worship, is the God of truth:—Which would you prefer, to lose all your riches and live in never-ending bliss hereafter, or to enjoy your wealth in the present life, and afterwards burn forever in unquenchable flames?”

“I had rather live in the greatest poverty during this life,” she replied, “that I might secure everlasting happiness, than, after enjoying all the riches of this world, go to endless destruction. But it is a great wonder to me that the rich should be so severely punished after their death. Is it because your God pursues riches with a fierce and relentless hatred?”

“God does by no means hate riches,” said the holy man, “but only the unjust acquisition and the improper use of them. Hence, he who spends honestly that which he has lawfully acquired, incurs no guilt before God; but he who steals and robs to gratify his avarice, or neglects to aid the needy in their distress, he shall not escape the just punishment of an offended Deity.”

“Does it then seem to you,” asked Eudoxia, “that the riches which I have are unjustly acquired?”

“Most unjustly,” answered Germanus; “and, in the sight of God, the keeping of them is a detestable sin.”

“How can that be?” she inquired. “By means of them I have been able to clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and console the afflicted. How can you call bad that wealth which has been put to so good a use?”

“Pray, madam,” said he, “listen to me for a moment. Suppose a person should go to a bath for the purpose of cleansing himself; do you think that he would prefer to make use of water which was impure and muddy rather than of that which is pure and clear? In like manner, so long as you continue, knowingly and willingly, to wallow in the mire of sin, and refuse to avail yourself of the pure stream of grace, you can never purify yourself of the defile-

ment of sin, which will at last, most certainly, like an impetuous torrent, drag you into the lake of fire and brimstone prepared by the justice of God for them that dare defy the divine wrath. Your riches, acquired as they are by lewdness and injustice, are the price of sin, and, therefore, an abomination before the God of holiness. Nor will it profit you to say, that you have made a good use of a part thereof; this may, indeed, to a certain extent, cover the offensive foulness of them, but it can never merit for you an eternal reward, so long as you yourself remain an enemy of God, and a servant of iniquity and of the devil. Wherefore, you must first of all be purified from everything that is unclean and offensive in the sight of God, that thus your works of mercy to others may become pleasing and meritorious in His sight. For, even as a person walking among thistles and thorns finds himself full of wounds, although he endeavors to remove and avoid some of them, so it will help you very little to give some comfort to others while you yourself, by your own free choice, continue to be an object of displeasure to an all-knowing Judge. In short, if you are willing to follow my advice, you may escape the punishment which you justly dread, and secure for yourself the joys of eternal life."

"I beg of you, Oh servant of the true God," said

Eudoxia, "do not refuse to tell me by what means I may obtain the friendship of Him whom you adore. You were saying just now, that God is pleased when we make a proper use of our riches. There is nothing to hinder me, even at the sacrifice of whatever I possess, to buy for myself an exemption from the sentence which will be pronounced in the day of judgment against them who are displeasing to God. I have a great number of servants; I will take them, laden with gold and jewels, according to your direction, to your God, if He will deign to receive all this and extend to me His mercy."

"Do not think in so gross and worldly a manner of the true God, Oh Eudoxia," said Germanus. "He is far above every consideration of such worthless trifles, which we men call riches, that, while He is the possessor of all the treasures of the universe, He chose to become poor for love of us, that by His poverty He might ransom our souls. Wherefore, my daughter, bestow the wealth which you possess upon the sick and needy. They are the friends of our God; whatever is done to them He considers as done to Himself. In this manner the perishable substance which you freely and lovingly give to them, will be repaid by Him with heavenly treasures, which can neither diminish nor perish forever. After this prepare yourself to receive the saving

waters of holy Baptism, that you may be purified from every defilement of sin. Thus, being spiritually born again, like a true child of God, you will be entitled to that celestial inheritance which is the hope and joy of all the children of God upon earth. In one word, my daughter, if you desire to be saved, do as I advise you, and you will secure your everlasting happiness."

"If what I heard you read last night," said Eudoxia, "had not made so deep an impression on my mind, I should never have had the boldness of inviting you, Oh holy Father, to my house. But since I have caused you so much trouble, would you not condescend to some further delay of a few days, that you may more fully instruct me in the teachings and practices of your holy religion, and direct me in what manner I should dispose of my possessions. After that I shall be ready to do whatever your wisdom and experience may suggest, that I may devote myself wholly to the study of things which perish not."

"The hope of bringing a lost sheep to the fold of Christ," answered Germanus, "will serve as an excuse for my delay. Meanwhile, do what I tell you; call one of the priests of the city, that, when you are sufficiently instructed, he may baptize you. This is the first thing to which you must give your serious

attention. After that, whatever else the grace of our Lord may require of you will be made known to you at the proper time."

Eudoxia, thereupon, calling one of her most trusty servants, bade him go to the church of the Christians and beg one of the priests to come at once to visit some one who stood greatly in need of his sacred ministration—without, however, mentioning the name of the person, or the reason of the request. The servant soon returned with one of the priests, and introduced him to his mistress. When Eudoxia saw him, she fell prostrate before him and said :

"I beseech you, Oh servant of the true God, refuse not to listen to me, but have the patience to explain to me the teachings of your holy religion. I am most anxious to become a Christian."

The priest, struck with wonder at the sight of her earnestness and humility, said :

"To what sect or religious profession do you belong, and what makes you desirous of becoming a Christian?"

"By birth and by religion," she replied, "if I may call it religion, I am a Samaritan. I have been, as it were, the beast of burden of every one. To make known to you, venerable Father, who and what I am, I need only tell you that I am a sea of every iniquity. I had lately the good fortune of hearing

that sinners, unless they did penance and became Christians, were doomed after death to burn in everlasting flames: upon this I resolved at any cost to become a Christian."

"If hitherto you were a sea of sin, as you say," said the priest, "strive now to become a haven of salvation. If you have been tossed about by the angry waves of unruly passions, follow henceforth the guidance of truth, that you may find peace and tranquillity in the safe harbor of religion. Endeavor to secure for yourself the inheritance of its promises, by distributing your possessions among the poor, that thus freed from the defilement and bitterness of sin, you need no longer dread the endless torments which are hereafter in store for the hardened and unrepentant slaves of iniquity."

When she heard this, Eudoxia, striking her forehead and her breast, exclaimed:

"Is there then no mercy with your God for sinners?"

"Undoubtedly there is," said the priest, "for sinners who repent of their evil deeds. For they, when they receive the seal of Faith, that is, holy baptism, obtain the complete pardon of all the sins of their former life."

"But tell me, Oh servant of God," she went on to say, "are there in the after life better and more

precious things than those we possess upon earth? For here we have everything that can please the eye or gratify the taste; what more can there be to make a person happy in another life?"

"If you estimate the things of the future life by those of the present, and suffer yourself to be influenced by the vain and transitory pleasures of this world, you will never attain to the endless bliss of heaven. It belongs to you, Oh Eudoxia, to make your choice between them."

"Far from me, Oh holy Father," she said, "be the foolish choice whereby I would prefer the transient things of the present to the blissful life of eternity. But what I desire to ask is this: If I become a Christian, will that entitle me to the hope of possessing one day that heavenly bliss of which you speak? What surety can you give me of this? How shall I know that God has forgiven me my sins? For if, after I distribute among the poor, as you advise me to do, all the riches which might enable me to lead a life of ease and plenty, I should not obtain the things which you promise, what would become of me, helpless and destitute? Were I then to implore the help of the persons whom I have offended by my crimes, they would scorn my poverty and cast me off. Hence I cannot but feel anxious at the prospect of a future so uncertain; so

that my mind is staggered by the dreadful thought. Give me, therefore, some fuller assurance of the exceeding goodness of your God, and I will proceed boldly to do whatsoever you may require of me. I will devote myself wholly and forever to the service of Him who has been merciful to me; and as I have been a cause of sin to so many, I will strive to be an example of penance to all. Do not wonder at my want of decision; what I have been told is all so new and strange to me that I am still at a loss what course to pursue."

"You should not suffer your mind to fluctuate," said the priest, "between what is right and what is wrong. All this wavering is a deceit of the devil, the author of sin, the enemy of your salvation. That wicked spirit, seeing that you are ready to enter the service of Christ our Lord, tries his utmost to excite in your heart vain and imaginary fears, that thus he may dissuade you from beginning a new life, and keep you in his chains, until at last he is able to drag you into final destruction. As regards that which you desire to know with certainty, namely, whether God is so good as to be willing to receive sinners, to forgive their sins, and to grant them hereafter everlasting life—this knowledge you may obtain by an earnest and attentive meditation on the great truths of eternity. Wherefore, you should put aside

for some days all worldly cares and occupations, and give yourself to fervent and humble prayer, reviewing your past life and confessing your sins before God, that thus you may show your good will. If, accordingly, in solitude, fasting and weeping, you implore your Creator to enlighten and direct you, believe me, you shall not be disappointed."

Seeing that Eudoxia was willing to follow his advice, he blessed her before he went away, saying:

"May Christ our Lord, who justified the publican, grant you His grace, and cause your name to be blessed in all the earth!"

Eudoxia immediately sent for her housekeeper, and said to her:

"If any of the persons who were wont to come hither should inquire for me, tell them that business of the greatest importance has called me away. Give orders to all the servants to admit no one on any account, and, above all, not to disturb me in my retreat. Let everything about the house have the appearance as if I were really absent from home."

After this she again requested to see the blessed Germanus, that she might have some further conversation with him. When the holy man entered the room, she at once addressed him, saying:

"Do not think it an idle curiosity on my part, if I ask you a question which may appear somewhat

strange. Tell me, venerable Father, why is it that you religious persons forego the comforts and pleasures of the city and retire into solitudes? Is it because such places have a greater charm for you?"

"It is by no means because we find there more comforts," answered Germanus, "that we seek the loneliness of the desert; but to discipline ourselves by humbling our pride, and by curbing the irregular desires of the body. For this purpose, we make use of that which the wilderness abundantly supplies—hunger and thirst, heat and cold, labor and suffering; whereby the senses are more easily withdrawn from the allurements of the things of this world, and from the evil suggestions of the devil. As every sinful indulgence defiles the soul and makes it unfit for heaven, so self-denial and works of penance cleanse it again, and make it pleasing in the sight of God. Hence, until we reach heaven, the abode of eternal light, of pure and genuine joy, we must strive to remove from our souls all darkness, that is, the stains of sin, for only there penance shall be no more. Wherefore, to atone for our past transgressions by bringing forth fruits worthy of penance, and to guard ourselves more effectually against the danger of relapsing into sin, is the true reason which induces us to retire into the wilderness. Besides, by thus withdrawing from the occupations and distract-

tions of the world, we gain that freedom of mind and heart, whereby we are enabled at all times to commune with our Maker, and while dwelling in this body our souls are enjoying to a great extent the privileges of the angels in heaven. Can you imagine a greater happiness than this? Is not such a penitential life the source of every delight? If it is your sincere desire to become a partaker of so great a blessing, do not resist the grace of God which calls you thereto. Lay aside those vain and useless ornaments, which are unworthy the servant of God—whose eyes love to see in His creatures a conscience pure and undefiled, a heart adorned with the jewels of every virtue. By tears of repentance wash away the stains of sin, which now so deeply tarnish the beauty of your immortal soul, that she can no longer be recognized as the image of her Maker. Strike in turn and punish the wicked enemy who has brought you so low by his deceitful flattery; and in spite of all the attempts he will doubtless make to win you back to his disgraceful allegiance, persevere in your resolve of serving God all the days of your life, that you may secure at last the reward of endless bliss.”

Eudoxia was greatly moved by these words of the servant of God; for her mind was now quite disposed to receive the good seed of the divine Word.

Casting herself at the feet of Germanus, and shedding many tears, she said :

“Do not refuse, I beseech you, Oh holy Father, to perfect the work which you have so happily begun. Leave me not to my own guidance at the very beginning of my conversion, lest, some way, I become the sport of them that seek my ruin. Direct me by your wisdom and experience, until I have the happiness of being purified in the saving waters which will render me pleasing in the sight of God.”

The request seems so reasonable,” answered Germanus, “that I promise you to remain seven days in Heliopolis. Meanwhile, calling to mind that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, retire into your chamber, and there, in the bitterness of your soul, reviewing your past life, with tears of compunction ask of God to pardon your sins. Doubt not, daughter, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is so good and merciful, will hear your prayer, and, like a father rejoicing at the return of an erring child, will hasten to console and strengthen you with His holy grace.”

Then kneeling down, he prayed a while, and making the sign of the Cross over her, he bade her be of good cheer, and went his way.

Eudoxia immediately shut herself up in the most

secluded apartment of her dwelling, and there during seven days persevered in meditating, in weeping over her sins, in praying and fasting. When the seven days were passed, Germanus returned according to his promise. He was no less astonished than edified at the sight of the change that had taken place in the sincere and zealous penitent. Her proud and defiant look was gone; instead of a sensual and pampered appearance, her pale countenance now bore the impress of self-denial and macerations; in short, so different did she seem from her former self, that he could not have recognized her had he met her in any other place. The holy man, after returning thanks to God for this happy change, bade her be seated, and then said:

“Tell me, daughter, with what thoughts did you occupy your mind during these days? What lights did God grant you? Did He make known to you His holy will?”

“I will conceal nothing from you, venerable Father,” she answered. “After persevering during six days in the manner of praying which you had recommended, on the seventh, as I was again lying prostrate on the ground, a great light shone suddenly around me. Thinking that the sun was shining into my chamber, I arose forthwith, and saw before me a youth clad in a snow-white robe,

his countenance terrible to behold. Taking me by the right hand, he lifted me up into the upper air, and threw around me a garment, as it were of a cloud. Then I descried a vast and marvellous plain, illumined with a soft and mellow light, and countless multitudes of people, clothed in white robes, rejoicing therein. How blissful they all appeared, my words cannot express. Many of them, on perceiving me, came towards me and greeted me as their sister. As I advanced towards them into the great light, I saw, afar off and below me, a huge and dark form, that seemed ready to tear me away from my companion. Being foiled herein, the spectre cried out with a voice that sounded to my ears like a burst of thunder: 'Shall that woman be saved, after she has defiled the earth by her crimes? She is mine, body and soul; I claim her as my slave. Threaten me not, but restore my property. Do I claim unjustly what is not my own?' My heavenly companion pressed my hand more closely, and, sweetly smiling upon me, laughed at the impotent rage of the foul fiend.

"At the same instant there came a loud and clear voice out of the great light, saying: 'Such is the will of God, who hath pity on the children of men. If sinners turn from their evil ways and do penance, they shall find rest in the bosom of Abraham.' And

the same voice, addressing my guide, continued: And thou, Oh guardian of my covenant, restore her to the place whence she came, that she may consummate the struggle she hath begun.' And straightway I found myself again in my chamber, and heard the voice of my companion, saying: 'Peace be with thee, Eudoxia; take heart and fear not; and may the grace of God be with thee and abide forever.'

"At this I took courage, and falling upon my knees, I said:

"'I beseech you, friend of God, be not displeased with me, but tell me who or what you are, that I may believe in the true God and find life.'

"'I am a Prince of the heavenly host,' he replied; 'it is my care to receive penitents, and introduce them into the life of bliss. The Father of the universe desires not the death of the sinner, for He created him in the beginning in His own image; therefore, too, the Angels rejoice when they that had wandered from the right way return to the path of duty, and by true repentance wash their robes in the Blood of the Lamb.' So saying, he made three times the sign of the Cross over me, and vanished from my sight."

The blessed Germanus, after praising the goodness of God in his dealings with Eudoxia, said to her:

"Thank God, my daughter, for His wonderful

condescension in opening your eyes to the truth. He hath not only convinced you of His willingness to forgive repentant sinners, but He hath given you a glimpse of that blissful abode where our Lord Jesus Christ rewards His faithful followers. After this, how vile and worthless must all things of earth appear! What is all the display and happiness, after which poor mortals seek in this short and transitory life, compared with that glory and bliss which will be the everlasting inheritance of the children of God! Tell me, then, what resolution have you formed with regard to the future?"

"Since I believe in that God of goodness and mercy," she answered, "who, though dwelling in light inaccessible, does not deem it derogatory to His infinite majesty to take, as it were, poor sinners by the hand, how could I hesitate to devote myself wholly and forever to His service?"

"If you are resolved to do this," said Germanus, "prepare yourself in such a manner that you may not only enter upon that service, but obtain the grace of persevering therein. Cease not to bewail the sins of your youth, until every vestige of uncleanness disappear from your soul. Forget the vanities after which you have run so long, that Christ our Lord may also deign to forget your former waywardness. Free your neck forever from the

galling and disgraceful yoke which the devil had put upon you, and cheerfully take up the sweet and easy burden which the children of light love to bear, as they walk in the footsteps of their divine Master. Lend no ear to the tempter, but drive him off at once, saying: 'Begone, Satan! what is there now in common between me and thee? I have found my true Master, whom I love and who loves me. I renounce forever and spurn the empty pomp and cunning devices wherewith thou deludest thy followers. Depart, thou cruel deceiver, I cling to Him who is the way, the truth and the life.' "

Strengthened still more in her firm resolve of beginning a new life, Eudoxia said to Germanus:

"What will you then, Oh Father, that I do now?"

"It is my wish," he replied, "that first of all you prepare yourself to be purified by the laver of regeneration, that is, by holy Baptism. As for myself, it is now time that I return to my solitude; but if it be God's holy will, you shall soon see me again."

At these words she burst into tears and said:

Do not abandon me, Oh Father, before you have perfected the work of my conversion. The wily enemy, when he sees me alone and unprotected, may again entrap me in his snares and drag me into the mire, whence you did but just now draw me; what will then become of me?"

“Fear nothing, daughter,” answered Germanus; “the strong resolution wherewith God has inspired you, will be your safeguard against the wiles of the wicked foe. Continue still in prayer, and in an humble acknowledgment of your sins before God, and, as soon as possible, receive holy Baptism. On my return, I will make known to you whatever the Holy Spirit may suggest to me, with regard to your future manner of living.” And, commending her to the divine Protection, he immediately withdrew.

After the departure of Germanus, Eudoxia, in accordance with the advice he had given, spent several days and nights in continued prayer, using no other food than a little bread and water. Then going to Theodotus, Bishop of Heliopolis, she besought him to administer to her the Sacrament of holy Baptism. The Bishop, finding upon examination that she was properly instructed in the doctrines of the Faith, granted her request. Great, indeed, was her happiness, and unspeakable the gratitude she felt for the grace which God had vouchsafed to her.

She now was fully persuaded that her Divine Master called her to a manner of life in which she might be exclusively devoted to His service, for the vanity and emptiness of earthly things, as well as the dangers and temptations of the world, had never

appeared to her in so clear a light. Accordingly, she had no sooner returned home than, acting under the inspiration of her good Angel, she began to make a complete list of all she possessed. When it was finished, she sent it to the Bishop. Theodotus read it, but not knowing what it meant, invited her to his dwelling and said to her :

“Is it you, my daughter, who sent this list to me?”

“Yes, I sent it,” she answered, “and I entreat you, Oh holy Father, to accept what I freely offer.”

“But, my daughter, what do you desire to be done with all the things enumerated in this list?” asked the Bishop.

“I beg your Holiness,” she replied, “to direct the treasurer of the Church to receive this donation, that he may expend it, according to your own good pleasure, among the sick and the needy. For I find now, what I never thought heretofore, that I can look upon none of these things as my just and lawful possessions.”

The holy Bishop was greatly edified by this generous behavior of the new convert, and after thanking God for all the mercies He had shown to her, said in a voice full of tender emotion :

“Blessed art thou, Oh Eudoxia, who after breaking the galling chain of a deceitful world and its baneful pleasures, didst suffer thyself to be attracted

by the sweet perfume of sacred fear, and of knowledge and of holy hope. Happy thou who, after having found a pearl of great price, givest all thou hast to buy it. Know, then, that God has chosen thee to do great things for the glory of His holy Name, and that it is His will that, by many trials and tribulations, thou make good the name thou bearest, Oh Eudoxia, and secure for thyself the reward of everlasting bliss. Pray for me, Oh servant and friend of God, that in the judgment-day I may be able to give a satisfactory account of my stewardship."

Then sending for the treasurer of the Church, he charged him to assist the lady Eudoxia in giving to the Lord her offerings through the hands of the sick and the poor. The treasurer accompanied her to her dwelling, where she ordered her stewards to give a faithful account of all the things entrusted to their care. When this had been done, she called together all her servants, both bond and free, and after bestowing upon each of them a liberal donation in money, she allowed them to divide among themselves all the costly furniture, which had so long excited the admiration of the frequenters of her gorgeous establishment. Then addressing her servants, she said :

"To you all who were hitherto bound to my ser-

vice, I give this day unconditionally your freedom; but, while you are thus released from all human bondage, I invite and exhort you to free yourselves from a far greater slavery—the bondage of sin. This freedom you may obtain by embracing the doctrine of Christ our Lord, the Redeemer of men. He will release not only your weak and corruptible bodies, but your precious and immortal souls from the power of the devil, and make you children of God, heirs of the glorious and everlasting Kingdom which He conquered for us by His sufferings and death.”

After this she made over her real estate and the remainder of her personal property, which was still very large, to the treasurer of the Church, that he might expend all in works of charity, according to the best of his judgment and the direction of the Bishop. Then, filled with a holy joy, she exclaimed:

“Thanks to the infinite mercy of God, who came in search of me when I was lost, I am now freed even from all earthly cares, and ready to follow whithersoever the light of His Holy Spirit may deign to lead me.”

The venerable treasurer blessed her, saying:

“Happy art thou, Eudoxia, who didst watch and pray, and hadst thy lamp trimmed when our Lord

came to invite thee. May His grace abide with thee forever, and when the Bridegroom comes, mayst thou be found worthy to go in with Him to the marriage, in the company of the wise Virgins!"

Not many days after, the blessed Germanus returned, and when he heard what had been done by Eudoxia, and how anxious she was to devote herself to God, and to live forever retired from the world, he told her that in the vicinity of his own hermitage there was a house for consecrated Virgins, and thither he proposed to conduct her. Eudoxia eagerly consented to the proposal, and blessing our Lord for thus removing all further perplexity from her mind, promptly accompanied the venerable servant of God. The sisterhood among whom she was received, consisted of no fewer than thirty virgins who, with unwearied zeal and fervor, occupied themselves night and day in singing the praises of God, and practising all kinds of penitential austerities. Here Eudoxia found at last that peace of mind for which she had sighed so often in vain. Remembering that by the Sacrament of Regeneration she had become a new creature in Christ, and that she might be constantly reminded of His merciful kindness, she continued to wear ever after the white robe she had put on at her Baptism. Over this, she wore in winter a coarse garment reaching

down to the ankles, made of hair-cloth, and a short cloak, with a hood of similar color and material.

While in the world, she had labored without ceasing to surpass all her rivals in the art of attracting admirers; now she strove to excel her companions in self-denial, penances and humiliations. Her charity to others, her readiness to be employed in the meanest office, her love of silence, her fervor in praying and watching, her meek and staid deportment, gained for her the affection of all who looked upon her, as a model of a true religious. God, who destined her for great things, showered His special lights and graces upon her, so that being made perfect in a short space she fulfilled a long time.

She had not been more than a year and a few months in the *asceterium* when Charitina, the Superior, went to receive the reward of a well-spent life. The Sisters did not hesitate to choose in her stead Eudoxia, in whose prudence and love of discipline they placed the greatest confidence. And our Lord soon made known, in a wonderful manner, that He approved the wisdom of their choice.

There was a certain young nobleman, Philostratus by name, who had been a friend and admirer of Eudoxia whilst she resided in Heliopolis. Him the tempter inspired with the wicked thought of making an attempt to induce her to abandon her sacred soli-

tude and return once more to the pleasant company and frivolous gayeties of the world she had forsaken. For this purpose, after long considering by what means he might best gain the end he had in view, he put on the garb of a hermit, and, filling his wallet with gold, set out, on foot and unattended, for the place where he knew Eudoxia was dwelling. Toward evening, he arrived at the house and knocked at the door. Immediately a little girl, who acted as portress, half opening a little window, inquired who he was and what he wanted. Assuming a tone of penitential sorrow, he replied:

“I am a poor sinner, Oh my sister; I ask for a share in your prayers and your blessing.”

Without giving him time to say more, the maiden, interrupting him, replied:

“You have doubtless made a mistake, brother, in coming to this place. If you keep on your way somewhat further, you shall come to the hermitage of the venerable Germanus; there you may obtain what you ask for.” And so saying, she shut the little window.

Philostratus, although thus sent away rather unceremoniously, was no ways discouraged, but continued his journey until he came to the hermitage. As chance would have it, he saw Germanus reading to himself in the vestibule. He quietly went up to

him, and, prostrating himself on the ground, meekly besought the holy man to grant him his blessing. Germanus did as requested, and, looking at him with great kindness, said:

“Be seated, brother, and permit me to ask you what country sends you hither as our guest, and to what religious house do you belong?”

“Holy Father,” replied the youth, “I was the only son of my parents, but death has deprived me of their guardian care. Disgusted with the world, and convinced of the uncertainty of life, I put on the garb of the Ascetics and went forth in search of a spiritual guide, to place myself under his direction. I had the happiness of hearing your name spoken of, and, in spite of the long and wearisome journey I had to undertake, I set out at once to throw myself at your feet. I beg you, venerable servant of God, do not suffer that I should have travelled hither only to be disappointed. Receive me unworthy among your disciples, that I may do penance and bewail my sins all the days of my life.”

Whilst he thus spoke, Germanus observed him more closely, and noticing his elegant form and delicate features, said:

“You undertake to perform a great work, my son; and, I fear, it is one far above your strength. We old men have no little difficulty in resisting the

assaults of the wicked demon; how will it be with one so young and delicate as yourself?"

"Have we, then, not numberless examples," Philostratus hastened to say, "of persons, even younger and more delicate than myself, who yet have subdued their evil inclinations and triumphed over the enemy? Who has not heard of that Eudoxia, at one time so overweening and fastidious in her tastes? Did she not become your disciple? And does she not bravely and perseveringly continue in all the austerities of a penitential life? In truth, I must confess to you, Oh Father, that it was her noble example, more than anything else, which encouraged me to begin a life of self-discipline and penance. If that lady, so flattered and admired, could, for the love of Christ, trample upon her own pride and renounce luxurious wealth, why would you despair of my success, Oh Father, if you reflect that, from a person of my sex, at least an equal strength and firmness may be expected? Could I but for a moment behold that valiant woman, the mere sight of her, or a word of encouragement from her, would breathe into my soul so ardent a zeal and so great a fortitude that, I feel confident, no power of devils would ever be able to shake my fixed determination, or make me succumb to the most violent temptations."

The guileless old man, not suspecting any evil intention on the part of one whose manner of speaking appeared so simple and unaffected, replied with much candor:

“For so praiseworthy a purpose it is not difficult, my son, to obtain for you what you so greatly desire.” And calling in one of his brethren, whose office it was to go every morning to the *asceterium* to celebrate there the Sacred Mysteries, he said:

“When, to-morrow, you go to celebrate the holy Mass, take along this brother. Give him an opportunity of seeing Eudoxia, for he is very desirous of being strengthened in his religious vocation by her words and example.”

Wherefore, on the following morning, Philostratus accompanied the priest, and after Mass he had at last his wish gratified by being introduced to the servant of God. When he beheld her emaciated features, the coarseness of the garments she wore, the unfurnished cell she occupied, and how everything about her denoted the strictest poverty, he lost all self-control. He threw back his cowl, assumed an attitude of scornful indignation, and cried out:

“What is this I see, Eudoxia? What fanatical adviser has induced you to hide yourself in a den like this—you who were wont to show yourself in

regal state to admiring multitudes in the crowded streets of a great city? What madness has seized you, what frenzy has blinded you, that you should exchange the splendor and delights of uninterrupted triumphs for this abject poverty and slavish degradation? Be worthy of yourself, noble Eudoxia; all Heliopolis still sighs for you. In every heart there is a void that cannot be filled, so long as your presence gladdens not the eyes of your longing admirers. I, their spokesman, pray and beseech you, delay no longer to gratify their most ardent desires. Return with me, Oh lady; cast aside that wretched garb, put on once more the garment of rejoicing. Why do you still hesitate? While loving hearts and sweetest accents invite you, why will you be your own enemy, your own most cruel tormentor? Is it not a disgrace that you should hide in darkness a form so fair, that you should weep out those brilliant eyes, and wear away by unavailing penance a body still glorying in the charms of youth and beauty? Where is now the fragrance of that aromatic perfume which followed in your wake and enraptured into bliss the throng of your worshippers, as if some goddess had passed by? What foolish fancy has fascinated your lofty mind, that you should choose to become a castaway? Arise, Eudoxia, and be again a queen. See here this gold; it is the first

tribute I lay at your feet. Make haste, Oh lady, all Heliopolis longs to do you homage."

Eudoxia stood calm and self-collected while the infatuated young man spouted forth his unseemly harangue. When he ceased speaking, she solemnly said:

"Let Christ our Lord, whose unworthy servant I am, arise as a just Judge against thee, and suffer thee not to return to the place whence thou camest for a wicked purpose; truly thou art a son of the devil."

She had no sooner spoken than the wretched Philostratus fell down upon the ground—dead.

Some of the sisterhood, attracted by the loud and extravagant oratory of the false hermit, stood looking on from a distance. When, at the words of their Superior, they saw him fall lifeless to the ground, they were filled with amazement. They willingly confessed, giving glory to God, that Eudoxia, though she ranked only with Penitents, was a Saint approved of Him who had come on earth to save sinners. But their feeling of contentment was not unattended with uneasiness. They knew that the Pagans did not like the Christians, and abhorred the very name of ascetics. Hence, they had reason to fear that if the dreadful occurrence became known to the Governor of the district, he might institute an inquiry

and bring against them an accusation of murder. They were also aware that the mere possibility of such a crime would arouse the prejudices of their enemies, and excite them to use this as a pretext to drive them away, and give their dwelling to the flames. Fully understanding the delicate position wherein they now found themselves, they agreed to betake themselves to prayer, in the hope that our Lord would deign to make known to them what was to be done. Wherefore, during several hours, they all persevered in fervent supplication, imploring their heavenly Bridegroom not to forsake them in this hour of their need and trouble. Their prayer was heard. Eudoxia, feeling herself suddenly inspired from on high, arose from the ground where she was lying prostrate, and, followed by the sisterhood, went to the place where lay the lifeless body of the youth. First making the sign of the cross, she said:

“In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Philostratus arise.”

Instantly the young man, as if awaking from a heavy sleep, arose and gazed around him with his senses bewildered and confused. Then acknowledging the power of God, and His great mercy to one so undeserving as himself, he fell at the feet of the Saint and said:

“Pardon me, Oh servant of the true God, I am truly penitent; forget the rash and foolish words I have spoken. I now understand how great, how good and merciful a Master you serve; I give glory to His holy Name.”

“Go, then, in peace, and return to thine own,” replied Eudoxia. “Remember the favor God hath bestowed upon thee; and depart not again from the way of truth that hath been shown to thee, nor from the faith wherewith Christ our Lord hath enlightened thee.”

It was not long before the wicked enemy stirred up another persecution against the servant of God. Some of her former admirers, knowing that there was no chance of seeing her return to the life she had so resolutely forsaken, determined not to rest satisfied until somehow or other they had taken their revenge. For this purpose, they hit upon the following plan. They addressed a petition to Aurelian, Governor of the country, wherein they stated that Eudoxia was possessed of large sums of money, which by right belonged to the public revenue, and had taken them with her to a place of concealment; wherefore they asked that a body of soldiers might be placed under their orders, so as to enable them to arrest the fugitive and recover the money. Moreover, they took care to add that if the recovery of

the money were not a sufficient motive to grant their request, it should be remembered that the delinquent belonged to the sect of the Galileans, who adored Christ and reviled the immortal gods, whom the Governor and all other good citizens worshipped.

Aurelian lent a willing ear to the calumny, and immediately sent an officer with three hundred men, to accompany the wicked accusers of the Saint, that they might bring her before him, after they had got possession of the money. Eudoxia knew nothing of the danger which threatened her. During the night, however, which preceded the arrival of the soldiers, an Angel of the Lord warned her, saying: "The anger of the Governor is aroused against thee, but fear not; I will be thy protector."

It was late in the evening when the officer, with his men, drew near the *asceterium*. After taking a survey of the locality, he stationed the soldiers in such a manner that, during the night, at a given signal, they might be ready to fall upon the sacred dwelling, and prevent the escape of any of its peaceful inmates. But no signal was given—neither that night nor the following day and night. During all that time, they stood stock-still, apparently forgetful of the object for which they had come. But, as even then they were unwilling to acknowledge in this the manifest intervention of a supernatural

Power, a greater punishment came upon them. They were suddenly attacked by an army of venomous serpents, whose deadly bite and poisonous breath caused so great a havoc among them, that only a few returned to relate to the Governor the story of their misfortune.

Aurelian, equally disinclined to perceive in this disaster an evident proof of divine interposition in favor of the innocent, grew furious at the thought of losing so many of his soldiers, and still more at being disappointed in securing for himself the wished-for treasure. He immediately called together his counsellors, and said:

“What are we to do against this terrible sorceress, who, by her magical powers, has slain so many of our men? Give me your advice. We cannot suffer that so great a crime should go unpunished.”

The counsellors were silent; they were afraid to become responsible for a second failure. The Governor's son, however, a high-spirited youth, laughed at the timidity of his seniors, and said to his father:

“Give me a sufficient number of men, and I will go and raze the infamous den of that witch to the ground, and, whether she will or not, you shall see her before you in a day or two.”

All commended the courage of the young man, and wished success to his bold undertaking.

Wherefore, on the following day, he set out, accompanied by a body of select troops. Toward evening they came to a country seat belonging to the Governor. Here they resolved to pass the night; for the elegance of the buildings, the cool and pleasant gardens, invited them to rest and refreshment, after the fatigue of their long journey. At the moment, however, when the youth, with the thoughtless impetuosity of his age, leaped from his horse, he dashed his foot against a stone, and hurt himself so severely that he fell senseless to the ground. His companions immediately lifted him up and carried him into the house. They began at once to apply every kind of restorative, but in vain; about the middle of the night the unfortunate youth expired.

As soon as the day began to dawn, they laid the body on a litter and returned to the city. How different was that return from their merry setting forward on the day before! Then they were all cheered on by the good humor of their youthful leader, who assured them of undoubted success in the somewhat singular expedition upon which they had ventured; now they were silent and dejected, fully persuaded that there was something inexplicable in the suddenness of the accident, which had frustrated all their expectations. Sad and weary, they bore their inanimate burden into the palace of

the Governor. Aurelian, who was unapprised of the fatal event, was struck dumb at the sight of the dead body of his son, and fell swooning on the floor. All the members of the family and the officers of the palace were filled with consternation. Friends and citizens appeared in crowds to express their sympathy, but their real or pretended grief and lamentation served only to increase the general confusion. After a while, however, the Governor began to recover from his swoon, and realizing once more the loss he had sustained, burst forth into direful threats of vengeance against the innocent cause of his misfortune. At this moment, Philostratus presented himself before Aurelian, and after entreating him to listen with patience to the few words he had to say, spoke as follows:

“The lady Eudoxia, my Lord, is manifestly under the special protection of God: no threats of vengeance, no measure suggested by angry passion, will have the least success against her. Believe me, who by experience have learned something of the greatness of her power, it is only with kindness and humble entreaty that so wonderful a person is to be addressed. If you are willing to follow my advice, I have no doubt that your Excellency may even move her to restore your son to life.” Then he related what had formerly happened to himself.

When the Governor heard this, though he had well-nigh given up all hope, he thought it but proper not to overlook the suggestion that had been made, lest it might afterwards be to him a source of unavailing regret. He, therefore, without delay, wrote to the servant of God a most humble apology for the annoyance he had caused her, and besought her to pardon his offence, since it was through ignorance that he had acted in a manner so unworthy of himself and so injurious to one so deserving of the highest commendation. He praised her many virtues, and, above all, her tender-hearted disposition towards her fellow-beings in their distresses, and concluded by begging of her kindness not to refuse to intercede with the great God whom she served, in favor of one who, in the bloom of life and vigor, had been snatched from the affection of an unfortunate and broken-hearted father.

This letter he intrusted to his confidential friend, the Tribune Babylas. That officer instantly set out, and, putting his horse to the utmost speed, soon presented himself before Eudoxia. Kneeling down before her, he said: "Friend of the great God, have pity on us; hasten to our relief. Forgive and forget; refuse us not the aid of that charity which you have shown to others." At the same time he handed her the letter of Aurelian. The Saint, greatly aston-

ished at what she heard and saw, took the letter and withdrew into an adjoining apartment. The Tribune, left to himself, sat down in a corner of the room, near a table on which lay a psalter. Opening the book at random, he read: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that search his testimonies: that seek Him with their whole heart. For they that work iniquity have not walked in his ways. Thou hast commanded Thy commandments to be kept most diligently. Oh! that my ways may be directed to keep Thy justifications." Putting aside the book, he began to think attentively on what he had just read, but as he was much fatigued, he fell asleep. While he slept he had a dream. He thought he saw before him a youth clad in snow-white garments, who, with a wand he held in his hand, struck him on the side, saying: "Arise quickly, Babylas; he that is dead awaits thee." On a sudden he awoke, and seeing no one near him, he was exceedingly amazed. Then calling Eudoxia, he said to her:

"It is time, Oh servant of God, to settle the matter for which I came, and bid me return to them that sent me." And he related to her what he had seen in his dream. Eudoxia, thereupon calling together the sisterhood, and reading to them the letter of the Governor, said

“What do you, my Sisters, advise me to do? What answer must I return to the Governor?”

“May the grace of the Holy Spirit guide you in this, as well as in all other matters,” they replied. Write whatsoever you understand to be pleasing to the Divine Will.”

Hearing this, she begged of them to unite with her for a few moments in fervent prayer; after which she wrote the following reply:

“I, a poor and sinful woman, cannot imagine for what reason your Excellency should have taken the trouble of writing to me. My conscience proves me guilty of many offences against my merciful Creator; how then could I be deemed a proper person to ask of our Lord Jesus Christ that He would deign to restore your son to life? Nevertheless, I feel confident, and dare assure you,—for God has again and again showed His exceeding goodness toward me,—that if, with all your heart and all your mind, you believe and confess that He is the true God, who restores the dead to life, and trust confidently in His power, He will manifest His mercy in behalf of yourself and your son. For it is not becoming that man should call on His dread and holy Name, except with a pure mind and a firm faith. Wherefore, believe with your whole soul, and you shall witness the infinite power of God, and receive the great favor which you so anxiously desire.”

When she had finished this letter, instead of a seal, she impressed on it three signs of the cross, and gave it to the Tribune. Babylas instantly departed altogether changed in his sentiments; for he had come as a Pagan, but he returned a firm believer in the One true God, and in all the truths of Christianity.

Meanwhile, Aurelian, to whom in his anxiety moments seemed hours, fearing lest some unforeseen accident might delay his faithful messenger, went to meet him on his way, resolved, in case he brought no favorable answer, to pursue his journey and plead in person with Eudoxia. The lifeless body of his son, placed on a litter, was borne before him. A vast number of people of all ranks joined in the solemn procession; for it had been made known to the public that they were going to the hermitage of Germanus. Toward nightfall they came to the Governor's country-seat, where the youth had met with the fatal accident. Here they all stayed during the night. Early the next morning, they were about to resume their solemn journey, when in the distance they beheld the Tribune advancing toward them with the utmost speed. When Babylas saw the great concourse of people near the pretorium, he understood at once what had been done. Hurrying on still more rapidly, he soon found himself in

their midst. Without saying a word to Aurelian, or taking notice of any one, he went straight to the litter whereon lay the body of the dead youth. Animated with that fulness of confidence which a strong faith inspires, he laid the letter of Eudoxia upon his breast, and thrice called upon the sacred Name of Jesus. Instantly the youth arose, restored to life and health.

At the sight of this miracle the whole multitude burst forth into loud exclamations of joy and wonder. The Governor, almost beyond himself with delight, rushed into the arms of his son, and cried out:

“Great is the God of Eudoxia! Just and true is the God of the Christians! Happy are they that have recourse to Thee, Oh Lord! more happy they that believe in Thee, Oh Christ Jesus. Receive me, Oh Lord, for I come to Thee; I believe in Thy holy and blessed Name; I confess that Thou art the true, eternal God. Glory to Thee forever and ever!”

After this, Aurelian invited all the people present to the pretorium, and that place, which had but now been a house of mourning, became the abode of happiness and rejoicing. Nor did he neglect to declare solemnly before all, that what he had said in a moment of enthusiasm was the expression of a sincere and firm resolve, and that his belief in the doctrines of Christianity would thenceforth be proved

by his every word and deed. The next day they returned to the city. On the way, the Governor bestowed large sums of money upon all the poor he met. The report of what had taken place having now spread far and wide, the friends of the Governor, and all the principal citizens of Heliopolis, came out to meet him. With every demonstration of joy they congratulated their ruler on the happy event which had restored to him a beloved son and to them a special favorite, and, to the great delight of the Christians, they gave glory to Christ our Lord, whom they willingly acknowledged as the true author of the wonderful miracle.

On his return to the palace, Aurelian immediately sent for the Bishop of the city, and besought him to become his instructor in the mysteries of the Faith. The man of God was at once ready to comply with this laudable desire. During seven days he devoted all his time to this noble work, not only explaining the doctrines of the Church, but training the new convert to the practice of Christian virtues. At the expiration of the seven days, he baptized the Governor, and all the members of his household who had shown themselves anxious to imitate his example.

In the midst of the blessings which a kind Providence had conferred upon him, Aurelian did not forget that Eudoxia had been the chief instrument,

in God's hand, of all these favors. He wrote to her several letters, in which he expressed his grateful feelings toward her, and, whilst commending himself to her prayers and to those of her holy sisterhood, he sent a large sum of money to enable her to build a beautiful chapel, which might serve as a memorial of the extraordinary graces which our Lord had bestowed upon himself and his family. Persevering in his first favor, and edifying all Heliopolis by his zeal and countless works of charity, he not long after slept the sleep of the just. His wife survived him but a short time, after having had, before her death, the satisfaction of seeing her son—who had been the occasion of their conversion to the Faith—raised to the order of Deacons. In the course of time he distinguished himself so greatly by his wisdom and virtues, that, after the death of Theodotus, he was deemed worthy to succeed that holy prelate as Bishop of Heliopolis.

During all this time the enemy of man's salvation, as may easily be supposed, had not remained idle, although his design had for a season been frustrated by the conversion of Aurelian. Shortly after his death, a new Governor was appointed in the person of Diogenes, one of the chief men of Heliopolis. Diogenes was an obstinate Pagan. Under the government of his predecessor, he had carefully

concealed his evil dispositions, because he aspired to the hand of Gelasia, the only daughter of Aurelian. Before his conversion, the father was not adverse to this suit, but after he had become a Christian, he resolutely refused to give his daughter in marriage to an idolator, hoping, at the same time, that Diogenes might imitate his own example and that of so many others, who were daily seen to embrace the Christian religion. As to Gelasia herself, whatever had been her views before, on the day of her baptism she resolved to consecrate herself to God and join the sisterhood directed by the blessed Eudoxia. This resolution she carried out as soon as her mother had been called to a better life, when, attended by two confidential servants, she secretly left the city and hastened to the *asceterium*. None knew for certain what had become of her, although it was rumored that her love of solitude had no doubt induced her to take up her abode with Eudoxia.

When, therefore, the new Governor began to show himself the champion of idolatry and the open enemy of the Christians, he was glad enough to find a pretext to exhibit his animosity against the servant of God, whose virtues and wonderful deeds had become the admiration of all the people. Without taking the advice of any one, he sent a body of soldiers

with orders to arrest Eudoxia and bring her before him. The Saint, however, was not left in ignorance of the danger which threatened her. A voice from heaven said to her: "Watch and pray, Eudoxia. The time is near when thou art to prove thy fidelity to Me. Fear not the malice of men; I am with thee always."

It was night when the soldiers arrived before the dwelling of the pious solitaries. As soon as they had made known the object of their mission, the servant of God, acting under divine inspiration, hastened to the little chapel, and unlocking the holy tabernacle, took thence one of the consecrated particles, which she carefully concealed in her bosom, and showed herself ready to accompany the soldiers. The night was exceedingly dark—but not for Eudoxia, for it seemed to her that a brilliant light guided her steps. The men, taking pity on her, besought her to mount one of their horses. But she, thanking them for their kindness, refused, saying: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but I, confiding in Christ my Lord, will joyously proceed on foot."

When they came to the city, the Governor was somewhat surprised that they should have returned so soon; for, remembering what had happened on former occasions, he seemed almost disappointed

that nothing strange had occurred. Not being ready for an interrogatory, he ordered the Saint to be shut up in prison. After three days had elapsed, he sent for the keeper and said :

“Did any one bring food, or any kind of refreshment, to that sorceress?”

“My Lord,” replied the keeper, “I solemnly declare to your Excellency, that, during all these three days, no one has brought her either food or drink. Whensoever I open the prison door, I find her lying prostrate on the ground, worshipping, I believe, the God whom she adores.”

“Then let her alone,” said Diogenes, “we will hear her to-morrow ; for to-day we are busy with more important affairs.”

On the fourth day after her arrival, the Governor summoned her before his tribunal. Eudoxia appeared before him in the modest dress of an ascetic, with her face veiled. When Diogenes saw this, he said in an angry manner to the lictors :

“Take away that veil, and let us see how she looks.”

This was done, and so great a splendor shone from the countenance of the Saint, that the Governor was startled at the sight, and for a while unable to utter a word. Then, turning to his associates, he said :

“By Apollo himself, I swear it is impossible that so grand a beauty should be guilty of anything deserving death. Why, his godship himself does not equal her in radiant majesty; it seems like an inhuman crime to attempt to disfigure a form so superb.”

“What!” said one of the assessors, “does your Excellency imagine that all this elegance is natural? I, for one, do not believe it, and I would advise your lordship to be cautious in your admiration. Do you forget what artifices an enchantress has at her command? Doubt not, she has not neglected to make use of them for this occasion. If you could but counteract her tricks and dissolve the charm, I am certain your Excellency would find her ugly enough.”

“It may be as you say, but, for the present, I prefer to believe that magic has nothing to do with the matter,” said Diogenes. “At all events, we shall soon find it out, if there be any trick in it; therefore let us proceed with the interrogatory.” Then addressing the accused according to the prescribed form, he asked:

“What is thy name and thy condition in life?”

The Saint, strong in her reliance upon her divine Protector, after blessing herself with the sign of the Cross, answered in a clear and firm tone:

“My name is Eudoxia; concerning my rank and

condition in society it is useless to make inquiries. Let it suffice to know that I am a Christian, and that the great Creator of all things has been so merciful to me as to suffer me to be called one of His servants. Therefore, I entreat your Excellency, do not waste your time with needless questions, but decide at once against me whatever it may please you to do against a Christian; for I trust that Christ, my God and Saviour, will not forsake me."

"Thou twistest thy words with remarkable skill, Eudoxia," said the Governor, "with the intention, no doubt, of charming our ears. Indeed, we are charmed at the thought that a simple question of ours has drawn forth so much eloquence; what would have happened had we plied thee with some knotty points?"

"Thinking that the truth was ever welcome to the minds of brave and prudent men," replied Eudoxia, "I spoke it freely. If, however, your Excellency thinks otherwise and expects to hear something different, it is useless to bandy words with me."

"Who is there that does not delight in the truth," exclaimed Diogenes. "Thou thinkest not so ill of us, we trust, as to imagine that we hold in contempt what is pleasing to every one. Nay, to show that it is from thy own mouth that we desire to learn the truth, tell us, for what reason didst thou leave the

city, despise our immortal gods, and retire into that solitude whence we have ordered thee to be taken? Moreover, why didst thou take thither so much money, after defrauding the public revenues?"

"Do you ask me why I left the city?" said the Saint; "my answer to that is brief enough—because I chose to do so. I was my own mistress. I knew of no law which commanded a free person to stay, or forbade me to leave, if so minded. About that money affair, I have this to say: I wish that they who invented that calumny were here present; the falsehood of their foolish story would vanish at once before the light of truth."

"Nevertheless," said the Governor, "the chief men of the city maintain that what thou callest a false accusation is really true. Let us, therefore, as soon as possible, learn the truth of the matter; for so long as we have not this, we must give credit to the statement of honest men. We cannot overlook a business of this kind without rendering ourself guilty before the Emperor—for there is here question of the public treasury; in affairs of this kind no magistrate can show himself remiss without endangering his safety."

"If it suits the policy of your Excellency," replied Eudoxia, "to simulate one thing and to do another, and to pretend, through hatred of my religion, that

I have defrauded the Emperor of his rights, do as you please. I, who acknowledge the God of truth as my Master, will speak those things which are fair and just; but I disdain to take notice of whatever is falsely and slanderously invented against me."

"Thou shouldst not attempt by foolish quibbles to evade the inquiries of our tribunal; neither shouldst thou rely upon thy skill in magical arts to elude the penetration of our judgment, and the power of the laws. To escape the penalties which these latter decree against thee, there remains for thee but one way; either to sacrifice to the immortal gods, or return to thy former manner of life. But if thou art willing to do neither, return the money which some time ago thou didst take with thee out of the city; for that belongs to the treasury."

"No good Judge, worthy of the name," said the Saint, "when he had instituted inquiries into a case, mixes with it matters which are irrelevant, so as to make a motley of the whole—to the injury of clearness and the truth. Let us, then, put aside that poorly devised fabrication about the money, which your Excellency brought forward at the end, as having little to do with the main subject; and let us come at once to the point, namely, about worshipping the gods or returning to my former man-

ner of living. To that I reply boldly and resolutely ; to my former life of licentiousness I will never return, since God in His mercy has granted me the grace of repentance ; much less will I offer sacrifice to your gods, that is, to wicked devils. Whatsoever torments you may choose to inflict upon me, you cannot change this my firm resolve ; for how could I ever forget all that I owe to the God of infinite goodness, who, in spite of my wickedness, did not suffer me to perish forever?"

The Governor, being now convinced that it was a useless undertaking to attempt to frighten the servant of God with words, ordered her to be taken into an adjoining apartment, there to be prepared for the scourging. When Eudoxia saw herself hurried out of the judgment-hall, she heaved a sigh and looking up to Heaven, she said :

"Lord Jesus Christ, whose holy and divine Name I bear with me, as the pledge of Thy promised assistance, stop the mouths of them that bring false accusations against Thy unworthy handmaid."

After a little while Diogenes entered the room, and, giving a sign to the lictors to delay the execution of his order, said to the Saint :

"I swear to thee, Oh Eudoxia, by all the gods of Olympus, if thou relent but ever so little, and show thyself somewhat less obstinate, we will favor thee

and show ourselves most gracious; but, if thou foolishly continue to be unyielding, we must perforce make thee undergo the utmost penalties of the law."

"I escaped death by believing in Christ," replied Eudoxia; "it is absurd to suppose that I would be so mad as to reject life to expose myself again to death. Be not then afraid to decree against me whatever you are inclined to do. I am an unworthy servant of my Lord and Master Jesus Christ; for His sake I will cheerfully suffer death."

Then the Governor, as if pronouncing her final sentence, said:

"Let four executioners prepare their whips and thongs, to be ready to scourge this obstinate woman, until her flesh be torn to pieces and all her bones laid bare."

After which he commanded all present to withdraw, that she might be left alone to meditate on the torments which were soon to be inflicted upon her. Two hours later he returned and said to her:

"How long wilt thou continue self-willed and disobedient, and refuse to offer sacrifice to our gods, to whom thou owest so much, since they bestowed upon thee so many charms of body and mind? Come now, be wise and do our bidding, that we may have the pleasure of restoring thee to wealth and honor."

“If you were wise yourself,” replied Eudoxia, “you would acknowledge the power and goodness of your Creator and Master; you would prostrate yourself before Him in humble adoration, and beg of Him to grant you pardon for all the wickedness whereof you are guilty. But now you strive in vain to stifle the voice of conscience, which warns you of the retribution which sooner or later will overtake you; and, in your wilful blindness, you widen the abyss that will engulf you while laden with crimes, and bury you in the depths of woe, where unavailing regret and racking despair will be your companions forever.

These words of the Saint so enraged Diogenes that he instantly commanded the lictors to bind her arms and shoulders, and hang her on a gibbet. When for this purpose they began to strip her down to the waist, the consecrated particle, which she had concealed in her bosom, dropped upon the ground. One of the lictors, not knowing what it was, took it up, and was about to hand it to the Governor, when suddenly, changed into a little ball of fire, it escaped from between his fingers. Floating in the air and twirling round, it flitted from lictor to lictor, instantly setting their clothes on fire, until it settled on the left shoulder of Diogenes. Maddened with pain, he fell from his chair, shrieking aloud:

“Great Apollo, save me! I will at once burn up that sorceress. I know it is thine anger I have aroused by my gentle treatment of her.” But a moment after he lay a lifeless body on the floor. Dread and consternation seized upon all present, and soon the whole city reëchoed with cries and lamentations.

Eudoxia, meanwhile, seemingly unconscious of what was taking place, continued absorbed in prayer where the executioners had left her, an invisible hand having thrown a snow-white veil over her shoulders and bosom. At sight of this, a soldier, who was standing by, was so struck with wonder that, yielding to divine grace which moved his heart, he went up to her and said:

“I too believe in your God. Intercede for me, a sinful man, Oh servant of the Most High.”

“May the grace of a new conversion enlighten thy mind,” replied the Saint, “that as a new-born babe thou mayest begin to live and grow unto salvation. But if thou wilt be saved, strive to fly far and forever from thy former infidelity.”

Then the soldier said: “Friend of the Almighty, I beg and entreat you, have some pity on the unfortunate Governor. Ask your God to restore him to life, that many others may confess His power and believe in Him.”

Eudoxia, thereupon, kneeling down, prayed for a long time. Then rising, she said in a loud voice :

“Lord Jesus Christ, who knowest the hearts of men, and who in Thy wisdom didst create all things, grant that they, whom Thou didst visit in Thy wrath, may return to life; that many may be strengthened in their faith, and others, illumined by its supernal light, may glorify Thy most holy Name now and forever.” And going to the place where lay the dead, she took each one by the hand, saying: “In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead, arise and live.” Immediately they stood up and gazed around, as if suddenly awakened from a dream.

While the people, who had witnessed this stupendous miracle wrought by the Saint, were extolling the power and mercy of God, their attention was unexpectedly directed to another scene of excitement and sorrow. A messenger made his appearance, bringing to Diodorus, the chief officer of the Governor, the sad tidings that Firmina, his wife, whilst taking a bath, had suddenly expired. The melancholy event so affected the officer that, casting aside his military cloak, he rushed like one demented to the spot. Diogenes and a great multitude of citizens soon followed. When they came to the bathing-place, they found that the intelligence was

but too true. As the family was one of the most noble and ancient in Heliopolis, and universally esteemed and beloved, every one seemed to share in the bereavement of Diodorus. The Governor, however, was the only one who appeared to be mindful of the wonderful things which had but just now occurred among them. Without communicating his attention to any one, he forthwith returned to the basilica, where Eudoxia was still remaining with some of her Christian friends, and said:

“I verily believe, Oh Eudoxia, that your God is far superior to our deities; indeed I confess that He possesses all power. But if you are willing to increase and confirm this, my weak and wavering faith, I beseech you, come with me to Firmina. If by your prayer you restore her to life, all doubt and misgiving must vanish from my mind; and I will firmly believe and openly confess that your God is the true and only one.”

“Not only for your sake,” replied the Saint, “but for them also who desire to enter the kingdom of God, will our Lord Jesus Christ manifest His infinite mercy. Wherefore, show me the way, and let us go in the name of the Lord.”

They had not gone far before they met the procession that attended the remains of Firmina, lying on a bier. Eudoxia said to the Governor: “Order

the pall-bearers to halt, that I may offer my prayer to our Lord for the deceased." This was done at once; and kneeling down and shedding many tears, the servant of God prayed for some time in silence. Then rising, she approached the funeral-couch, and removing the pall, she took Firmina by the hand, saying in a loud voice:

"Lord Jesus, omnipotent, eternal God, Thou who art the Word of the Father, through whom the dead live again, vouchsafe, I beseech Thee, for the sake of them that are here present and are still seated in the darkness of error, to work this great wonder, that Firmina may be restored to life. Grant her also, Oh Lord, the spirit of true repentance that, being converted to Thee, she may confess and adore Thee, the true and everliving God, to whom be glory now and forever. Amen."

No sooner had she finished this prayer than Firmina sat up alive, and Diodorus, her husband, transported with joy, took her up in his arms. And all the people cried out as with one voice: "Great is the God of Eudoxia! teach us to know and serve Him, that we too may find salvation, Oh beloved friend of the Master of life." When Diodorus recovered from his astonishment, he cast himself at the feet of the servant of God, saying:

"Oh faithful servant of God, make me also a

Christian. For now I understand in good truth how great and merciful is the God whom the Christians adore.”

In consequence, after they had been duly instructed in the mysteries of the Faith, the officer and his whole family were baptized by the bishop of the city. Diogenes, also, faithful to his promise, and grateful for the mercy which had been shown him, embraced Christianity, and, during the remainder of his life, became a model of every Christian virtue.

At the urgent request of Diodorus, Eudoxia consented to take up her abode for some days with his family. Thus she had an opportunity of instilling more fully into their minds the principles and practices of religion. For, by her example even more than by her words, she inspired them with a zeal and love for the Faith which enabled them, in the hour of trial, to triumph over the assaults of the enemy. Many of the neighbors also availed themselves of the short stay of the Saint among them to become acquainted with the teachings of the Church of God, and to enter the fold of salvation. During this time there happened an event which contributed not a little to strengthen the Faith of all the new converts.

A little boy having fallen asleep about mid-day in a garden not far from the dwelling of Diodorus, was

bitten by a very venomous serpent. The cries of the child immediately brought the mother to his aid; but in spite of all her efforts to save him he soon died. Inconsolable at the loss of her only one, the widowed mother was heard mourning and weeping aloud. When Eudoxia was informed of the cause of her distress, her own kind heart was moved with compassion. Without waiting to be asked to do something to comfort the disconsolate mother, she said to Diodorus:

“Come along with me, and you shall see another mystery of our good and merciful Lord.”

Hastening to the spot, they found the body of the child turned black and blue, and frightfully swollen. At the sight of this painful spectacle, the Saint said to her companion:

“Now you must put to the test your faith in God, and prove by an experiment whether it is firm and perfect. Lift up your heart to our Lord, and, with an unwavering confidence, ask Him to restore this child to life.”

“Oh my lady, servant of God,” exclaimed Diodorus, “I am but a neophyte; how can I fix my mind and heart so steadily on my Lord, that He would deign to hear me?”

“I have so firm a confidence in Him,” she replied, “as to be certain that He listens to the prayer of a

penitent; how much more then will He give ear to the supplication of a neophyte who begs for things that are good? Call, therefore, with your whole heart and soul upon His infinite power, and assuredly He will show forth His mercy upon us."

Then Diodorus, reverently bowing down his head, striking his breast, and shedding many tears, prayed with a loud voice, so as to be heard by all the bystanders:

"Lord God, who, in Thy unsearchable wisdom and goodness, didst deign to call me, an unworthy, sinful man, to the knowledge of salvation; and who, in so wonderful a manner, didst send us Thy handmaid to free our souls from the snares of the demon; remembering my unshaken faith in Thee, hear the prayer of Thy poor servant, and command this child, so untimely snatched from his mother, to live again, that they too may serve and glorify Thee hereafter, and together with every spirit praise Thy holy name now and forever."

Having thus prayed, he laid his hand upon the boy, saying:

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified under Pontius Pilate, arise, Oh Zeno."

Forthwith the child stood up, the livid color disappeared, and wiping away the venomous slaver that issued from his mouth, he rushed into the embrace

of his delighted mother. To complete the joy and satisfaction of those who had witnessed the miracle, Eudoxia, by her prayers, caused the hideous monster to crawl forth from its lurking-place, and burst in the sight of all. These wonders had the effect of opening the eyes of a great number of persons to the light of the Gospel, and of making them ask and receive the grace of Baptism at the hand of the Bishop of Heliopolis.

After this the Saint returned to her peaceful solitude, where she continued during some years to edify and direct her pious sisterhood. During the lifetime of Diogenes, the Governor, she remained not only free from every kind of annoyance, but she was, moreover, greatly revered by all the people of the Province—by the Pagans as well as by Christians. When, however, Diogenes had gone to his reward, he was succeeded in his office by Vincentius, a proud and cruel man, and a sworn enemy of the Christians. As soon as he learned what had been done by the servant of God for the overthrow of idolatry in those parts, he determined forthwith to become the champion of Pagan error and superstition. Convinced that his attempts against the faithful would be comparatively powerless, so long as the example and influence of the holy ascetic served to uphold and animate them in their religion, he resolved to begin

his wicked work of persecution by putting her out of the way. Not wishing to summon her before him, or to make her undergo another public interrogatory, since this might have the effect of frustrating the plan he had hit upon, he sent an officer with a company of soldiers to the *asceterium*, with orders, if she was unwilling to renounce her religion and to sacrifice to the gods, to put her to death with the sword. The officer, as indeed he had expected, found her not only firm in the Faith, but delighted at the thought of having, at last, the good fortune of being able to prove her love for her divine Master by laying down her life for His sake; a happiness for which she had long sighed and prayed. She was accordingly beheaded. Thus the great and generous Eudoxia, bearing the palm of martyrdom, went to her Lord, to praise and thank Him for all His graces and wonderful mercies, in the abode of the Elect. She suffered in the reign of Trajan. Her festival is kept on the first of March.





III.

SS. NICANDER AND MARCIAN.

NICANDER and Marcian had during several years served with great distinction in the Roman armies. When, however, they had the happiness of becoming Christians, and understood the dangers to which their Faith was constantly exposed, on account of the idolatrous practices kept up among the soldiers, they resolved to bid farewell to the service of earthly rulers, that they might devote themselves to the nobler work of extending the empire of the Prince of peace. While thus engaged in winning many souls to Christ—more by the example of their blameless lives than by their words of exhortation—the jealousy of the priests of the idols was aroused against them. The influence which the two servants of God possessed with the people had become so great that their enemies found themselves powerless against it, and consequently saw that the only effective means to regain their lost authority would be

the enforcement of the imperial edicts against the Christians. For this purpose they went to Maximus, the Governor of the Campania, and accused Nicander and Marcian of violating the laws of the Empire, by publicly proclaiming the doctrines of the Crucified.

The Governor was by no means pleased with the officiousness of the accusers, and would have gladly overlooked the charge, but, afraid of incurring the displeasure of his imperial masters should he take the responsibility upon himself, he summoned the two Christians before him, and said to them:

“Are you ignorant of the edicts of our sovereign, whereby you are commanded to offer sacrifice to the gods?”

“We are not unacquainted with such edicts,” answered Nicander, “but they do not concern us, since we are Christians, and cannot obey orders which are neither lawful or just.”

“Tell me,” said Maximus, “why did you abandon the military service?”

“We were free to do so,” replied Nicander, “and did it, because we knew by experience that a soldier’s life was dangerous to the morals of men who were resolved to serve the true God.”

“If now you resolve also,” said the Governor, “to offer incense to the gods, we will forget the past,

and reward you with wealth and honorable employments.”

“If, when we possessed wealth and dignities, we gladly renounced them, because we had found a heavenly treasure, how can you suppose that we would be so foolish as to worship stocks and stones to regain what lately we despised and forsook? We serve the One eternal God, who made all things out of nothing; we adore Him who alone is omnipotent, who is able and willing to grant us everlasting happiness, as well as to all others who believe and trust in Him.”

When Daria, the wife of Nicander, who had followed her husband to the tribunal, heard him speak in that fearless manner, she exclaimed:

“Thanks be to God for the brave words you have spoken, Oh my noble husband! Give glory to our Lord Jesus Christ, that He may enable you to triumph over His enemies. Look up to heaven; there behold the immortal King who waits for you, ready to reward you with the crown of victory, if you continue faithful to Him, and keep your soul free from the defilement of idol-worship.”

The Governor, nettled at the boldness with which she cheered on her husband, suddenly turning towards her, said with considerable bitterness in his tone.”

“Oh wicked and senseless blockhead of a woman, dost thou desire the death of thy husband?”

“Far from it,” she replied. “I desire on the contrary, that he may live forever, and rejoice with Christ our Lord in the company of the Elect.”

“I understand all that well enough,” said Maximus; “thou art not sorry to get rid of Nicander, that, being free once more, thou mayest marry a more youthful husband.”

“If you suspect me capable of so base a design,” said Daria, “I beg of you, as a favor, to put me to death first, for the sake of Christ;—if indeed your orders permit you also to execute women.”

“That is just what I thought,” said the Governor. “Thou knowest full well that my orders do not extend to the punishment of women. However, as I cannot gratify thy wishes, nor put thy courage to the test, I will shut thee up in a place of safety, where thou shalt give no evil counsel to thy husband.”

Thereupon, he ordered his lictors to take her to prison.

After this, Maximus, again addressing the Martyr, said to him :

“Nicander, give no heed to the words of thy wife nor to the advice of thy friends, lest they be the cause of thy death. I grant thee a respite of three

days. During that time, reflect seriously whether it is not better for thee to live than to die."

"Your Excellency may consider that time as already past," replied Nicander. "This matter has long since been settled in my mind. My deliberate choice has always been—to live."

"Thanks be to the gods!" said the Governor, in a loud voice, when he heard the answer of the Martyr.

"What reason have you to thank your idols?" asked Nicander. "Is it because I choose life rather than death? Could I, as a Christian, make a different choice, and deny Him by whose grace I hope to be saved?"

"What!" exclaimed Maximus, "didst thou not just now say that thou wast ready to worship the gods, and thus secure both life and happiness?"

"Not at all; the life I have chosen is that endless and blissful life promised by our Lord to His faithful servants. You may torture and kill my body, for it is in your power; you cannot subdue my spirit. I repeat what I said before: I am a Christian."

The Governor, turning to Marcian, said:

"And what sayest thou, Marcian?"

"My answers and my sentiments are the same as those of my companion," replied Marcian.

"Then you shall both go to prison," said Max-

imus, "and await there the day which will be fixed for the punishment deserved by your obstinacy."

Whereupon, the lictors immediately took the two friends in charge and put them in a dungeon, where no one was allowed to visit or comfort them. Here they were kept during thirty days, after which they were again summoned before the Governor, who said to them :

"The time which I have allowed you ought to have been sufficient to make you decide whether or not you are willing to obey the commands of our sovereigns."

"There is no occasion for using many words," replied Marcian ; "no arguments could move us to deny our God, or to swerve from the Faith whereby we behold Him here present with us, and know whither He invites us. Do not detain us any longer, but suffer us speedily to go to Him, who was crucified for us ; whom indeed you revile, because you know Him not, but whom we worship and adore."

"Since you refuse to worship the gods, you shall be put to death, according to your desires," said Maximus.

"It is not through fear of torments," added Marcian, "that we desire a speedy death ; we are ready to suffer cheerfully whatever punishment you may choose to inflict upon us ; but we are more anxious

to attain as quickly as possible the everlasting happiness which is prepared for us."

"You should remember," said the Governor, "that I do not punish you because you have offended me, and that, as far as I am concerned, I wish to remain guiltless of your blood; but I am obliged to execute the orders of our Emperor. This then is your sentence: "Let Nicander and Marcian, formerly soldiers of the imperial armies, who refuse to worship the gods, be beheaded by the sword. And," he added, "if you know that it is going to be well with you hereafter, I wish you joy, and hope that your desires may be fulfilled."

"Peace be with you, Oh Governor, for your kindness," replied the Martyrs, and, blessing God for deeming them worthy to suffer for His Name, they joyfully proceeded to the place of execution.

They were followed by a great multitude of people of every rank, many of the friends and relatives of the Martyrs among them. Some of these encouraged the servants of God with cheerful words, because the moment of their triumph was so near at hand; others, unmindful of a Christian's faith and hope, wept and lamented because they saw them cut down by death, while yet in the full strength of their manhood. Among the latter, the wife of the blessed Marcian was especially conspicuous. With

hair disheveled and in the garb of mourning, she presented herself before him, and cried out :

“Is this the promise which you made me, Oh my husband, that I need have no fear?”

“Go away from me, woman,” said the Martyr, “and trouble me not with your foolish lamentations.”

But she, raising her voice, cried out the more :
“Woe is me! why do you suffer yourself to be led in this manner as a lamb to the slaughter? Have pity on me, Oh Marcian, my lord. How can you forget our darling child, whom you leave an orphan? Forsake us not; spurn not them that have a claim on your guardian care and protection. Alas! did I not foresee all this? Whither are you hastening without so much as a word of kind farewell to the loved ones you leave behind?”

Marcian hearing this, suddenly stopped, and sternly looking at his wife, said :

“How long will you allow Satan to blind your understanding and corrupt your heart? Go away from me; suffer me to lay down my life for the sake of Him from whom I received it—as well as every other blessing.”

Then one of the Martyr’s friends, Zoticus by name, drew near, and taking him by the hand, said :

“Be of good cheer, my lord, and bear up against

this new trial. You have fought the wicked enemy and conquered. Your heavenly King is ready to bestow upon you the crown of justice, as a reward for your unwavering fidelity."

Meanwhile, his wife, who had withdrawn for a moment, returned again, holding her little son in her arms. Placing the child before her husband, she said :

"Can a father behold unmoved the tears of his child? Oh Marcian, my lord, how can you disregard so great a misery as ours? How can you bid farewell to sweet life, and wish for death?" .

"Get thee behind me, Satan," said the Martyr, rebuking her; "thou understandest not the things which are of God." And, addressing Zoticus, he added: "Take up the little boy and restore him to his mother; request my wife to go home, for she hath neither strength nor courage to see her husband die for the Faith. Comfort her with the hope of a happier future, and the protection of one who, when in heaven, will not cease to watch over them that were dear to him upon earth."

When he came to the place of execution and saw that his companion had not yet arrived, he prayed for a little while; then, casting his eyes on the vast multitude of people that surrounded him, he perceived that his friend Zoticus had remained standing

at a distance. Making a sign with his hand, he invited him to approach, and said:

“Zoticus, servant of our Lord Jesus Christ, without loss of time, bring hither my wife again.”

His friend immediately hastened to comply with the request, and led the weeping lady through the crowd. The blessed Martyr affectionately embraced her, and said:

“My beloved wife, this ill-timed grief is unworthy of a Martyr’s wife. The fatherly care of Him, for whose holy Name I rejoice to lay down the present life, will not be wanting to thee when I am gone. By patient resignation, strive to gain that blissful abode where we shall meet again to part no more forever. My going hence, I know, thou art not strong enough to witness; wherefore, go in peace, with His blessing to whose guardianship I entrust thee.”

Then he took up his little son, and pressing him to his bosom, he kissed him again and again, and raising his eyes to heaven, he said:

“Lord God Omnipotent, to Thy loving care I commit my darling child; grant that, ever faithful to Thee, he may not forget the example of one, who, although unworthy, has the happiness of bearing witness to the truth of Thy sacred doctrines.” After which, putting the child into the arms of its mother,

and bidding her again farewell, he dismissed her, greatly comforted and resigned.

Far different was the courageous conduct of Daria, the wife of Nicander. For fear of disturbing her husband at this solemn moment, she followed at a short distance with her little son, whom Papinian, brother of the Martyr Pasicrates, carried in his arms. At the place of execution she would have remained unnoticed, had not the blessed Marcian, seeing her in the crowd, requested the spectators to make way for her and allow her to come to her husband. Nicander, embracing her, said:

“God be with thee, my sister.”

“Rejoice and be thankful, Oh my beloved Nicander,” she replied. “Long and fervently have I prayed that it might be granted to me to pass my days in your happy company, but God wishes to take you to Himself. His holy will be done. I shall have at least the consolation of being called the widow of a Martyr. When you are with our Lord in bliss, ask of Him that, through the merit of the sacrifice which you offer to Him this day, I too may be freed from everlasting death.”

The Martyr promised to comply with the request she made, and then asked:

“But where is our little son?”

“Yonder he is, in the arms of our friend Papinian,” she answered.

“Bring him to me that I may bless him,” he said.

The child being brought to him, he kissed it repeatedly, and, after calling God's blessing upon him, he handed him again to the mother.

After this, the Martyrs saluted each other with the kiss of peace, and kneeling down, they prayed for a while. The executioners then bandaged their eyes with handkerchiefs, and instantly struck off their heads.

The Bishop of Atina, accompanied by the relatives of the Martyrs and many of the Christians, took away the bodies of the servants of God and buried them near the tomb of the blessed Marcus, the Martyr.

They suffered on the seventeenth of June, in the reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus.





IV.

ST. FEBRONIA.

TOWARD the end of his reign, while residing at Nicomedia, Diocletian, at the instigation of his wicked colleague Galerius, consented to renew the persecution against the Church. For this purpose he sent his officers into all the provinces of the East, with orders not only to put to death the professors of the hated religion, but to obliterate the very name of Christian. Among the Prefects commissioned in this manner was Lysimachus, a young nobleman of only twenty years of age, whose father, Anthimus, had been a special favorite of Diocletian. As the youth, however, was suspected of favoring the Christians, the old Emperor, who intended that this mission should put his loyalty to the test, sent out with him his uncle Silenus, with the title of imperial Judge. Silenus, thus appointed to watch over the conduct of his nephew, was a person of a haughty and cruel disposition, a great admirer of his imperial master and an

avowed enemy of the Christians. Lysimachus took with him his cousin Primus, a young man of about his own age, to whom he gave the command of the troops that accompanied him on this expedition.

When they arrived in Mesopotamia, the province to which they were sent, Silenus soon filled the whole country with terror. Everywhere the Christians were hunted down without regard to age or sex; fire and the sword were indiscriminately used for their extinction; so great were the numbers of the slain, that their bodies were left unburied and exposed to be devoured by wild beasts. The executioners themselves became weary and ashamed of their bloody work; the inhuman Silenus alone remained inaccessible to pity and remorse. It was then that Lysimachus, one night, calling aside his cousin, said to him :

“ You have doubtless perceived that my heart is not in the barbarous work wherein we are engaged. My uncle seems to have lost all feelings of humanity; he is like some wild animal of the desert; the sight of blood seems to whet his appetite for more. What is to be done? If I expostulate with him and arouse his anger, he will denounce me for cowardice and neglect of duty, and, probably, obtain from the Emperor the appointment of a person more according to his own heart.”

“I understand not your meaning,” replied Primus. “In punishing these Christians we are doing our duty, according to the command we have received. Why should we sympathize with them? Have they not been declared enemies of the State?”

“Ah, my cousin,” answered the youth, “you remember very well that my father was Governor of Nicomedia, that he was the friend of Diocletian, and the staunch supporter of all our institutions; but you know not that my admirable mother was a Christian. During her lifetime, she made every effort to induce me to follow her example, and at her death she made me promise that if I did not become a Christian, I should at least not be an enemy of her people, nor oppress them without cause. Help me with your advice; what must I do?”

“If these be all your troubles,” said his companion, “it is not difficult to settle them. After this we will make no more arrests, whenever it can possibly be avoided. We will give warning beforehand to the Christians, so that they may have time to make their escape before our arrival. This course will likewise satisfy Silenus, since he will imagine that he has succeeded in exterminating them all.”

Thus did matters stand when they reached the neighborhood of Nisibis. At that time, there was

in this city a monastery of fifty virgins, presided over by a person of great holiness of life, called Bryena, who had been a disciple of the saintly Platonis, whose rule they followed. Among the pious practices observed in the house, there was the custom of keeping holy every Friday of the week, by spending it in prayer and meditation, interrupted only by the reading of the sacred Scriptures. One of the most fervent Religious of this community was Febronia, a young lady about eighteen years old. She was no less distinguished for her great talents than for the extraordinary beauty of her person. As she was a niece of the Abbess, Bryena thought she was entitled to her special care; and hence while, according to their rule, the other sisters took their repast every day toward evening, she allowed the blessed Febronia to take a meal only every second day. Even then the bread and water, her only food, were never taken to satiety. Her rest she took upon a very narrow plank, or more frequently upon the bare ground; and when it happened that she was assailed by any temptations of the evil one, or when she desired to obtain some special favor from God, she was wont to spend the whole night in prayer and in holy reading, that thus her mind might be altogether withdrawn from earthly thoughts and occupations. In consequence

of this assiduous application, she became exceedingly well-instructed in whatever appertains to the duties and practices of asceticism, and she improved so much in the knowledge of the sacred Writings, that even the oldest among the Religious looked up to her as an authority in all these matters. Hence it was that Bryena ordered her to give readings and explanations on these subjects, when, on Fridays, the Sisterhood assembled in their oratory to devote themselves to spiritual exercises.

The manner in which she acquitted herself of this task, which obedience imposed upon her, gave so general a satisfaction, that her reputation soon spread beyond the walls of the monastery. Several of the noble matrons of the city became desirous of attending the exhortations of the eloquent nun, and ceased not to importune the lady Abbess until, at last, their wish was gratified. As, however, the young Religious was very humble and modest, Bryena took care to have a curtain hung before her during these lectures, so that the secular portion of the audience could indeed hear but not see their eloquent instructress, and she, on the other hand, was not aware that there was any one present except her own sisters.

Among the ladies who came to listen to Febronia there was one day a young widow named Hieria,