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THE ACTS

OF THE

EARLY MARTYRS

BY

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER.	PAGE.
I.—ST. MARGARET.....	5
II.—ST. EUDOXIA.....	24
III.—SS. NICANDER AND MARCIAN.....	91
IV.—ST. FEBRONIA	103
V.—ST. MAXIMUS AND HIS COMPANIONS.....	164
VI.—ST. EUPHEMIA.....	186
VII.—SS. TIMOTHY AND MAURA.....	210
VIII.—ST. ALEXANDER AND HIS COMPANIONS.....	231
IX.—ST. JULIAN AND HIS COMPANIONS.....	257



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,

who, after the death of her husband, a distinguished and wealthy Senator, seeking to lead a retired life, had again taken up her residence with her parents. These were Pagans, as well as herself. So pleased was Hieria with the instructions of the young Religious, that she determined at once to become better acquainted with her, in the hope of inducing her to be the teacher and guide of one who had hitherto lived in error and ignorance. Wherefore, the next day, she returned to the monastery, and casting herself at the feet of the Abbess, and shedding many tears, said:

“I beseech you, by the mercy of the great Creator of heaven and earth, do not cast me off, although a blind and ignorant Pagan, who have been until now the sport of all the follies of idolatry. Do not deny me the favor I ask, but suffer the blessed sister Febronia to teach me the way of salvation, that walking therein all my days, I may obtain the promises made to faithful Christians. My parents indeed destine me to a second marriage, but it depends on yourself, Oh holy Bryena, to snatch me from the vanity of this world and the defilement of idols. Permit Febronia to teach and direct me, and you will bestow upon me a new life and unutterable happiness. The heaviness of heart and the distress of mind which I have experienced while wandering in the

darkness of Paganism and seeking in vain for the truth, ought to be a sufficient punishment for my many faults, since, after all, I may assert that I have sinned more through ignorance of what was right, than through intentional malice."

These words and the tears of the noble matron, moved the kind-hearted Bryena, who said to her:

"God knows how great a care I have ever taken of my niece. She was a child of only two years of age when I received her in my charge, and ever since I have watched over her in such a manner that, so far from seeing any person of the other sex, she has not even seen any woman who did not wear the dress of the Religious. Would you believe it? the good woman who nursed her when an infant, has these many years begged me again and again to allow her to exchange a few words with her former foster-child, or to give her at least a chance of seeing her once more; but she has never yet been able to obtain my consent."

Hieria expressed her astonishment at this excess of watchfulness, as she considered it to be, but she was not dissuaded from her purpose, and said:

"If, good Mother, you object to my worldly apparel, the difficulty can be easily removed, by permitting me, for the present occasion, to disguise myself in the garb of a Religious."

“Great indeed, and ingenious, Oh Lady, is your perseverance,” replied Bryena, smiling. “However, on account of your earnest desire of learning to know the true God and the doctrines of the Christian religion, I cannot refuse your request.”

Wherefore, having made her put on the dress of a nun, Bryena introduced her to Febronia as a foreign sister, who desired to confer with her upon Christian doctrine and various spiritual matters for the good of her soul. The young Religious affectionately embraced the stranger, and showed herself ready to begin at once their conference. With so much zeal did she enter upon her subject, and with so generous a spirit of charity was she animated, that she became wholly unconscious of fatigue. On the other hand, her companion was so attentive to her words, and so anxious to learn always more and more, that she too seemed forgetful of everything else, and, whilst shedding floods of tears, drank in with her whole soul the stream of sacred knowledge which God had prepared for her in so wonderful a manner. Thus, without being aware of the flight of time, they spent the entire night, absorbed in the study and consideration of heavenly things.

In the morning, when Bryena met them again, it was with great difficulty she could persuade the Lady Hieria to return to the home of her parents.

For she declared herself not only converted to the Faith, but determined to lead thenceforth a life of chastity, and to devote herself altogether to works of piety and Christian benevolence. Incited by this spirit of charity, she gave herself no rest until she had induced her parents to forsake the worship of idols and every other heathenish superstition, and had made them understand and embrace the truths of Christianity. Such was the admirable result of her conversation with the blessed Febronia. Yet all the while the blessed servant of God was ignorant of the good effected by her instruction, and, as on that day she did not again see her companion, she addressed herself with childlike simplicity to Thomaïs, who was the next in authority to Bryena:

“Tell me, Mother,” she said, “who was that stranger nun with whom I conversed so long, and who wept as if she had never before read the Holy Scriptures or heard them explained?”

“Why,” said Thomaïs, “do you not know her?”

“How should I know her,” replied Febronia, “since she is a stranger?”

“Not at all,” said the Prioress; “it was the Lady Hieria, the widow of the Senator.”

“Why, then, did you not tell me of this?” said Febronia, “for I talked to her as if she were a sister.”

“It was the will of the lady Abbess,” answered Thomais, “that it should be so.”

And well might Febronia have spoken to her as to a sister, for when, a few days after, she fell sick, and was brought to death’s door, the noble Hieria never left her for a moment, but ministered to her night and day until all danger had disappeared.

Meanwhile the report spread through Nisibis that Silenus was fast approaching the city. Immediately all they that were able began to seek safety in flight. The Bishop also gave orders that the monks and the members of his clergy whose presence was not absolutely necessary in the city, should withdraw at least for a short time, well knowing that the more violent was the storm of persecution, the shorter would be its duration. He himself sought a temporary hiding-place in the vicinity of the town.

The sisters who dwelt in the monastery of Bryena, when informed of these precautions taken by the inhabitants of Nisibis, went to her and said:

“What are we going to do, Oh Mother? The people of the city are fleeing from the wrath to come; the wild beasts are entering among us ready to devour their prey.”

“And what do you want me to do?” asked Bryena.

“Command us to conceal ourselves for a little

while," they answered, "that thus we may save our lives."

"What is this I hear, Oh my children?" exclaimed the Abbess. "You have not yet seen anything of the war, and do you want to run away? The battle is not yet begun, and are you already conquered? Not so, my daughters; not so, I beseech you. Let us stand our ground fearless and firm; let us fight, let us die for Him who died for us, that we may live and triumph with Him."

By this resolute reply of their Abbess, the fears of the sisterhood were allayed for the present, and all betook themselves to their usual occupations, apparently determined to engage in the conflict and to conquer or die. But as constancy has never been a special attribute of their sex, we need not wonder that a short time produced a great change in the feelings of so many persons, differing in age and natural dispositions. For the following day one of their number, called *Ætheria*, in whom the spirit of martyrdom was not very strong, began to busy herself in going about and saying to her sisters: "Our good Mother Abbess is not so impartial as she would fain make us believe; I am sure it is all for the sake of her niece that she wants us to remain. Do you think it fair that, on account of *Febronia*, we must be exposed to the danger of losing our

lives? Come with me; I will speak for you, and make her understand what is right and proper."

This proposal awakened a long and lively discussion among her companions, some being in favor of it, while others were decidedly opposed to a suggestion which appeared to them prompted by a spirit of cowardice. At last, however, it was resolved to repair once more to their Superior, and to leave to her the final decision. When they presented themselves before her, Bryena—who already knew that *Ætheria* was the cause of all this trouble—looked at her with a stern countenance, and said:

"What dost thou desire, sister *Ætheria*?"

"That you would order us to hide ourselves until the danger which threatens us is past; for we are not better than our clergy, or the Bishop himself. Besides, it is but proper to consider that among us there are several who are still quite young, and that these must needs be exposed in a particular manner to all the violence of a ruthless soldiery. Moreover, who can say what strength will be vouchsafed to us? Who can be certain that the cruelty of the torturers will not overcome our constancy, and thus cause us to lose our immortal souls? But if you command us to take care of ourselves, we will take with us the lady *Febronia*, and go whithersoever a kind Providence may guide us."

When Febronia heard the last words of her sister, she said:

“As the Lord liveth, to whom I have consecrated myself, and who hath my soul in His holy keeping, I will not of my own accord quit this place; here will I rather die, here too will I be buried.”

Then said Bryena to *Ætheria*: “Thou shouldst now understand the harm thou hast done, but see thou to it; I, for my part, am innocent of guilt in this matter.” And addressing the Sisterhood, she added:

“Let each one of you consult her own conscience and choose what she thinks best for herself.”

Whereupon, nearly all yielding to their fears, amidst sobs and tears, and striking their breasts, bidding farewell to the Abbess and Febronia, left the monastery. But when Procla, the foster-sister of Febronia, came to her, and while embracing her, whispered: “O my beloved sister, pray for me in a special manner, that I may be able to resist the temptations of the evil one, and that our separation may not be of long duration;” the holy Religious, holding her by the hand, said:

“Have confidence in God, beloved Procla; how canst thou find it in thy heart to leave us so? Seest thou not how weak I am, and how, if it be God’s will that I should die at present, our good Mother

Abbess, thus forsaken by you all, shall not even be able to commit my poor body to the tomb? Stay then, Oh sister, and refuse me not this last token of thy affection."

"If it be thy wish," replied Procla, "that I remain with thee, I will never abandon my beloved sister."

"Our Lord is my witness," said Febronia, "were it not in an emergency like this, I would never have asked thee to make so great a sacrifice for me; but be assured it will not be without its reward."

This induced Procla to yield to the voice of duty, as well as to the promptings of her own heart; for she was sincerely attached to her saintly foster-sister. But, as might well be expected, during the day new rumors of the approach of the enemies of the Christians shook her good resolutions, and, instead of animating her with the spirit of martyrdom, caused her to yield to the natural instinct of self-preservation. In consequence, she no longer remembered her love for Febronia, nor the promise she had made; but when evening came she betook herself secretly to the place of concealment where her sisters had found for the present a safe asylum.

Bryena, seeing herself thus suddenly abandoned by her community, and well-knowing that still greater sorrows were in store for her, went into the

oratory, and, bursting into tears, prostrated herself upon the ground. Here she continued for some time, loudly lamenting and giving free scope to her long pent-up feelings. Thomais, the Prioress, perceiving the great mental anguish of the afflicted lady, seated herself beside her, and endeavoring to comfort her, said :

“Do not distress yourself in this manner, beloved Mother. God is all-powerful; He will not suffer us to be tried beyond what we are able to bear. Who that hopes in the Lord has ever been put to confusion? Who hath called upon Him and hath not been heard? He is compassionate and merciful; He will not remember our sins in the day of our tribulation; for He is the Protector of all them that seek Him in truth.”

“What you say is perfectly true, Oh my sister,” replied Bryena. “But what shall I do with Febronia? Where or how shall I conceal her from the sight of the profaner? I would rather suffer a thousand deaths than see her carried off a captive by the barbarous enemies of our holy Faith.”

“Do you then forget what I was just now saying?” asked Thomais. “He that restores the dead to life, cannot He strengthen and save our sister? Come, then, Mother, let us go hence; wipe away those tears of sadness and despondency. Let us go and cheer

up our beloved Febronia, for she is again quite ill and in great suffering."

Wherefore, going into the cell of Febronia, they found her reclining upon her narrow bench. At the sight of this, Bryena began to weep most bitterly, and embracing the feet of the young Religious, bedewed them with her tears. This strange manner of acting on the part of the Abbess, astonished Febronia, and thinking that something dreadful was about to happen, she said to Thomais:

"Pray, tell me, good Mother, what is the cause of this unwonted dejectedness of the lady Abbess? I heard her but just now, while she was in the oratory, giving utterance to ejaculations which show that she has a heavy heart."

"Alas! my daughter," answered Thomais, "it is mainly on thy account that the lady Abbess is so sorely distressed. We are well aware of the great dangers which threaten us all, but we feel especially that the beauty and gracefulness which God has bestowed upon thee, is, at this time, a fatal gift rather than a blessing. For if, in the day of visitation, age and discretion are scarcely able to guide us in safety through the difficulties which beset our paths, what can be expected of youth and inexperience?"

"If you refuse me not the help of your prayers," said Febronia, "I cannot believe that the danger

will be as great as you seem to surmise. Our Lord is able, and, doubtless, willing to regard the lowliness of His handmaid. I am certain that he will not withhold from me, although I am so unworthy, that strength and fortitude which, in the hour of trial, He is wont to bestow upon all His servants who love Him in truth."

Then Thomaïs went on to say: "I deem it my duty, my beloved daughter, to warn thee that the hour of trial, whereof thou speakest, is very near at hand. Soon the soldiers sent by the tyrant will be upon us. They among us who are advanced in years will be dispatched at once. Yet thee, on account of thy youth and beauty, they will strive to gain over by their wily arts. When, therefore, with their deceitful tongues they praise and flatter thee, hearken not to them; when they display before thee gold and silver, rich garments and priceless jewels, and promise thee all the pomp and luxury of this world, close thine eyes and much more thy heart against these vanities, lest thou lose the reward of all thy past labors, and become the sport of the demon and his servants. Remember the excellence of holy virginity, and the bright crown which awaits it hereafter; for the Bridegroom of Virgins is immortal, and He shares His own immortality with them that continue ever faithful to Him. Look up

to Him, therefore, Febronia, to whom thou hast consecrated thyself. Take care lest thou make void the solemn promise which thou hast made to Him, and forfeit the sacred pledge which He hath given thee in return. And, above all, sooner than yield to the temptation of the evil one, think of that dreadful day, when our Lord, seated on the throne of His glory, shall come in His majesty to judge every one of us, as well as our persecutors, and pronounce sentence according to our deeds—whether they be good or evil.”

Febronia listened with the greatest attention to the advice of the lady Prioress, and, after thanking her kindly for the interest which she had manifested toward one who was so undeserving of special favors, she said :

“It is indeed but right, my kind mother, that you should endeavor to strengthen one who is so weak and inexperienced as I am; our Lord only knows with how great a courage you have inspired my poor heart. And, as it may be some comfort to yourself to believe that your words have not been spoken in vain, I can assure you that they have confirmed me in the resolution which I had taken. For, had I been desirous of avoiding this conflict with the enemies of our holy religion, I would have left the convent with my sisters, and, even as they have

done, so would I have sought safety in flight. But, as I have no other desire upon earth than to please Him, to whom I have consecrated my body and soul, I will strive to the best of my power to gain the prize which He proposes to His faithful servants—should He deem me worthy to enter upon this struggle, and to die for the confession of His holy Name.”

When Bryena heard her niece talk in this manner, she was greatly comforted, and said:

“Do not forget, my beloved child, that from the age of two years I had thee in my charge, and so trained thee to the knowledge of everything that is good and useful, that thou art become even to others a teacher of sound doctrine. Remember, also, that, in order to keep thy heart pure, and free from every danger of defilement, I have shielded thee not only from the sight of men, but also from the presence of women who neglect their religious concerns. Now, then, my child, dishonor not my old age, and forget not the labors and anxieties of thy spiritual mother. Call to mind those noble champions who have gone before us, how, after a generous confession of their Faith, they have received the crown of victory from the divine Athlete Himself—not men only, but women and young and delicate maidens as well. Remember those valiant

sisters Lyba and Leonis, how they triumphed over fire and sword. Think of that child-martyr Eutropia, who, at the age of twelve, suffered together with her mother. How often thou didst express thy admiration at the heroic conduct of that little girl! For when the judge, who condemned her to be pierced with arrows, had given secret orders that her bonds should be loosened, so that, in her fright, she might betake herself to flight, and when her mother, who saw through the artful device of the enemy, said to her: "Do not run away, my beloved Eutropia," she herself at once tightened her own bonds, and, standing firm and erect, never stirred until, transfixed with arrows, she yielded up her generous soul to her Maker. Didst thou not continually extol the wonderful virtue of that noble daughter, obedient to the voice of her mother even unto death? Yet the blessed Eutropia was a simple and untaught child—and thou hast been the teacher of many others unto justice! See, therefore, my child, whether it would not be altogether unworthy of thyself and of thy spiritual mother, to shrink from imitating what thou admirest so deservedly in others."

Exhorting and cheering one another with these and similar conversations, they passed the night.

Early in the morning, the whole city was thrown

into utter confusion, because, under favor of the night, Silenus and his men had entered Nisibis. While the soldiers were engaged in arresting the Christians wherever they could be found, and committing them to prison, some of the Pagans called the attention of the Judge to the monastery. This was welcome news to the tyrant. Immediately he sent a band of armed men to the place. These surrounded the convent, and with their axes soon shattered the doors to pieces. Great was their astonishment when they found that its inmates had made their escape. Wandering from room to room, they came, at last, to the apartment where the three Religious were trying to solace one another with the hope of dying for their faith, and securing a Martyr's crown. Suddenly laying hold on the venerable Abbess, they were about to despatch her with the sword, when Febronia, in spite of the feeble state of her body, leaping from her poor couch, cast herself at the feet of the ruffians. and, shedding a flood of tears, exclaimed:

“By the mercy of the great Creator of the universe, and by whatever you hold sacred, I beg and implore you, if ye be men, harm not this aged and innocent lady; or if ye be unwilling to spare, first turn your swords against me, that I may not see her die, who is more than a mother to me.”

Taken by surprise at what they saw, they hesitated to strike, and began to consult with one another what was to be done, when, unexpectedly, Primus, their commander, presented himself. Seeing how matters stood, he forthwith ordered the soldiers to leave the monastery; then, addressing himself to Bryena, he asked:

“Where are they all who dwelled in this house?”

“Frightened when they heard that you, my Lord were coming, they fled from the convent,” answered the Abbess.

“Would that in like manner you had made good your escape,” said he. “Perhaps it is not yet too late: leave at once, and hide yourselves wheresoever you may find a place of safety.”

And immediately, taking with him the soldiers whom he saw still loitering about the premises, he departed, hastening to the pretorium of his chief. Lysimachus, who was much concerned for the safety of the inmates of the monastery, no sooner beheld his lieutenant than he cried out:

“Tell me at once, are the reports true, which I hear about that house?”

“They are all true, my Lord,” replied Primus. Then taking him aside, he added: “All its inmates had made their escape before our arrival, except two old matrons and one young lady. But, I can assure

you, this young person is indeed fair to look upon. Never before have I beheld so much beauty and loveliness combined in woman. In good truth, were she not poor and without rank—as I suppose her to be—I venture to say, your lordship could nowhere find a worthier consort, were you to seek for one through every Province of the Empire.”

“Do you then forget,” said the youth, “that I have a command from my mother, not to shed the blood of Christians, but on the contrary to treat them kindly? How could I, after that, lay snares for the servants of Christ? I will, most certainly, not disgrace myself so foully as to become guilty of such a crime. As a friend, therefore, I beg you, protect those three persons; enable them to make their escape, and above all, see that they do not fall into the clutches of my pitiless uncle.”

Meanwhile, however, one of the soldiers, who had been ordered away from the monastery, hurrying to Silenus, had related to him what he had seen, and how Primus, the lieutenant of Lysimachus, seemed inclined to take under his protection the Christian women whom they had been sent to arrest. This report so aroused the ire of the wicked old man, that he instantly gave orders to one of his officers to repair with a company of soldiers to the monastery, and to keep its inmates close prisoners in their cells.

At the same time, he commanded proclamation to be made throughout the city that, on the following day, the persons arrested in the convent should be publicly interrogated. But, later in the day, when his anger had somewhat moderated, he changed his intention, and resolved to confine himself to the examination of Febronia alone.

Wherefore, early the next morning, the apparitors entered the sacred place which had been the abode of the blessed Febronia from her childhood, and summoned her to appear before the imperial Judge. Without the least regard to her feeble condition, they put her in chains, and even fastened an iron collar around her neck, as if they were afraid that otherwise she might in some way succeed in escaping from them. When Bryena and Thomais, to whom this painful display appeared at first as if it were only a mockery or a dream, began to realize what they saw, they threw their arms around their beloved daughter, and, uttering loud cries of lamentation, implored the men to grant her a few moments of respite, that they might bid a last farewell to one who was so dear to their hearts. Perceiving that their appeal was made in vain, they begged to be allowed to take the place of the sick and suffering girl, or, at least, to accompany her to the tribunal of the Judge. Upon this the officer in command said to them:

“We have no orders to take you to the tribunal, but only this young lady. However, for her sake, we allow you a few moments of time. Speak to her at once, and bid her farewell.”

Then Bryena, wiping away her tears, said to Febronia, in a tone of tenderest affection, but withal full of firmness :

“Behold, my beloved daughter, thou art this very moment going forth to battle; the contest is to be final. Remember that thy heavenly Bridegroom is looking down from on high upon this struggle. His holy angels are holding in their hands the crown of victory, ready to place it upon thy brow, if thou prove thyself a true champion worthy of thy calling. Fear not the torments prepared for thee; they are but of short duration, howsoever cruel and unendurable they may appear to thy present weakness. Put thy confidence in Him who calls thee to show forth the power of His grace. Above all, give no opportunity to the demon to triumph and rejoice over us. Think not of thy poor and perishable body, even were it to be torn to pieces by the scourge and the rack; for thou knowest full well that, after all, in spite of ourselves, it is destined very soon to become the prey of the tomb, and to be reduced and lowered—how fair soever it may have been—to its original dust. Clad with the armor of Faith, go forth, and

fear not the wicked foe. Meanwhile, since I am not permitted to do more, I will continue in this holy sanctuary, praying and weeping, and awaiting from thee tidings either sad or cheering. So act, Oh my daughter, that they be glad and consoling to my heart. Oh! who will bring me the happy message, that my darling Febronia, after a glorious combat for the honor of her divine Bridegroom, has merited to be ranked among the noble band of Martyrs!"

The young Religious, embracing her spiritual mother, replied:

"I trust in God, Oh my beloved mother, that, forasmuch as hitherto I have never transgressed any of your commands, I shall not now prove faithless to your wholesome advice. With the aid of divine grace, I will so acquit myself that all who behold me will call my aunt Bryena blest in her old age, and say of me: "Truly, she proved herself a worthy nursling of the great Bryena." For I will show to the enemies of our Faith that in this tender and womanish body there lies concealed the fearless courage of a man. Meanwhile, cease not to pray for me, and suffer me now to go my way."

As she said this, Thomais drew close to her, and whispered in her ears:

"I solemnly declare to thee, my daughter Febronia, thou shalt not be altogether alone. The tyrant

has it not in his power to make me, in the hour of thy trial, lose sight of thee. I will this moment put on a secular dress, and, mingled with the crowd of spectators, I will be an eye-witness of thy conflict."

The officer then said: "It is time to go."

"I am quite ready," replied Febronia, and addressing the two Religious, she said:

"Give me your blessing, O my venerable mothers, that God may this day be my strength and support."

Immediately, Bryena, lifting her hands toward heaven, said in a loud voice:

"Lord Jesus Christ, who didst appear, under the form of thine Apostle Paul, to Thy servant the blessed Thecla, in the hour of her struggle, be also with this Thy lowly handmaid in her combat for Thy glorious Name. Forsake her not, when the powers of darkness assail her from everywhere; but graciously uphold and comfort her, that she may obtain the palm of victory."

Then, once more embracing her noble daughter and bedewing her with her tears, she bade her good speed.

When she beheld the soldiers leading away the child of her affection, the Abbess, in spite of all her efforts to appear calm and resigned, was overwhelmed with a crushing grief. Reëntering the oratory, she prostrated herself upon the floor and, for a while,

gave herself up to a paroxysm of anguish and desolation, relieved at last by a flood of tears. Then, with a strong cry, she began to offer up prayers and supplications to God for Febronia, beseeching Him to show forth the greatness of His mercy in her behalf, and to grant strength and perseverance to the youthful and innocent Religious, who had served Him all her days in total ignorance of the world and its deceitful allurements. Her prayer did not remain unanswered, for she suddenly felt within her the assurance that Febronia would secure her crown.

Meanwhile, faithful to her promise, Thomais had put on a disguise, and was hastening to the tribunal of the Judge. Thither she was followed by many of the matrons of the city, who had been accustomed to attend every Friday the instructions given by Febronia. These, weeping aloud and striking their breasts, gave unmistakable signs of the distress they felt at the thought of losing their holy instructress, who had become so endeared to them, and by whose eloquent words they had not only been charmed, but guided in the path of duty and of Christian perfection. But when it was reported to the Lady Hieria, that her saintly mistress was that very moment on her way to the court of Silenus, she set up so great a cry of lamentation, that the whole house was filled with alarm and consternation. Her fright-

ened parents forthwith ran to her assistance and inquired the cause of this sudden outburst of grief.

“Woe is me!” replied the dejected lady, “they are dragging my sister Febronia before the tribunal of the merciless tyrant. They are going to try my beloved teacher, because she is a Christian.”

Her parents endeavored to console her with whatever words of comfort their affection for their daughter could suggest; they besought her with many tears not to weary herself with unavailing sorrow and repining.

“Alas! alas!” said Hieria; “suffer me at least to weep out the bitterness that fills my soul for the loss of my sister, my darling Febronia. She taught me to know and serve the true God. Alas! alas! shall I see thee no more, O beloved Febronia, my sister Febronia!”

So moved were all the members of the household at the sight of this inconsolable anguish of the affectionate Hieria, that they ventured, at last, to beg of her parents to permit her to go to the place of the trial, not doubting but that, if she could once more behold, if not address, her beloved Febronia, she would learn patience and resignation from the example of her who had first opened her eyes to the knowledge of truth and salvation. Acting upon this advice, the parents made the proposal to their

daughter, who immediately, suppressing every outward demonstration of her grief, showed herself ready to go. Whereupon, attended by a great number of family servants, Hieria hurried to the public place. On her way she overtook many of the ladies of her acquaintance, and even Thomaïs herself—in whose company she had the sad consolation of witnessing the brave struggle of Febronia for the Faith.

A vast multitude of spectators already filled the space around the tribunal. For not only the people of the city, but even those of the neighboring country, to whom the name of the holy Religious had become known, were desirous of witnessing—some her fall, others her triumph. Silenus and Lysimachus, having taken their places on the judgment-seat, ordered her to be brought forward. When, therefore, she appeared before them, with her hands tied behind her, and a heavy iron collar around her neck, all the people, Pagans as well as Christians, moved with a natural impulse of compassion, uttered a loud cry of horror and indignation: “Why,” they exclaimed, “must one so fair and delicate be unnecessarily treated in so cruel a manner?” Silenus, however, gave no heed to this indignant protest of the multitude, but commanded the soldiers to enforce silence and order. Then, turning to his nephew, he

requested him to open the interrogatory and to receive the answers.

Lysimachus, somewhat confused at this unexpected request of his uncle, said to the accused :

“Tell me, young lady, art thou a free-woman or a slave?”

“I am a slave,” she replied.

“And whose slave art thou?” he asked.

“The slave of Christ,” she answered.

“And what is thy name?” he inquired.

“An humble Christian,” she said.

“But I would know the name by which thou art called.”

“I have told you already, that I am but an humble Christian ; yet if I must needs answer more, my Lady calls me Febronia.”

Then Silenus, to whose impatient mind this formal manner of interrogating seemed altogether too tedious, interrupted his nephew, and said to the accused :

“The gods be my witnesses, Oh Febronia, that I had at first resolved not to grant thee even a hearing ; so greatly was I incensed against thee. Thy modest demeanor, however, and thy great reputation, no less than thy graceful appearance, have softened—nay, disarmed all feelings of hatred or resentment which I had conceived against thee.

Well, then, I will speak to thee, not as a judge to one accused, but as a father to his child. Listen, therefore, my daughter, with a heart open to persuasion. The gods know that I and my brother Anthimus, some time ago, agreed upon a marriage between Lysimachus, who is here seated at my right hand, and a lady possessed of very great wealth. I now annul this betrothal between my Lord Lysimachus and the daughter of Prosporus, and I offer thee in marriage to a person, as thou seest, as beautiful and graceful as thyself. Do but follow my good advice, as that of a loving father, and I will make thee famous throughout the whole Empire. Nor needest thou plead thy poverty as an excuse for refusing the high honor which is offered thee this day. I have neither wife nor children. I will make thee the mistress of all my vast possessions, and thou wilt bring them as a marriage portion to my Lord Lysimachus; and I will look upon you both as my beloved children. Not only this, but if thou art willing to be guided by me, the Emperor himself will be delighted to honor thee. He will make thy husband—according to a promise made to me—a Governor, as great and powerful as his father was before him. Now thou hast heard all; call me thy father, and give me an answer that may please the gods and delight my heart. Never were greater

inducements held out to woman; be not so foolish as to reject this magnificent offer. If, nevertheless, thou chooseth to despise our gifts and to insult our kind nature, I swear by the immortal gods, thou shalt not live three hours. Give me thy answer."

"I have in the heavens," replied Febronia, "a bridal-chamber not made with hands, where I also have a Bridegroom who may not be disowned, since He pledged Himself to give me the whole kingdom of heaven. How could I abandon Him, who is ever glorious and immortal, for a husband who is human and perishable? Do not, then, Oh Judge, make useless efforts to shake my firm resolves; neither flattery can change my mind, nor can threats frighten me into compliance with your desires."

When Silenus heard this answer, all his pretended kindness suddenly vanished away; he flew into a great passion, and addressing his soldiers, cried out:

"Take off the garment which she wears and clothe her with rags, that she may stand vile and contemptible in the sight of all this people; then perhaps she will understand what it is to despise wealth and distinction, which a moment ago were within her reach."

Instantly the soldiers stripped her of her religious habit, and throwing on her a tattered garment, exhibited her to the assembled multitude. The

Judge, seeing her in this condition, scoffingly exclaimed:

“What sayest thou now, Febronia? Seest thou the height from which thou art fallen, and the low estate to which the haughty refusal of our favors hath reduced thee?”

“Even were you to deprive me of all my garments, Oh Judge,” replied the Virgin, “I would not consider myself disgraced. When I came hither, it was with the expectation not only of being despoiled of my garments, but also of being subjected to the torture of fire and the sword. Heaven grant that I may be deemed worthy to suffer for the sake of Him who hath suffered so much for me.”

‘Oh shameless girl!’ cried Silenus; ‘truly thou deservest to be disgraced in very deed. I knew very well that thou wert not a little proud of thy beauty, but I did not suspect that vanity would carry thee so far as to make thee desire to be publicly exposed to the gaze of the multitude, that all might admire the graceful proportions of thy body.’”

“My Lord Jesus Christ is my witness,” said Febronia, “that until this day I had never seen the face of any man; and am I to be called shameless, because, against my will I am fallen into your hands? But tell me, Oh wicked and insensate Judge,” she went on boldly, raising her voice, ‘what champion

ever presents himself at the Olympian games without first divesting himself of his garments? and does he not remain naked until he has overthrown his antagonist? Since I expected to be scourged, as well as to be burnt, had I no reason to think that my garments would be torn from me? Come, then, let me enter upon this conflict with your father the devil, that I may prove to you how I scorn all your torments.”

“Since she is so willing to undergo tortures,” said the wicked Silenus, “and defies us for threatening her with the punishment of fire, bind her to four stakes and put fire under her; at the same time let four soldiers unceasingly beat her with rods.”

The soldiers accordingly stretched her over a glowing fire, into which they poured, from time to time, a great quantity of oil. Soon the blood flowed in streams from the delicate body of the Martyr,—the executioners plying their rods with the utmost vigor. The Pagans themselves, who witnessed the cruel spectacle, were moved with compassion and exclaimed:

“Have pity, Oh kind and merciful Judge, have pity on the poor girl!”

But the cold-hearted tyrant, instead of relenting, encouraged his men to still greater exertion. When, however, he saw that large pieces of flesh, torn from

her mangled limbs, dropped into the fire, and, on account of her having swooned away, he believed that she had already breathed her last, he ordered the executioners to desist.

At the sight of the barbarous cruelties inflicted upon her beloved Febronia, the faithful Thomais sank lifeless to the ground at the feet of the Lady Hieria. Regardless of the danger to which she might be exposed by thus betraying her presence, Hieria exclaimed in a loud voice:

“Woe is me, Oh my sister Febronia! alas, my darling mistress! What shall I do? I am deprived this day not only of my beloved instructress, but even of my lady Thomais, who is dying with thee and for thee, Oh Febronia!”

The sound of that well-known voice seemed to recall the Martyr to life. Faint with loss of blood, and unable to rise from the ground, where she lay all bruised and bleeding, she begged the soldiers to sprinkle some water upon her face. The men willingly complied with her request. This act of kindness refreshed her so much that she was enabled to raise her head a little and ask to be allowed to see the Lady Hieria. But the inhuman Judge, hearing the desire she expressed, sneeringly cried out:

“Not so, my fair damsel; if thou art not yet dead, it is but proper first to settle thy account with us.

What sayest thou? How did this first conflict suit thee?"

Thus taunted, the brave Febronia, unmindful of her sufferings, replied:

"You ought yourself to be convinced, Oh wicked man, that you are unable to conquer me. As your first attempt against me has utterly failed, so, with the help of my Saviour, I trust to prove myself superior to all your power of tormenting."

"Very well," said Silenus, "we shall see." Then, addressing the executioners, he added: "Hang her on the rack, scrape her sides with your iron combs, and after that burn her to the very bones."

The men immediately obeyed the command of the Judge.

Febronia, while undergoing these dreadful tortures, raised her eyes toward heaven and prayed aloud:

"Come, Oh Lord Jesus Christ, come to help me; forsake me not in this my hour of trial." After this, as the fire was frightfully burning her whole body, she remained silent. Many of the spectators, no longer able to endure the sight of the cruelties displayed by the hard-hearted Silenus, left the place in disgust; others, with loud cries of indignation, called upon him to order, at least, the fire to be removed from his suffering victim. Seeing that the

tumult was increasing, the Judge reluctantly yielded in part to the voice of the people, and commanded the fire to be taken away. Nevertheless, he kept the Martyr stretched upon the rack, and began once more to ply her with questions. But her strength was exhausted, and she made him no answer. This roused his anger anew. He ordered her to be taken from the rack and to be bound to a stake. After which, sending for a surgeon, he said to him:

“I command you, sir, to cut out on the instant the tongue of that miserable witch, and to cast it into the fire. Then, perhaps, she may learn what is the consequence of refusing to give answer when summoned so to do before a court of justice.”

Febronia, who heard the command, and saw that the surgeon shuddered at the thought of performing so barbarous an act, immediately put forth her tongue to show her readiness to submit to this torture. The people, however, struck with horror, protested with loud clamors against this kind of punishment, and begged the Judge, by the life of the Emperor, to desist from his purpose. With a bad grace he yielded to their request, but, to make up for his disappointment, he commanded the surgeon instantly to extract all the Martyr's teeth. The surgeon forthwith set to work with his pincers. He had already plucked out by the roots seventeen of her

teeth, when he saw that, through loss of blood and intenseness of the pain, the poor sufferer had fallen into a deep swoon. The Judge thereupon signified to him to proceed no further with the torture, but to apply what restoratives his art suggested, so as to keep her from dying before he had fully sated his vengeance.

No sooner had the skill of the physician restored her to consciousness and to some degree of strength, than Silenus, impatient at the delay caused by his own cruelty, again addressed the Martyr, saying:

“Art thou even now willing, Febronia, to yield to the commands of the Judge, and to give honor to our gods?”

“Evil betide you, Oh most wicked old man,” replied Febronia. “How long will you put obstacles in my way, and hinder me from going to my heavenly Bridegroom? Make haste, and free me from this body of clay, that I may the sooner appear before Him whom my soul longs to behold.”

“Have patience,” said the Judge, “I will soon enough destroy thee with fire and sword. Meanwhile, it were better for thee to lay aside some of that over-confidence inspired by thy youth; for, by making thee impudent, it has brought upon thee all the evils which now overwhelm thee.”

Paralyzed by her sufferings, the Martyr was una-

ble to make a reply. This aroused the wrath of Silenus. Raising his voice, he shouted to the executioner:

“Cut off the breasts of that most impudent vixen.”

The man, seizing a sharp knife, was about to obey the brutal command, when the spectators, moved with pity, cried out with one voice: “Have pity, my Lord; do not inflict this torture on the poor child.” The clamoring of the people caused the executioner to hesitate. He looked at the Judge, as if expecting him to recall the order that had been given. The tyrant, fuming with rage, repeated his command:

“Do our bidding, accursed coward,” he cried; “cut and slash at her.”

Thus summoned, the executioner instantly began his work, and cut off the right breast of the Martyr. The pain awaking her to consciousness, she exclaimed in a loud voice:

“Lord, my God, behold what I endure for love of Thee; into Thy hands I commend my spirit.”

And after this she spoke no more. When her left breast had also been cut off, Silenus ordered fire to be applied to both wounds, until the remaining flesh became quite charred. The greater part of the spectators, unable to bear any longer so revolting a sight,

left the place, and uttered loud imprecations against Diocletian and his gods.

Meanwhile, at the request of Thomaïs, Hieria sent one of her female attendants to the monastery to give to the Abbess an account of all that had happened. The servant, finding that Bryena was sorely afflicted, did not venture to relate what she had witnessed, but simply said :

“ My mistress and Thomaïs send greeting : Cease not to lift up your hands to heaven ; pray that God may grant strength and perseverance to His beloved servant. Febronia is still engaged in the terrible conflict.”

Bryena, well knowing what was the meaning of these words, instantly fell prostrate upon the ground, saying :

“ Lord Jesus Christ, come to the assistance of Febronia ; make haste, Oh Lord, to help Thy lowly handmaid. Let them be put to confusion that desire evil to her. Alas, alas, alas ! Febronia, where art thou ? Be Thou to her, Oh Lord, a shield of salvation ; suffer not Thine enemies to prevail against her. Grant to me, unworthy the consolation, to know that my beloved daughter has passed victoriously through her struggle, and that she has secured a place in the glorious company of Thy Martyrs.”

When Silenus perceived that the Pagans themselves openly condemned his cruelty, instead of yielding in some degree to the popular feeling, he became only the more furious. He ordered the executioners to cut the cords which bound her to the stake. Thus freed, she instantly sank to the ground, for she was too exhausted to hold herself upright. Præmus, the commander of the troops, who was standing near his cousin, Lysimachus, seeing that she fell so heavily, said to him :

“My lord, I believe that the poor lady is dead.”

“Say not so, my lord,” replied Lysimachus, “she is doubtless undergoing these great sufferings for the salvation of many, perhaps even for my own. I have often heard such things related to me by my mother. Yet, were I able to save her now, and restore to her the bloom of health and vigor, I am not persuaded that it would be to her advantage. Let her finish the struggle upon which she has entered ; it will be for the life and salvation of many.”

But Hieria, whose feelings had been worked up to the utmost by what she had heard and seen, now stood up in the crowd, and advancing toward the Judge, addressed him :

“Oh pitiless and inhuman tyrant, she exclaimed, “have you still more torments in reserve for that

poor innocent girl? Had not the mother that bore you a body similar to that of this victim of your brutality? Have you forgotten that when, in an evil hour, you saw the light, you drew your first food from her breast, and thus, to the disgrace of human nature, you grew up to be the monster that you are? But why need I wonder that no thoughts like these ever softened the heart of so untamable and blood-thirsty a beast as you have proved yourself this day! May the God of heaven show you the same pity that you have had for this lovely, innocent child!"

Silenus, maddened with rage, immediately commanded her to be seized and to be put to the torture. Hieria hearing the order, rejoiced exceedingly, and said aloud:

"Receive me, Oh Lord God of Febronia, together with my mistress and teacher—although I am wholly unworthy, and still half a Pagan, as my want of self-command has but just now proved."

The officers, however, who were seated near the Judge, knowing what would be the evil consequences if he were to execute his threat, began to expostulate with him, and said:

"If you put that noble lady to the torture, be assured, all they who surround us will either declare themselves Christians, or take upon themselves the task of avenging her. It cannot be your intention

to bring destruction upon this fair city; yet this must follow as a matter of course."

This caused him to relent so far as to recall his order, but at the same time, shaking his fist at Hieria, he shouted at the top of his voice:

"Hearken thou, bold woman; may the immortal gods take vengeance upon thee! Besides, understand that by thy effrontery thou hast brought still greater evils upon thy wretched friend." And immediately he commanded the executioners to cut off both hands and the right foot of the Martyr. Whereupon, placing a block of wood near her, they put her right hand upon it, and cut it off at a single stroke; after which they did the same to the left. But when they had lifted her right foot upon the block, the executioner, with unsteady aim, struck his axe upon the ankle bone. The sight of this clumsy performance aroused the indignation of the crowd, and made them cry out vociferously. This so confused the man, that it was only after a second and a third blow he succeeded in severing the foot. Febronia, trembling in every limb and writhing with agony, although unable to speak, seemed nevertheless anxious to make it understood that she was still unconquered, and ready to undergo more tortures for the love of Him who had suffered so much for her. For no sooner was the right foot cut off

than she made every effort to lift also the left upon the block. The wicked Judge, seeing this, instead of giving honor to the heroic spirit to the lady, cried out:

“See you the obstinacy of that impudent witch? she defies me still.” And, calling upon the executioners, he added: “Do what she desires; cut off that foot also.”

Lysimachus, who was long since disgusted with all he had been obliged to witness, then arose and said to Silenus:

“Now, at last, what more are you able to do against that unfortunate lady? Pray, let us go hence; you have surely labored enough for this day. Moreover, you appear to forget yourself; it is high time that you should take your repast.”

“May the gods punish me,” replied the tyrant roughly, “if I let her alone so long as she has life in her. No, no, I am determined to stay here until she has breathed her last.”

As, however, her agony lasted much longer than he had expected, he grew impatient, and said to the executioners:

“Is that stubborn vixen still alive? What has become of your strength and skill? Cannot you despatch her at once?”

Thereupon he gave a sign to one of the soldiers

to strike off her head. The man, accustomed blindly to perform whatever he was commanded by his superiors, forthwith advanced, grasped the Martyr by the hair, and first marking the spot where he was to strike, with one blow severed the head from the body. Thus the noble and youthful Febronia, bearing the palm of victory, went to receive the crown of Virgins at the hand of her heavenly Bridegroom. The cold-hearted Silenus, pleased with his bloody work, instantly arose and, followed by his attendants, went to enjoy his meal with as much indifference as if nothing unusual had occurred.

But the noble-hearted Lysimachus remained for some time lingering near the scene of suffering which he had witnessed that day, and shedding many tears, prevented the crowd from carrying off the sacred remains of the Martyr. He placed a guard of soldiers around the spot, and ordered them to suffer no one to touch the body, until himself had made arrangements for its burial. Afterwards, when he had joined the company of his uncle, he would taste neither food or drink, but, shutting himself up in his apartment, he gave full scope to the heavy weight of sadness and regret which oppressed his generous soul. Silenus, hearing that his nephew was deeply afflicted and weeping bitterly for the death of Febronia, forthwith arose from the table in

great anger, and began to walk about in the inner court of the Governor's palace. A great struggle was going on within him; all his passions seemed to be set in a ferment. Unfortunately, he had never learnt the great lesson of bringing them under the control of reason. If a man of so churlish a temper were capable of being influenced by tender feelings, it might be said, that amidst all his evil propensities, he had a sincere affection for his brother's son. Him he had now wounded to the heart. His own selfishness and hatred of the Christians were, at last, to receive their reward. As he continued to walk, he became more and more agitated. The enormous cruelties of which he had been guilty appeared to rise up before him. His memory, conjuring up the past, presented not a single virtuous action, to make amends for the crimes he had committed. His imagination was worked up to its utmost tension. He grew frantically mad. He groaned and shrieked, and again roared like some infuriated wild beast of the desert. He looked up to heaven and cursed his gods. Then, in his despair, suddenly rushing forward, he dashed his head against one of the pillars of the gallery, scattering his brains all over the marble pavement, and fell lifeless to the ground.

Immediately the prætorium presented a scene of wildest confusion. The domestics and attendants,

running hither and thither, filled the halls with their cries of fear and consternation. The tumult brought Lysimachus to the spot. When, upon inquiring, he learnt the manner and circumstances of his uncle's death, he shook his head, and said:

“Great is the God of the Christians! Blessed be the God of Febronia! He hath avenged the blood that has been unjustly shed.”

And, without further delay, he gave orders to have the body of Silenus properly prepared and laid in the tomb.

After this, Lysimachus sent for his cousin Primus, and said to him:

“I entreat you, by the God of the Christians, do not omit anything of the order with which I now charge you. First of all, prepare a coffin of incorruptible wood wherein to place the body of Febronia; then send heralds in every direction to proclaim to the Christians that all who desire to be present at the funeral solemnities, are free to do so without fear of being molested, for my uncle is now dead. You understand what I request, as well as what I would wish to be done in this matter. Take your soldiers, or whomsoever you may think proper, to bear the holy remains to the monastery of Bryena. Suffer none of the crowd to carry off any of the limbs that have been severed from the body; and, lest

some animal might lick up the blood that has been spilled, see to it that the earth all around which has been moistened therewith, be dug up and carefully removed to the same place."

After receiving these instructions, Primus immediately repaired to the spot where the soldiers stood watching the remains of the martyred virgin. He ordered the men to cover up the body and place it on a litter, to convey it to the monastery; he himself, taking the head and the limbs that had been cut off, wrapped them up in his military cloak, and reverently bearing the precious burthen in his own arms, followed after them. It was, however, not without difficulty that they were enabled to proceed. For after a while the multitude that thronged around them became so great, and their attempts to obtain possession of the sacred relics so bold, that Primus was obliged to command the soldiers to force them back with their swords. When they reached the monastery, he suffered no one to enter except Thomais and Hieria. Then, after stationing a strong body of soldiers to guard every entrance, he went to give an account to Lysimachus of what he had done.

No sooner did Bryena cast her eyes on the mutilated form of her beloved Febronia than, uttering a loud cry, she fell senseless to the ground.

Thomais and her companion, by applying proper

restoratives, after a time succeeded in bringing her again to life. When she had recovered sufficient strength to rise, she knelt down by the side of the Martyr's body, and addressing her as if she were still alive, said:

“Alas! my daughter Febronia, art thou then gone forever from thy mother Bryena? Shall my eyes behold thee no more? Who shall henceforth read and explain to thy sisters the sacred writings? Who shall peruse thy own favorite books?”

Whilst she was pouring forth these and similar expressions of grief and affection, all the Sisters who, at the suggestion and under the guidance of Ætheria, had left the monastery at the approach of the storm of persecution, returned sorrow-stricken and ashamed of the cowardice they had shown. With one accord they all prostrated themselves before the inanimate form of their martyred Sister, and amidst sobs and tears of repentance, implored her to intercede for them with her heavenly Bridegroom, that He might pardon their sins and receive them again into favor. The lady Hieria, seeing what was taking place, in like manner drew near to the sacred remains, and falling on her knees, exclaimed:

“Suffer me, also, Oh my Sister, to venerate thy feet, which have crushed the head of the infernal serpent; suffer me to kiss the blessed wounds of

her through whose holy teaching my soul hath found salvation; let me adorn with a wreath of precious stones and sweet-scented flowers the head of her who, by the splendor of her victory over the powers of darkness, has become the boast and glory of womankind."

By this time it was the hour of None. Bryena, addressing the Martyr as if she were only sleeping, said to her in a tone of great earnestness:

"It is the hour of prayer, Oh Febronia; come thou, my daughter, and join with us in this sacred duty." Then, remembering the sad tragedy which her distracted mind seemed continually to forget, she added: "Alas! alas! my daughter Febronia, where art thou? arise and come."

And Thomais, as if seconding this appeal of the Abbess, said:

"Oh my beloved Febronia, while among us, thou didst never transgress any command of thy venerable Mother, why wilt thou not now listen to her voice?"

This familiar manner of acting on the part of the Sisters in Religion showed more clearly than words could express, how much the departed had been loved by all, during her stay among them, and how affectionate a remembrance was to follow her in after times.

Towards evening, when the mangled body of the Martyr had been carefully washed and all the limbs fitted once more in their proper place, it was suitably dressed and laid out upon a frame in the oratory. The Abbess then ordered the gate of the monastery to be thrown open, that the Faithful might come in and venerate the sacred remains. So great was the multitude of persons of every age and condition, that the night did not suffice to satisfy the devotion of all those who presented themselves for admission. They who had known the Saint during life, and had so often been edified by her words and example, could with difficulty tear themselves away from her presence. While the people were thus indulging their piety, the Bishop and his clergy kept holy vigil near the body, by alternate prayer, the singing of psalms and canticles of triumph. Nor did the Saint fail to manifest how great was the power which she enjoyed with her heavenly Bridegroom. For she began at once to obtain, by her intercession, special graces and wonderful favors for those who had interested themselves in her sufferings. Many of the Pagan inhabitants of Nisibis, who had been hitherto most hostile to the Christians, now opened their eyes to the light of the truth, and begged to be instructed in the mysteries of the Faith. Lysimachus, the Prefect, who was punctually informed

by trusty messengers of all that was taking place in the oratory of the convent, passed the night in great agitation of mind. A fearful struggle was going on within him. The wholesome advice and instructions which, in childhood, he had received from his Christian mother, the promises he had so often made and renewed of being friendly to the persecuted servants of Christ,—his present elevated position, the prospect of preferment to still higher dignities, the enjoyment of unbounded wealth, the favor of his imperial master—then again, his own everlasting condemnation by the God of truth and justice; all these thoughts presented themselves so vividly to his mind that, for a moment, he seemed on the point of giving himself up to despair, and even ready to follow the fatal example of his wretched uncle. But he remembered the words that he had uttered at the martyrdom of the blessed Febronia: “She doubtless undergoes these sufferings for the salvation of many—perhaps even for my own.” At the thought, light suddenly flashed into his soul, divine grace triumphed over the temptations of the spirit of darkness—he was saved. Instantly he sends for his cousin Primus; he meets him with a countenance beaming with joy, clasps him in his arms, and exclaims:

“At last my friend, the prayers of my mother

and the sufferings endured by Febronia, have subdued my rebellious heart. Be my witness that, from this time, I renounce the abomination of idols and all the vanities of worldly ambition. Christ hath conquered: Him I am resolved to serve and follow at any cost."

"And I too," replied Primus, "I abjure whatever allegiance I owe to Diocletian. Often indeed did my mind turn with abhorrence from his unjust commands and inhuman cruelties; but what I have witnessed of late has rendered his yoke too galling to be borne any longer. I too forsake that which hitherto was the object of my ambition, and I cling to Christ, the Saviour of men."

Thereupon the two friends, after promising to stand by each other, whatever troubles their generous resolve might excite against them, left the prætorium, and joined the crowds of people that were still thronging towards the monastery.

Early in the morning, they who had been charged to prepare the rich coffin, ordered by Lysimachus, arrived at the convent. Soon after, amidst the prayers and tears of the assembled multitude the Religious took the sacred body of their Sister and reverently placed it therein—properly arranging the dissevered limbs—but the teeth they laid upon the breast of the Martyr. Then the people, to testify

their love and admiration for the servant of God, notwithstanding all the efforts used to restrain them, surrounded the coffin and filled it up with every kind of precious ointments, with sweet-scented flowers and aromatic spices, in such a manner that the body of the Saint could no longer be seen. But when the hour was come to consign the remains to their final resting-place, there arose so tumultuous an outcry on the part of the multitude, that both the Bishop and his clergy were fairly at a loss what to do. For a long time it was necessary to yield to the desires of the people, by allowing them to indulge their devotion. At last, however, Bryena, the Abbess appeared on a balcony, and addressing them said:

‘ My brethren, do not, I entreat you, incur the displeasure of our beloved Saint, by unreasonably detaining her. Suffer her to go in peace to her own place, that peace may also be your reward.’

These words served to remove all further opposition. Whereupon, the body of the Martyr was with due solemnity deposited in a tomb within the precincts of the monastery.

Shortly after this, Lysimachus and his cousin Primus, having received Baptism, resolved to imitate the example of the Saint who had done so much to obtain their conversion. Renouncing the

world, they put themselves under the direction of the holy Abbot Marcellus, and by their fervor and holiness of life long continued to edify their religious brethren.

But when the lady Hieria had seen her parents, and all the members of their household, converted to the Faith, she bade them farewell, and repaired to the monastery of Bryena. Here she took off all her costly ornaments of gold and precious stones of every description, and reverently laid them as an offering upon the tomb of her martyred instructress.

Then she went to the Abbess, and casting herself at her feet, said .

“Receive me, I beseech you, my Mother, although I am wholly unworthy, in the place of your beloved Febronia; I will serve and obey you as she was wont to do.”

From that time, the anniversary of the Saint's martyrdom began to be celebrated with great solemnity on account of the faith and confidence which the people had in her power of intercession. This devotion was not a little increased when it became generally known that every year, on that very day, a wonderful occurrence was witnessed in the chapel of the monastery. For when, at midnight, the Sisters assembled to sing matins, the blessed Febronia appeared in her accustomed place, and continued

there until the beginning of the third nocturn. No one, however, dared to approach her or to ask any questions. The first time she was seen in this manner among her Sisters, Bryena uttered a loud cry, saying: "Behold my daughter Febronia!" and ran forthwith to embrace her. But before she could draw near, the apparition suddenly vanished from her sight. Thenceforward the religious were satisfied with beholding the marvel, and feeling the sweet and holy influence of rapturous joy which the mysterious presence awakened in their hearts.

James, the Bishop of Nisibis, spent six years in erecting a church in honor of the Martyr. When the splendid edifice was completed, he resolved to translate thither her sacred relics. For this purpose he invited as many of the bishops and clergy of the province as were able to be present. On the twenty-fifth of June, the day appointed for the ceremony, followed by an immense concourse of people, they repaired to the monastery. The Bishop, addressing the Abbess, said:

"We are aware, venerable mother, with how tender an affection you cling to the memory of your beloved Febronia. But, for the glory of our Lord, her divine Bridegroom, with whom her blissful spirit now rejoices in heaven, suffer that her tomb may be made glorious upon earth. Permit us to

place her holy remains in the church which we have erected to God, under her name and invocation."

When the Sisters heard this, they fell prostrate at the feet of the Bishop, and, weeping and lamenting, they exclaimed as with one voice: "Have pity on us, Oh most Reverend Father, and disregard not the prayer of our lowliness. Deprive us not of the only treasure we possess in this world."

The Bishop then said to Bryena:

"Listen to me, my Sister in Christ. You know with how great a diligence we have labored during these six long years to erect a monument worthy of the glorious Martyr. Shall it now be said that all our toils and exertions have been useless and unprofitable?"

"If it seem good to your Holiness," answered the Abbess, "and if it be pleasing to the blessed Martyr, who am I that I should hinder you from doing what you desire? Go, therefore, and take her away."

The bishops thereupon went to the tomb, and kneeling down, began to pray.

Meanwhile, Hieria, well-nigh beside herself at the thought of parting with the relics of her beloved instructress, went about the monastery sobbing and constantly repeating: "Woe unto us! this day our house loses its most precious jewel. Woe unto us! a heavy load of sorrow hath come upon us. Woe

unto us! we are giving away our greatest treasure!" Then addressing Bryena, she said: "What are you doing, my Mother? Why do you deprive me of my sister? I have forsaken all things of earth that, near her, I might serve Him whom she loved so much; how can you thus separate me from her?"

Bryena, seeing her almost distracted with grief, endeavoring to comfort her, said:

"Why, my daughter Hieria, art thou distressed in this manner without cause? If it be the good pleasure of our beloved Sister to leave us, we cannot detain her against her will; but if she desire to stay among us, no one can now take her away."

When the bishops had finished their prayer, they prepared to open the coffin; but no sooner did they touch it than a loud clap of thunder was heard above them. As the sky was serene and cloudless, this filled them with wonder. Nevertheless, determined to secure the relics, they made a second attempt. But instantly the ground all around and the whole convent began to tremble, as if shaken by a violent earthquake. Struck with awe, they confessed themselves convinced that the Saint was unwilling to leave her monastery. They then said to Bryena:

"The blessed Martyr is not willing to forsake you. Give us one of the limbs that were severed from the body, and we will go our way in peace."

The Abbess then opening the coffin, all present beheld a brilliant light like a sunbeam surrounding the body. Wherefore, it was not without dread that she prepared to take one of the Martyr's hands to give it to the Bishop. Suddenly she felt her own hands and arms so paralyzed that she was unable to move them. Bursting into tears, she exclaimed :

“ My daughter Febronia, be not angry with thy mother. Remember with what loving care I have trained thee. Put not this day my old age to confusion.” And immediately perceiving that her hands and arms were free from pain, she added: “ Do not sadden my heart, Oh my beloved, but give us at least some blessing.”

And taking one of the teeth that lay upon the Martyr's breast, she gave it to the Bishop and forthwith closed the coffin.

The Bishop received the relic and inclosed it in a golden casket. After which, returning to the church with great pomp and rejoicing, the prelates explained to the people all that had occurred at the tomb of the Saint, and then solemnly consecrated the place to God under her name. From that day so many miraculous favors of every kind were there obtained, that it became manifest that God was pleased to reward the faith and confidence of all those who had

recourse to the intercession of the virgin and Martyr Febronia.

Bryena lived still two years after the consecration of the church dedicated to her spiritual daughter, and in a ripe old age, full of good works, fell asleep in the Lord. She was succeeded in the government of the monastery by Thomaïs, who, for the glory of God, and the honor of the blessed Martyr, wrote a faithful account of what she herself had heard and seen.





V.

ST. MAXIMUS AND HIS COMPANIONS.

AT the time of the persecution excited against the Christians by the wicked Galerius Maximian, there lived in Marcianopolis, in Mœsia, a man of distinguished birth and of great wealth, named Maximus. His many virtues, and above all, his open-handed charity in relieving the poor and distressed, had gained for him the esteem and respect of his fellow-citizens. When, however, the edict of the Emperor had been published in the city, some of the Pagans, thinking to ingratiate themselves with their cruel master, brought an accusation before the magistrates against the noble-hearted Christian, in consequence of which he was thrown into prison, together with his sister Asclepiodota. After repeated examinations before the officers of the law, and the severest threats of tortures and the confiscation of all their possessions, it was found impossible to intimidate the generous

servants of Christ, and they were kept to languish in a darksome dungeon.

Meanwhile, it happened that Teres, Governor of Thrace, came to Marcianopolis for the very purpose of instituting inquiries and proceedings against the Christians. Hearing that two of them, persons of wealth and distinction, were imprisoned in the city, he was delighted at the opportunity of gratifying at once his avarice and his cruel disposition. Immediately, he summoned the prisoners before his tribunal. When they stood in his presence, Teres interrogated them in the usual form about their names, their country, and their position in society. Maximus, fearlessly addressing the Governor, said:

“It is of little use to question us about those things. It ought to be sufficient to know that we are Christians. This name is the mark of our true nobility. As regards our wealth, our Faith is the only real treasure we possess: this we can carry with us whithersoever we go. So long as we possess it, we need no other riches, for it makes us heirs of the heavenly kingdom, and the chosen friends of the God whom we serve. Nor do we desire anything beyond it upon earth, unless it be the glorious distinction of suffering imprisonment and torments for the profession of that Faith.”

Teres was not at all pleased with this bold reply

of the Confessor, and not knowing what else to ask, he said to Maximus :

“Hast thou not heard of certain laws published by our imperial masters against persons of thy profession?”

“I have heard of the promulgation of certain decrees full of the greatest injustice and of inhuman cruelty; but of any recent publication of laws, whereby states and nations deserve the thanks and praises of mankind, I have not heard.”

“Dost thou calumniate the benefactors of men?” cried the Governor with great animation; “darest thou accuse our invincible sovereigns of injustice and cruelty?”

“I acknowledge as my true Sovereign, and my God, the Lord Jesus Christ, by whose will and command all things exist; but among men, I say, that there are some who are wicked, unjust and ungrateful, and others who are virtuous, faithful and loving servants of their Master.”

“Art thou not ashamed of calling a man, who was crucified, a God?” asked Teres.

“The cross, scourging, and even death, in themselves considered,” answered Maximus, “do not bring disgrace upon any one; but the cause for which these punishments are inflicted, makes persons either deserve the approbation or receive the

condemnation of men. You cannot deny that upon robbers, pirates, tyrants, and similar evil-doers, who injure and slay their fellow-men without reason or justice, such punishments are deservedly inflicted by the lawfully constituted authorities of human society, and that, with respect to said persons, death is rightfully looked upon as a disgrace; but will you say that the innocent sufferers, who were the victims of these malefactors, and suffered death at their hands, are equally to be condemned and disgraced on account of their misfortune? Moreover, good and valiant men, who, for their country's sake, or to maintain and defend the rights of their people, undergo tortures and death, are they to be accounted wretches deserving the execration of their fellow-men? What do I say? Do they not justly merit the praises which are bestowed upon them? Are they not entitled to the crowns awarded to their fearless and disinterested conduct by their grateful fellow-citizens? In like manner, it was neither a reproach nor a disgrace to Him who suffered on the cross; nor is it to be deemed anything blameworthy in them who show themselves grateful for so great a condescension, and worship Him with all the affection of their hearts, because, for their sakes, He underwent so cruel an ignominy—which was to be the true and only means of securing for them an

everlasting happiness, after the present short-lived existence upon earth. Compare this conduct of Him, whom Christians adore as their Lord and Saviour, with that of the gods whom you worship. If you sincerely acknowledge what you know to be true, you will confess that the real or imaginary persons to whom you offer sacrifice as to gods, were, in fact, greater than ordinary mortals, solely because they surpassed them by the enormity of the crimes which you attribute to them. For whatever wickedness you condemn in your fellow-men, such as theft, murder, adultery, incest, and the like, you honor in them whom you call your gods. But the sufferings of the Crucified, endured for the salvation of men, are the manifestation of His exceeding charity, and justly demand of us that, in return, we honor Him with every sentiment of gratitude and veneration."

"But who ever heard," exclaimed Teres, "that a man was crucified for the salvation of mankind?"

"No one, I confess, Oh Governor," said Maximus. "Yet, if I add that He whom we adore as God was crucified not only for His friends, but for His enemies as well, your wonder must doubtless increase to very astonishment. For Christ, the Redeemer of men, was not merely a man, but the true God hidden in the human nature; since it was impossible that a mere man should be able to make atone-

ment by his sufferings for the sins of all men. But He who had created men out of nothing, seeing that they had fallen from their high estate and had lost the glory to which He had raised them, desirous of manifesting the boundless love and mercy which He has for His creatures, became Himself that which He had made, and, in this human form, suffered death, because, in His divine Nature, He was incapable of suffering. What do you say to that? Did He for so doing deserve that we should deny Him? Is it becoming in us that we should be ashamed of honoring a God who has been so exceedingly merciful to us? Should we not rather deem it a disgrace in ourselves that we are so little thankful for a goodness and love surpassing our limited understanding? Ought we not unceasingly to praise and worship the greatness of Him who has acted so divinely toward us—even when we were wholly undeserving of His mercies?"

The wicked Governor was at a loss what to answer to this reasoning. Instead of being moved to feelings of justice and humanity by what he had heard, he grew very angry, and, at last, cried out:

"Talk no more nonsense of that sort before me, or a most cruel death will soon force thee to silence."

"It was not I who started this subject of dispute," boldly replied the undaunted Confessor, "but your-

self, who cry out against us Christians, who worship the Crucified. I know too well that a soul wilfully buried in the darkness of idolatry is incapable of seeing the saving light of the truth—which reason and common sense bring forward; hence I do not wonder that even the faintest glimmer of that glorious light is offensive to an obstinate pagan like yourself.”

This aroused the fury of the Governor to the highest degree. Without attempting a reply, he commanded four men to beat the noble Christian with rods, until every part of his body was streaming with blood. While the executioners were inflicting this punishment, they kept constantly repeating: “Such is our answer to thy artful reasoning and boastful words: thus we teach thee that language, as well as other things, has its limits.”

But the more cruelly the men scourged him, the more cheerfully did the generous sufferer endure his torments. After awhile, however, Teres, understanding that this kind of argument produced no effect on the mind of the heroic champion of the Faith, ordered the executioners to desist. Then turning to the blessed companion of the Martyr, who was forced to witness this inhuman treatment undergone by her brother, he said to her:

“Seeing now with how severe a chastisement we

visit the opposers of our commands, it will be well for thee to secure thy safety by offering sacrifice to the gods."

"I secure my safety best," answered Asclepiodota, "by not abandoning the worship of the One true God."

"Dost thou refuse to sacrifice to our great gods?" he asked with much vehemence.

"Your great gods!" exclaimed the lady, "who or what are they? To how many of them do you bid me sacrifice?"

"To as many of them as thou choosest," shouted Teres. "But sacrifice to them thou must, or, I swear by them all, thou shalt not escape our hands."

"It appears to me," replied Asclepiodota with great calmness, "that, if you worship some of them and neglect the others, you can by no means give satisfaction to all. And, as they are so numerous that you yourself could not easily count them all, and so different in their claims and dispositions, you cannot safely honor some, without giving offence to others. Besides, I have heard it stated by your own people, that they are quite jealous of one another. Such being the case, it is plain to me that one of your deities would not willingly divide the honor given to him with his fellow-god, for whom he happens to feel no special affection. But, supposing

even that you offer a considerable gift to all of them, and that they agree to divide it fairly among themselves, do you not think yourself, O Governor, that when each one comes to look at his portion, it will appear so ridiculously small and contemptible, that he will consider it rather as an insult offered to his godship than as a proper means of propitiating him and securing his protection. No, no, sir; this whole matter of the worship of your multitudinous pretended deities is so mixed up and confused, that no rational person can view it otherwise than as an inconceivable mass of absurdities. Blinded indeed by passion and prejudice must he be, who can so far forget himself as to consent to do that which the good sense of every one must condemn as the height of folly, and an action altogether unworthy of reasonable men. Therefore, I declare to you, that I neither worship your idols nor consider them as possessing the least power to do me any harm or any good whatever."

Teres, who, although a Governor, was not well versed in the history of the gods, was unable to take up their defense, or to explain the nature of the good and evil qualities attributed to them by the poets of paganism. Wherefore, he remained silent for some time, revolving in his mind what answer might be given to refute the unexpected objections made by

the Christian virgin. But he soon gave up the subject, and, returning to a sort of argument with which he was more familiar, he said to Asclepiodota :

“It is clear to me that thou art of a rather delicate constitution, and that thou wilt be unable to bear even a single one of the tortures to which we are going to subject thee—unless, indeed, thou consent at once to comply with our commands. Do not flatter thyself with the vain delusion that the God whom thou adorest—how great and powerful soever He may be—can save thee from our hands.”

“It is true,” she replied, “that it is not in the nature of women, nor of men, to endure without shrinking the inhuman tortures to which you have the power to subject them. Yet the grace and power of Christ, my Saviour, can and will make even me—if I sincerely trust in Him—sufficiently strong and courageous to defy all your torments, and death itself; for, upheld by His gracious assistance, feeble in body though I be, I am certain that I can overcome all the wicked inventions of the demons and their servants.”

“Put away all that useless talk,” said the Governor, “for it will be a great wonder to us if thou yieldest not to our arguments when we come to try our art of persuading the obstinate. In fact, we have no doubt but we shall yet be able to propose

thee as an example of unusual impudence in defying our power so long as we caused thee no hurt, and of prudent submission when we chose to show our skill in punishing."

"Proceed at once to do what you are threatening," she answered. "For, a weak and delicate woman as I am, I see no reason to dread the tyranny of the wicked, when I know that I am to suffer in a just and holy cause. The help of the God of the strong is promised to them that confide in Him: with His aid I am able to defy all your power, and to challenge you to do the worst you can invent against me."

"We shall soon see," said Teres, "whether the confidence which thou seemest to place in the God of the Christians, is of any avail to thee."

And, calling upon the executioners, he began immediately to give them instructions with regard to the special torments he intended to be inflicted upon the servant of God.

After the Governor had for some time consulted with his men, they seemed, at last, to agree upon the most painful torment that, in their opinion, could be inflicted upon a person condemned to the torture—though it had not that bloody and unsightly appearance of some other cruelties. This consisted in beating with sticks the soles of the feet and the

heels of the sufferer. To this torment the unfeeling tyrant condemned the weak and delicate Asclepiodota.

No sooner had the executioners begun their barbarous work than the blood flowed in streams from the Martyr's feet. At sight of this the whole multitude of spectators began to cry out vociferously—some expressing their admiration at the patient manner in which she bore her sufferings, others giving utterance to their feelings of sympathy for the victim, and of indignation against the inhuman tormentor. Among the latter there was a brave and fearless man named Theodotus, who, boldly advancing towards Teres, exclaimed so that he might be heard by all present:

“You are a cruel and unmanly oppressor of the innocent, Oh Governor; you persecute them whom you know will offer no resistance to your injustice, because it is for their faith in the true God that you hate them. But remember, you shall not escape the wrath of the God whom they serve. He will reward you according to the works which you have done against His faithful servants.”

This freedom of speech so aroused the wrath of the haughty Governor, that he forthwith ordered the speaker to be seized and put upon the rack. Not satisfied with this, he commanded the execu-

tioners to tear the flesh of their victim with iron combs until the bones were laid bare. Theodotus underwent his sufferings with patient resignation, and uttered not a word during their continuance. When, at last, his strength was wholly exhausted, and he seemed on the point of expiring, Teres gave orders that he, together with his companions, should be taken to prison.

Here they were left to languish during fifteen days, exposed to all the hardships which the keepers, by command of their tyrannical master, could invent. At the end of this time, as the Governor was about to set out for Adrianople, they were bound in chains and commanded to follow him. The journey was long and wearisome. Everything that could be done to make it to them a sorrowful way was taken advantage of by those who had them in charge, for the commands of their relentless persecutor in this regard were peremptory. The thought, however, that they suffered in the cause of truth and justice, and the remembrance of the painful journey of their Divine Master to Calvary, made them bear up courageously under all their afflictions. At last, more dead than alive, they reached the place of their destination. No sooner had they arrived than Teres, impatient to know what change these hardships might have effected in his prisoners,

summoned them again before his tribunal. In a tone of voice that was meant to be persuasive, he said to them :

“ You see now what misfortunes your obstinate adherence to a religion forbidden by the laws of the Empire has brought upon you. If you are wise, you will listen to good advice, and consent at once to offer sacrifice to the gods ; that thus you may secure happiness for yourselves and the peaceful enjoyment of all the good things of this life.”

The three Martyrs answered as with one voice :

“ The worship which, even from the days of our childhood, we have paid to the true God, has ever been to us a source of all blessings. Nor can we be sufficiently thankful to Him for His exceeding mercy in enlightening our understanding, and for drawing us from the darkness of error and the abominations of idolatry, whilst, at the same time, He filled our hearts with love for Him ; but, above all, we praise Him for deeming us worthy to suffer persecution for His holy Name. Therefore, also, the more you take away from our sufferings, the greater will be the punishment you inflict upon us ; and the greater the torments to which you subject us, the more delightful will be the pleasures which we enjoy : for, you must understand that we have no better means of proving our love for our Lord and Creator than a firm and

constant readiness to endure all manner of torments for His glory."

This was enough to provoke the wrath of the irritable Governor. Although the wounds which the Martyrs had previously received were yet unhealed, he ordered them to be opened afresh by a cruel scourging. As the scabs fell from their bodies, and the blood flowed in streams from every pore, the generous servants of Christ said to their tormentor :

"This reopening of our wounds seems like a healing balm applied to them; our former sufferings, instead of being renewed, disappear altogether, and a pleasing sensation pervades our bodies. If it is your intention to cause us suffering, invent some other means of doing so; for this apparently inhuman treatment is making us stronger and better disposed to undergo whatsoever torments you may have in store for us."

Upon this, Teres ordered the executioner to apply red-hot plates to the limbs of the Martyrs. Whilst their flesh was roasted by this torture, and fell in large pieces upon the ground, the sufferers, far from being subdued by the barbarous process, grew stronger in their resolve to fight the good fight, and showed by their conduct that they regarded not the things of this life, but fixed their whole attention

upon the reward that was held out to them. The love of their divine Master was burning in their souls: this fountain of all consolation so bedewed with its healing and saving waters every part of their aching bodies that they felt not the fire which, to all appearances, was consuming them. Hence, to the astonishment of all who witnessed their frightful torments, they rather sang than exclaimed:

“Lord, our God, grant us peace; grant us strength to persevere in the confession of Thy holy Name. Show forth Thine almighty power, Oh Lord, by enabling us to glorify Thee by our sufferings, and by putting Thine enemies to confusion. For they have risen up against them that honor Thee,—against us who refuse to unite with them in acting wickedly. Fill them with a dread of Thy judgments, that they may acknowledge the error of their way, and, turning to Thee, seek Thy mercy.”

As they prayed in this manner, they heard a voice from heaven, saying: “Be strong: I am with you, fear not; your prayer is heard.”

Meanwhile, Teres, who did not wish that they should succumb under their present sufferings, ordered them again to be taken to their dungeon, at the same time forbidding, under the severest penalties, every one of the citizens to afford them any relief, or to procure any remedies whereby their

wounds might be healed. When the Martyrs heard these orders, they said :

“ We have Christ, the Son of the living God, for our physician. He heals not only the bodies but also the souls of them that trust in Him. What need have we of human assistance, even if it were allowed to be given ?”

After the lapse of a few days, the public criers, by order of the Governor, invited the people to assemble in the amphitheatre, for the Christians were to be exposed to the beasts. When the Martyrs appeared before the public, all the multitude bore witness that there remained upon their bodies not a single mark of their former wounds. They were now, in turn, exposed to the wild beasts. And first, Maximus was ordered into the arena. As he stood absorbed in prayer, with his eyes lifted up towards heaven, a monstrous she-bear was let loose against him. The beast seemed full of rage as she entered the place ; but no sooner did she perceive the servant of God than she became as meek as a lamb, and, gently approaching him, she laid herself down at his side and began to lick his feet.

When the wicked Governor saw this, he grew very angry, and cried out : “ What is to be done ? the very beasts are subdued by the magic of these persons !” And immediately he ordered a large

panther to be let loose against the Martyr. But the animal, as if forgetful of its natural ferocity, followed the example of the bear, and quietly crouched by the side of Maximus.

Thereupon, Teres, unwilling to acknowledge in what he had seen the power of the true God, and more devoid of feeling than the brutes, gave orders that the noble Christian should be shut up in the enclosure where the beasts were kept.

After this, Theodotus was bound to a stake in the arena, and the same bear was let loose against him. The animal seemed furiously mad until she stood before the servant of God; then she bowed down her head before him, and, in spite of the efforts of the keepers, who endeavored to enrage her, she remained gentle and submissive in his presence. They then loosened the Martyr from the stake and threw him upon the wild beast, but she could not be provoked to do him the least harm. Nevertheless, the more respectful the irrational animals showed themselves toward the servant of God, the more excited and revengeful did the Governor appear to grow. Seeing that the wildest beasts could not be forced to become the ministers of his cruelty, he gave orders that the third prisoner—the lady Asclepiodota—should be tied to an untamed bull, feeling assured that the animal would soon gore her to

death. Yet, in this he was also to be disappointed. The keepers of the beasts did as they were commanded, and with their goads excited the animal to fury; but, whilst they were engaged in this manner, the Martyr, raising her voice, prayed to God, saying:

“Oh Lord, my God, who is like unto Thee in power and glory? In Thee I put my trust; save me from the snares and persecutions of the Evil One.”

When she had uttered this prayer, she blessed herself with the sign of the Cross, and the untamed bull suddenly stood still, so that neither the blows nor the goads of the keepers were able to make him stir. The Martyr, thereupon, addressing the spectators, said to them:

“Men, brethren, what you have seen this day ought to make you understand that even the wildest beasts have regard for the servants of the true God, and acknowledge in them the image of their own Creator. You, then, who are partakers of the same nature with ourselves, and who ought to be kind and merciful to your fellow-beings, how can you lay aside your inborn feelings of humanity, and become more ferocious than the senseless brutes, so as to be almost ready to tear us with your teeth? Is it not a disgrace that you should so lower yourselves as to become inferior in magnanimity to the

most savage of your fellow-creatures? If you have no reverence for Him who made of one blood all nations of men who dwell upon the face of the earth, you should at least so far respect yourselves as not to ill-treat them that bear your own image and likeness."

These words of the Martyr put to confusion those among the spectators who had not yet lost all feelings of humanity, but, as they were unable to do anything in favor of the persecuted, they gave expression to their sentiments by withdrawing from the amphitheatre. The vulgar mob, however, deeming themselves insulted by the noble manner in which Asclepiodota had given utterance to the truth, resolved to stone the Christians to death. When the Governor saw how matters stood, he ordered his men to put the Martyrs once more in chains, and, directing them to follow in his suite, he hastily left the city and set out for Philippopolis.

After travelling about thirty miles, they came to a village called Saltys, or the *Springs*, on account of the abundance of the waters, which makes it celebrated for the luxuriant variety of its trees and the richness of its vineyards.

The Governor, remembering his want of success on previous occasions, and by no means desirous of making himself a laughing-stock in a city where

the number of Christians was very great, decided to have the final trial of his prisoners in this place. Wherefore, calling the three Martyrs before him, he exhorted them again to sacrifice to the idols, and to save themselves by so doing from the torments which he was determined to inflict upon them. They, however, indignantly rejected his proposals, and fearlessly added :

“We are full of hope that, in this very place, we shall, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, obtain the end of our sufferings, and give a generous testimony to His holy Name. At the same time, we warn you to repent of your inhuman cruelties, lest a just punishment overtake you in the midst of your iniquities.”

Instead of having the effect of bringing him to acknowledge his wickedness, the charitable advice of the Christians made Teres only the more bold and defiant in his hatred against the servants of God. Wherefore, without any further attempt to make them deny their faith, and afraid of putting them to the trial in Philippopolis, he pronounced against them this sentence :

“We decree that Maximus, Asclepiodota, and Theodotus—three Christians who obstinately refuse to submit to the laws enacted by our imperial masters, and who persist in insulting and despising our

gods—be put to death by having their heads struck off with the sword.”

The Martyrs heard this sentence with the greatest joy, and while singing the praises of God, and thanking Him for His mercies, received the crown for which, during their many trials and sufferings, they had unceasingly sighed.

A short time after this, as the Governor, engaged in his favorite occupation of persecuting the Christians, was seated in his tribunal, there arose a terrific storm. Apparently unmindful of the warning that had been given him by the innocent victims of his cruelty, he went on to pronounce his unrighteous sentences, when suddenly he was struck by lightning, and so completely consumed that nothing remained of him except a mass of shattered and shapeless bones. These his friends and associates buried beneath a huge mound of earth, in the hope of obliterating even the remembrance of one who had been struck by the manifest judgment of God; but the very monument which they erected served to proclaim to succeeding ages that, sooner or later, —even as the innocent and oppressed receive their reward—so the wicked are visited by the just punishments of an offended God.



VI.

ST. EUPHEMIA.

THE martyrdom of the Virgin Euphemia is one of the most celebrated in the annals of the Church, since her glorious struggle has called forth not only a tribute of praise from the historians, but has also been honored by an admirable eulogy which merited the applause of the Fathers assembled in a general Council.

It was in the reign of Diocletian that the Proconsul Priscus, who resided at the time in Chalcedon, was instigated by his friend Apelian to put in force the imperial edict against the Christians. Apelian, by profession a sophist, was a vile and meddling person, and a fanatical worshipper of Mars. On this account he bore a relentless hatred against the Christians, whose teachings and practices he knew to be a strong and constant protest against the folly and wickedness of idol-worship. To gratify the vindictive feelings which rankled in his breast, he went to the Proconsul, and, by many cunning

and insidious reasonings, persuaded him to issue a proclamation, whereby all the inhabitants of the city were commanded to come together on a certain day, and offer sacrifice in the temple of Mars. The most severe punishments were threatened against every person who should presume to disobey this order.

On the day appointed, Apelian busied himself with finding out, and reporting to the Proconsul, every citizen who kept away from the idolatrous ceremony—well knowing that the Christians would give no heed to the unjust and absurd command of Priscus. In this manner he came to a dwelling in which many of the Faithful had met together that they might atone, as far as they were able, by fervent prayer and supplication, for the insult offered that day to the true God by their fellow-citizens. Among the Christians thus assembled was Euphemia, a young virgin of noble birth—whose father, the Senator Philophon, was a man highly esteemed by all the people, and whose mother, the lady Theodora, was known as the true friend of the poor and distressed, whose sufferings she was ever ready to alleviate.

Filled with joy at the discovery he had made, the base informer immediately hastened to the Proconsul, and said :

“There are some persons, who, to evade compliance with the imperial edict and the order of your Excellency, have shut themselves up in a certain house. If they are permitted to do this without being molested, the effect will be very bad indeed. You are doubtless aware, that there are several others who seem by no means inclined to yield a ready obedience to your command. The honor of our great god and your own dignity demand that these persons be made to unite with us in worshipping Mars, or that so glaring an act of resistance to your authority be not suffered to go unpunished.”

“We must teach those persons that they cannot make light of our commands with impunity,” said Priscus, “and that they shall be held to a strict account for every transgression.”

And forthwith sending for a band of soldiers, he ordered them to arrest and bring before his tribunal every individual that should be found in the house designated by his friend Apelian.

When the prisoners appeared before the Proconsul, he was so struck with the dignity and modesty of their bearing, that he seemed at a loss how to address them; for, from the account of his friend the sophist, he had naturally enough concluded that they who durst disregard his orders, must be a class

of men whose insolent audacity would defy his own power as well as that of his imperial master. Seeing that the greater number of them were women belonging to the most respectable families of the city, he spoke to them in a manner which was meant to be kind, saying :

“It is our advice that, without making any difficulty, you should at once submit to the command of our sovereign, and prepare yourselves to offer sacrifice to our great god Mars.”

Euphemia, strong in the justice of the cause for which she stood arraigned, modestly yet firmly addressing the Proconsul, replied in the name of all her companions :

Be it known to you, Oh Priscus, that we are the servants of Christ, our Lord, the eternal King, who ruleth in the heavens. He it is who hath laid the foundations of the earth ; He hath stretched out the heavens as a curtain ; He hath created all things. Him we serve, and to Him we are ready to offer ourselves as a pleasing sacrifice.”

“I am astonished at what I hear,” said Priscus, “and the more so when I consider what must be the consequence of your resolution. Can it be possible that persons of your good sense, of your training and position in society, should be willing to throw themselves away ? No, no ; when you reflect

awhile, I doubt not, you will declare yourselves ready to obey the emperor, and to take my advice. Besides, you should not forget that, by agreeing to offer sacrifice with us, you become our friends, and are entitled to all the favors and privileges which we have it in our power to bestow."

These words of the Proconsul, instead of causing them to waver in their resolution, animated them only the more in their desire of making a generous confession of their Faith. The example given by Euphemia, her courageous bearing in the presence of the haughty magistrate—who possessed over them the power of life and death—caused them to look upon her as the proper interpreter of their sentiments. Understanding the desire of her companions, she, with modest reserve yet without timidity, said to Priscus:

"Your Excellency must know, as I said just now, that we are servants of the true God, and that we endeavor to walk without blame in the way of salvation which He has taught us. By so doing, we are persuaded that we can secure for ourselves the fulfilment of the promise which He has made: 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things.' And you yourself know full well that all they to whom an official dignity

has been entrusted, use their utmost endeavors to merit the approbation of him who has conferred it upon them, that thus they may prepare the way to obtain still greater dignities and emoluments. If they, therefore, who are mortal men, and serve them who are but mortals like themselves, seek thereby after honors which are vain and perishable, with how much more zeal ought we strive to prove ourselves faithful to the immortal and eternal King, that thus we may obtain the promised inheritance of honors and possessions, which are real and imperishable, and shall endure forevermore? Do then, with us whatever you like. We are ready even to suffer death, that we may come the sooner to the enjoyment of those supernal treasures laid up for us with God, the Lord and Master of the universe."

When Priscus heard this, and saw that all her companions approved of the words spoken by Euphemia, he became very angry, and at once made up his mind to change the manner of dealing with the servants of Christ. After he had commanded them once more to offer sacrifice to Mars, finding that they all resolutely refused to comply with his order, he gave them in charge to some of his men, whom he instructed to take them to prison. Not satisfied with this, he insisted that all of them should daily be put to the torture, unless they agreed to

yield to his authority by sacrificing to the idol. During nineteen consecutive days each of them was daily put upon the rack, and made to undergo the most excruciating torments. Yet none of them ever showed the least sign of denying the Faith or yielding to the unjust command of the Proconsul. This generous perseverance in their firm resolve of suffering and dying for their Religion the blessed Confessors attributed to a special grace obtained for them by the noble example and powerful intercession of Euphemia.

Each day, after undergoing their tortures, they assembled around her, and glorifying God for the happy issue of their struggle, they expressed to her the grateful feelings of their hearts, saying :

“ Beloved servant of Christ, our Lord, who art again adorned with the bloody mark of an heroic confession of thy Faith, mayest thou continue to be strong in body and wise in mind, until thou comest into the possession of the glorious prize promised to the wise Virgins, who had their lamps trimmed and were awaiting the coming of their heavenly Bridegroom.”

Thus strengthened from on high by the grace of the Holy Spirit, they animated one another to fight the good fight, and forget the things of earth—which indeed it was not so hard to do, since none of their

friends and relations were permitted to hold the least communication with them, or supply them with the comforts or even the necessaries of life.

On the twentieth day, the Proconsul, after consulting with his friend Apelian—to whose opinion he was wont to defer in every matter of importance—summoned the prisoners again before his tribunal. When they stood in his presence, he looked at them for a while with softened countenance, and then said:

“Tell me, my good people, now that you have had some experience of the manner in which we treat persons who refuse to do our bidding, have you changed your first resolution, and are you ready to offer sacrifice to our mighty god Mars?”

Without hesitation, the blessed Euphemia immediately replied in the name of all:

“How long, Oh Proconsul, do you deceive yourself? Why do you not remove the veil of error which darkens your understanding, and acknowledge the One true God, who created you?”

“Here is my answer,” said Priscus; and turning to his men, he added: “Give every one of them a blow on the face with the palms of your hands, saying: Obey by sacrificing to Mars.”

The executioners forthwith did as they were commanded. The generous Confessors so readily bore this unmerited treatment that their countenances

appeared radiant with joy; for they remembered that, for their sake, their Divine Master had undergone a similar punishment. Apelian—who understood at once from what he saw, that it would be impossible to make them deny their faith, and that his expected triumph would end in a disgraceful discomfiture—with his wonted cunning resolved to prevent this result. Wherefore, without making known his real purpose, he said to Priscus:

“Your Excellency is aware that the Emperor prides himself in the skill he has of dealing successfully with this kind of persons; if, therefore, you should deem it proper to send so great a number of them to Nicomedia, that he may dispose of them according to his judgment, he will think it no ordinary expression of your regard for his superior wisdom. And, if I might be permitted to suggest my opinion, I would say: Scourge them first merely, on account of their insolent behavior in your august presence; then keep them in prison until you find it convenient to send them to the Emperor.”

This counsel of the wily sophist was at once approved by the Proconsul and his assessors. Whereupon, the Martyrs were sent back not to their former prisons, but to a deeper and more loathsome dungeon under the same.

As they were fifty in number, this dark and nar-

row abode was of itself sufficient to inspire them with horror; nevertheless, they uttered not a word of complaint, but showed themselves pleased and cheerful. A great trial, however, awaited them.

The extraordinary beauty of Euphemia had fascinated Priscus. No sooner had he sent away the prisoners than he resolved to gain her over at any cost. Wherefore, he ordered some of his men to take her out of the dungeon and bring her secretly before him. Judging of others by his own imbecility, he thought it impossible that any one should be able to resist the allurements which his station enabled him to offer. When the servant of God heard the summons, she knew right well what sort of temptation the evil one had prepared for her; but knowing also whence her strength was to come, she raised her eyes to heaven and said:

“Help me, Oh Lord, my Saviour! for in Thee I trust. Let not this day the confidence of Thy handmaid be disappointed.”

As she stood again before the Proconsul, he tried to appear as gracious as he was able, and said to her:

“Do not disgrace thyself, Euphemia; do not render thyself unworthy of the honor and esteem which deservedly belong to thy family and kindred. Forget what thou hast said heretofore; it is not unbecoming in a woman to change her mind. Say now

that thou hast thought better of thy foolish resolution, and that, like a true member of a noble family, thou art willing to renounce all this folly, and ready to join us in offering sacrifice to one of the great gods of the Empire."

But the high-spirited lady, indignant at what she heard, fearlessly replied :

"We Christians care very little for the things which give comfort or honor to our corruptible bodies ; but we strive, by our perseverance in well-doing, to obtain that higher crown which is the reward of virtue. As the daughter of heroes who have joyfully laid down their lives for the truth, I am ready to follow their example, that, like them, I may inherit the glorious promises made to the champions of our Faith."

This unexpected answer suddenly changed the fascinated Priscus into a furious wild beast. Instantly he ordered his men to seize the martyr and stretch her upon the wheel, that, with all her limbs torn and broken, she might die a miserable death. As they placed her upon the instrument of torture, Euphemia made the sign of the Cross upon her breast, and said :

"Oh senseless impiety! what streams of blood are shed by Priscus, that enemy of all truth! But no wonder if by his wicked arts he persecutes the

just: he only does the work inspired him by his father, the devil.”

Then addressing the Proconsul, she added: Deceitful enemy of all that is good, the engine of your cruelty cannot reach my soul. And, as Christ our Lord is my Helper, I trust that, by enduring still greater torments, I may be enabled to give to others an example of fortitude.”

When the executioners turned the wheel and tore her fearfully, she exclaimed: “Oh Lord, the light of truth and the joy of all, who art merciful to them that call upon Thee, look upon me, Thy lowly and unworthy handmaid; save me from the power of the evil one, and from the threats of the wicked Priscus.”

No sooner had she uttered this prayer than the dreadful instrument of torture burst asunder.

This accident, as they considered it, took the executioners by surprise. But when they looked at the Martyr, and saw that not a limb was broken, and that she bore not even a mark of the torture, they were struck with awe. Knowing that nothing merely human could have produced so wonderful an effect, they suddenly withdrew and stood off at a distance—not a little afraid lest some new order from the Proconsul might expose them to certain death.

Priscus, however, blinded by the spirit of hatred and revenge, was unwilling to acknowledge the intervention of a Superior Power in what he had just witnessed. Intent upon the object of putting to death the maiden who had spurned his offers, he cried out, in a voice trembling with rage :

“By the fortune of the Emperor and the favor of the gods, I swear that, if thou sacrifice not instantly to Mars, I will have thee cast into the fire. Then thou shalt see, that He whom thou worshippest is not so ready to help thee as thou seemest to imagine.”

“Do you threaten me with fire, which burns but for a moment and is then extinguished?” answered Euphemia. “I am not so weak-minded and cowardly as to be frightened by threats of that kind. Taught by the example of the blessed heroes who fought and died for Christ, my Redeemer, I too am able to trample under foot the arbitrary power of tyrants.”

The Proconsul, now furious, commanded some of his attendants to heat a furnace seven-fold, and to cast her into the flames. Whilst the men were preparing the furnace, the servant of God, lifting her eyes to heaven, prayed in a loud voice :

“Blessed art Thou, Oh Lord our God, who dwellest in the highest, Thou whom the angels and all

the powers of heaven praise and exalt unceasingly. Thy weak and lowly handmaid calls upon Thee, who regardest the humble: strengthen me this hour with the power of Thy Holy Spirit, and show to the wicked enemy of Christ that Thou art the God who didst send Thine angel to the three youths, and didst drive the flame of the fire out of the furnace. Hear my prayer, Oh Lord; send me Thine aid, and deliver me from the mouth of the lion—from the threats of Thine enemy; and may Thy dread and glorious Name be praised forever. Amen.”

When the blazing furnace was ready to receive the Martyr, and the attendants were about to throw her into it, one of them, called Sosthenes, drawing his sword from his belt and advancing towards the Proconsul, cried out:

“Your Excellency may command me to use this sword against myself, but I will not stretch forth my hands against that holy young lady. I see before me a whole army clad in glittering armor in readiness to receive her.”

At the same time another, named Victor, whose eyes were also opened to the light of truth, untying his military belt, said to Priscus:

“I beg your Excellency, do not force me to attempt what is impossible for me. It would be a crime were I to touch that servant of God. I see

by the side of the furnace a great number of men who, while awaiting her, are scattering the flames on all sides so that she may receive no hurt."

The Proconsul, without heeding what was said, instantly ordered the two soldiers to be held in custody, and called for others to take their places. But this was not easily effected; because all present seemed to share to some extent the feelings of their comrades. He was, however, relieved from his perplexity by two persons, one Cæsar and the other Varius by name. These fellows, on the promise of a liberal reward, agreed to execute his command. Laying hold on the blessed Martyr, they cast her into the blazing furnace. But the angels of God received her into their midst, and scattering the flames on every side, kept her unharmed,—whereas Cæsar, one of the two wretches, paid for his officiousness with his life.

Euphemia, in the sight of all the multitude, stood in the furnace as if it were a cool and refreshing abode, and lifting up her hands towards heaven, prayed in a loud and clear voice:

"Blessed art Thou, Oh God of our fathers, who didst hear the petition of Thy handmaid when she called upon Thee. Blessed art Thou, who, by Thy Holy Spirit, didst shut the lion's mouth and keep from me the snares of the infernal dragon. Grant

that, after fighting in a manner worthy of Thee, I may at last receive the reward of eternal life; and not only for me do I ask this favor, but also for the two soldiers who, enlightened by Thy holy grace, are ready to bear testimony to the truth."

When she had finished this prayer, she came out of the furnace without having suffered the least injury from the flames.

Priscus thereupon, not knowing what else he could do, said to his attendants:

"Take her again to prison, and keep her there until to-morrow: by that time we shall have considered what is to be done with her."

As she was led away, praising God for the wonderful favor she had received from Him that day, the two soldiers, Sosthenes and Victor, unable to contain their joy at this glorious triumph of the Faith, whereof they had been eye-witnesses, exclaimed:

"Blessed art Thou forever, Oh Lord, who gavest strength to Thy servant that she might offer herself as a pleasing sacrifice to Thee, after the example of her fathers, who with an eager desire laid down their lives to give glory to Thy Holy Name!"

The Proconsul hearing this, cried out to them:

"Think not that we have already forgotten you. It is now your turn. Prove to us that your disobedience did not arise from any disloyalty to our Sove-

reign, nor to the gods of the Empire, by at once offering sacrifice to Mars."

But the two soldiers, far from complying with this order, boldly replied :

"We, sir, like yourself, deceived by the dark fiend whom you worship, had lost all hope of happiness hereafter, because we knew that we were enemies of the true God. But the sight of the wonders He has worked through His blessed servant Euphemia has dispelled darkness from our minds : we believe in Him, and we hope that, in His mercy, He will not refuse to receive us among His servants. As He has freed us from the chains of the enemy of the truth, we trust He will enable us to persevere in the confession of our faith in Him. Punish us, therefore, in whatever manner you may think proper ; and understand well, that we obey not your impious commands, nor those of your Emperors ; and that we despise all the demons whom you call gods, and particularly the impure Mars."

This stirred up the wrath of the Proconsul. Without delay he commanded that they should be taken to the amphitheatre, and exposed to the wild beasts. When they stood in the arena, they lifted up their voices to God and said :

"Almighty Father, who art great and exceedingly to be feared, who by Thy Word hast created all

things; who didst dispel darkness and give light to the world; who tookest away the power of the enemy of mankind and the sorrows of death; deliver us this day from the grasp of the evil-doer, and grant that, cleansed from our sins, we may inherit the possessions promised to them that faithfully serve Thee."

As they prayed in this manner, a voice was heard from heaven, saying: "Fear not; your prayer is heard."

Immediately after this, two bears and a lion were let loose upon them; but the beasts were unwilling to do them any harm. This so annoyed Priscus that he gave orders that they should be burnt alive. Whilst the men were preparing to execute this command, the two Martyrs remained kneeling side by side in the arena, and commended their souls to God by fervent prayer. When all was ready, the executioners were about to seize their victims, but, to their great astonishment, they found that both had already expired. The Proconsul was greatly disappointed, and without giving any further orders, suddenly returned to the pretorium.

This left the Christians at liberty to carry off the bodies of the two Martyrs, and to bury them in a proper manner.

Early the next morning, Euphemia was again

summoned before Priscus. As she left the prison she was so overjoyed that, raising her voice, she sang with rapture :

“I will sing to Thee, Oh Lord, a new canticle in the land of the stranger : I will glorify Thee to the utmost of my strength. I praise Thee, Oh Lord God, among the nations ; a hymn to Thy Holy Name. Hear my prayer, Oh God my Father, and grant that this day I may find rest in Thy dwellings.”

When she stood before the Proconsul, he said to her :

“How long wilt thou turn a deaf ear to our advice, and seek thy own destruction? If thou do but consent to worship our mighty god, he will become favorable to thee in every way. Wherefore, show thyself less haughty and more yielding, by offering sacrifice, and we promise to confer on thee every favor thou canst desire.”

“I should deserve to be called wicked and foolish indeed,” she replied, “were I to offer sacrifice to deaf and dumb idols, or to evil spirits that mimic the power of the Deity. And you, who are an enemy of the truth and devoted to the powers of darkness, should be ashamed of the means you employ to draw from the path of virtue them that are walking in the light, that you may drag them with yourself into everlasting destruction. As for myself, I will on no

account listen to your promises, nor can I be frightened by your threats ; for Christ, my Saviour, is my strength. So long as He upholds me, I dread none of the torments you have it in your power to inflict upon me.”

Priscus, hardly knowing in what manner to satisfy his feelings of resentment, ordered his men to dig a deep pit, after the manner of those which are made for catching wild beasts. The bottom of this was paved with stones, filled with sharp-pointed iron spears. A very thin covering of earth spread over it, completely concealed the snare from the sight of every one who was not acquainted with the exact location. The blessed Euphemia, wholly unaware of the cruel trial to which she was exposed, was made to walk repeatedly over the place, but, protected from on high, not the least harm befell her. The Proconsul and his assessors wondered exceedingly, and began to suspect that some deception had been practised in the construction of the pitfall, when some of the executioners, who had superintended the work, suddenly dropped through the slight covering of earth, and miserably perished at the bottom of the pit, thus verifying to the letter the saying of the Psalmist: “They are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the very snare which they hid hath their own foot been taken.”

The Martyr, seeing what had happened, and understanding how she had been protected by a special providence, exclaimed:

“Oh God, who knowest the secrets of all hearts, who didst send Thine only begotten Son to loosen the sorrows of death and to bind the chief and leader of wickedness, help me in this my struggle for the glory of Thy Holy Name. Listen to the voice of supplication poured forth in my behalf by the saints who, for Thy sake, are detained in prison. Be not mindful of my sins and unworthiness; but, remembering Thy mercy and Thy readiness in helping them that call upon Thee, save me in this hour of my distress, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy only Son, our Lord.”

Priscus, seeing that the plan from which he had expected such wonders had failed altogether, again called the servant of God before him, and addressed her with flattering words:

“Thou knowest, Oh Euphemia, that though born of a noble and most excellent family, thou hast suffered thyself to be misled, and that thou still continuest in wrongful ways, even so far as to oppose us, who hold the place of the Emperor himself. Now, then, like an honorable and virtuous lady, forget the harm we have done thee, and listening to our advice, without further objection, offer sacri-

face to our great god, that thus thou mayst avoid the crime of bringing disgrace upon thy family."

The Martyr, fully aware of the insincerity of the designing Proconsul, boldly made answer, saying :

"You tyrant, why are you still full of bitterness and deceit? Your words, though fairly put together, are like gall and wormwood, because they are the utterances of the wolf in sheep's clothing. I am not yet so insane as to give my dearest treasure for the sake of pleasing the devil. Deceive not yourself, sir, nor flatter yourself with the thought that you are able to persuade me to sacrifice to impure demons, whom you call gods. For how could I stoop so low as to give divine honor to imaginary beings, that never had real life or sense? Hence, understand well, once for all, that I care not for your foolish advice, and that I am ready to suffer all you may attempt against me, rather than forego the hope of receiving the reward promised to them that fight manfully for the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

This so incensed Priscus that he commanded her instantly to be beaten with rods. This, however, did not subdue the courageous spirit of the Martyr. For while she was treated so cruelly, she boldly addressed the Proconsul, saying :

"In spite of your desire to hurt me, these rods

seem not at all to touch me. If you have no other torments to inflict upon me, you might as well confess that your will is stronger than your power, and that the wickedness of the tyrant is unable to overcome the fortitude of his victim."

Then, at the suggestion of his friend Apelian, Priscus gave orders that her body should be sawed to pieces and cast into the fire, so that her very ashes might be scattered to the winds. But, notwithstanding the repeated attempts made by the executioners, the teeth of the saw would turn round whenever they touched the body of the Saint. Thus this punishment failing in its effects, it was resolved that she should be exposed to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre.

As she stood in the arena, she lifted up her eyes toward heaven, and said:

"Oh Lord, who hearest them that call upon Thee, may the offering I make be pleasing to Thee. And, even as Thou didst accept the sacrifice of Thy servant Abraham, receive this day the lowliness of my spirit."

Saying this, she blessed herself with the sign of the Cross, and called again upon the name of the Lord. Several of the wild beasts were then let loose against her; but, instead of touching her, they quietly lay down at her feet, to the great annoyance

of the Proconsul. For some time the Martyr thus remained standing absorbed in prayer, until one of the animals bit her in the side—yet so slightly as scarcely to leave a visible wound. At the same moment a voice was heard from on high :

“Euphemia, thou hast fought a good fight ; thou hast finished thy course, thou hast kept the faith. Come hither and receive the prize.”

“Lord God, help Thy servants,” exclaimed the Saint ; let not thine enemies triumph forever.” And kneeling down, she yielded up her noble spirit.

Her parents, Philophon and Theodora, took away her precious remains and deposited them in a new and elegant sepulchre, about a mile from Chalcedon—where afterwards a celebrated basilica was built, under the name and invocation of the Saint. Her companions were sent by the Proconsul to the Emperor at Nicomedia, with the recommendation that they should not be too severely dealt with, for the avenging hand of God was already heavy upon him.

St. Euphemia suffered on the sixteenth of September, A. D. 304.





VII.

SS. TIMOTHY AND MAURA.

THE blessed Martyr Timothy suffered in the Thebais, or Upper Egypt, in the beginning of the reign of Diocletian. Accused of being a Christian, he was brought before Arian, Governor of the country. Arian interrogated him, and hearing that he held the office of Lector in the church of the village where he resided, said:

“A person of thy condition and learning must, no doubt, have heard of the decree of the Emperor, whereby he commands all the subjects of the Empire to worship the gods, under pain of incurring his displeasure, and all the penalties annexed to the crime of high treason.”

“The Spirit of Christ dwells within me,” replied Timothy; “therefore I do not worship idols.”

“Seest thou not these instruments of torture which lie scattered all around thee?” asked Arian.

“And do you not see the angels of God, who

encourage and strengthen me?" answered the Christian.

"It were better for thee," said the Governor, "to obey me at once, and to begin by giving me the books which are read in the assemblies of the Christians, that I may see what they contain."

"Foolish man!" exclaimed Timothy; "who ever heard of a father delivering his children to destruction? Do you not know that those books are as dear to me as if they were my children; and that, while I make use of them, the angels of God stand reverently around me?"

"This is but an excuse for refusing to give them to me," interrupted Arian, "and it will avail thee very little; for thou must either give me the books or offer incense to our gods. Do not, I warn thee, expose thyself to the consequences of a refusal."

"I will do neither! I am a Christian," replied Timothy without hesitation.

The Governor thereupon ordered his men to heat two iron bodkins and thrust them into the ears of the Confessor. So intense was the heat that it instantly caused the eyeballs to start out of their sockets. The soldiers, seeing this, said:

"Behold, now, on account of thy unwillingness to worship our gods, thou hast lost thy sight."

"The eyes of my body," replied the Martyr,

“which often saw many foolish things, are gone indeed; but the saving eyes of Jesus 'Christ, my Lord, still illumine my soul.”

Arian, hearing this, commanded the men to fasten him by the feet to a wheel, and said:

“So soon as thou agreest to do our bidding thou shalt be set free.”

“That I will never do,” said Timothy; “for the Master whom I serve will not cease to be my Protector.”

After a while, seeing that his victim showed no sign of yielding, the Governor said to the men:

“Take him from the wheel, bind his hands, and put a gag into his mouth; then, with a stone tied to his neck, hang him up against a pillar with his head downward until he promises to obey our commands.”

Whilst the Martyr was undergoing this torture, the soldiers, knowing how excruciating his suffering must be, were eagerly listening to hear him utter the promise that should set him free. But they waited in vain; for all they could understand was, that the sufferer muttered in a low voice: “There is a God in the heavens, who sooner or later will release me from these pains.” This they reported to the Governor, and at the same time made bold to suggest that probably he was one of those men

whose mind is more easily changed by kindness than by cruel treatment. "Besides," they added, "he is a man newly married, as it is only some twenty days since he took to himself a wife, and she is very young."

Arian, pleased with the suggestion made by the soldiers, immediately sent for the wife of the Martyr. As she stood before him, he said:

"What is thy name?"

"My name is Maura, the wife of Timothy, the Lector," she replied.

"It is a pity that one so young as thyself should become a widow," said the Governor; "wherefore, follow my advice. Go home, and adorn thyself with thy fairest and richest garments and jewels; then return, and strive by all means to induce thy husband to obey the Emperor's and my own commands, that thus thou mayst save him from death, and thyself from the miseries of an early widowhood."

Maura immediately hastened home, and soon returned, attired as on the day of her nuptials. Approaching her husband, she began to entreat him to comply with the orders of the Governor. As, however, he was unable to make any reply, she begged the Governor that the gag should be removed. When this was done, she renewed her entreaties. Timothy made her no answer, but, per-

ceiving the sweet fragrance of her scented ornaments, he said:

“Where is my father?”

In a moment the father stood by him and said:

“What dost thou desire, my beloved son?”

“I beseech you, Oh father,” said the Martyr, “do me an act of kindness. Put a cover over my face, that I may escape the danger of this sweet-smelling atmosphere: for this fragrance is deadly; it drags men to destruction, it is the source of evil desires, it is the attendant of the devil, and the enemy of the friends of God.”

Maura, hearing her husband speak in this manner, blushed with shame, and said to him:

“My brother Timothy, why dost thou treat me in this disgraceful manner, although I have given thee no intentional cause of offence? It is scarcely twenty days since we were united in the bonds of holy wedlock, and experience has not yet been able to show thee my true character, for I have not even become acquainted with the various apartments of our dwelling. How then can I have given thee a cause of displeasure? Thou didst not so much as tell me why they are treating thee in this barbarous way. What am I to think? I know thee too well to suppose that thou art guilty of any crime; and here I am, ready to do whatever I can to save and

comfort thee. If it is because thou art somehow involved in debt that they deal so unmercifully with thee, is not all the gold I possess and this jewelry thy own? Sell it all, and free thyself from this suffering, and me from the anguish of seeing thee in this sad condition."

The Martyr waited for a while and prayed in silence; then he said to his wife:

"My sister Maura, when a short time ago thou wast leaving our house, I saw at thy right side a demon who, in some mysterious manner, seemed to be turning thy heart from uprightness to the crooked ways of the world."

"If this be so and thou abandon me, what must become of poor me?" replied Maura. "Yet words cannot express how great is my concern for thee, and how anxious I am to prove that I am truly desirous of pleasing thee."

"If thou art sincere in what thou sayest, bid farewell to the vain and transitory things of this world; come with me, that together we may fight the good fight, and receive the crown of victory promised by our Lord to them that suffer and die for the glory of His holy Name."

"Alas! my brother," said Maura, "I was willing enough to share with thee these sufferings, but I thought that my heart was too full of guile and

wickedness to deserve so great a blessing. Now, however, whilst thou wast speaking to me it seemed as if the Spirit of God entered again into my soul, and drove out all worldly desires. Yes, I am ready to follow thee: whatsoever thou lovest I do also love; whatsoever thou chooseth I do also choose."

"If in good truth thou meanest what thou sayest," said the Martyr, "go and upbraid the Governor for the injustice and cruelty wherewith he treats the innocent, who have done him no harm."

"I am afraid," she replied, "that the sight of the Governor in his wrath, and the threats of torments, may cause me to lose courage; for I am not strong and brave, and not quite seventeen years of age."

"Think not of thy weakness," said Timothy, "but put thy trust in our Lord Jesus Christ, and all the threats and tortures used by the Governor against thee shall be as a healing oil poured upon thy body, and as the morning dew refreshing and invigorating thy very bones, and freeing thee from every pain." Then, raising his voice, he prayed: "Oh God, Father of mercies, who didst deliver the three youths from the flames of the fiery furnace, and thy prophet Daniel from the mouths of the lions; Thou who wast ever mindful of them that suffered for truth and justice, and trustingly called upon Thee, look upon Thy handmaid and strengthen her this

day; and, as Thou didst unite us in the bonds of holy wedlock, grant that together we may be deemed worthy to join the glorious company of Thy Martyrs. Grant us courage and patience that, by our struggle for Thy sake, we may put Thine enemies to confusion, and show that they are unable to withdraw us from that sacred union which we possess in Christ our Lord. Amen."

No sooner had Timothy finished this prayer than Maura, feeling herself encouraged by the spirit of Faith renewed in her breast, hastened to the Governor, and boldly addressing him, said:

"Oh you worker of iniquity, was it by gold and jewelry that you attempted to draw my soul to destruction? Is it a part of your duty as a ruler to entrap the unwary and innocent by arts whereof they have no knowledge? Thanks to my God, who kept me from falling into the snare which you had laid for my ruin! And now I stand before you clad with the armor of my Saviour, Jesus Christ, and I defy your wiles as well as your power."

When Arian understood how wonderfully the wife of Timothy was changed in so short a time, he said to his attendants:

"Did I not tell you that the man is a magician? See how he has bewitched his wife; she has become as mad and as insolent as himself."

Then, addressing Maura, he added :

“Dost thou also prefer death to life? Reflect well before thou makest thy choice. Art thou prepared to bid farewell to all the sweets of this life in the midst of tortures and sufferings? Or, knowing that thy husband is about to die, dost thou already feel with sad forebodings the grief and lonesomeness of a long widowhood? If so, give thyself no trouble about that; the days of thy widowhood shall not be long. For I myself will see to it that one of my centurions, who has served out his time, marry thee, and thou shalt then have a husband much worthier and nobler than the present one, so that an unlimited amount of happiness is still in store for thee, provided thou art willing to listen to good advice.”

“When I presented myself before you, Oh Governor,” replied Maura, “I did so because I had firmly resolved to trample under foot all the vanities of this world; and do you imagine that the thought of becoming the wife of a centurion would have the effect of making me return to my former follies? No, no, Arian, I have given my heart and its affections to Christ, my Saviour, to whom by right I belong! He will enable me to remain faithful to Him, and to endure whatever punishments you may see fit to inflict upon me.”

This complete change in the sentiments of one upon whom the Governor had relied to overcome the resistance of Timothy, so excited his anger that instantly he commanded his men to tear out her hair. When this was done, he said :

“Seeing that thou hast already lost the beautiful head of hair of which thou wast so proud, I think it would be well for thee to reflect a little before setting our threats at defiance and encountering the severe punishments which still await thee.”

“There is no need of wasting time by useless considerations,” answered Maura. “Now I feel persuaded that Christ, my merciful Redeemer, has forgiven me the sin I committed when I so foolishly listened to you and adorned myself after the manner of worldlings. For you have torn up by the very roots that which you induced me to form into ringlets, the more wickedly to tempt my blessed husband. I thank God because, by your means, He has removed from me that which, as I now understand it, may heretofore have been a stumbling-block to men.”

The moral and Christian view which Maura took of the first torment she had undergone was not at all satisfactory to the Governor. He had imagined that one so young and delicate—a person, too, not wholly weaned from the love of earthly vanities, as

he had been informed—would have been a willing instrument in the execution of his plans. Seeing himself thus foiled by the young woman, he grew very angry, and ordered his men to cut off all her fingers and cast them away. Maura was not discouraged by this barbarous treatment, but calmly addressing Arian, she said:

“For this also I must confess that I owe you many thanks; for you have deprived me of the fingers which I used as instruments to adorn myself after the manner of worldlings. You understand not the greatness of the service which you are rendering me: this torment which you have made me undergo I have offered as an atonement for the sins of vanity, of which I have been often guilty. Wherefore, do not spare me; for I am ready to suffer whatsoever tortures you intend to inflict upon me.”

The Governor made her no answer, for he was fairly astonished at the wonderful courage displayed by the sufferer. Poccilius, her father-in-law, who had remained standing in the crowd of spectators, now drew near and said:

“Oh Maura, my most valiant and excellent daughter, how feeblest thou after the loss of all thy fingers?”

“You have often seen,” she replied, “men pulling

up by the roots the herbs in their well-watered gardens. As the herbs are insensible to this action, so am I void of feeling as regards my fingers; since He for whose glory I suffer takes away all pain from His unworthy servant."

Arian, after reflecting for some time, ordered his men to prepare a large caldron of boiling water and throw her into it. The men immediately complied with his commands. When, however, Maura was cast into the scalding water, she remained unhurt, and said to the Governor:

"For this also must I thank your Excellency; for I think that now I am being washed and cleansed from all the defilements which I contracted formerly, by serving the world rather than my gracious Redeemer. Now I feel confident that I am being prepared to present myself before Him with a clean heart, which will entitle me to receive the crown of life. Nevertheless, I must confess that, perhaps, you were in too great a hurry to cast me into this caldron: for the water, so far as I am able to feel and judge, is doubtless more cool and refreshing than you intended it should be."

These words caused Arian no little annoyance, and made him suspect that, perhaps, his men, by some secret understanding for purposes of their own, had let out the boiling water and filled the caldron

with cool, so that Maura might suffer no harm. Acting under this suspicion, he suddenly leaped from his tribunal, and going close to the Martyr, he said to her:

“If, because thou hast no longer the power of feeling, thou sufferest no harm from this water, pour a handful of it upon my hands, that I may judge whether it is really hot or cold.”

“As I said just now,” replied Maura, “I do not feel that it is hot. But perhaps, sir,” she added, “your men were too ill-supplied with wood to make this water boiling hot; if so, send to my father, who is a carpenter; he will, no doubt, cheerfully give you a wagon-load of wood to make this caldron boil, so that his daughter may receive the greater reward hereafter.”

“It may be,” said the Governor, “that thy limbs are become too benumbed to feel the difference between what is hot or cold. Do, therefore, what I said before; let me try the warmth of that water.”

The Martyr thereupon threw some of the water upon his hands, and Arian, instantly feeling that they were scalded, exclaimed:

“Blessed be the Lord God of Maura! He alone can bestow these favors upon them that believe in Him.”

Then he gave orders to his men to take her out

of the boiling caldron and set her at liberty. But no sooner had he yielded to this generous impulse than the devil entered again into his heart, and suggested to him the thought that, by his action, he had approved of the doings of the Christians, and encouraged them in their opposition to the will of the Emperor. Whereupon, recalling the Martyr, he said to her:

“Maura, give up thy trust in Christ, and sacrifice to our gods, that thus thou mayst secure for thyself, now and forever, freedom from every sort of annoyance.”

“Neither now, nor at any other time, will I do what you require of me,” she replied; “and you know well enough that I have a Protector who will enable me to remain constant in my resolve.”

“I will fill thy mouth with live coals,” said the Governor, “and burn it so that thereafter thou shalt be unable to utter a word, unless thou consent to do my bidding.”

“The mind of your excellency is too excited to understand the meaning of that threat,” said Maura; “these coals would have the effect of cleansing my soul from the sins which I have committed by means of my tongue and my lips. For, even as of old an angel of the Lord touched with a live coal the mouth of the Prophet, and said: ‘Behold, this

hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquities shall be taken away, and thy sins shall be cleansed,' so this torment, endured for Christ's sake, will serve to purify my heart. Wherefore, I pray you, order these coals to be applied not only to my mouth, but to my face and my whole body."

This aroused anew the anger of Arian, so that he instantly ordered his men to bring a lamp filled with pitch and sulphur, and scorch by little and little her whole body. When the spectators saw what was going on, they became indignant,—for they had all along admired the wonderful courage of Maura,—and exclaimed :

"How long, Oh Arian, will you persist in inventing new tortures to afflict that poor girl? Put a stop, sir, to your cruel work; we all, as well as yourself, admire the heroic constancy of the noble sufferer."

But Maura, turning to the multitude, said :

"My kind friends, I would advise you all to attend to your own affairs. I understand quite well what is best for me; but should I need a helper, I have only to call upon the God whom I serve; He is ever ready to protect me."

When she had said this, the Governor ordered the burning lamp to be applied to her body. The Martyr seeing this, said to him :

“Has not your former experience taught you that the feeble light of a little lamp can have no terror for me? Ought not the boiling caldron into which I was cast have frightened me? But you know what happened; and do you imagine that this trifling fire will terrify me into doing what is wrong? No, no, sir; if you are in earnest, command a fiery furnace to be prepared, throw me into it, and then judge whether it is in your power to overcome my constancy. Were it not better for yourself to confess sincerely, and at once, that you know at last that I am a servant of Jesus Christ, and that it was He who, by means of my blessed husband, called me to this struggle, that my very weakness might proclaim His power and mercy? This fire is to my body what the morning dew is to the field; it refreshes and invigorates my limbs.”

Arian knew not what answer to make to this bold declaration of the suffering servant of God. His proud mind hesitated between a public confession of his belief in the power of the God of the Christians and the unavailing efforts of the enemies of the truth to put down by force that which reason and common sense proved to be a supernatural declaration of the powerlessness of Paganism. For a time he was at a loss how to act; but at last he gave orders that Timothy and his wife should be crucified

—over against each other. Their trials, however, were not yet ended. As they were going to the place of execution, the mother of Maura met them. Bathed in tears and loudly lamenting, she addressed her daughter, saying :

“Is it thus, Oh Maura, thou forsakest thy mother? What shall become of all the ornaments of which thou wert so proud? Whose form shall they adorn when my daughter is no more?”

“Speak not of such things, O mother,” answered Maura. “Gold may be carried off, garments are consumed by moths, youth and beauty disappear with age; but Christ, our Lord holds out to me a crown of glory that fadeth not forever: this I mean to secure for myself.”

And as the mother not even then desisted from importuning her with worldly suggestions, Maura said to her :

“Leave off troubling me! Wouldst thou draw me away from my Saviour, or hinder me from dying on the cross, when Himself did not disdain this manner of death?”

When fastened to the cross, Maura, instead of giving the least sign of weakness brought on by her sufferings, at once began to cheer up her husband, saying :

“Let us not give ourselves to sleep, lest, perhaps,

our Lord, coming to visit our habitation and finding us asleep, take offence at our sluggishness. The lamp that burns in the house of the watchful father of a family frightens away the thieves that come in the night. If we watch and pray, we shall ever be prepared to ward off the blows which our enemy will not fail to aim at us, so long as we continue here waiting the coming of the Heavenly Bridegroom."

During nine days they remained alive on the cross without tasting any kind of food, and encouraging one another to perseverance, in spite of their sufferings and the many assaults of the devil. For the enemy of man tempted them in various ways during this long-protracted torture. At one time Maura beheld him in the form, as it were, of a man holding in his hand a large cup filled with milk and honey. Presenting it to her, he said:

"Take this and drink, for thou hast need of greater strength."

"And who art thou," asked Maura, "who offerest me this drink?"

"I am an angel of God," he answered.

"Then let us pray together," said Maura, "giving thanks to God."

"I am come hither," he replied, "because I feel pity for thee. I know thou art weak and hungry, for thou hast not tasted food for a long while."

“What induces thee to speak in this manner?” inquired Maura, “or why wouldst thou condemn my abstemiousness and forbearance? Knowest thou not that God often grants to his servants to do things which seem impossible.”

And as she began to pray he turned away his face, and soon after vanished from her sight.

At another time, when she felt her mouth parched with thirst, she had another vision. She saw a person who, kindly addressing her, invited her to accompany him. He led her to a stream of cool and limpid water, and said:

“Thou art faint with thirst and exhaustion; drink of this water and be refreshed.”

Suspecting that he was the tempter, she replied:

“I have already said that I would not drink water nor take any refreshment, until I drink the cup which Christ our Lord has set before me, and which, by death, prepares me for the joys of everlasting life.”

Thereupon he himself went near the stream and began to drink of its water, and as he drank, the stream dried up and he disappeared. By this the Martyr knew that she had escaped another snare of the evil one.

The day before their death, Maura related to her husband another vision which had been shown her

for her own consolation, but still more for the encouragement of Timothy, the silent and patient sufferer. A person appeared to her, his countenance shining as the sun, his garments whiter than the snow. Taking her by the hand, he lifted her up into space until they came to a vast apartment, where he showed her a throne prepared, upon which lay a white garment exceedingly rich, and a crown. Astonished at their splendor, she said to her guide:

“Whose are these, my lord?”

“This throne, the garment and the crown, are prepared for thee as a reward of thy victory,” he replied.

Then he led her to a place somewhat higher, where she beheld a throne, a garment and a crown like to the former. She said to her guide:

“And pray, my lord, whose are these?”

“These belong to Timothy, thy husband,” he answered.

“But why, then,” she asked, “are the thrones placed so far apart?”

“Because,” he replied, “there is a great difference between thyself and thy husband. Knowest thou not that it is by his means, by his words and example, thou hast become entitled to these rewards? Go now; to-morrow, at the sixth hour, the angels

will come to release your spirits: but yet, be watchful; the enemy sleepeth not."

On the tenth day, when the time foretold by the angel was nigh, Maura said to the people, who had been all the while watching them and admiring their constancy and patient suffering:

"Brethren, remember that at one time we were given to the things of this world, and we acted according to its spirit; but, with true repentance, we foresook that which we found to be wrongful, and applied ourselves, with all sincerity, to serve our Lord Jesus Christ; now we trust to receive from Him the recompense promised to them that die in His friendship. Let not our example be useless to you. Persevere in his service; or, if you have gone astray, call upon Him, with humble prayer, that He may be merciful to you, according to His great mercy."

After she had uttered these words, herself and her husband went to receive their reward.

They suffered on the third of May.





VII

ST. ALEXANDER AND HIS COMPANIONS.

ALLEXANDER was the successor of the blessed Evaristus in the see of Peter. By the holiness of his life, by his burning zeal, and the wonderful faith which animated all his actions, he brought to the fold of Christ great numbers of his fellow-citizens—among them many Senators, and also Hermes, Prefect of Rome. The conversion of the latter—who, together with all his household, consisting of more than twelve hundred persons, received baptism at the hands of the holy Pontiff—created so great a stir in the city that it induced the Emperor Trajan, who was then in the East, to send Aurelian, one of his chief officers, to Rome, that he might enforce the laws against the Christians.

On his arrival in the city, Aurelian was received with every demonstration of joy and welcome, for the priests of the idols had persuaded the populace to gratify in this manner the vanity of the imperial

deputy, that thus they might the more easily impel him to enter into their designs of extinguishing the very name of Christian. Wherefore, also, amidst the shouts of welcome which greeted him, Aurelian heard repeatedly from all sides the cries of "To the flames with Alexander, the Christian Pontiff," and "Death to Hermes, the Prefect, who has destroyed his household gods and taught his people to abandon our temples."

In consequence of these clamors of the people, Aurelian had Alexander forthwith arrested and sent to prison; after which he gave orders to the Tribune Quirinus to put the Prefect in chains, and hold him in safe keeping at his own residence.

While the Tribune had the noble prisoner in charge, knowing that, sooner or later, he should have to appear before Aurelian and suffer the penalty of the law, unless he consented to abandon his religion, he thought that it would be an act of kindness on his part if, by some means or other, he could prevail upon him to return to the worship of the gods. For this purpose he sought an interview with Hermes, and said to him:

"What is the reason that a man of your rank suffers himself to be subjected to this degradation? How can you thus calmly give up the honors which, as Prefect of the city, you were wont to receive,

and patiently permit yourself to be put in chains, as if you had never been more than a private citizen?"

"I have not lost my prefectship," answered Hermes, "nor the honors attached thereto. I have simply made a desirable change; for all earthly dignities may be lost or taken away: but heavenly dignities are permanent, and not subjected to the fluctuations of human affairs."

"I am astonished," said the Tribune, "that a man of your good sense should forget himself so far as to give credence to the absurd opinion that, after this life, there is another, in which he may enjoy comfort and happiness. Do you not know that, after death, the ashes of the human body are so reduced to nothingness that of the very bones not a particle remains?"

"Not longer than two years ago," replied Hermes, "I used to talk as you do now. I then endeavored to persuade myself that the present life was the only one wherein happiness was to be found. But, by the mercy of God, my eyes have been opened to the truth, and I now fully understand that the joys, as well as the sorrows of this life, are neither real nor abiding."

"If you can prove this to me, I would willingly believe as you do," said Quirinus.

“The blessed Alexander, who is now in prison, has made me clearly see all this,” said Hermes.

When the Tribune heard the name of Alexander, he grew very indignant, and, interrupting the Prefect, exclaimed: “My noble lord, illustrious Hermes, take back your prefectship; return to your senses; enjoy all your possessions, which shall be restored to you. Aurelian, in the name of the Emperor, authorizes me to make you these promises: reject not his generous offer. He puts only one condition—sacrifice to the gods of the Empire. If you know your own interest, follow my advice, and revenge yourself upon your enemies, who are even now rejoicing over your misfortunes.”

“Did you not desire me to give you a reason for my belief?” asked Hermes. “How comes it that you are all at once unwilling to listen to me?”

“That is easily explained,” answered the Tribune. “I requested you to show to me that your change of belief was founded on reason and good sense; but you quote to me the authority of Alexander, a magician, whom I was obliged to put in prison. How could I listen to you after hearing the name of that miserable wretch, who, by his cunning devices, has succeeded in deceiving yourself, as well as many other citizens? How is it possible, my lord, that you could suffer yourself to be imposed

upon by a juggler, as if you were an untutored rustic? But perhaps the poor man is himself mistaken, and will only discover his error when he is about to be thrown into the flames for his wicked deceptions. If he have any power, here is a chance to show it. Let him free you and himself from these bonds."

"Such also was the saying of the Jews," replied Hermes, "when Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour, was hanging on the Cross. For they mocked and blasphemed Him, and, defying His power, said with lying tongues: 'If He be the Son of God and the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross and we will believe Him.' And He, had He not known their corrupt and treacherous hearts, would doubtless have worked a miracle to save them."

"If what you say is true," said the Tribune, "I will repair at once to Alexander and say to him: 'If you desire me to believe that you worship the One true God, and that you are His herald, let me find you in company with Hermes at my dwelling, or let me see Hermes with you in your prison, and I will believe all your teachings.'"

"Let it be so," replied Hermes.

"But observe, I will more than double his chains and the number of his keepers, and tell him to meet

you here about the hour of supper. If he can do this, I must needs confess that he possesses a power greater than that of other men, and I will lend a ready ear to his words."

Thereupon he hastened to the place where Alexander was kept a prisoner, and related to him all that had passed between himself and the Prefect Hermes. After which he saw to it that, under his personal inspection, the bonds were doubled as well as the number of the guards, and then went his way.

As soon as Quirinus had left the prison, the holy Pontiff betook himself to prayer, saying :

"Lord Jesus Christ, who didst place me in the chair of Peter, Thy Apostle, hear my prayer. As formerly Thou didst send Thy holy Angel to free him from prison, so now send him in like manner to me, Thy unworthy servant, that this night he may lead me to the apartment of the blessed Hermes and guide me back—yet so that my absence from this place may not be known to my keepers."

His prayer was heard. At the beginning of the night, when all was silent, Alexander saw before him a little child bearing a lighted torch in his hand. The servant of God was so filled with wonder that he thought at first it was only a dream. But the child said to him : "Follow me."

“As Christ my Lord liveth,” replied the Pontiff, unless thou kneel down with me and recite the Lord’s Prayer, I will not follow thee.”

The child, who, to all appearance, seemed not to be more than five years of age, immediately kneeling down, said the Lord’s Prayer. Then taking the holy prisoner by the hand, he led him to the window of the apartment. Instantly it flew open, and they, passing through it, in a few moments stood in the presence of Hermes, at the house of the Tribune—the doors of the room remaining closed. After a while, Quirinus, anxious to see what would be the upshot of their agreement, opened the door, and, beholding the two servants of God with their arms extended and absorbed in prayer, was greatly frightened; because the light of the torch, for the presence of which he could not account, threw such a dazzling brightness through the room, that he became wholly confused. They, however, seeing him in this trouble, instantly came to his relief, saying :

“Since you put it as a condition, that you would not believe our doctrines unless you saw us two,—who were at a distance from one another in body, although intimately united in spirit,—brought also visibly together, you must confess that your wish has been satisfied, and that you cannot honorably

recede from your agreement. Yet, do not imagine that it was for the sake of securing our liberty you see us this moment freed from our bonds. In the morning you shall find us again in chains and secured as before. All this is done to release you from the bonds of sin and the slavery of the devil, and to convince you that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is Himself the true God, who hears the prayers of them that believe in Him, and grants to them whatsoever they may ask in His name."

Nevertheless the Tribune was not yet inclined to yield to the evidence of his senses, and said :

"Is it not possible that what I behold may, after all, be simply the effect of your skill im magic?"

"Was it then for our sake that this was done?" replied Hermes. "Was it not because you said you would believe as I do, were you to see what you now witness? Disregard not this favor which Christ our Lord has granted you ; for He does not perform these miracles without a purpose. Whilst He conversed with men upon earth, He healed the sick, cleansed lepers, gave sight to the blind, restored the dead to life ; very many persons witnessed all these wonders, and yet how few believed in His doctrines! Think you that they who refused to believe shall escape condemnation? To come more closely to the point, what do you imagine should be my des-

tiny hereafter, had I been unwilling to listen to the teaching of this holy Pontiff Alexander? Listen how my own conversion to the Faith was brought about.

“I had an only son, who was successfully pursuing his studies; but he was of a weak and sickly constitution. At the suggestion of his mother, we took him to the temple of Jupiter, and there offered sacrifice to all the gods, and bestowed liberal gifts upon the priests, in the hope that, by their prayers, we might obtain his complete restoration to health. But, in spite of all this, he continued to languish, and at last, to our unspeakable grief, he died. An old servant of mine, who was now blind, but who had nursed the boy in his childhood, hearing of his death, was deeply afflicted, and, bathed in tears, she loudly upbraided me, saying :

“‘Had you taken your beloved child to the shrine of the blessed Peter, and believed in Christ, the boy would this day be alive and well.’

“‘If thou hast so easy a remedy at hand,’ I replied, ‘how comes it that thou didst not get cured of thy blindness?’

“‘Because, during the five years since I lost my sight,’ she answered, ‘I never thought of believing in Christ.’

“‘Well, then,’ I said, ‘go and believe in Christ.

And if Alexander, the Christian Pontiff, restore thee thy sight, I am ready to believe that he can give me back my darling boy.'

"I sent with her a trusty servant to guide her on the way. It was about the third hour of the day when she left my dwelling. Three hours later she returned with her sight perfectly restored. Before we had time to give expression to our astonishment, she took the lifeless body of my son in her arms, and returned to the blessed servant of God, with such vigor and sprightliness that the youngest and strongest of the attendants were hardly able to keep up with her. Arrived at the residence of Alexander, she laid the body at his feet, and said:

" 'May I become blind again, if it be God's will; only let this child be restored to life.'

" 'May Christ our Lord raise up the boy,' replied the Pontiff, 'without taking away from thee the blessing of sight, which He hath mercifully bestowed upon thee.'

"Then calling upon the name of the Lord, he blessed my child, and instantly led him to me, not only alive, but perfectly restored to health. Seeing this, I threw myself at the feet of the holy man, and besought him to make me a Christian; for I could not possibly doubt of the truth of a doctrine which received so marvellous a sanction from on high.

Since then I have placed my son under the guardian care of Alexander; I have given freedom to all my slaves, after making an adequate provision for their support; the remainder of my possessions I have sold, and distributed the amount among the suffering and the poor. And now that I am at ease, and no longer encumbered by the things of earth, I fear neither the confiscation of my property nor the wrath of man; but I hope that I shall have a portion with them who, for the sake of their faith in Christ, the Saviour of men, generously lay down their lives."

Quirinus, hearing these things, was greatly moved, and throwing himself at their feet, said:

"May Christ the Lord save also my soul by your means. And as a sign that He is willing to do so, I am bold to make a request. I have a grown-up daughter, a virtuous and comely maid. Her I desire to give in marriage to a person of distinguished rank; but she is afflicted with an ugly swelling in her neck. If you deign to heal her, I will give her all my wealth, and serve Christ after your example."

"Go and take her to my prison," said Alexander; "I will heal her there."

"But since you are here in my house," exclaimed the Tribune, "how can I expect to find you in your prison?"

“Do as I say. He that has brought me to your house will also take me hence.”

Quirinus withdrew, leaving the door of the room unlocked; but they insisted that he should put everything in the same condition in which he found it when first he entered.

About an hour after he had left his own house, Quirinus came to the prison of Alexander. Here he saw the four men, whom he had placed there as a special guard, wide awake, and fully convinced that nothing strange had occurred. He found the door closed,—the seal he had put on it unbroken and untouched. Anxious to ascertain whether all he had witnessed that night were not a dream, he opened the door, and beheld the holy Pontiff in chains, and reverently engaged in prayer. Struck with awe at a sight so unexpected, the Tribune cast himself at the feet of the prisoner, and exclaimed:

“Pray for me, most holy Father, lest I be overtaken by the wrath of the great God, whose servant you are.”

Alexander bade him rise, and said:

“The God whom I serve is not willing that any should perish, but that all who have sinned should be converted from their evil ways, and, through His mercy, should become entitled to life everlasting. Therefore, also, when He was hanging on the

Cross, and dying for man's salvation, He prayed with a loud voice for them that crucified Him."

"May He also have mercy on me," exclaimed Quirinus. Then, remembering that there was one very dear to him whom he wished to be made a partaker of his own happiness, he added: "My daughter Balbina, whom you desired me to bring to this place, is outside waiting for your blessing."

"How many persons are there confined in this prison?" asked Alexander.

"Twenty persons, or thereabouts," he answered.

"Go then," said the Pontiff, "inquire if there be among them any who, for the sake of Christ, have been thrown into this dungeon."

The Tribune went, and soon returned, saying:

"There is one aged priest, Eventius by name, and another called Theodulus, who, they say, have been sent hither from the East."

"Make haste," replied Alexander, "and kindly invite them to join me here. Yet, before going, take this collar from my neck, and put it on the neck of your daughter."

Immediately Quirinus took the collar, and at the same time, removed all the other chains from the servant of God; then, kneeling down before him, said:

“I beseech you, most holy Pontiff, deign to put this chain on her with your own blessed hands.”

Alexander complied with his request, urging him again to release the two imprisoned priests. No sooner had the Tribune left the place than the little child, bearing the lighted torch, again made his appearance, and, addressing the daughter, said :

“Thou art healed. Continue to lead a life chaste and undefiled, and I will show thee a Bridegroom who, for love of thee, deigned to shed His own Blood.” Saying this, he vanished from their sight.

A few moments later Quirinus returned with Eventius and Theodulus. Seeing his daughter transported with joy and perfectly healed, he was so astonished and delighted that he fell down before the servant of God, and cried out with a loud voice :

“Leave this prison, I entreat you, O holy Father ; lest fire fall from heaven and destroy me for keeping you here.”

“No, my son, not at all,” replied Alexander ; “but, if you are willing to do me a favor, suffer all the prisoners detained in the place to come to me, that they may have a chance to hear the doctrine of salvation and to become Christians.”

“You Christians,” said the Tribune, “are holy persons ; but these prisoners are robbers, house-breakers, adulterers, in short, evil-doers guilty of

all sorts of crimes. How could they be induced to forsake their evil ways, and to lead the blameless life required by your sacred teachings?"

"It was for the salvation of sinners," answered the Pontiff, "that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came down from heaven and took upon Himself our human nature. Do not, therefore, hinder them from reaping the benefit of so great a condescension, but permit them to listen to what I have to say to them."

Quirinus, thereupon, hastened to the different apartments of the prison-house, and cried out to them that were in custody:

"They among you who desire to become Christians, let them repair to the room of Alexander, the Pontiff."

All, without exception, eagerly availed themselves of this permission. As soon as they were all assembled, the servant of God said to them:

"O, my children, listen to me, that you may believe. God,—the Creator of all things and the Ruler of the universe, who made man in His own image,—when man had fallen away from his original state, sent His only Son to redeem him. This Son of God, assuming our human nature, was born of a Virgin; and, dwelling among men, appeared as one of them, that thus He might the more easily

teach them the way of salvation. He came down from heaven for the salvation of the whole human race, but He taught His doctrines chiefly among the Jews. However, when they were unwilling to believe His words, He called upon them to believe His works. For this reason, He made them witness many signs and wonders! He changed water into wine; He read their most secret thoughts; He gave sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, cured the lame. He healed the sick and cast out devils; He calmed the storms, and walked upon the waters; nay more, He restored the dead to life. And when He did all these things, great multitudes believed in Him; but the priests and chiefs of the Jews, goaded by envy, persecuted, and, at last, crucified Him. This He permitted them to do because He chose in this manner to lead into captivity the author of our death. Hence also, the third day, He rose again from the dead; and, after abiding for forty days among men, and conversing with them on the kingdom of God, He ascended into heaven, in the presence of many witnesses. And, that His Disciples might continue the work He had begun, He gave them all the power which Himself possessed for the salvation of mankind. Lastly, at the end of the world, He will come, in the clouds of heaven, with great majesty, to judge all men, and

give to every one according to his works, whether they be good or evil. See, therefore, in Whom you are invited to believe: hearken to the voice that calls you from on high; resolve at once to become followers of Christ, your Divine Leader, and thus secure your best interests for time and for eternity."

No sooner did he cease speaking than they all exclaimed, as with one voice: "We believe in Christ! Teach us what we must do to become His true followers."

Whereupon, he ordered Eventius and Theodulus to lay their hands upon them, and to receive them as catechumens. After a few days, when they were sufficiently instructed, Alexander baptized them all, together with Quirinus and the members of his household,—so that the prison was changed, as it were, into a church. But they were not long suffered to remain undisturbed.

Instigated by the evil spirit, one of the keepers went to Aurelian, and related to him all that had taken place in prison. Aurelian was very angry. Forthwith he sent for the Tribune, and said:

"I have loved and treated you as my son; how could you suffer yourself to be misled by that Alexander? How could you trifle thus with the confidence and friendship I had shown you?"

“I will hide nothing from you, my lord,” answered Quirinus. “I have become a Christian. You may scourge, you may burn, you may kill me: I will not deny my faith. I begged the blessed Pontiff Alexander and the noble Hermes to leave the prison, but they refused. All the persons confined in prison have also become Christians: I gave them a chance to make their escape, but they said: ‘If we were resigned to die on account of the crimes we had committed, how much more willing ought we now to be to lay down our lives for the Name of Christ, who has so mercifully forgiven us our sins.’ Thus do matters stand: it belongs to yourself to decide what is to be done.”

Aurelian grew furious when he heard this, and, sternly eyeing the Tribune, said:

“Since thou wert not afraid of boldly divulging thy secrets, I will force thee henceforth to be silent by having thy tongue cut out, and by putting thee on the rack as the vilest of criminals.”

“Wretched man,” replied Quirinus, “take care of your immortal soul, lest hereafter you be condemned to suffer everlasting torments.”

Aurelian, instead of being frightened, became only the more incensed, and gave orders, first to torture him on the rack, then to cut off his hands and feet, and, lastly, to sever his head from the

body, and to throw the remains to the dogs; all which was duly executed. The Christians, however, secured the relics of the Martyr, and privately buried them in the cemetery of Prætextatus, on the Appian Way.

A few days later, the Prefect Hermes, after fearlessly confessing the truth, was by order of Aurelian beheaded. Theodora, the sister of the noble Martyr, obtained possession of his body and deposited it in a monument not far from the city, on the Salarian Road. Next, all they who had been baptized in prison were put in an old worn-out ship, and, with stones tied to their necks, sunk into the depths of the sea.

Afterwards, the Judge summoned Alexander before him, and said:

“I command you, first of all, to make known to me all the secrets of your doctrines, so that I may understand why it is that the followers of Christ choose rather to die than to give up their belief.”

“That which you require is sacred and inviolable,” replied Alexander; “and Christ does not allow us to give to the dogs that which is holy.”

“Am I then a dog?” shouted Aurelian.

“Would that you were only a dog,” said the Pontiff, “but what is more unfortunate for you, you are much worse. For when a dog dies, he comes

to nothing, and is not thrown into everlasting fire, on account of his evil deeds. But a man, created in the image of God, if by wickedness he departs from the worship and obedience which he owes to his Maker, exposes himself to endless torments,—even as you would consider him guilty who should defile your own picture or statue. And you, being yourself mortal and short-lived, you inflict punishments which last but for a time; but God, who is Eternal, visits with everlasting punishments the transgressors of His law.”

“If you do not satisfy me by answering what I ask of you, I will have you scourged,” said the Judge.

“Wicked tyrant,” replied Alexander, “how dare you make bold to ask for such things, and that too of me, who, beside my King who reigns in the heavens, fear none other? You are mistaken if you imagine that you can learn the mysteries of the Christian Religion by disputing instead of by believing.”

“Let there be an end to that cunning loquaciousness of yours,” said Aurelian; “and remember that you are not talking to an ordinary Judge, but to one whose power and influence have been felt throughout the world.”

“Boast not of your power,” answered the Pontiff;

“for he that glories in his strength is nigh to a fall.”

“I allow you now to talk, you poor wretch,” exclaimed the Judge; “because I am about to torture the life out of you with every punishment I can invent.”

“That will be nothing new,” said the Confessor; “for what innocent man did ever escape your hands? They alone who deny that they are servants of Christ, deserve to live according to your decisions. I, therefore, who will never deny my divine Master, must needs be condemned to death by you—even as the holy Hermes, who, by dying for the truth, is now truly illustrious. And is not Quirinus, whom you ordered to be slain, now more exalted in glory than when he was a Tribune upon earth? and all they whom I baptized in their prison, are they not now free and blissful in the kingdom of heaven?”

“That is the very reason,” said Aurelian, “why I did ask, and still ask, how comes it that you Christians prefer a cruel, ignominious death to a pleasant and honorable life?”

“As I said before,” answered the fearless Pontiff, “it is not lawful to throw to the dogs that which is holy.”

“Do you still persist in calling me a dog?” cried

the Judge. "But let that pass; words will cease when blows begin."

"I fear not your blows," said Alexander; "they soon come to an end; but I dread those torments of the hereafter, of which you seem not to be afraid."

Aurelian, no longer able to contain his wrath, ordered him to be put on the rack, and to be torn with iron hooks and burned with lighted torches. When the Martyr had been in this manner tortured for a long time, and did not utter a word, the Judge said to him:

"Why are you now silent?"

"Because, during prayer, a Christian converses with his God," answered the Martyr.

"Answer the questions which I did put you heretofore," said Aurelian, "and I will order the tortures to be discontinued."

"I care not for your foolish questions," replied Alexander, "and I despise all the inventions of your cruelty."

"You seem not to be more than thirty years of age," added the Judge; "how can you be willing to forego the happiness and pleasure of so youthful an age?"

"Would that you were so wise as not to be willing to lose your own soul," answered the Martyr.

Meanwhile, Severina, the wife of Aurelian, hear-

ing what was going on, presented herself before him, and said:

“Save thyself from the evils which threaten thee; release the holy Bishop Alexander, lest thou die a miserable death, and bring misfortune upon thy family.”

“Is it because he is a friend of thine that thou speakest thus in his favor?” said the Judge.

Nevertheless, he ordered the Martyr to be taken from the rack, and sending for Eventius and Theodulus, said to Alexander:

“Who are these persons?”

“They are two holy men, both worthy priests,” answered the Pontiff.

Then, addressing Eventius, Aurelian said:

“What is thy name?”

“According to the world, my name is Eventius, but in a spiritual sense I am called a Christian,” answered Eventius.

“When didst thou become a Christian?” asked the Judge.

“More than seventy years ago,” replied the servant of God; “for when eleven years old, I was baptized; at the age of twenty, I was ordained a priest; I am now in my eighty-second year, and I am glad to be able to add that I spent the last year in prison and in chains for the sake of my Faith.”

Consider thy advanced age," said Aurelian; "have pity on thyself. Deny Christ, thy God; I will make thee my friend and companion, and enrich thee to thy heart's content."

"Where is your reason? where is your common sense?" exclaimed the venerable old man. "I took you to be a person of at least ordinary understanding; but, alas! blind and hard-hearted as you are, you cannot see the things that are of God. Do at last, I entreat you, consider that you are but a poor mortal man; believe and confess that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is truly God; do penance for your sins, that you may find mercy with Him who came upon earth to save sinners."

Whereupon the Judge, ordering him to stand aside, said to Theodulus:

"Art thou that Theodulus who carest nothing for my commands?"

"And I will continue to make very little of yourself," boldly replied the Confessor, "so long as you persist in afflicting the Saints of God with your torments. For what wrong hath the blessed Alexander done that you should treat him thus?"

"Thinkest thou, perhaps, that I am about to exempt thee from a similar treatment?" asked Aurelian.

"I hope, by the mercy of my God," answered

Theodulus, "that I shall not be separated from the company of His holy Martyrs."

Then the Judge commanded his men to heat a large oven, and to cast Alexander and Eventius, tied back to back, into the same. But Theodulus he placed close to the oven, so that, frightened by the sufferings of his brethren, he might be induced to sacrifice to the idols. Alexander, however, seeing him in that condition, cried out to him:

"Brother Theodulus, hasten to join us here; that fourth one, who appeared among the Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace, is now here with us."

Instantly Theodulus leaped into the glowing oven, and, together returning thanks to God for their wonderful preservation, they joyfully exclaimed:

"Thou, O Lord, hast tried us by fire: and iniquity hath not been found in us."

When Aurelian saw and heard all this, he was exceedingly annoyed. After giving orders that Eventius and Theodulus should be beheaded, and that Alexander should be pierced to death with small sharp-pointed instruments, he returned to his dwelling sad and despondent. No sooner had he arrived there than he felt a burning fever in all his limbs, and began to rave like one in utter despair, calling upon his wife, who was a Christian, to pray to God, that He might spare him. But in vain;

after some hours he died a wretched maniac, and the words of Alexander, "He that glories in his strength is nigh to a fall," were verified in him.

Severina, clothed in the garments of mourning, hastened to the spot where lay the bodies of the three Martyrs, and, followed by many of the clergy and the Faithful, took them to her own villa—on the Nomentan Road, near the seventh milestone from the city—where she reverently buried them; placing the sacred remains of Alexander and Euentius in the same monument, and those of Theodulus in another close by. There she continued to watch and pray for many days, until the blessed Sixtus, successor of Alexander in the chair of Peter, arrived in Rome, and, at her request, appointed a priest who should daily celebrate the Sacred Mysteries near the resting-place of the holy Martyrs.

Their martyrdom is commemorated on the third of May.





IX.

ST. JULIAN AND HIS COMPANIONS.

JULIAN was the only son of his noble and wealthy parents. As they were good and fervent Christians, they took great care to bring him up in the school of virtue. Hence, even in his earliest years, Julian showed by the innocence of his life and the fidelity wherewith he devoted himself to his religious duties, that he was called to accomplish one day great things for the glory of God and the salvation of his neighbor. From his very childhood, he seemed fully to understand that saying of the Apostle, "the fashion of this world passeth away." Wherefore, he looked upon all the temporal blessings which God had bestowed upon him as a means to attain the end of his creation, and not as objects whereon a Christian may suffer his affections to rest—knowing how short-lived and uncertain they are. Accordingly he found his delight in reading the Sacred Writings and the records of the glorious deeds of the martyred Saints ;

while he would never grow weary of conversing with persons whom he knew to be faithful observers of the Divine Law. Thus he passed the days of his youth in preparing himself for the trials of life,—which began with him much sooner than he had reason to anticipate.

For when his good parents thought that he had now come to man's estate, and concluded that it would be best for him to settle in life by making choice of some virtuous person, who might be a suitable consort to accompany him on this world's journey, they were not a little astonished at the objections made by the youth,—to whom every expression of their will or desire had ever been a law obeyed without hesitation. As they, however, continued to insist, he said:

“It is neither my inclination, nor is it yet the time, to do what you propose. But as you appear anxious that I should obey you herein, I will leave the matter to God. Grant me, therefore, a delay of seven days that, by prayer and meditation, I may weigh your proposal in His sight. Whatsoever He may inspire me to do, I will gladly endeavor to perform.”

His parents willingly consented to this fair proposition. The holy youth immediately withdrew himself from all worldly distraction, and, in the

privacy of his apartments, devoted himself to prayer and penitential watchfulness—with many tears begging of heaven for the light and guidance whereof he stood so much in need. After persevering during seven days in this earnest appeal to the Father of light and mercy, a heavenly vision was vouchsafed to him, as he still lay prostrate in prayer. For he beheld standing before him an Angel of the Lord, who said :

“ Arise, O Julian ; fear not the words of thy parents, nor do thou hesitate to comply with their will. Receive the bride that will be proposed to thee. Her presence will cause no harm to the virginal purity which thou hast vowed to thy Lord. She herself hath no other desire than to be wholly consecrated to the Divine Bridegroom. Many youths and maidens, drawn by your teaching and example, will deserve to be ranked among the chosen ones that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.”

Thereupon, the heavenly Messenger, putting forth his hand, touched him, saying :

“ Do thou act manfully, and let thy heart be strengthened.”

Suddenly the servant of God felt as it were a new virtue within him, and arising, with a heart overflowing with gratitude for the great favor bestowed upon him, said :

“I thank Thee, O Lord, who art the searcher of the hearts and the reins of men. I thank Thee, because, even from the days of my childhood, Thou didst remove from me the love of this world and its empty pleasures, and didst inspire me with a longing desire to seek after the things that perish not forever. Deign, I beseech Thee, to complete Thy work within my soul, that, with a chaste mind and a body undefiled, I may serve Thee all days, and glorify Thy holy Name upon earth, so that men may understand that Thou grantest the heavenly gift of purity to them that ask it of Thee in simplicity and in truth.”

Having prayed in this manner, he immediately went to his parents and made known to them to what conclusion he had come during the days of his retirement. When they heard that he was ready to comply with their wishes, they rejoiced exceedingly, and forthwith set about selecting a person whom they thought worthy of being his companion through life. Their choice fell upon Basilissa, a young lady of distinguished rank and great wealth, but more eminent still for her beauty and virtue. The holy youth prepared himself for his nuptials with all the care of one who has no other object in view than to render himself more pleasing, not indeed in the eyes of mortal men, but in the sight

of the heavenly King. Outwardly calm and cheerful, and apparently attentive to all the plans and proposals made by his loving parents, he, in fact, was giving himself to constant prayer, that the coming event might not be to him a source of temptation, but rather a pledge of an irrevocable consecration of himself to God's service. Nor did he pray in vain.

When the appointed day had come, and the ceremonies and rejoicings were over, as he met Basilissa in the bridal chamber, he was no less astonished than delighted, when she greeted him with these words :

"How is this, O Julian? is not this the wintry season? Whence this sweet fragrance of lilies and roses perfuming this apartment, while yet nowhere the flowers can be seen?"

"The sweet-scented odor of flowers which thou perceivest, O Basilissa," replied the youth, "hath neither beginning nor end. It is the mysterious aroma exhaled by virtue and holiness. It is the gift of Christ our Lord, the Lover of chaste souls. If, then, thou art willing to listen to His voice, inviting us by this sign to belong wholly to Him, let us consecrate our souls and bodies to His service, that, with the wise virgins, we may hereafter be admitted to the marriage-feast, and never be separated from each other."

“What can there be more excellent,” said Basilissa, “than the bliss of the kingdom of heaven secured by a pure and chaste life here below? With mind and heart I gladly consent to thy proposal. May the Divine Bridegroom receive our vow as a pleasing sacrifice!”

In a transport of holy joy, Julian fell upon his knees, and, raising his hands to heaven, exclaimed:

“Confirm, O Lord, what Thou hast wrought in us.” And, kneeling by his side, Basilissa with the greatest fervor, over and over again repeated the same prayer.

And behold, suddenly the very foundations of the house seemed to be shaken, and a dazzling light filled the apartment wherein they were at prayer. And they saw, as it were, a two-fold vision. On the one hand appeared the King of Glory, seated on His throne, surrounded by an innumerable multitude of attendants clad in snow-white garments; on the other was seen the Queen of Virgins, accompanied by choirs of angels and maidens. And they heard a voice proceeding from the throne, saying: “Thou hast conquered, O Julian, thou hast conquered;” and the maidens answering, said: “Blessed art thou, O Basilissa, who didst hearken to the heavenly warning, and, by choosing the better part, didst trample under foot the vanity of the world.”

And a throne was placed before them, and on the throne was laid a book of marvellous richness and beauty. And a voice cried out: "Let Julian read what is written in the book." And he read: "Julian, who, for love of Me, hath despised the world, is reckoned with them that were not defiled with woman. Let Basilissa, his chaste companion, be ranked among the maidens over whom presides the true Virgin—Mary, the Mother of the Lord." And all the multitude as with one voice answered: Amen.

And the book was closed, and the voice said again: "In this book are written the names of all them that are chaste and sober, truthful and merciful, lowly and meek; of them that possess charity unfeigned; of them that suffer tribulation and persecution in much patience; of them that esteem the love of Christ above all things, and, for His sake, bid farewell to father or mother, to wife or children, to brethren or sisters, to lands or houses, or to whatsoever else in the world may be a hindrance to the soul; of them that do not hesitate to lay down their lives for the glory of His Name,—among whom you are chosen to be."

Thereupon the vision vanished from their sight. But they, rejoicing in the Lord, passed the remainder of the night in prayer and in singing hymns of thankfulness for the wonderful favor that had been granted

to them. The following day they received, according to custom, the congratulations of their friends and relatives, but they were careful to conceal from all the mystery of divine grace, whereby they had been made a spectacle to the angels and saints.

Shortly after this the parents of both were called to a better life. Being now altogether at liberty to carry into effect their holy designs, they began immediately to devote themselves not only to their own greater perfection, but also to the salvation and sanctification of their neighbor. For this purpose they made use of their immense wealth to erect large and suitable buildings, into which they admitted persons who desired to consecrate themselves to God by a life of prayer and labor, and the practice of all kinds of penitential austerities. Julian took care of the men, who placed themselves under his direction in such numbers, that, in the course of a few years, he was the spiritual guide of no less than ten thousand cenobites; whereas, Basilissa, in her establishment, at no very great distance from that of her husband, instructed in the ways of perfection about a thousand virgins. Then, as God had anointed them with the oil of gladness, they were enabled to draw to Him numberless chosen souls, among whom they shone like two burning lights placed upon the candlestick of the sanctuary.

But the ever wakeful enemy of mankind,—unable to discourage them or hinder them from possessing their souls in peace, while fulfilling the mission to which they had been called by the divine will,—stirred up the powers of earth to undo and well nigh utterly destroy their charitable work.

The bitter persecution excited against the Church by Diocletian and Maximian, had spread at last even into the interior parts of Egypt. So soon as it became known that their religious establishments would certainly be exposed to the violence of the storm, Julian and Basilissa met together to consult what was best to be done in this emergency.

During several years the two holy servants of God had not seen one another; and this meeting was most probably to be their last upon earth. But, as they had forsaken all things for Christ's sake, it was also in Him they placed all their confidence; to Him they looked for counsel and comfort in the present tribulation. Wherefore, kneeling down before Him, with humble supplication, they said:

“O Lord Jesus, who knowest the secrets of all hearts, and understandest the desires of them that are devoted to Thee, look down in mercy upon thy servants, and gladden them with thy heavenly light. Suffer not that the flock committed to our care be invaded by the ravenous wolves, whom the enemy

of all good has stirred up against us. Grant that the mark of their faith in Thy promises be to them a mighty buckler in the midst of their struggles. Consider, O Lord, how weak we are of ourselves, and how great is our reliance upon Thee: give glory to Thy holy Name, by enabling us all to confess Thee before men, that we, Thy unworthy but devoted servants, when standing before Thee to give an account of our charge, may be able to say: ‘Behold us, O Lord, of them Thou gavest us, we have lost none.’”

Having finished this prayer, they felt their hearts wonderfully strengthened. Without distinctly knowing how to act, they resolved to wait upon the will of their Divine Master, that He might dispose of them, and of all those under their charge, according to His own good pleasure. Returning to their respective abodes, they gave themselves with renewed fervor to the work of sanctifying themselves and their spiritual children. Shortly after, our Lord appeared in a vision to Basilissa, and said:

“Basilissa, I have heard thy prayer. It is my good pleasure that thou send before thee to My kingdom all whom thou hast sanctified and given to Me. Thou shalt have the space of half a time for the harvest, and when thou hast garnered the chosen wheat, I will call thee to thy reward. But

Julian, like a valiant champion, shall fight my battle and conquer his foes; and, for the sake of his chastity, I will endue him with power to do great wonders and signs in the sight of the people, that thus he may bring them to Me: for no sooner shall he call upon Me, than I shall say: ‘Behold, here I am.’ ”

This vision so comforted the servant of God that the trials of life, which had hitherto been to her a source of constant uneasiness, now appeared light and even desirable. She communicated to Julian what had been revealed to her by our Lord, and exhorted him to acquit himself manfully in the great combat which he was soon to begin for the glory of his heavenly King. Then calling together her spiritual children, she said to them:

“My dearly beloved, my joy and my crown, with a contrite and humble heart, let us give thanks to God, because He has deigned to make known to us hidden mysteries. In His loving kindness, He forewarns us that the time is near at hand when we shall all be called away from the land of our exile, from the dwelling wherein we have known unceasing tribulation. I advise you, therefore, carefully to scrutinize the inmost recesses of your hearts, that you may learn whether there remains within them aught whereof the enemy of our souls might take advantage to trouble you on the day of your

departure hence. I would not have you ignorant, my dearly beloved, that it is our own petition to which our Lord has graciously listened, and that, in consideration of our common weakness, He has promised to save us from the sword of persecution. Wherefore, in truthfulness of heart and in the spirit of charity see whether you have any ill feeling one against another, or whether there be within you any blemish to mar the beauty of your souls, that by tears of repentance you may remove every stain and perfect the brightness of the crown of justice which is even now held out to you."

When Basilissa had spoken in this manner, the place wherein they were assembled was suddenly shaken, and there appeared before them as it were a pillar of fire, and they heard a voice saying :

"All these, O Basilissa, are chosen vessels unto me. Their reward is awaiting them."

Immediately they all prostrated themselves upon the ground, and gave thanks to God for the wonderful favor He bestowed upon them. Nor did the words spoken to her in the vision fail of their fulfilment. Before the appointed time had elapsed, all the virgins, over whom she had so wisely ruled, had passed away to their reward. The happiness of them all was made known to her when one day, as she was absorbed in prayer, she beheld them crowned

with glory, clad in garments more bright than the sun, and bearing in their hands a cross as the emblem of their victory over the world. At the same time she heard them say, addressing her: "This is the answer we have received, that we should wait until, in thy company, we may adore the heavenly King, unto whom thou hast purchased us."

Knowing then that the hour of her dissolution was fast approaching, she sent for Julian. And, as they were praying together, thanking God for all the wonders He had wrought in their behalf, the spirit made perfect of Basilissa—her body remaining the while in a kneeling posture by the side of her husband—went to join the throng of the holy virgins, whom she had sent before her into bliss. Julian buried her in a manner becoming her great worth and the affection which, as a true Christian, he had never ceased to entertain for one so pure and holy: and, during several days and nights, he continued to watch and pray near the spot where he had consigned her body to the tomb.

Returning to his brethren, the servant of God related to them what had occurred, and encouraged them to persevere in laying up treasures in heaven, by faithfulness in complying with all the obligations of the state of life which they had embraced for the love of Christ. This he did, not, however, because

he thought that any among them needed to be awakened in spirit, on account of lukewarmness in the service of the Divine Master; but rather for the sake of fostering in them that humbleness of mind and heart which is the best preservative against pride and vain-glory. For he knew, at the time, that God worked many miraculous cures and other wonders through the instrumentality of them that were under his charge; and that their manner of living might be called rather angelic than human, by reason of their marvellous charity toward one another, their love of silence and contemplation, and their readiness to oblige, even by unusual labors and hardships, every one who came to them for relief in suffering or for comfort in distress. In truth, it might be said of them, that they were leading a kind of heavenly life upon earth, so intent were they all on rendering themselves daily more pleasing to God, and on walking in His holy presence. But the abiding good things promised to faithful servants are not to be possessed in this place of exile and valley of tears; since they are reserved for enjoyment in the endless life of the hereafter.

Meanwhile Marcian, Governor of Middle Egypt, had arrived in Antinoe to see that the edicts of his imperial master were enforced. By his order, in every street and market place some idol was put

up, that no one might have a chance of selling or buying anything without first offering sacrifice. Moreover, he commanded every citizen to have in some prominent place of his dwelling a statue of Jupiter, as a proof of his fidelity to the religion of the empire. When it was reported to him that in the neighborhood there were living, under the care and direction of Julian, formerly a distinguished citizen of Antioe, a great number of Christians, who were ready to suffer torments and death rather than offer incense to his gods, he grew exceedingly angry. Forthwith calling his Assessor, he ordered him to repair at once to the abode of these men, and to command them to comply without delay with the laws, that thus they might avoid the punishment prepared for the disobedient. The Assessor, accompanied by his assistant and some of the chief men of the city, straightway proceeded to execute the order of the Governor. Beside those who were there already, many other Christians, both of the clergy and laity, had come to seek an asylum near the Saint, feeling persuaded that, if they did not escape the dangers of the persecution, they should at least derive strength and courage from his words and example.

As soon as Julian heard that the officers were near, he called together all the brethren, and said to them:

“Now, brethren, let us put our trust in the Lord, who is the support of the weak; for they that, for His sake, persecute us, are near at hand ready to swallow us up. Let us see what they demand of us. Meanwhile arm yourselves with the sign of our redemption and take up the shield of faith, that you may be able to ward off the darts of the enemy.”

Then, making the sign of the Cross, he joyously went forth to meet his welcome visitors. The citizens who were with the officers showed him much deference, as to one whose name and rank had ever been in great honor among them. The Assessor concluded from what he saw that he should have no difficulty in gaining the object for which he had come. Addressing the man of God, he said:

“I take it for granted, Julian, that you are aware of the earnest desire of our sovereigns, that all the subjects of the empire should unite in one and the same worship of the gods. For this purpose they have, at various times, made laws and issued decrees, that all might know and fully understand their intention in this matter. Our excellent Governor Marcian, hearing that you are a person of noble birth, sends me to request you to set to others the example of a ready compliance with the will of our princes. The last of their edicts I have brought with me, so that you may examine its contents.

Read it, therefore, and let me have the pleasure of reporting to his Excellency that you are true to the sentiments of a man of your rank in society, and worthy of the friendship and favor of our rulers."

"I take it for granted," said Julian, "that your wisdom is aware that, as it is said, the serpent does not leave its hole, unless it perceives that the charmer has spoken the real words of the incantation. As he, therefore, who does not know the true words cannot move the serpent, so neither can the decrees of princes nor the conceit of judges, whose authority is regarded only in temporal matters, move Christians to incline their minds or hearts to the worship of devils."

"So you refuse to listen to the commands of our princes," said the Assessor.

"Let them listen to your princes," replied the Saint, "who serve under them; we, whose King reigns in the heavens, have nothing to do with the service of earthly rulers."

"And can you prove this by deeds and in public?" asked the Assessor.

"Let them who put their trust in the present life prove things by their deeds," answered Julian; "but we, to whom the world is crucified, what have we to do with the public?"

"I see very well that for yourself you make little

account of life," said the Assessor; "but you should have pity on this multitude of men who are your followers."

"All these men, as well as myself, have no other desire than to do the will of God; what I say and think, they also do. There is but one Lord and Master whom we serve and confess, Christ, the Son of the living God."

"What you have said I will report to my lord, the Governor," said the Assessor.

"What you know to be true you need not conceal from men," said the Saint; "we are ready to suffer a temporal death, that we may live forever, rather than lose everlasting life for a brief existence upon earth."

"I understand," resumed the Assessor, "that there are several Bishops and other members of the clergy here; are they also your disciples?"

"They are not my disciples," answered Julian, "but my Father's. Through them we are truly born in Christ. And what is there more befitting than that fathers and sons should go together on on their way to the kingdom of heaven?"

Thereupon the Assessor, with his attendants, returned to Antinoe, and related to Marcian all that had been said and done.

When the Governor heard that Julian and the

brethren were resolved not to comply with his wicked commands, he flew into a great passion, and without considering the cruelty and injustice of the action, sent a band of soldiers with orders to consign to the flames all the dwellings of the servants of God with their inmates. He directed, however, that Julian himself, after witnessing the death of his spiritual children, should be brought to the city, that he might have the pleasure of interrogating and of punishing him, if he should refuse to yield to his wishes. In this manner, therefore, their faith being tried by fire, this numerous company of Martyrs went to receive the reward of their fidelity to their heavenly King. Nor was the fact of their living in glory left unknown to the people of the neighborhood. For, it is related that during many succeeding years they could daily be heard singing, at stated hours, both by day and by night, the offices of the Church, as they had been wont to do under the direction of their spiritual father. At the place, also, where the ruins of the buildings lay, all sorts of diseases continued to be healed, as of old, whenever the faithful resorted thither to implore the intercession of the holy cenobites.

No sooner did Marcian learn that he had the celebrated Julian in his power than he made every preparation to hold the interrogatory in as public

a manner as possible. He sent his heralds in every direction to announce to the citizens that they were invited to witness the discomfiture of the great leader of the Christians, and the triumph of the religion of the Empire. On the following day a great multitude of persons of every age and condition, Christians as well as pagans, assembled in the forum, and the Governor, seated on his tribunal and surrounded by his guards, summoned Julian to appear. As the man of God was led into his presence Marcian immediately cried out :

“Art thou the Julian who rebellest against the authority of our princes, and who holdest our gods in contempt? Art thou the wicked magician who, by thy cunning tricks, gatherest around thee a legion of innocent dupes and pervertest their minds and hearts?”

But Julian did not answer.

“I see,” resumed the Governor, “that thou knowest thyself guilty of these things, and hence thou fearest to answer my questions.”

“I have never been a rebel,” replied the Saint, “nor a transgressor of the laws; on the contrary, it has been my study to obey in all things the Divine Law, which is the rule of our actions. If I refuse to answer your questions, it is because I feel ashamed to converse with one whom I see so involved in the

darkness of deceit that he is unwilling to learn what is just and true. As to the laws and commands of your princes, how can they be obligatory on any one, seeing they are a direct violation of the supreme law?"

"It grieves me," said Marcian, "to perceive that thou art so far led away by thy magical arts as no longer to understand the binding power of the laws made by our sovereigns. Knowest thou not that they who obey them secure by their submission the praise and good will of our rulers? and, on the other hand, that they who disregard them, as experience may full soon teach thee, subject themselves to all the miseries of punishment, torture, and death? I am informed that thou art born of a very noble family. I am willing to take that into consideration. I counsel, thee, therefore, with all the earnestness of a kind friend and father; for the honor of thy race, and thy own good, delay not to offer incense to our gods, and thus comply with the will of our great and mighty princes."

"If your malice did not blind you," said Julian, "you might be able to see and understand wherein the true nobility of my family consists. My parents were dutiful observers of the divine law, and faithful followers of the religion of Christ our Lord. In vain do you attempt to make me forget the lessons they

have taught me and the examples they have given. And after all, why would you cajole me into worshipping your gods? what sort of beings are they? You will tell me that they are great and strong. Yes, no doubt, they are strong; for they are made of brass or of stone; if of brass, then the kettles in the kitchen are better than they; since these utensils are very useful to men; if of stone, this material likewise, when not made into gods, is of more service to us, even when it is only used to pave the streets and to keep us from being soiled with mud. How can a man in his sober senses imagine that sacrifices offered to such things can render them propitious to deluded worshippers? We Christians serve and adore the one living, everlasting God, who hath created heaven and earth. Our faith and trust in Him cannot be shaken either by your threatening commands or by your most cruel punishments; for what communion hath light with darkness? what fellowship hath the lamb with the wolf?"

"I am not here," said the Governor, "to bandy arguments with thee, but to make thee acquainted with the laws, that thou mayest learn what our invincible princes demand of thee."

"What they command," replied the confessor, "I have already heard; and what it is my duty to do

I have also maturely considered. Would it not be a disgrace for the shepherd to be unwilling to follow the flock he has sent before him?"

"They to whom thou makest allusion," said Marcian, growing angry, and interrupting him, "have suffered a miserable death, well deserved by their wilfulness. But thou shouldst exert thyself, while it is yet time, to escape the torments in store for the breakers of the law, and thou shouldst strive to render thyself worthy of thy name and race."

"It were better for you," said Julian, "to be concerned about yourself and your own friends, since the devil has so ensnared and entangled you as to make you his dupes and his very slaves. For myself, I need not be troubled; my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ hath care of me."

"I see very well," said the Governor, "that I have to be patient, and that I must treat thee as physicians are wont to treat persons afflicted with bad digestion. But if I succeed in restoring thee to health, by making thee a good worshipper of our gods, I shall doubtless obtain no little credit with our sovereigns, for they greatly desire to see thee healed of thy madness."

"We do not often hear," replied the saint, "that the blind undertake to give sight to them that have

good eyes, that the sick heal them that are well, or that he who has lost his way sets right the one that follows the straight path."

"So then," exclaimed Marcian, "I am blind, and sick, and gone astray, because I show myself interested in thy well-being; and thou art perfectly right in everything!"

"I will not deny," answered Julian, "that all those misfortunes have fallen upon you. Yet, were you willing to acknowledge sincerely that you are in a bad state, and that you need some one to heal you, I doubt not the charitable Physician, who gives health and life to us Christians, would also give soundness to your soul. For the devils, whom you worship, can indeed destroy their dupes, but they are not able to give them salvation."

Then the Governor, no longer able to control his anger, shouted to the executioners:

"Stretch him out to be scourged, that all may bear witness to what extremity his own foolishness has brought him."

"It is no foolishness to know and adore the one true God," said the saint, "but rather perfect wisdom. But you, taken up as you are with the vain and silly pursuits of this world, you cannot understand these things."

"Stretch him out," repeated Marcian to his men;

“see that your cudgels be stiff and knotty; lay on your blows until you break every bone in his body.”

Hardly, however, had they begun the punishment when, by a misdirected blow, one of the executioners hit one of the attendants on the face, and tore out one of his eyes. This made the Governor furious, for the wounded man was one of his favorites. Turning to the Martyr, he roared out:

“Wilt thou still deny that thou art a wicked magician? Instead of submitting with a good grace to the punishment inflicted upon thee for thy correction, thou tearest out the eyes of our friends!”

“Was it not with truth,” answered the Martyr, “that I said a while ago, O Marcian, that you are blind, and sick, and gone astray? Put away that cruel hatred which causes you to rage against me, and listen calmly to what I have to say.”

“I am ready,” he replied, “to listen, provided thou sayest something that may tend to secure thy safety.”

“Call together,” said Julian, “all the priests of your gods and goddesses, select the best from among them, and bid them call upon their deities, beseeching them to restore the sight of their unhappy worshipper. If they are unable to obtain this from them, I will call upon our Lord Jesus Christ,

and he will not only heal this poor, miserable man, but also open the eyes of his mind and heart to a knowledge of the saving truth."

This fair proposal took the Governor by surprise. Nevertheless he sent for the chiefs among the priests, and said to them :

"Go and without delay offer rich sacrifices to our immortal gods, that they may manifest their power by restoring sight to my attendant, and thus persuade Julian who now disbelieves and despises them, to become their faithful worshipper."

The priests thereupon repaired to the temple, and by their unholy rites sought to propitiate the demons. For a long time they called and prayed in vain. At last, however, a voice issued from one of the idols, saying :

"Why do you trouble us? Let us alone. Is it not enough for us to be condemned to everlasting fire? From the moment you began to torment Julian, our sufferings have been doubled. Why do you imagine that we, who dwell in endless night, can give sight to the blind?"

Meanwhile Julian himself continued engaged in fervent prayer, beseeching our Lord to put his enemies to confusion. As the priests did not return, the Martyr, knowing what had occurred, said to the Governor :

“O Marcian, hasten at once to the temple; your gods are calling for you.”

Although he suspected that there was some hidden meaning in this, or that something was wrong, the Governor, nevertheless, went to the temple. As he entered he beheld with dismay all the idols of crystal, of silver, and gold, and every other material, to the number of more than fifty, broken into fragments and scattered on the pavement, so that it was impossible to say where each piece had belonged. The sight of this total destruction of his gods did not remove the veil of darkness from the mind of Marcian. Instead of sincerely confessing the powerlessness of these objects of his worship, he exclaimed:

“O mischief-working sorcery! how is it possible that thy incantations can prevail even over our precious gods and reduce them to powder! But, after all, it appears to me, this their gentle forbearance is really beyond all praise! they endure these insults that they may subdue the rebellious hearts of those that do not believe in them. But let us see whether that boastful Christian, by invoking his God, will restore to soundness the sight of my servant.”

And, returning to Julian, he said to him:

“Boast not as if thou hadst overcome our kind-hearted gods! thou canst not yet understand how

great is their kindness toward thee in all this matter. Now, letting alone all useless talk, let us see how thou art going to fulfil thy promise. In the name of Christ whom thou worshippest, restore the eye of my servant. But, lest thou make again use of thy magic arts, I will first pour over thee a medicinal preparation which possesses the virtue of counteracting the effects of witchcraft.”

When the liquid was poured upon the Martyr, although its odor was naturally very offensive, no sooner had it touched his body, than it diffused so sweet a perfume that all were filled with admiration. Then, calling upon the name of our Lord, he made the sign of the Cross on the eye of the man ; instantly the eye was healed and his sight perfectly restored.

Marcian, however, still chose to consider it all the effect of magic. But the man, the intensity of whose sufferings was so suddenly changed from an agony into a feeling of delight, cried out with all his might.

“Jesus Christ is the true and living God. Him we must serve and adore. The idols I worshipped heretofore are wicked demons.”

The Governor thereupon commanded him to retract what he had said. But as he generously persevered in the confession of faith, his head was ordered to be struck off with the sword.

The Governor, exasperated by what had just taken

place, now sought to revenge himself on the servant of God; wherefore he gave orders to subject him to various torments. But Julian bore them with so great a patience, and even cheerfulness, that all the spectators were filled with admiration. Vexed at being again disappointed, Marcian commanded him to be bound in chains and led through the principal streets of the city, that he might be disgraced in the eyes of the people, among whom he had formerly been so highly esteemed, that the mere mention of his name recalled to mind every good quality of a true and noble citizen. As the martyr was made to undergo the ignominy, a herald went before him, crying aloud :

“Thus are they treated who despise our gods and disobey our Princes!”

While this was going on, Celsus, the Governor's son, a youth of tender years, and the darling of his parents, was attending school. When Julian was led past the school-house, the teacher and his scholars, prompted by curiosity, stood looking at the wonderful spectacle. Suddenly, the boy cried out in a loud voice :

“O! see: O! the marvelous sight! I wonder what it means?”

“What do you see?” exclaimed his school-mates.

“Do you not see that Christian in chains, whom the soldiers are leading? Look at the throng of persons, clothed in white garments, who are talking with him and scatter flowers before him, whilst they are putting a crown of gold and precious stones upon his head. Do you not see the three great eagles that hover about him, as if to keep him from harm? O how good and mighty must be the God who does such things for His servants! O how I wish that the God of the Christians were also my God!”

“What madness has come upon thee, Celsus?” said the teacher. “We see the prisoner and the crowd, but nothing more. Something has unduly excited thy imagination; try to be calm, my son.”

“Great indeed is the God of the Christians!” exclaimed the boy. “In Him I believe: He will not abandon me. He is the Maker and Lord of all things: why do men refuse to confess His power and goodness? What folly to worship gods of wood and stone. Alas! I too have erred; but I confess my error, and cry for mercy. God of the Christians, be my Saviour: I am willing to lay down my life for the confession of Thy name. Be my Protector, and bid me come to Thee.”

Thus speaking, he cast away his books, and, throwing off his upper garment, hastened after the

Martyr of Christ. The Governor had commanded that Julian should be made to undergo some torture in every street through which he was led. This command was being executed when Celsus arrived at the place. Immediately he cast himself at the feet of the servant of Christ, and exclaimed :

“Martyr of Christ, be a father to me. The God who protects thee has made known to me how pleasing thou art to Him. I renounce my father Marcian; he is an enemy of the truth and a persecutor of the friends of the true God. I will cling to thee; and with thee I am ready to suffer every torment for the love of Christ.”

The soldiers and executioners were so amazed at what they heard and saw that they knew not what to say. The spectators seeing the youth embracing the Martyr and kissing his wounds, and learning that he was the Governor’s only son, frightened at the thought of the father’s anger, began at once to withdraw. But Celsus, addressing them, said :

“Be not astonished, O good people, at what you see. I am indeed the Governor’s son. Even as my father, I was supposed to be a persecutor of the friends of God. A change has come over me. Hitherto I knew not the true God; but now that his voice has spoken to my mind and heart, I detest and abhor the wicked demons who led me astray.

I declare myself the disciple of the venerable Julian. He is henceforth my guide, my friend, and father."

When Marcian heard what had happened he was beyond himself with wrath. Immediately sending some of his men, he ordered them to bring his son home—even if they had to use violence for the purpose. The men went as they were bidden, but, whenever they attempted to lay hold on the boy to tear him from the Martyr's embrace their hands and arms became stiff and powerless. Thus foiled and perplexed, they returned to the Governor, who, thereupon, directed that the two should be brought together before him. As soon as they stood in his presence, the Governor mad with rage, addressing Julian, cried out :

"How darest thou, base villain, tear away from a father's bosom the hope and solace of his days? How darest thou, by thy magical arts and unholy devices, force a child to forget the affection of his loving parents?"

At that very moment, the wife of Marcian, attended by the members of her household, both men and women, made her appearance, with every demonstration of inconsolable grief. Crying and lamenting, tearing their hair and beating their breasts, all gave expression to feelings of extreme anguish and despair—as if the direst of misfortunes

had fallen upon them. Seeing this, the Governor, as if determined not to be outdone by them in outwardly manifesting his sentiments, tore his garments, and, changing his tone of anger and insolence to that of mildness and supplication, said to the Martyr :

“Cruel Julian, behold the distress of a father and a mother. Harken to the groans and lamentations of a whole family. Release my son from the charm thou hast cast on him, and I will intercede for thee with our Princes, and free thee from all further annoyances.”

“I have no need of your intercession,” replied Julian, “nor do I desire to be set free by your Princes. But I beg of our Lord Jesus Christ that, together with this innocent lamb born of wolves, I may be deemed worthy to complete my martyrdom and be admitted into the company of them whom you lately ordered to be consumed by fire. The son who was born of you has been born again by Faith! he is able to speak for himself; let him say whether he is ready to yield to your tears and lamentations.”

Thereupon Celsus, addressing his parents, said :

“The rose born in the midst of thorns is not less sweet-scented on that account, nor does it lose its fragrance by being crushed. Let them who are

willing to perish yield obedience to your commands; but let them who desire to pass from darkness into light follow my example. I would have you know that for the sake of Christ my Lord, I renounce you as my parents; and if for the sake of pleasing your idols you crush me with torments, I am most ready to endure them all, since they will be the means to introduce me the more speedily into the abode of everlasting bliss. Nor can it be expected that I should be kind and dutiful to you, and cruel and unjust to myself; neither were it fair to prefer your short-lived affection to the eternal love of my God. Why do you delay? Seize the sword and slay me at once; or, if you are willing to show me a last favor, send me to your Emperor, that I may make a more public confession of my faith. As for the rest, be assured neither tears nor entreaties, nor threats can prevail to make me change my firm resolve; for I freely choose to belong to Christ, my God and Saviour, and no earthly powers shall separate me from Him."

Marcian, unable to make a reply to what his son had stated, said to his attendants:

"Let them be kept in private custody; and see to it that no comforts be wanting to them."

Hearing this the youth and the Martyr said to the Governor:

“Keep your comforts for them that are willing to comply with your unjust commands ; we desire none of them. Christ, the Lord whom we serve, is our life and our every comfort.”

At this, Marcian grew furious, and, thinking that he might subdue them by dint of punishment, he ordered them to be thrown into a dark and noisome dungeon swarming with every kind of vermin. Prepared as they were to suffer all sorts of hardships for love of their heavenly King, the Martyrs rejoiced to receive this sentence. But great was their astonishment, as well as that of the soldiers who accompanied them, when, on entering the deep dungeon, they found it illumined by a soft and cheerful light, and exhaling a pleasant odor as of the sweetest perfumes. Julian and Celsus, immediately kneeling down, returned thanks to God for this signal favor bestowed upon them. The soldiers, convinced that the God of the Christians was the author of the wonders they had witnessed that day, said to one another :

“Is it not a shame that we should be so hard-hearted as to be unwilling to confess the truth? Why should we return from this heavenly light to the night and darkness of earth? Why should we refuse to cling to the life we have found here, and go and seek death elsewhere? Let us embrace the truth and bid farewell forever to falsehood.”

And, casting themselves at the feet of Julian, they exclaimed as with one voice :

“Servant of Christ, we too confess His greatness and power. Intercede for us, and teach us how we may serve Him.”

The Martyr, thanking God for this new miracle of divine grace, embraced the new converts, and encouraged them to persevere in their generous resolution. He began forthwith to instruct them in the mysteries of religion, and to prepare them for holy Baptism. Providence again favored his design; for the Governor, hearing what had occurred, gave orders that they all should be shut up together in the dungeon until he had made preparation for their punishment.

Before the time of the persecution under Diocletian and Maximian, there lived in the city a certain nobleman who was greatly respected by them on account of his many virtues, and chiefly, perhaps, because though he was a member of the family of the Emperor Carinus, he had withdrawn altogether from public life. This person, as well as his wife, had embraced Christianity. At his death he left after him seven sons, all of a tender age and all Christians. By a special favor of the Emperors, these children were permitted to follow without molestation the practice of their religion. They had with

them a holy priest named Antony, to instruct them in their duties, and to celebrate for them the Sacred Mysteries. Late in the evening of the day on which the Martyrs were imprisoned, a voice from on high warned these noble youths and their spiritual director to repair to the dungeon, that the catechumens might receive Baptism. Obedient to this call, they forthwith complied with the command. The night was very dark. They hardly knew the way to the prison; and they felt convinced that the new body of soldiers placed there by the Governor would not suffer them to pass. Nevertheless, they continued on their way. As they drew near the place, they beheld before them a brilliant light, and soon perceived that it was an angel of the Lord, beckoning to them to follow. He went before them, and as he touched the heavy doors of the prison they instantly flew open. Entering the dungeon, they saw it illumined with a mysterious light brighter than that of the sun. They found the prisoners engaged in prayer, and said to them:

“The Lord Jesus has sent us hither with His priest, that he may administer holy Baptism; and that we, who are but beginners, may learn of you, O venerable Julian, how to contend for the prize of martyrdom.”

Overjoyed at these words, the Martyr exclaimed:

“I thank Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, because Thou grantest me the desire of my heart, that they whom through me unworthy, Thou didst draw unto Thyself, might be confirmed as members of the Faith by the grace of Baptism; grant also that they, whom the cunning policy rather than the kindness of the Emperors has left as lambs in the midst of wolves, may be deemed worthy generously to confess Thy holy Name in the sight of Thine enemies.”

Early in the morning, it was reported to Marcian that the seven brothers who were under the Emperor's protection, had joined Julian in prison, and that they were anxious to suffer death for their religion. Hearing this, the Governor trembled with fear and vexation. He immediately ordered them to be taken out of the dungeon and to be brought before him. Addressing them with every show of kindness, he said :

“What has come over you, O my children, whom our Emperor so loves and protects as to permit you to be your own masters, and to be undisturbed in the practice of your religion? Why would you desire to die, when you are allowed to live without suffering annoyance from any one whomsoever? If I have lost my only son by the influence of magic, if the minds of my soldiers have been perverted by

certain charms which I do not understand, why would you, who are free and independent, go, of your own accord, in search of an ignominious death? Follow my advice: return home, and enjoy, as you have hitherto done, the freedom which you possess."

To this the eldest of the brothers made answer:

"Listen, O Governor, to what I have to say. A mass of gold is bright by nature, but yet, unless the hand of the goldsmith subjects it to the fire, the file and the hammer, and divides it into various parts, it can never be worn as a diadem on the head of kings. So also is it with us, who are born of Christian parents; unless our Faith is tried by fire and other sufferings, it cannot be to us a crown of glory; neither shall we shine as jewels in the crown of the Eternal King, Christ Jesus, unless we have the happiness of following in the footsteps of that noble champion Julian. A tree that produces only leaves and no fruits is not worthy of the gardener's care."

Not knowing what to reply, the Governor ordered them for the present to be taken back to the prison, where Julian and his companions received them with the greatest joy.

No sooner had the seven Brothers left his presence, than Marcian began to consider what means to adopt in this dilemma; for he was afraid of incur-

ring the displeasure—and perhaps even the wrath—of Diocletian, if he enforced the law in their case; and he saw that his power and authority were in danger, if he gave them their liberty. After a while, he came to the conclusion that the safest way for himself was to refer the matter to the Emperors. Wherefore, he sent to them the following letter: “Most noble and clement Princes, deign to uphold the laws, and grant your generous protection to those among our gods who still remain. May it please your Imperial Majesties to summon before you a certain magician, Julian by name, who, by his cunning arts, hath destroyed more than fifty images of the gods under whose guardianship the world was happy and prosperous; he hath also taken from me my only son, and hath, by his devices, perverted the minds of several soldiers; lastly, he hath, in like manner, corrupted the hearts of the seven brothers, who, by your clemency, were allowed to follow their own laws—thus inducing them to become ungrateful toward their liberal and princely benefactors. May it please your exalted wisdom to decide what is to be done under these circumstances.”

His Masters replied to the Governor, that, if Julian and his companions persevered in their sentiments, and refused to sacrifice to the gods of the Empire, he should—as a warning to all Christians, in the pres-

ence of as many people as he was able to bring together,—cast them into caldrons filled with sulphur and boiling pitch; and, in case the magic skill of Julian rendered that kind of punishment ineffectual, he might make use of whatever tortures he thought fit to overcome their obstinacy.

Being thus empowered to act as he pleased Marcian ordered his tribunal to be erected in the *forum*, and, on the following day, he summoned all the prisoners before Him. He said to them :

“Have you made use of the time I gave you to think of securing your safety?”

“Our thoughts have ever been the same,” answered Julian; “and such as they were in the beginning they shall continue to the end. But if you yourself, by thinking, have invented some sort of torture, which you suppose may answer your purpose, do not delay to put it to the test.”

“What I have devised I am able to carry out—without following thy counsel,” said the Governor. “Did you hear what our invincible sovereigns have decided concerning you?”

“And did you hear, O wretched man,” suddenly exclaimed the boy Celsus, “what punishment the great and everlasting God has prepared for the devil, and such as yourself, who choose to be his ministers?”

These words of his son so surprised and confused the Governor that he remained silent. Julian, however, relieved him from his embarrassments by saying ;

“ Whatever your Masters have directed you to do, do you quickly ; we care not to hear what it is.”

At that very moment a funeral procession was passing through the forum. Instantly it came into the mind of the hard-hearted Governor to subject to a trial the Faith, or as he considered it the magical skill, of the Martyr. Sending one of his attendants he ordered him to request the mourners to halt for a while, and bring the body near his tribunal. Great indeed was the wonder and the horror of the spectators at this new whim of the Governor ; yet, knowing his arbitrariness, none ventured to make the least objection. Then he said to Julian :

You Christians say, that your Master, before he was crucified, did raise the dead to life. Here now is a chance for you to prove, that what you assert is true, and that He was truly God. If, by calling upon Him, you are able to restore life to this dead body, we are ready to concede that what you relate of Him is not a delusion.”

“ Of what advantage is the light of the sun to him that is stone-blind ?” said Julian.

“ Let alone all that stuff and nonsense,” interrupted

the Governor ; “ if either thyself or thy God possess any power, raise this dead man to life.”

“ Your sinful unbelief,” replied the Martyr, “ does not deserve that a sign from heaven be given to prove the truth of the doctrine which we teach. Yet, lest you might think that what you ask of us is an impossibility with God, whom we serve, and as this is a fit opportunity to make known to this vast assembly His goodness and power, I feel persuaded that according to His promise, the words which He spoke to His disciples shall be fulfilled: “ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you.”

And immediately the blessed servant of God, kneeling down and lifting up his eyes to heaven, prayed aloud:

“ Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of Thy Father before all ages, who in time didst choose to be born of a virgin, look down from heaven, and, for the confusion of Thine enemies, and for the strengthening of the faith of them that believe in Thee, hear my prayer; and as, while dwelling visibly upon earth, Thou didst raise the dead to life, so now also restore life to this dead body, that they who live may not die, and they who are dead may find the true life by believing in Thee.”

Then addressing the dead body, he said :

“O lifeless dust, in the name of Him who raised Lazarus from the tomb, I command thee, arise.”

And presently the man sat up, and, arising from the bier, cried out with a loud voice :

“O welcome prayer! O the power of a chaste life! O whither was I being led, and whence did I return?”

“Tell us, thou wretch,” shouted Marcian, sneeringly, “tell us whither thou wast led, and whence thou didst return.”

“Suffer me to relate without interruption, all I have seen,” said the man.

“No, no,” persisted the Governor, “it is enough to tell us how thou didst return.”

“When my soul left the body, it was seized by two apparitions of a form and aspect so horrible, that no words of mine could describe them. They dragged me toward a dark and deep abyss, whence issued howlings so harsh and horrifying, that no earthly noise can be compared to them. As I stood upon the brink of that abyss, and, in my despair, thought myself lost forever, suddenly there was heard, far above me, a dear and pleasant voice, saying: ‘For the sake of my beloved servant, Julian, I command that soul to return to the body.’ At the same time there appeared two persons in glitter-

ing garments who snatched me from my tormentors, and brought me hither. O, I beg and entreat you all, refuse no longer to acknowledge the One true God, whom I also, even as yourselves, refused to confess before my death."

When the multitude heard these words, there arose a great commotion among them. The Governor, however, remained as hard-hearted as before and as he was afraid of a tumult among the people, he ordered the man, together with the Confessor of the Faith, to be taken to the dungeon. Here Julian prepared him for the reception of holy baptism, and taught him to fight the good fight in the company of his fellow-prisoners.

Meanwhile, Marcian, after considering in what manner he might best carry out his plan of overcoming the constancy of the Christians, becoming convinced that delay would only increase his difficulties, resolved to bring them to punishment as speedily as possible. Wherefore, he directed his men to have everything ready for the following day. Early in the morning, the public criers were sent throughout the city, not only to invite, but to command the inhabitants, of every age and condition, to repair to the forum in order to witness the discomfiture of the enemies of the gods. When the people arrived in the forum, and beheld there, placed

in a row, thirty-one large caldrons half filled with pitch and sulphur, and a quantity of fagots and other dry materials underneath them, they were struck with terror and filled with disgust at a sight so revolting. The Governor himself, accompanied by his officers and soldiers soon made his appearance, and the prisoners were brought out from their dungeon. Julian and the boy Celsus were chained together; the others were heavily fettered, each one by himself; but all united in saying, as they advanced to the place of execution: "It is good for us, O Lord, that Thou hast humbled us, that we may learn Thy justification;" and, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

The spectators were moved to tears by what they heard and saw. Many of the men cried out:

"O cruel injustice! and we too have children!"

"O heartless father!" exclaimed the women, "who can thus destroy the life of the youthful and the innocent: O hateful tyranny, which pities neither the living nor the dead!"

But Julian, making a sign to them to be silent, said:

"Do not endeavor, my friends and fellow-citizens, to hinder that which God himself permits to take place. Suffer us to become brighter than gold by

means of this trial ; and know ye all, Pagans as well as Christians, that this day, when the fires are extinguished, you shall behold us as safe and unscathed as you see us at present."

Marcian then ordered them to come near his tribunal and said :

"I know not by what magic spells your minds have been so blinded as to make you prefer, whilst yet in the bloom of youth and the strength of manhood, a miserable, disgraceful death to all the happiness and the enjoyments of this life. I would advise you again, before it is too late, to seek the protection of our immortal gods, who are still willing to secure your safety. Nay more, I promise to obtain for you from the Emperors permission to follow without molestation, the practices of your religion—provided you induce my beloved son to leave your company and to return to the embrace of his parents. O Julian, the author of so many misfortunes, thou knowest not of how great a happiness thou deprivest an affectionate father and a fond mother!" And, turning to his son, he added : "O Celsus, son of my heart, let me once more hear the sweet music of thy voice, before it be silenced forever. See, there comes thy disconsolate mother, who did not expect that thou wouldst in this manner requite her for all the sufferings she has endured

for thy sake; behold, also that throng of our faithful family-servants, who hoped that one day thou shouldst be their kind master; alas! weeping and lamenting, they are bidding thee their last farewell."

"Let them weep and lament for themselves and for you," replied the noble youth; "for us, whom they see on the point of entering into bliss without end, they need not grieve. For yourself—as well as for all those who stand around us on every side, in the expectation of seeing our agony and death,—shall this day bear witness, that the fires which you have prepared can do no harm to the servants of the true and living God. And remember, also, that the demons you worship, and those scourges of mankind, whom you call your Emperors, we utterly despise."

"Blame not our august Sovereigns," shouted Marcian; "it is not their cruelty, but your own unyielding wilfulness that is the cause of your death."

"Be that as it may," said the youth; "yet I have one request to make, and I beg you by all that you hold dear, to grant it to me."

"Ask what thou wilt," immediately replied the Governor, "I will grant it to thee."

"Promise me," said Celsus, "that, if I escape without hurt this torment to which we are condemned, you will permit my mother to visit me, so

that for three days she may stay and converse with me; and, if she grant me one thing which I desire, and which I will make known to her during that time, you shall save both me and her."

The mother, hearing this, instantly began to join her entreaties with the request of her son; and Marcian, not knowing whether he should consent or refuse, after reflecting for a while, said:

"I do not think that thou shalt escape the trial prepared for thee; if however, the contrary do come to pass, I willingly agree to grant the request."

Whereupon, as he felt disinclined to witness the sufferings of his son, he left the execution of the sentence to his Assessor, and withdrew—together with most of the members of his household.

Without delay, the Assessor ordered the servants of God to be thrown into the caldrons, and fire to be applied to the fagots. Soon the flames were seen to spread and rise high into the air with such violence and density, that it was impossible to see the blessed sufferers; but, above the crackling and roar of the fire, their clear and firm voices were heard singing: "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God! it is meet and just; Thou hast redeemed us, O Lord, in Thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation;" and "We have passed through

fire and through water, but Thou hast brought us into a place of refreshment.”

And well might they give glory to God; for the raging flames, and the pitch and sulphur boiling in the caldrons, had no power over them, who were in the keeping of Him, whose commands all the elements obey.

When the Governor was informed of the wonderful manner in which the lives of the Martyrs had been preserved, he at once, followed by a numerous attendance, hastened to the forum, that with his own eyes he might see the miracle. Convinced that there was no deception in what he had heard, he addressed the leader of the glorious band of confessors, saying :

“Julian, I adjure thee by thy God, tell me, whence didst thou learn and obtain so great a skill in the magic arts?”

“Since you call upon me in the Name of my God, the Author of these wonders,” replied the Martyr, “I will make known to you, how a person desirous of learning this kind of sorcery, may become a proficient in the art, so as to be able to use this form of incantation as successfully as myself. If any one strive to withdraw himself from all worldly pursuits, and hearken solely to the voice of God—making known His will and command in these words: ‘If

any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it. But he that shall lose his life for My sake, shall save it ;' if he prefer the love of God before all things of earth whatsoever ; if he consider neither father, nor mother, nor children, nor possessions, nor aught that may be a stumbling-block to his soul ; moreover, if he have an affectionate care of the poor and the sick, and gladly suffer hunger and thirst, that he may be able to give them relief and comfort ; if he return good for evil ; if he foster neither malice nor anger in his breast ; if he overcome impatience and excitement by meekness and long sufferance ; if he desire not to be called holy, but earnestly strive to become so, in order to be pleasing to God ; in short, if he love to remain unknown and forgotten of men, that he may serve his Maker in lowliness and in singleness of heart—knowing that of Him he is in due time to receive his reward ; if he is such a one, I say, that he is fit to learn the art which you suppose me to possess."

"And who is there upon earth," exclaimed Marcian, "so foolish as to give up all the enjoyments of this life, and to lay aside all manliness, so as to make himself the laughing-stock of men !"

"This true wisdom," answered Julian, "the Infi-

nite God is willing to bestow upon all men; but there are few who show themselves ready to receive this divine gift."

"Tut, tut, Julian," said the Governor, "I will hold no more conversation with thee."

"That is what I was long since wishing for," replied the Martyr.

Marcian, thinking that, at least for the present, he had got rid of the blessed Julian, turned himself to his son Celsus, and said :

"There is Marcionilla, thy mother; for her sake I have granted thy request. I allow her three days to pass in thy company. Remember that this delay is given only in the hope of making thee happy by securing thy own safety; for I know that she loves thee well; yea, even with an affection greater than my own.

"Since you are so good as to grant me these three days to rejoice in the company of my beloved mother," said the son, "I trust you will permit none of your men to interfere with us."

"If such is thy request," said the father, "I will not refuse it. If thy mother is willing, let her go with thee and thy companions."

Thereupon, by his orders, they were all sent to a large and commodious private dwelling, instead of to the prison which the Confessors had until then

occupied. As they entered this new abode, all the Martyrs fervently joined in this prayer uttered aloud by the blessed Julian :

“ O God, who alone knowest the future, and to whom, also, all things past are present ; O Thou, who regardest not age, but the dispositions of our minds and hearts, vouchsafe to open the eyes of this Thy creature, and make her heart a pleasing field, whence Thou mayest gather unto Thyself a rich harvest.”

And suddenly the place was filled with a sweet perfume, as of many flowers, and a brilliant light shone upon them, and a voice was heard from on high : “ Truly merciful is the Lord, who justifies the sinful soul without any merit of her own.” No sooner did the voice cease than Marcionilla exclaimed :

“ O the fragrant aroma ! No flowers of earth could ever fill my senses with such a feeling of delight. This makes me forget all the cares and the sorrows of the past. It draws away my heart : it excites within me an ardent longing to know the true God—for whose honor my son is so bravely fighting.”

Then Julian said to her : “ Blessed indeed art thou, O Marcionilla, who, through the prayers of thy matchless child, so speedily obtainest the health

of thy soul! Know then, that thy Physician is One, whose wont it is to heal, not by applying the scalpel to the wounds of his patients, but by trying their faith in Him.

Celsus, no longer able to contain the joy he felt at the wonderful change which had taken place in one whom he so dearly loved, embracing his mother, said:

“Now I may call thee truly my mother. Now I shall not lose thee, neither shalt thou lose me. Now let us together contend for that prize for which the chosen friends of God hesitate not to make every sacrifice, for which they joyfully endure all the hardships of this life.”

The noble matron, filled with an anxious desire to obtain the perfect health of her soul, replied:

“Know, my son, that there is absolutely nothing which I deem preferable to the love of Him, whom thou lovest so much. Wherefore, delay not to do for me whatever may be necessary for my soul’s salvation.”

“With the heart we believe unto justice,” said Celsus; “but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. It remains, therefore, that thou be cleansed from sin in the waters of holy Baptism, that, being thus born again, thou mayest become the dwelling of the Holy Spirit.”

“Alas! shut up as we are in this place,” said Mar-

cionilla, "and guarded by soldiers, how shall we find a person to cleanse me from my sins by the saving water?"

"Be not uneasy, noble Lady," answered Julian; "we have among us a priest of Christ, who is ready to administer the holy Sacrament. It is necessary, however, that first thou renounce freely and explicitly the worship of idols, and profess thy belief in One God in three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,—the creator of all things that exist—the Lord and Ruler of the universe. The second Person of the most Blessed Trinity took upon Himself our human nature, to redeem man, when, by sin, he had become the slave of the devil. This Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, taught us the doctrines which we Christians believe and teach. Dost thou believe all this?"

"I renounce and detest the worship of idols," answered the lady; "and I believe all the doctrines which you believe and teach; and, for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Lord and Redeemer of men, I am ready to lose this life, that, together with you, I may obtain life everlasting."

All the servants of God rejoiced exceedingly at what they heard, and gave thanks to God, who had so miraculously led her into the saving fold of

Christ. After which she received Baptism at the hands of the holy priest Antony. And, while they all united in singing hymns of thanksgiving, they heard a clear and sweet voice saying to them: "Let your hearts take courage: wait ye for the Lord, and act manfully."

And immediately the Blessed Julian, taking up the word and addressing his companions, said:

"This voice that speaks to us from heaven, announces that we are about to undergo many hardships and various kinds of torments. The enemy has laid his cunning plans in the hope of triumphing over us. Let us, therefore, commend our struggle to Him, who will enable us to fight a good fight, to finish our course and to keep the Faith that thus we may receive the crown of justice laid up for us."

As soon as the Governor was informed that Marcionilla had embraced the Christian religion, and that she was resolved to spare the fate of her son and of the other Confessors, he gave orders that they all should be privately brought to his palace. There, addressing his son, he said:

"Didst thou not ask me to permit thy mother to go with thee? Now I command thee to acquaint me with what has been done."

"I return thanks to my God," replied Celsus, "Who has deigned to fulfil the fondest desire of

my heart, in such a manner that, henceforth, I shall forever enjoy the company of my loving mother; nor shall she again be separated from her son. Know then that, from this day, we have for the love of Christ given up even the wish of possessing aught upon earth, insomuch that my mother can no longer acknowledge you as her husband, nor can I look upon you as my father."

This so irritated Marcian, that he commanded his attendants to seize Marcionilla, to drag her away by force, and shut her up in her apartments. But when the men, obedient to these orders, attempted to lay hands on her, they were filled with dismay at finding themselves struck with sudden blindness. The miracle, instead of opening the eyes of the wicked Governor, seemed only to harden his heart the more; for he instantly ordered them all to be cast again into their former loathsome dungeon.

On the following day, without any further examination, he commanded the twenty soldiers, who had been converted by the wonders they had witnessed in the dungeon, to be beheaded; and the seven noble brothers, who had so generously given up all earthly prospects for Christ's sake, to be burned alive. But Julian and the venerable priest Antony, together with Celsus and Marcionilla, as also the

person whom the Saint had raised from the dead, were kept in prison for further trial.

After the lapse of a few days the Governor sent again for the prisoners; and when they stood before him he said to their leader:

“With thee, Julian, I think it not only useless, but also beneath my dignity to speak again;” and, addressing the venerable priest, he continued: “Art thou that Antony, whom these enemies of our gods call their priest and father? If so, I make no doubt but thou art an experienced master of the magical arts practised by thy people.”

“I thank Christ our Lord,” replied the blessed Antony, “who has chosen me, although unworthy, to be a teacher of His doctrines.”

“Tell me, then,” said Marcian, “wherein consists that marvellous power whereby you are able to separate children from their parents, and parents from their children; whereby ye induce so many to forsake the possessions and enjoyments of this life, and to despise the immortal gods themselves, the givers of all the good things we have upon earth? Whence arises that bold defiance which ye all so constantly display? But, above all, explain to me that wonderful skill, whereby ye mislead the simple and ignorant, so as to make them believe that ye can restore even the dead to life.”

“I would rather that your Excellency should question our great leader Julian concerning these matters,” answered Antony; “but, as we are unworthy servants of the same One and true God, I trust, our Lord Jesus Christ will put words into my mouth to make you understand these things, if you are willing to learn them. Well then: our Divine Master—the Teacher of those arts whereof you say that we make use, and which appear so incredible to you—warned His followers not to cast pearls before swine, meaning that it was not given to the carnal-minded to relish His sublime doctrines. He said: ‘Think not that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother.’ And, ‘He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me.’ When your son heard these words, he understood that it was his duty to love his God and Creator more than him who was his father according to the flesh. In like manner, she whom you called your wife, after hearing the words of the Divine Master, chose to forsake the things of time, that by following Christ the immortal King of glory, she might secure the blissful rest of eternity. Such is the truth briefly stated, the foundation of those resolves and actions which appear so strange

and inexplicable to them that perceive not the things that are of the Spirit of God.”

The Governor was again at a loss what to reply ; for he had not foreseen that the holy priest, by this concise statement, would have so completely put him out as to give him no chance to bring forward, as usual, one of his absurd objections. Wherefore, to gain time and to contrive meanwhile, if possible, some new mode of punishment, he sent them all back to their dungeon.

There was in the city a magnificent temple of Jupiter, the walls of which were covered with panels inlaid with silver and gold. The ceiling and arches glittered with pearls and precious stones ; and the pavement was of the richest marble. The statue itself of Jupiter was of pure gold. This edifice was opened only once a year, on the day of the solemn sacrifices. Marcian commanded the priests of the idols to open this temple, and to make the preparations necessary for the sacrifices. Then, he summoned his prisoners to appear before him in the place, and said :

“The hour has come at last to save yourselves from future troubles. It was through regard for you that I selected this splendid edifice, as the place where you should offer incense to the immortal gods. Wherefore, thou O Julian, who art the author of all

this wicked obstinacy, come and appease the wrath of the gods, that thus, by their power, thou mayest once more be restored to thy kindred."

"Did you not say that you would not again speak with me?" said Julian. "However, since I know the true time and the means to secure our safety, and since you are resolved to worship your gods, command all your priests to enter, that they may witness what kind of sacrifice we are about to offer."

Hearing these words, and interpreting them according to his own wishes, Marcian flattered himself that, now at last he had succeeded in his efforts to make his prisoners yield to his will, and said :

"It gives me joy that, though late, ye have become reasonable, so as to consult your own interests by showing a desire of enjoying this life and all its sweet pleasures." Then after ordering their chains to be removed, he added: "It would be a disgrace to see in chains those to whom the gods are becoming propitious." And addressing his son and Marcionilla, he said :

"Come, you also, and propitiate again the gods you were wont to worship."

"God forbid," replied Marcionilla, "that with full knowledge I should do again that which, heretofore, I did through ignorance. Now that I know the

truth, I am resolved never to swerve from its sacred teachings."

The Governor, without seeming to take any notice of this answer, said to Julian :

"Everything is ready! do now what you have promised."

"Behold, the hour is come," said Julian, "wherein we are to be glorified, and to be approved in the sight of all."

"Such will be the case," said Marcian, "if ye have the good sense to consult your own interest and safety." Then the Saint said to his companions :

"Let us draw nigh that we may secure our safety, and make known to the whole world what kind of sacrifice we offer this day." And, addressing the Governor, he asked : "What is your will, O Marcian? Do you command us to sacrifice to all the gods?"

"All the gods whom you see in this temple," answered Marcian, "are equally immortal, glorious and powerful. They are not jealous one of another. They regard with favor all worshippers, especially such as you, who but now begin to know and honor them."

Julian and his companions, thereupon, knelt down near the entrance of the temple, and all made the

sign of the cross ; then the Saint prayed in a loud and clear voice :

“Almighty and Eternal God, whom the whole world cannot contain, and who yet dwellest in them that are clean of heart ; O Thou, who didst say by the mouth of Thy Prophet : ‘All the gods of the Gentiles are devils ;’ behold this abode of demons : break the boldness and humble the pride of their worshippers ; that they may see and confess their own folly, and proclaim Thee the One true God, and Jesus Christ Thine Only-begotten Son, who, with Thee and the Holy Spirit, reigneth forever and ever.”

And no sooner had his companions answered : Amen, than the vast edifice was seen to shake, and, falling to the ground, buried a great number of the priests beneath its ruins. At the same moment, from the place where the statue of Jupiter had stood, immense flames were seen to burst forth,—which for many years after could not be quenched.

The Governor, overwhelmed with grief and pale with rage at the sight of the fearful disaster which had befallen his gods, stood aghast and speechless. Julian said to him :

“Where now are your idols of gold ? What has become of your magnificent temple ? Where is the power of those immortal gods whereof you boasted

so much? Did they not all crumble into dust and come to naught at the mere mention of the Name of Jesus? Thus also shall it be with you and with your Emperors, when comes the day of reckoning. Devouring flames will be your portion forever, unless you repent, and, confessing your error, cry for mercy to him who alone can give salvation."

These words of solemn warning spoken by the Martyr did not move the stony heart of Marcian. Far from appearing to relent, he exclaimed with wrathful vehemence :

"O the power of magic! O unheard of incantation, how can it be that thou art able to open the very bosom of the earth, and deprive us of that which was the delight of our eyes and the pride of our hearts! But, henceforth, I will not spare again; the time for pity is passed; the hour for vengeance is at hand."

With these feelings of hatred and revenge rankling in his breast, he ordered the servants of God once more to their dungeon. Here Julian and his companions prepared themselves for the final struggle by praying, and by singing the praises of Him, who had in so many ways manifested His goodness and mercy in their behalf. While they were thus piously employed, about the hour of midnight, the dungeon was suddenly illumined with a dazzling

light, and they beheld above them, as it were floating in the air, a great multitude of persons in shining garments, with palms in their hands. Among them they clearly distinguished the seven brothers and the twenty soldiers, who, a few days before, had suffered martyrdom. Next they saw a heavenly throng of Virgins, with Basilissa at their head. And addressing Julian, the blessed Basilissa said: "The gates of Paradise are even now thrown open for you. The word of Christ, the Eternal King, has gone forth:—On the day of My Manifestation they shall all be welcomed to endless bliss by the choirs of Prophets and Apostles!" And while enraptured they listened to the chorus of joyful and repeated Alleluias, the vision vanished from their sight.

The following morning, the Governor, now determined to bring all his troubles to an end, again summoned the prisoners before him. He ordered at once their hands and feet to be bound with cords saturated with oil, and fire to be applied. This was accordingly done; but when the cords were consumed by the fire, the limbs of the Martyrs were seen to remain uninjured. Then he commanded the executioners to strip the skin from the head of the blessed Julian and of the youthful Celsus. At the sight of the cheerfulness where-

with they bore this cruel torment, the holy priest Anthony and Anatasius—the same who had been raised from the dead—could not help exclaiming: “Glory to Thee, O Christ Jesus, our Lord!” Whereupon they had their eyes torn out with iron hooks. Meanwhile, the mother of the noble youth, who had stood a witness to all these cruelties, was by her husband condemned to be stretched on the rack. But no sooner did the executioners attempt to touch her than they lost their sight, and their hands and arms became so stiff that they were unable to move them. And, to the amazement of all present, after the Martyrs had undergone these various tortures, He for whose sake they were suffering, had so perfectly healed them, that not the least mark of bodily injury could be discovered.

Seeing this, the hard-hearted and fanatical Governor cried out :

“Woe to us! we are conquered and undone! What else remains? Aha! there is one thing we have not yet tried: the amphitheatre.”

Whereupon he commanded the Martyrs to be instantly exposed to the wild beasts. But this resulted equally in disappointment; for none of the animals could be forced to do them any harm whatever. Then at last Marcian gave orders that they should all be beheaded; and to render this punishment the

more ignominious, he made several criminals—who at the time were in prison awaiting their sentence of death—suffer in their company. Thus, after a long and glorious struggle, they went to receive their crown,—likened in their last moments unto their Divine Master, who, when dying, “was reputed among the wicked.”

During the night the Christians came, and, easily distinguished the Martyrs by a soft and mysterious light that shone from them; they took them up with great reverence and deposited them carefully beneath the altar in one of the churches. Here many healings, both of body and soul, were performed in behalf of persons who came to implore the intercession of the Saints with God.

They suffered on the thirteenth of January.



