

St. Cuthman was titular patron of Steninges or Estaninges, and is honoured to this day, on the 8th of February, in the great abbeys of Fecam, Jumieges, and others in Normandy: and his name occurs in the old Missal, used by the English Saxons, before the Norman conquest, kept in the monastery of Jumieges, in which a proper mass is assigned for his feast on the 8th of February. In the account of the principal shrines of relics of saints, honoured anciently in England, published by the most learned Dr. Hickes, mention is made of St. Cuthman's, as follows: "At Steninge, on the river Bramber, among the South-Saxons, rest St. Cuthman." See *Narratio de Sanctis qui in Anglia quiescunt*, published by Hickes, in his *Thesaurus Linguarum veterum Septentr.*, t. 1. in *Dissert. Epistol.* p. 121. See also two lives of St. Cuthman, in Bollandus, t. 2. Feb. p. 197. and the more accurate lessons for his festival in the Breviary of Fecam. He is honoured in most of the Benedictin abbeys in Normandy.

FEBRUARY IX.

ST. APOLLONIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

Her acts are of no authority, and falsely place her triumph at Rome, instead of Alexandria. See Tillemont, t. 3. p. 295. Her authentic history is in the letter of St. Dionysius, then bishop of Alexandria, preserved by Eusebius, l. 6. c. 41, 42. p. 236. Ed. Val.

A.D. 249.

ST. DIONYSIUS of Alexandria wrote to Fabius, bishop of Antioch, a relation of the persecution raised at Alexandria by the heathen populace of that city, in the last year of the reign of the emperor Philip. A certain poet of Alexandria, who pretended to foretell things to come, stirred up this great city against the Christians on the motive of religion. The first victim of their rage was a venerable old man, named Metras, or Metrius, whom they would have compelled to utter impious words against the worship of the true God: which, when he refused to do, they beat him with staffs, thrust splinters of reeds into his eyes, and having dragged him into one of the suburbs, stoned him to death. The next person they seized was a Christian woman, called Quinta, whom they carried to one of their temples to pay divine worship to the idol. She loaded the execrable

divinity with many reproaches, which so exasperated the people that they dragged her by the heels upon the pavement of sharp pebbles, cruelly scourged her, and put her to the same death. The rioters, by this time, were in the height of their fury. Alexandria seemed like a city taken by storm. The Christians made no opposition, but betook themselves to flight, and beheld the loss of their goods with joy; for their hearts had no ties on earth. Their constancy was equal to their disinterestedness; for of all who fell into their hands, St. Dionysius knew of none that renounced Christ.

The admirable Apollonia, whom old age and the state of virginity rendered equally venerable, was seized by them. Their repeated blows on her jaws beat out all her teeth. At last they made a great fire without the city, and threatened to cast her into it, if she did not utter certain impious words. She begged a moment's delay, as if it had been to deliberate on the proposal; but, to convince her persecutors that her sacrifice was perfectly voluntary, she no sooner found herself at liberty, than of her own accord she leaped into the flames. They next exercised their fury on a holy man called Serapion, and tortured him in his own house with great cruelty. After bruising his limbs, disjuncting and breaking his bones, they threw him headlong from the top of the house on the pavement, and so completed his martyrdom. A civil war among the pagan citizens put an end to their fury this year, but the edict of Decius renewed it in 250. See the rest of the relation on the 27th of February. An ancient church in Rome, which is frequented with great devotion, bears the name of Saint Apollonia: under whose patronage we meet with churches and altars in most parts of the Western church.

The last part of our saint's conduct is not proposed to our imitation, as self-murder is unjustifiable. If any among the Fathers have commended it, they presumed, with St. Austin, that it was influenced by a particular direction of the Holy Ghost or was the effect of a pious simplicity, founded in motives of holy zeal and charity. For it can never be lawful for a person by any action wilfully to concur to, or hasten his own death, though many martyrs out of an ardent charity, and desire of laying down their lives for God, and being speedily united to him, anticipated the executioners in completing their sacrifice. Among the impious, absurd, and false maxims of the Pagan

Greeks and Romans, scarcely anything was more monstrous than the manner in which they canonized suicide in distress, as a remedy against temporal miseries, and a point of heroism. To bear infamy and all kind of sufferings with unshaken constancy and virtue is true courage and greatness of soul, and the test and triumph of virtue: and to sink under misfortunes, is the most unworthy baseness of soul. But what name can we find for the pusillanimity of those who are not able so much as to look humiliations, poverty, or affliction in the face? Our life we hold of God, and he who destroys it injures God, to whom he owes it. He refuses also to his friends and to the republic of mankind, the comfort and succours which they are entitled in justice or charity to receive from him. Moreover, if to murder another is the greatest temporal injustice a man can commit against a neighbour, life being of all temporal blessings the greatest and most noble, suicide is a crime so much more enormous, as the charity which every one owes to himself, especially to his immortal soul, is stricter, more noble, and of a superior order to that which he owes to his neighbour.

SAINT NICEPHORUS, M.

From his genuine acts in Rainart, p. 244. Tillemont, t. 4. p. 17.

A.D. 260.

THERE dwelt in Antioch a priest called Sapricius, and a layman, named Nicephorus, who had been linked together for many years by the strictest friendship. But the enemy of mankind sowing between them the seeds of discord, this their friendship was succeeded by the most implacable hatred, and they declined meeting each other in the streets. Thus it continued a considerable time. At length, Nicephorus, entering into himself, and reflecting on the grievousness of the sin of hatred, resolved on seeking a reconciliation. He accordingly deputed some friends to go to Sapricius to beg his pardon, promising him all reasonable satisfaction for the injury done him. But the priest refused to forgive him. Nicephorus sent other friends to him on the same errand, but though they pressed and entreated him to be reconciled, Sapricius was inflexible. Nicephorus sent a third time, but to no purpose; Sapricius having shut his ears not to men only but to Christ himself, who commands us to forgive as we ourselves hope to be forgiven. Nicephorus, finding