

before, was attributed to a flood of water which twelve years before this had overflowed that vault. Miracles continued frequently to be wrought by the relics and invocation of St. Vincent. A Benedictin nun at Montmirel, afflicted with a violent fever, retention of urine, ulcers, and other disorders, her body being swelled to an enormous size, and having been a long time paralytic, was perfectly cured all at once by a relic of St. Vincent applied to her by Monseigneur Joseph Languet, then bishop of Soissons. Francis Richer, in Paris, was healed in a no less miraculous manner. Miss Louisa Elizabeth Sackville, an English young lady at Paris, was cured of a palsy by performing a novena at the tomb of St. Vincent; which miracle was attested in the strongest manner, among others, by Mrs. Hayes, a Protestant gentlewoman, with whom she lodged. Miss Sackville became afterwards a nun in the French abbey called of the Holy Sacrament, in Paris, lived ten years without any return of her former disorder, and died in 1742. St. Vincent was canonized in 1737 by Pope Clement XII.

This saint could not display his zeal more to the advantage of his neighbour than by awaking Christians from the spiritual lethargy in which so many live. He set before their eyes the grievous disorder of lukewarmness in the divine service, and explained to them, like another Baptist, the necessity and obligations of sincere repentance; for those certainly can never be entitled to the divine favour who live in an ambiguous, divided, and distracted state of sinning and repenting; of being heathens and Christians by turns. Still more dreadful is the state of those who live in habitual sin, yet are insensible of their danger, and frightful miseries! Into what extravagance, folly, spiritual blindness, and sometimes incredulity, do men's passions often plunge them! To what a degree of madness and stupidity do men of the finest natural parts sink, when abandoned by God! or rather when they themselves abandon God, and that light which he has set up in the world! Let us by tears and prayers implore the divine mercy in favour of all blind sinners.

ST. ARSENIUS, ANCHORET.

He was a Roman by birth, and was related to senators. He

had been trained up in learning and piety, was sincerely virtuous, and well skilled, not only in the holy scriptures, but also in the profane sciences, and in the Latin and Greek languages and literature. He was in deacon's orders, and led a retired life at home with his sister in Rome, when the emperor Theodosius the Great wanted a person to whom he might intrust the care of his children, and desired the emperor Gratian to apply for that purpose to the bishop of Rome, who recommended Arsenius. Gratian sent him to Constantinople, where he was kindly received by Theodosius, who advanced him to the rank of a senator, with orders that he should be respected as the father of his children, whose tutor and preceptor he appointed him. No one in the court at the time wore richer apparel, had more sumptuous furniture, or was attended by a more numerous train of servants than Arsenius; he was attended by no fewer than a thousand, all richly clad. Theodosius coming one day to see his children at their studies, found them sitting, whilst Arsenius talked to them standing. Being displeased thereat, he took from them for some time the marks of their dignity, and caused Arsenius to sit, and them to listen to him standing.

Arsenius had always a great inclination to a retired life, which the care of his employment and the incumbrances of a great fortune made him desire the more ardently; for titles and honours were burthensome to him. At length, about the year 390, an opportunity offered itself. Arcadius having committed a considerable fault, Arsenius whipped him for it. The young prince, resenting the chastisement, grew the more obstinate. Arsenius laid hold of this occasion to execute the project he had long before formed of forsaking the world. The Lives of the Fathers, both in Rosweide and Cotelier, make no mention of this resentment of Arcadius, which circumstance is only related by Metaphrastes; on which account it is omitted by Tillemont and others. It is most certain that retirement had long been the object of the saint's most earnest wishes and desires; but before he left the court, he for a long time begged by earnest prayer to know the will of God; and one day making this request with great fervour, he heard a voice saying: "Arsenius, flee the company of men, and thou shalt be saved." He obeyed the call of heaven without delay, and going on board a

vessel, sailed to Alexandria, and thence proceeded to the desert of Sceté, where he embraced an anchoretical life. This happened about the year 394, he being in the fortieth year of his age, and having lived eleven years at the court. There he renewed his prayers to God, begging to be instructed in the way of salvation, having no other desire than to make it his only study to please God in all things. Whilst he prayed thus he again heard a voice which said: "Arsenius, flee, hold thy peace, and be quiet; these are the principles of salvation,"⁽¹⁾ that is, the main things to be observed in order to be saved. Pursuant to the repeated advice or injunction of fleeing and avoiding human conversation, he made choice of a very remote cell, and admitted very few visits even from his own brethren. When he went to the church, upwards of thirty miles distance from his habitation, he would place himself behind one of the pillars, the better to prevent his seeing or being seen by any one. Theodosius in great affliction for the loss of him, caused search to be made for him both by sea and land; but being soon after called into the West to revenge the death of Valentinian II. and to extinguish the rebellion of Arbogastus his murderer, and Eugenius, he died of a dropsy at Milan in 396. Arcadius being left emperor of the East, advanced Rufin, who was the prefectus-prætorio, and had been his flattering governor, to the rank of prime minister, committing to him the direction not only of his armies but also of the whole empire. He at the same time earnestly desired to call back to court his holy master Arsenius, that he might be assisted by his wise and faithful counsels. Being informed that he was in the desert of Sceté, he wrote to him, recommending himself to his prayers, begging his forgiveness, and offering him the disposal of all the tribute of Egypt, that he might make a provision for the monasteries and the poor at his discretion; but the saint had no other ambition on earth than to be allowed the liberty of enjoying his solitude, that he might employ his time in bewailing his sins, and in preparing his soul for eternity. He therefore answered the emperor's message only by word of mouth, saying, "God grant us all the pardon of our sins; as to the distribution of the money, I am

(1) "Fuge, tace, quiesce; hæc sunt principia salutis." Rosweide, Cotelier, et St. Theod. Stud. Vit. S. Arsen. c. 1, n. 7.

not capable of such a charge, being already dead to the world." When he first presented himself to the ancients or superiors of the monks of Sceté, and begged to be allowed to serve God under their direction, they recommended him to the care of St. John the Dwarf, who when the rest in the evening sat down to take their repast, took his place among them, and left Arsenius standing in the middle without taking notice of him. Such a reception was a severe trial to a courtier; but was followed by another much rougher; for, in the middle of the repast, St. John took a loaf or portion of bread, and threw it on the ground before him, bidding him with an air of indifference to eat if he would. Arsenius cheerfully fell on the ground, and in that posture took his meal. St. John was so satisfied with his behaviour in this single instance, that he required no further trial for his admission, and said to his brethren: "Return to your cells with the blessing of the Lord. Pray for us. This person is fit for a religious life."

Arsenius after his retreat only distinguished himself among the anchorets by his greater humility and fervour. At first he used, without perceiving it, to do certain things which he had practised in the world, which seemed to savour of levity or immortification, as, for instance, to sit cross-legged, or laying one knee over another. The seniors were unwilling, through the great respect they bore him, to tell him of this in a public assembly in which they were met to hold a spiritual conference together; but abbot Pemen or Pastor made use of this stratagem: He agreed with another that he should put himself in that posture; and then he rebuked him for his immodesty; nor did the other offer any excuse. Arsenius perceived that the reproof was meant for him, and corrected himself of that custom. In other respects he appeared from the beginning an accomplished master in every exercise of virtue in that venerable company of saints. To punish himself for his seeming vanity at court, because he had there gone more richly habited than others, his garments were always the meanest of all the monks in Sceté. He employed himself on working-days till noon in making mats of palm-tree leaves; and he always worked with a handkerchief in his bosom, to wipe off the tears which continually fell from his eyes. He never changed the water in which he moistened

his palm-tree leaves, but only poured in fresh water upon it as it wasted. When some asked him one day why he did not cast away the corrupted water, he answered: "I ought to be punished by this ill smell for the sensuality with which I formerly used perfumes when I lived in the world." To satisfy for former superfluities he lived in the most universal poverty, so that in a violent fit of illness having occasion for a small sum to procure him some little necessaries, he was obliged to receive it in alms, whereupon he gave God thanks for being made worthy to be thus reduced to the necessity of asking alms in his name. The distemper continued so long upon him that the priest of this desert of Sceté caused him to be carried to his apartment contiguous to the church, and laid him on a little bed made of the skins of beasts, with a pillow under his head. One of the monks coming to see him, was much scandalized at his lying so easy, and said: "Is this the abbot Arsenius?" The priest took him aside, and asked him what his employment had been in the village before he was a monk? The old man answered, "I was a shepherd, and lived with much pains and difficulty." Then the priest said: "Do you see this abbot Arsenius? when he was in the world he was the father of the emperors; he had a thousand slaves clothed in silk, with bracelets and girdles of gold, and he slept on the softest and richest beds. You who were a shepherd, did not find in the world the ease which you now enjoy." The old man, moved by these words, fell down, and said: "Pardon me, father, I have sinned; he is in the true way of humiliation;" and he went away exceedingly edified. Arsenius in his sickness wanting a linen garment, accepted something given him in charity to buy one, saying: "I return thanks to thee, O Lord, for thy grace and mercy in permitting me to receive alms in thy name. One of the emperor's officers, at another time, brought him the will of a senator, his relation, who was lately dead and had left him his heir. The saint took the will, and would have torn it to pieces, but the officer threw himself at his feet, and begged him not to tear it, saying such an accident would expose him to be tried for his life. St. Arsenius, however, refused the estate, saying, "I died before him, and cannot be made his heir

Though no one knew the saint's fasts, they must have been

excessive, as the measure of corn, called thallin,* sent him for the year, was exceedingly small; this, however, he managed so well as not only to make it suffice for himself, but also to impart some of it to his disciples when they came to visit him. When new fruit was brought him he just tasted it, and gave thanks to God; but he took so little as to show he did it only to avoid the vanity of singularity. Great abstinence makes little sleep to suffice nature. Accordingly, St. Arsenius often passed the whole night in watching and prayer, as we learn from his disciple Daniel. At other times, having watched a considerable part of the night, when nature could hold out no longer, he would allow himself a short repose, which he took sitting, after which he resumed his wonted exercises. On Saturday evenings, as the same disciple relates, it was his custom to go to prayers at sun-set, and continue in that exercise with his hands lifted up to heaven till the sun beat on his face the next morning. His affection for the holy exercise of prayer, and his dread of the danger of vain-glory, gave him the strongest love of retirement. He had two disciples who lived near him, and did all his necessary business abroad. Their names were Alexander and Zoilus; he afterwards admitted a third called Daniel. All three were famous for their sanctity and discretion, and frequent mention is made of them in the histories of the fathers of the deserts of Egypt. St. Arsenius would seldom see strangers who came to visit him, saying, he would only use his eyes to behold the heavens.

Theophilus, the patriarch of Alexandria, came one day in company with a certain great officer and others to visit him, and begged he would entertain them on some spiritual subject for the good of their souls. The saint asked them whether they were disposed to comply with his directions; and being answered in the affirmative, he replied: "I entreat you, then, that wherever you are informed of Arsenius's abode you would leave him to himself, and spare yourselves the trouble of coming after him." On another occasion, when the same patriarch sent to know if he would open his door to him if he came? St.

* A small Egyptian measure of vegetables made of palm-tree leaves, as the word implies. See Cotelier, *Mou Gr.* t. 4, not. p. 748; and Du Cange, *Gloss. Græc.* v. *θαλλιν*.

Arsenius returned for answer, that if he came alone he would ; but that if he brought others with him he would seek out some other place, and would stay there no longer. Melania, a noble Roman lady, travelled as far as Egypt only to see Arsenius, and by means of Theophilus contrived to meet him as he was coming out of his cell. She threw herself at his feet. The saint said to her : " A woman ought not to leave her house. You have crossed these great seas that you may be able to say at Rome that you have seen Arsenius, and raise in others a curiosity to come and see me." Not daring to lift up her eyes, as she lay on the ground, she begged he would always remember her and pray for her. He answered : " I pray that the remembrance of you may be blotted out of my mind." Melania returned to Alexandria in great grief at this answer ; but Theophilus comforted her, saying : " He only prayed that he might forget your person on account of your sex ; but as for your soul, doubt not but he will pray for you."

The saint never visited his brethren, contenting himself with meeting them at spiritual conferences. The abbot Mark asked him one day, in the name of the hermits, why he so much shunned their conversation ? The saint answered : " God knoweth how dearly I love you all ; but I find I cannot be both with God and with men at the same time ; nor can I think of leaving God to converse with men." This disposition, however, did not hinder him from giving short lessons of virtue to his brethren, and several of his apophthegms are recorded among those of the ancient fathers. He said often : " I have always something to repent of after having conversed with men ; but have never been sorry for having been silent." He had frequently in his mouth those words which St. Euthymius and St. Bernard used also to repeat to themselves, to renew their fervour in the discharge of the obligations of their profession : " Arsenius, why hast thou forsaken the world, and wherefore art thou come hither ?" Being asked one day why he, being so well versed in the sciences, sought the instruction and advice of a certain monk who was an utter stranger to all human literature ? he replied : " I am not unacquainted with the learning of the Greeks and Romans ; but I have not yet learned the al-

phabet of the science of the saints, whereof this seemingly ignorant person is master."

Though the saint was excellently versed in sacred learning, and in the maxims and practice of perfect Christian virtue, he never would discourse on any point of scripture, and chose rather to hear than to instruct or speak, making it the first part of his study to divest his mind of all secret opinion of himself, or confidence in his own abilities or learning; and this he justly called the foundation of humility and all Christian virtue. Evagrius of Pontus, who had distinguished himself at Constantinople by his learning, and had retired to Jerusalem, and thence into the deserts of Nitria, in 385, expressed his surprise to our saint, that many very learned men made no progress in virtue, whilst many Egyptians who knew not the very letters of the alphabet, arrived at a high degree of sublime contemplation. To whom Arsenius made this answer: "We make no progress in virtue, because we dwell on that exterior learning which puffs up the mind; but these illiterate Egyptians have a true sense of their own weakness, blindness, and insufficiency; by which they are qualified to labour successfully in the pursuit of virtue." This saint used often to cry out to God with tears, in the most profound sentiment of humility: "O Lord, forsake me not; I have done nothing that can be acceptable in thy sight; but for the sake of thy infinite mercy enable and assist me that I may now begin to serve thee faithfully."

Nothing is so remarkable or so much spoken of by the ancients concerning our saint, as the perpetual tears which flowed from his eyes almost without intermission. The source from which they sprung was the ardour with which he sighed after the glorious light of eternity, and the spirit of compunction with which he never ceased to bewail the sins of his life past, and the daily imperfections into which he fell. But nothing was more amiable or sweet than these tears of devotion, as appeared in the venerable and majestic serenity of his countenance. His example was a proof of what the saints assure us concerning the sweetness of the tears of divine love. "When you hear tears named," says St. Chrysostom,(1) "do not re-

(1) St. Chrys. l. de Virginit. t. 1, p. 321, ed. Ben.

present to yourselves any thing grievous or terrible. They are sweeter than any carnal delights which the world can enjoy." St. Austin says to the same purpose : (1) "The tears of devotion are sweeter than the joys of theatres." St. John Climacus unfolds to us at large the incomparable advantages and holy pleasure of pious tears, and among other things writes thus : (2) "I am astonished when I consider the happiness of holy compunction ; and I wonder how carnal men can think it affliction. It contains in it a pleasure and spiritual joy as wax does honey. God in an invisible manner visits and comforts the heart that is broken with this holy sorrow." Saint Arsenius being asked by a certain person what he must do to deliver himself from a troublesome temptation of impure thoughts? the saint gave him this answer : "What did the Midianites do? They decked and adorned their daughters, and led them to the Israelites, though they used no violence upon them. Those among the servants of God who treated them with severity, and revenged their treachery and criminal designs with their blood, put a stop to their lewdness. Behave in the same manner with regard to your evil thoughts. Repulse them vigorously, and punish yourself for this attempt made in yourself towards a revolt."

This great saint lived in a continual remembrance and apprehension of death and the divine judgment. This made Theophilus, the busy patriarch of Alexandria, cry out when he lay on his death-bed in 312: "Happy Arsenius! who has had this moment always before his eyes." His tears did not disfigure his countenance, which, from the inward peace and joy of his soul, mixed with sweet compunction ; and from his assiduous conversation with God, appeared to have something angelical or heavenly ; being equally venerable for a certain shining beauty, and an inexpressible air of majesty and meekness, in a fair and vigorous old age. The great and experienced master in a contemplative life, St. John Climacus, proposes St. Arsenius as an accomplished model, and calls him a man equal to the angels, (3) saying that he shunned so rigorously the conversation of men, only that he might not lose

(1) St. Aug. in Ps. 128.

(2) St. John Clim. Grad. 7, p. 427.

(3) Gr. 27, n. 65.

something more precious, which was God, who always filled his soul. Our saint called it a capital and indispensable duty of a monk never to intermeddle in any temporal concerns, and never to listen to any news of the world. He was tall and comely, but stooped a little in his old age; had a graceful mien, his hair was all white, and his beard reached down to his girdle; but the tears which he shed continually had worn away his eye-lashes. He was forty years old when he quitted the court, and he lived in the same austere manner from that time to the age of ninety-five; he spent forty years in the desert of Sceté, except that about the year 395 he was obliged to leave it for a short time, on account of an irruption of the Mazici, a barbarous people of Lybia; but the plunderers were no sooner returned home but he hastened back to his former solitude, where he remained till a second inroad of the same barbarians, in which they massacred several hermits, compelled him entirely to forsake this abode about the year 434. He retired weeping to the rock of Troë, called also Petra, over against Memphis, and ten years after to Canopus, near Alexandria; but not being able to bear the neighbourhood of that great city, he staid here only three years; then returned to Troë, where he died two years after. Knowing that his end was drawing near, he said to his disciples: "One only thing I beg of your charity, that when I am dead I may be remembered in the holy sacrifice. If in my life I have done any thing that is accepted by God, through his mercy, that I shall now find again." They were much grieved to hear him speak as if they were going soon to lose him. Upon which he said: "My hour is not yet come. I will acquaint you of it; but you shall answer it at the tribunal of Christ, if you suffer any thing belonging to me to be kept as a relic." They said, with tears, (being solicitous for a funeral procession,) "What shall we do alone, father? for we know not how to bury the dead." The saint answered: "Tie a cord to my feet, and drag my carcass to the top of the mountain, and there leave it." His brethren seeing him weep in his agony, said to him: "Father, why do you weep? are you, like others, afraid to die?" The saint answered: "I am seized with great fear; nor has this dread ever forsaken me from the time I first came into these

deserts." The saints all serve God in fear and trembling, in the constant remembrance of his judgment; but this is always accompanied with a sweet confidence in his infinite love and mercies. The Holy Ghost, indeed, so diversifies his gifts and graces as to make these dispositions more sensible in some than in others. Notwithstanding this fear, St. Arsenius expired in great peace, full of faith, and of that humble confidence which perfect charity inspires, about the year 449. He was ninety-five years old, of which he had spent fifty-five in the desert. Abbot Pemen having seen him expire, said, with tears: "Happy Arsenius! who have wept for yourself so much here on earth! Those who weep not here shall weep eternally hereafter." This saint was looked upon by the most eminent monks of succeeding ages as a most illustrious pattern of their state. The great St. Euthymius endeavoured in all his exercises to form himself upon the model of his life, and to copy in himself his humility, his meekness, and constant evenness of mind, his abstinences and watching, his compunction and tears, his love of retirement, his charity, discretion, fervour, assiduous application to prayer, and that greatness of soul which appeared with so much lustre in all his actions. The name of St. Arsenius occurs in the Roman martyrology on the 19th of July. See his life written by St. Theodore the Studite; and another in Metaphrastes; also, the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*, in Rosweide and D'Andilly, t. 2. p. 183, collated with a very fair ancient MS., probably of Saint Edmund's-bury, more ample than that published by Rosweide, in the hands of Mr. Martin, attorney-at-law, in Palgrave, in Suffolk. See likewise the *Apophthegms of the Fathers in Cotelier's Monumenta Ecclesiæ Græcæ*; the collections and remarks of Pinus the Bollandist, Jul. t. 4. p. 605, and F. Marian, *Vies des Pères des Déserts d'Orient*, t. 3. p. 284 ad 339.

ST. SYMMACHUS, POPE, C.

HE was a native of Sardinia, and archdeacon of the Roman church under Pope Anastasius, and succeeded him in the holy see in 498. Festus, the patrician, had been gained by Anastasius, emperor of Constantinople, and a protector of the Eutychians, to endeavour to procure from Pope Anastasius a confir-