

at the age of eighty-six, and was buried in the church of his abbey. He is mentioned in the Gallican and Benedictin Martyrologies. See D. Menard, l. 2, Observ. in Mart. Ben. et addit. and Mabillon addit. sec. 4, Ben.

SS. SOCRATES AND STEPHEN, MM.

THEIR names are illustrious in the British Martyrologies. They suffered during the persecution of Dioclesian. Many churches in Wales were formerly dedicated to their memory; and they are thought to have glorified God by their death in that part of Britain. See Wilson's English Martyrology, the Roman Martyrology, and Britannia Sancta.

SEPTEMBER XVIII.

ST. THOMAS OF VILLANOVA, C.

ARCHBISHOP OF VALENTIA.

From his life composed by Michael Salon, a native of Valentia; the same by Jerom Canton, and Nicasius Baxius, two religious men of his Order; and chiefly from the memoirs furnished for his canonization, prefixed to his works. Pinius, t. 5, Sept. p. 799.

A. D. 1555.

ST. THOMAS, the glory of the church of Spain, in these latter ages, was born at Fuenlana in Castile in 1488: but received his surname from Villanova de los Infantes, a town where he had his education, situate about two miles from the place of his birth. His parents, Alphonsus Thomas Garcias and Lucy Martinez, were also originally of Villanova. Their fortune was not affluent; but it contented all their wishes, and with their prudent frugality enabled them liberally to assist the poor. Instead of selling that corn which was not necessary for the subsistence of their family, they made bread of it, which they bestowed on the necessitous, and they usually observed the same rule with regard to their cattle, and the rest of the produce of their small estate. This charitable disposition was the most valuable part of their son's inheritance, and proved one of the most distinguished virtues in his character during the whole course of his life. When but seven years old he studied every day by various little contrivances to do whatever lay in his power in favour of poor persons,

often depriving himself of part of his meals for this purpose, and gathering together what scraps he could find at home or whatever else he could presume on his parents' consent to give: nor were they backward in approving his conduct on such occasions, or in giving what he asked them for the indigent. This virtue was accompanied in the saint with a practice of assiduous mortification, a modesty and sweetness which charmed every one, perfect love of purity which was never sullied, a predominant love of truth which abhorred the shadow of a lie, and a regular piety and devotion, which made him even from his infancy spend hours together on his knees in the church with extraordinary fervour. The first words which his parents had taught him to pronounce were the names of Jesus and Mary; and during his whole life he had the most tender devotion to the mother of God. His excellent wit began to appear in the school at Villa Nova; and at the age of fifteen he was sent to the university of Alcala, which had been lately founded by Cardinal Ximenes, the great patron of learning, and the celebrated prime minister under Ferdinand and Charles V. Our saint pursued his studies there with a success that drew all eyes upon him, and the cardinal, out of a regard to his merit, gave him a place in St. Ildefonso's college. By the regularity of his own conduct he engaged many of his fellow-students in the practice of Christian perfection. He mortified his senses with abstinence and great severities: and his whole time was divided between prayer, study, and actions of charity, so that he had none left for pastimes and diversions.

After eleven years spent at Alcala he commenced master of arts, and was made professor of philosophy in that city, being then twenty-six years old. His father had built him a house against his return home from his studies; but this the saint, with the leave of his mother, converted into an hospital. After he had taught two years at Alcala, he was invited with the promise of an honourable stipend, to the same employment at Salamanca, a place famous for its ancient university, which had been founded there by Alphonsus IX. king of Leon, in 1200, and for the many great men who flourished in it. The motives which prevailed with the saint to comply with this invitation were chiefly a desire of shunning the applause which he received at Alcala,

and the hopes of removing certain impediments which arose from his friends in the former place, and obstructed his fixed design of quitting the world. He taught moral philosophy two years at Salamanca: during which time he considered what religious retreat he should make choice of. After the most mature deliberation, in which he took a review of the rules of several orders, and considered the spirit of their respective founders, he determined to enter himself among the Hermits of St. Austin. He took the habit in a most rigorous and exemplary house of that institute at Salamanca in 1518, about the time that Luther apostatized from the same order in Germany.

His behaviour in his novitiate was such as showed he had been long inured to austerities, to the renouncing his own will, and the exercises of holy contemplation. The simplicity of his behaviour in his whole conduct charmed his fellow-religious, and made them admire how he seemed totally to forget that he had been professor in a famous university. Soon after the term of his novitiate was expired, he was promoted to priestly orders in 1520, and employed in preaching the word of God, and in administering the sacrament of penance. Of these functions he acquitted himself with such dignity and success that he was surnamed the apostle of Spain. Neither did he interrupt these employments, or allow himself any relaxation in his monastic rules or austerities whilst he taught, with wonderful applause, a course of divinity, in the public school of the Augustinians, at Salamanca. He was afterwards successively prior at Salamanca, Burgos, and Valladolid, was twice provincial of Andalusia, and once of Castile; and behaved himself in all these stations, with a sweetness and zeal which equally edified and gained the hearts of all his religious brethren, so that he governed them rather by the example of his most holy life than by the authority of his charge. His charity made him accessible to all who wanted his assistance, advice, or comfort, and the prudence, skill, and spiritual light with which he applied remedies to the various maladies of human souls manifestly discovered how great a blessing God bestows on a people when he sends them directors animated with his divine spirit, and enlightened by himself. This heavenly succour the saint found in the constant close union of his soul with God. He fell into frequent raptures at

his prayers, especially at mass; and though he endeavoured to hide such graces and favours, he was not able to do it: his face after the holy sacrifice, shining like that of Moses, sometimes dazzled the eyes of those who beheld him.

Preaching once in the cathedral church at Burgos, and re-proving with zeal the vices and ingratitude of sinners, he held in his hand a crucifix, and cried out from the bottom of his heart with a broken voice: "O Christian, look here, O Christian—" Saying this he was not able to go on, being ravished in an ecstasy. Preaching also at Valladolid on Maunday-Thurs-day before the emperor Charles V. and explaining the words of St. Peter to our Lord, at the washing of the feet, he repeated: "Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Thou Lord of all creatures! thou Creator of the angels! thou God of infinite majesty, wastest any feet! The Sovereign Monarch those of a vile creature! the Master his servant's! the Innocent, a sinner's feet!" Here falling into a rapture, he broke off his sermon, and remained for some time with his eyes lifted up to heaven, pouring forth abundance of tears. The emperor chose him for one of his preachers; afterwards made him one of his counsellors, received his advice as an oracle of heaven, and sometimes wrote to him when at a distance. For a proof how great the authority of our saint was with that prince, the authors of his life give the following instance. This emperor had signed an order for the execution of certain persons of quality condemned for treason; and neither the archbishop of Toledo, nor his own son Philip, nor all the nobility of Spain, were able, by the warmest solicitations, to move him to mercy. At length our saint, at the request of Philip of Spain, went to him, and by discoursing some time with him, prevailed upon the angry monarch to grant which he asked. When the princes and nobles expressed their surprise hereat, the emperor told them, that when the prior of the Austin Friars of Valladolid desired to obtain any thing of him, he rather commanded than asked it; so strongly did he incline him to what he pleased, by persuading him that it was the will of the Almighty. "He is a true servant of God," said that prince, and though he abides among mortals, he is worthy the honour due to those who enjoy the crown of immortality."

Persons of all qualities and conditions consulted him. Nor is

it to be expressed with what zeal, prudence, and charity he endeavoured to advance the glory of God among men, especially among those who were committed to his charge. He was most zealous to maintain regular discipline in his Order, and a great enemy to discourses of news among his brethren, or whatever else might dissipate their minds, or introduce the world into their hermitages. When any of his subjects had committed any grievous fault, he joined fasting and bloody disciplines with earnest prayer and tears, that it would please the Lord of mercy to bring back the strayed sheep, for which he had shed his blood. He bore patiently the infirmities and imperfections of others, accommodating himself, like St. Paul, to the humours and weaknesses of every one, where no duty was injured. When he was provincial, he visited his convents with singular diligence, and was particularly careful about four things. The first was the worship of God, that the divine service should be performed with the utmost reverence and attention; that a moderate pause should be observed in the middle of each verse by those who sung in choir; and that all things belonging to the altar should be kept with great neatness and cleanness. The second thing which he recommended, was assiduous reading of the holy scriptures and pious books, with holy meditation, without which he said it is impossible for devotion to last long. Thirdly, he was very solicitous to settle all the religious in every convent in the most perfect concord and union, exhorting every one to the most sincere and tender fraternal charity. Fourthly, he procured that every one should be employed according to his talents, and in those offices for which he was fittest.

Whilst the saint was performing the visitation of his convents, he was nominated by the emperor Charles V. to the archbishopric of Granada, and commanded to repair to Toledo. He obeyed; but undertook the journey with no other view than that of declining the dignity; in which, by his urgent importunities, he succeeded according to his wish. George of Austria, uncle to the emperor, resigning some time after the archbishopric of Valentia, to pass to the bishopric of Liege, the emperor, who was then in Flanders, thought of not venturing to offer him this see because he knew how grievous a mortification it would be to his humility. He therefore ordered his

secretary to draw up a placit, or letter of recommendation or nomination, for him to sign in favour of a certain religious man of the Order of St. Jerom. Afterwards, finding that the secretary had put down the name of F. Thomas of Villa Nova, he asked the reason. The secretary answered, that he thought he had heard this name; but would easily rectify the mistake. "By no means," said the emperor; "this has happened by a particular providence of God. Let us therefore follow his will." So he signed the placit for St. Thomas, and it was forthwith sent him to Valladolid, where he was prior. The saint wept bitterly upon receiving the news, and used all means possible to excuse himself. But Prince Philip, who was regent of Spain during his father's absence, was not easily to be overcome; and the archbishop of Toledo, and several others, fearing lest the nomination should be by any means frustrated, engaged the saint's provincial to command him, in virtue of his religious obedience, and under a threat of excommunication, to submit to the emperor's will.

Pope Paul III. sent the bull for his consecration, and that ceremony was performed at Valladolid by cardinal John of Tavera, archbishop of Toledo. The saint set out very early next morning for Valentia. His mother, who had converted his house into an hospital for the use of the poor and sick, and resolved to spend the rest of her days in their service, entreated him to take Villa Nova in his way, that she might have the satisfaction of seeing him before she died. But the holy bishop, having recommended that affair to God, according to his usual custom, went directly to his diocess, being persuaded that his present character obliged him to postpone all other considerations to that of hastening to the flock committed to his care. He travelled on foot, in his monastic habit, which was very old, with no other hat than one he had worn ever since his profession, accompanied by one religious man of his Order, and two servants. Upon his arrival at Valentia, he retired to a convent of his Order, where he spent several days in penance and devout prayer, to beg the grace of God; by which he might be enabled worthily to acquit himself of his charge. He took possession of his cathedral on the first day of the ensuing year, 1545; which he was prevailed upon to do with the usual ceremonies,

amidst the rejoicings and acclamations of the people. But when he was led to the throne prepared for him in the church, he cast away the cushions and silk tapestry, fell upon his knees on the bare floor, embraced the foot of the cross, and adored our Lord, pouring forth a torrent of tears; and before he rose up he humbly kissed the ground. The chapter, in consideration of his poverty, made him a present of four thousand ducats towards furnishing his house, which he accepted of in an humble and civil manner, and thanked them for their kindness; but he immediately sent the money to the great hospital, with an order to lay it out in repairing the house, for the use of the poor patients. The first thing he did after the public ceremonies were over, was to visit the prisons of his bishopric, and judging them too dark and inconvenient, he ordered them to be changed, and make commodious.

It is often said, that "Honours change manners:" but our saint kept not only the same perfect humility of heart, but, as much as possible, the same exterior marks of a sovereign contempt of himself and all worldly vanity. He went almost as meanly appparelled as before; and even kept for some years the very habit which he brought from his monastery, which he sometimes mended himself, as he had been wont to do in his convent. One of his canons surprising him one day in the fact, said, he wondered he would so meanly employ his time, which a tailor would save him for a trifle. The servant of God said, that he was still a religious man, and that that trifle would feed some poor man; but he desired him to tell nobody of what he saw him doing. Ordinarily he wore only old clothes, insomuch, that his canons and domestics were ashamed of him, himself alone not blushing. When he was pressed by them to put himself into a dress and equipage suitable to his dignity, his answer was, that he had made a vow of poverty; and that his authority did not depend upon his dress or appearance, but was to be supported by his zeal and vigilance. With much ado his canons gained so far upon him that he cast away his woollen hat, and wore one of silk. Upon which he used afterwards sometimes to show his hat, and merrily say: 'Behold my episcopal dignity: my masters the canons judged it necessary that I should wear this silk hat, that I might be

numbered among the archbishops." The frugality of his table was not less extraordinary, and he continued to observe the fasts and abstinence prescribed by his rule: nor would he ever suffer any expensive fish to be bought for his table; saying, the superfluous price would feast some poor person; and that he was not master, but only dispenser of the goods of the church. In Advent and Lent, upon Wednesdays and Fridays, and on vigils, he contented himself with a little bread and water, fasting till night. His palace was a true house of poverty: there was no tapestry to be seen in it; nor did he use any linen, unless when he was sick; he oftentimes took his rest upon a bundle of dry sticks, with no other pillow than a hard stone.

He discharged all the duties of a good pastor, and visited the churches of his diocese, preaching every where, both in the towns and villages, with such zeal and affection, that the words which came from his mouth seemed so many flashes of lightning, or claps of thunder. His sermons were followed with a wonderful change of the manners and lives of men, in all places he visited, so that one might say he was a new apostle or prophet raised by God to reform that people. Having ended his visitation, he assembled a provincial council, where, with the advice of his fellow-bishops, he made holy ordinances to cut off the abuses he had taken notice of in his visitation, especially to establish a perfect reformation of his clergy. To effect that of his own chapter it cost him much difficulty and time; though he at last gained his point. On all emergencies, like another Moses, he had recourse to the tabernacle to learn the will of God: he often spent nights and days in his oratory to beg light from above. The saint perceiving that his servants made a difficulty to disturb him at his devotions when persons came to consult him, gave them a strict charge, that as soon as any one asked for him, they should immediately call him, without making the party wait; giving them this reason, that though solitude and retirement were his sweetest delight, since he had accepted the archbishopric he was no longer his own master, but was engaged in the service of his flock. By his assiduity in prayer he obtained so excellent a gift of counsel and prudence, that when he had passed sentence, or given

his opinion in any matter of importance, the lawyers were wont to say, there was no room for any further doubt. When any affair of great consequence was to be despatched, or any notorious sinners or public malefactors appeared deaf to all exhortations, the holy pastor spent whole nights in prayer, and to render his prayers more efficacious, he accompanied them with tears and with some extraordinary austerities and alms. Thus he obtained of God several wonderful conversions of obstinate sinners and malefactors, especially of two wicked priests. One of these he had conjured, in the most tender and vehement expressions, to remember how dear a price his soul cost our Redeemer, and finding him not sufficiently softened, he threw himself down before a crucifix, and pouring out a deluge of tears, uncovered his back, and tore his body with a discipline, so that his garments were all stained with his blood. Which charity moved the other to begin to weep for himself, and to cast himself at his feet, beseeching him to forbear exercising that cruelty against himself, saying: "It is I who have sinned, and who deserve all punishment," &c.(1)

St. Thomas was most bountiful and tender towards all his servants. His bishopric was worth eighteen thousand ducats per annum; two thousand of which were paid to Prince George of Austria, as a pension reserved to him upon his resignation: twelve thousand the saint gave to the poor, not reserving one penny for the following year, and he allowed himself only four thousand to defray all the expenses of his family, repairs of his palace, &c. There came to his door every day about five hundred poor people, and each of them received an alms, which was ordinarily bread and pottage, with a cup of wine and a piece of money. He took all poor orphans under his particular care; and for the space of eleven years that he was archbishop, not one poor maid was married who was not helped by his charity. He brought up all the foundling infants in his diocese with the tenderness of a careful mother; often visited them all, and gave extraordinary recompenses to those nurses who were particularly tender and diligent. To his porters, to make them more diligent in finding children who were exposed by their

(1) See Rodericus a Cygnâ archiep. Bracar. 1, de confessor. solicitant. qu. 13, n. 38.

parents, he gave a crown for every foundling they brought him. When, in 1550, a pirate had plundered a town in his diocese, near the sea-coast, the archbishop immediately sent four thousand ducats, and cloth worth as much more, to furnish the inhabitants with necessaries, and to ransom the captives.

Nor was he only the support of the poor himself, but he engaged the great lords, and all who were rich, to make their grandeur appear, not by pomp and vanities, but by becoming the fathers and protectors of their vassals, and by their profuse liberality to the necessitous. He exhorted them to be richer in mercy and charity, than they were in earthly possessions. "Answer me, O sinner," he would say, "what can you purchase with your money better, or more necessary, than the redemption of your sins?" At other times he would say: "If you desire that God should hear your prayers, hear the voice of the poor. If you desire that God should relieve your wants, relieve those of the indigent, without waiting for them to importune you; especially anticipate the necessities of those who are ashamed to beg; to make these ask an alms, is to make them to buy it." His charity towards his neighbour, and all his other virtues received their perfection from the most ardent love of God which burnt in his pure breast, and which he expressed both by works and by the most tender words and sweet sighs. "Thou commandest me, O Lord," said he sometimes in imitation of St. Austin, "to love thee in all things, and above all things; and thou commandest me this very strictly, under pain of being for ever deprived of the vision of thy beautiful and amiable face, which the angels desire continually to behold. And what! is it possible, O my God, that I should be so ungrateful and so base as to stand in need of such a precept? After having been created by Thee to thy own image, and redeemed with the infinite price of the blood of thy dear Son; after having received so many and so great favours, do I stand in need of a command to love thee? Ah! my God, thou confoundest me by this precept. But, O infinitely sweet and delicious command! O light burden! I return Thee immortal thanks, O my God, for having obliged me by so holy and so desirable a law, to love thee. What could be so agreeable and pleasant, so just and so glorious as to love Thee? Is it possible

that any creature capable of knowing Thee, should not love Thee? If I were forbidden to love Thee, this ought to seem impossible and intolerable to me. This affrights me above all the other evils and torments of hell. O wretched creatures who are condemned to that unhappy place, because you love not, but hate and blaspheme your Creator! is this the acknowledgment you render him? May I perish, O my God, rather than ever cease to love Thee. If I forget Thee, let my own right hand be forgotten. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember Thee, and always make Thee the object of my joy and love," &c.(1) And again, "Who can be excused from so sweet and light a precept? How justly is he damned eternally who chooses rather to burn in hell than to love Thee."(2)

St. Thomas not being able, through the weakness of his health, to assist in person at the council of Trent, deputed thither the bishop Huësca in his place. Most of the Spanish bishops who went, repaired first to Valentia to receive his advice. The saint lived in perpetual fear and apprehension under the grievous obligations of the episcopal charge, and used to say, that, "he was never so much afraid lest he should be blotted out of the number of the predestinated, as since he had been enrolled in the list of bishops." He had often employed his interest at Rome and at the court of Spain for leave to resign his dignity. God was pleased at length to hear his prayer, by calling him to himself. The blessed man having been forewarned by a vision that he should die on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, was taken ill of a quinsy, attended with a violent fever, on the 29th of August. He began his immediate preparation for his passage by a general confession of his very least faults, which he made with many tears, as if he had been the greatest of all sinners. Then he received the viaticum; on which occasion, by a most pathetic exhortation which he made, he moved all that were present to weep bitterly. And having commanded all the money then in his possession (which amounted to four thousand ducats) to be dis-

(1) S. Tho. a Villâ Novâ Serm. 1, super Diliges Dominum Deum Tuam.

(2) Ibid. See also Serm. de M. Magdalenâ, &c.

tributed among the poor in all the parishes of the city, he then ordered all his goods to be given to the rector of his college, except the bed on which he lay. Being desirous to go naked out of the world, he gave this bed also to the jailer, for the use of prisoners, but borrowed it of him till such time as he should expire. Understanding that some money had been brought in for him, he caused it to be immediately sent to the poor at midnight. On the 8th of September in the morning, perceiving his strength to decay, he caused the passion of our Lord according to St. John to be read to him, during which he frequently lifted up his eyes bathed in tears towards a crucifix. Then he ordered mass to be said in his presence, and after the consecration, recited the psalm, *In te, Domine, speravi, &c.*, streams of tears falling from his eyes; after the priest's communion he said that verse: *Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit*; at which words he rendered his soul into the hands of God, in the sixty-seventh year of his age, the eleventh of his episcopal dignity, of our Lord 1555. He was buried, according to his desire, in the church of the Austin Friars at Valentia: was beatified by Paul V., in 1618, and canonized by Alexander VII., in 1658. His festival was appointed to be celebrated on the 18th of September. His sermons, and his exposition of the book of Canticles, printed in two volumes in quarto, breathe an admirable spirit of humility, and the ardent love of God and our Blessed Redeemer. The relation of many miracles wrought through his intercession and by his relics, with most authentic attestations, may be seen in the process of his canonization prefixed to his works.

Nothing can be more vehement or more tender than his exhortation to divine love. "O wonderful beneficence!" he cries out; "God promises us heaven for the recompence of his love. Is not his love itself a great reward? a blessing the most desirable, the most amiable, and the most sweet! Yet a recompence, and so immense a recompence, further waits upon it. O wonderful excess of goodness! Thou givest thy love, and for this thy love thou bestowest on us paradise. Such and so great a good is thy love, that to obtain it, all torments and fatigues ought joyfully to have been undergone. Yet this thou bestowest on us free cost; and then givest heaven for its reward. O

Omnipotent Jesus, give me what thou commandest. For though to love Thee be of all things the most sweet; yet it is above the reach and strength of nature. I am, notwithstanding, inexcusable, if I do not love Thee; for thou grantest thy love to all who desire or ask it. I cannot see without light: yet if I shut my eyes in the midst of the noon-day light, the fault is in me, not in the sun." (1).

ST. METHODIUS, BISHOP OF TYRE, M.

THIS illustrious father of the church was bishop, first of Olympus, a town on the sea coast, in Lycia, as St. Jerom and others testify; or, according to Leontius, of Byzantium or Patara, which see was then probably united to that of Olympus. He was translated to the bishopric of Tyre, probably after the glorious martyrdom of St. Tyrannio who suffered under Dioclesian. Such translations of bishops were not then allowed except in extraordinary cases of necessity. St. Methodius was crowned with martyrdom at Chalcis in Greece toward the end of the last general persecution, says St. Jerom; consequently about the year 311 or 312. St. Jerom usually styles him, the most eloquent Methodius.

His works were famous among the ancients; and in large quotations and extracts in Photius, St. Epiphanius, St. Jerom, and Theodoret, we have considerable fragments of many valuable writings of this father, especially of his book, On Free-will, against the Valentinians, and that, On the Resurrection of the Bodies, against Origen. His Banquet of Virgins, often mentioned by ancient writers, was published entire by Leo Allatius at Rome in 1656; by F. Poussines, the Jesuit, at Paris, in 1667; and by F. Combessis, the Dominican, with notes in 1672. See also the notes on it collected by Fabricius, in the end of the second volume of the works of St. Hippolitus printed at Hamburgh, 1718. This book was composed in imitation of a work of Plato entitled, The banquet of Socrates, and is an eulogium of the state and virtue of virginity. In it a matron named Gregorium is introduced telling her friend Eubulus (that is Methodius himself) all the conversation of ten virgins in an assembly at which she was present. A discourse is put into the

(1) Serm. super Diliges Dominum, &c.