

account in the most barbarous manner, and never ceased to blaspheme God, the Creator of all things. She making use of the liberty which both the Roman law and the gospel⁽¹⁾ gave her in that case, proceeded to a legal separation. The husband, in revenge, accused Ptolemy of being a Christian. The martyr lay a long time in a stinking dungeon, and being at length brought to his trial before Urbicius, prefect of Rome, boldly confessed his faith in Christ, and, without more ado, was condemned by the judge to lose his head. Lucius, a Christian, who was present, said to the prefect: "Where is the justice to punish a person who has not been convicted of any crime?" Urbicius said: "I presume you are also a Christian?" "I have that happiness," replied Lucius. Urbicius, whose heart was hardened in injustice, passed sentence also on him. A third who declared himself to have the same faith, and whose name is not known, was beheaded with them. They received their crowns in 166, in the reign of Marcus Aurelius. The saints looked on the goods and evils of this world with indifference, and went with joy to martyrdom, because they regarded this life only as a preparation for a better, and considered that they were immense gainers by death, which puts us in secure possession of eternal happiness. See St. Justin, *Apol.* vol. 1. ed. Ben. Eus. 1. 4. c 17.

ST. FRIDESWIDE, V. PATRONESS OF OXFORD.

SHE was daughter of Didan prince of Oxford, and the neighbouring territory, and learned from her cradle that most important Christian maxim, that "whatsoever is not God, is nothing." Her mother's name was Safrida. From her infancy she exerted all her powers and strength, and made it her whole study to please him alone. Her education was intrusted to the care of a virtuous governess, named Algiva, and in the early period of her life her inclinations led her strongly to a religious state. Riches, birth, beauty, and whatever appeared flattering and dazzling in the eyes of the world, made no weight in the scales with her, unless it was to make her dread more the dan-

(1) 1 Cor. vii. 8. Aug. 1. de fide, et Oper. c. 16, cap. Si Infidelis, causa 28, qu. 2, et cap. Quanto. Ext. De Divortiiis. Nat. Alexander, Theol. Dogm. t. 2, l. 2, reg. 4, 5, p. 153.

gers and snares into which they often betray souls. In the duties of an active life she feared, in the dissipation and hurry of external duties, she should not have strength so well to stand her ground, but her heart would suffer some division. Every virtuous and just interest may and ought ultimately to terminate in God: thus are worldly duties to be made the objects of pure virtue, directed by the divine love. But to live in the world in such manner that her affections should contract nothing of its dust, seemed to Frideswide a difficult task: and the contemplative life of Mary presented charms with which her pure soul was infinitely delighted. She therefore desired earnestly to devote her virginity to God in a monastic state. Her mother was then dead, and her most religious father rejoiced in the choice which his daughter had made of the better part; and, about the year 750, he founded at Oxford a nunnery, in honour of St. Mary and all the saints, the direction of which was committed to her care.*

Sincere love or charity consists not in words, but in deeds. The holy virgin therefore considered, that to profess in words that she belonged wholly to God, would be a base dissimulation, and criminal hypocrisy, unless, by most strenuous endeavours, she made good her solemn promise to God, and studied to be entirely his in her whole heart, and in all her actions. The devil envying her happy progress, assailed her virtue with implacable rage; but his fury rendered her victories more glorious. Algar, a Mercian prince, smitten with her beauty and

* The nunnery of St. Frideswide being dispersed in the Danish wars, this became a house of secular priests, till, in 1111, Roger, bishop of Salisbury, founded in this church of St. Frideswide a monastery of Regular Canons of St. Austin. Cardinal Wolsey, in 1525, began in it the foundation of a noble college; but all his lands and revenues being seized by King Henry VIII. in 1529, that prince reestablished this collegiate church in 1532, for a dean and twelve canons, but dissolved it in 1545. This king erected a new bishopric for Oxfordshire, which he settled first at Osney, then a priory of Austin Canons; but, in 1546, he removed it to Oxford, making this church of St. Frideswide (which from that time is called Christ Church) the cathedral, and refounding the college both of canons and students. This royal and ample foundation consists of a dean, eight canons, and one hundred students, besides chaplains, choristers, &c. See Chamberlain's Present State of England; Tanner's Notitia Monastica; Historia Fundationis Prioratus S. Frideswide Oxon. per Will. Wyrley, MS.; also Registra, Chartas Originales, &c. in Thesaurario Ardis Christi Oxon.

virtues, and not being able to overcome her resolution of chastity, gave so far a loose to the reins of his criminal passion, as to lay a snare to carry her off. The holy virgin escaped his pursuits by concealing herself a long time in a hog-stye. The prince is said to have been miraculously struck with blindness just as he entered the city, and to have recovered his sight by his repentance and the prayer of the saint. After this accident, the holy virgin, to shun the danger of applause, and live more perfectly to God in closer retirement, built herself a little oratory at Thornbury, near the town, where, by the fervour and assiduity of her penance and heavenly contemplation, she made daily advances towards God and his kingdom. The more she tasted of the sweetness of his holy love, the more she despised the straws and dung of earthly vanities, and the more earnestly she sighed after the light of the children of God. The fountain which the saint made use of in this place was said to have been obtained by her prayers. St. Frideswide died before the end of the eighth century, was honoured by many miracles, and the church in which she was buried became famous for the treasure of her relics, and took her name. Wood and others mention, that Martin Bucer's Dutch wife, whom he brought over in the reign of Edward VI. was buried, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in the spot where the relics of St. Frideswide had been scattered, with this inscription: *Hic jacent religio et superstitio*: the obvious meaning of which would lead us to think these men endeavoured to extinguish and bury all religion. St. Frideswide was honored as the patroness of the city and university of Oxford; also of Bommy near Terouenne in Artois, and some other religious houses abroad. See William of Malmesbury, Brompton, the Monast. Anglic. vol. 1. pp. 173. 981. Ant. Wood, Hist. et Antiquitates Acad. Oxon. l. 2. p. 246. Leland's Itinerary, published by Hearne, vol. 4. app. p. 156. Mabill. sæc. 3. Ben. part. 2. p. 561. Bulteau, c. 6. Britannia Sancta, and Leland Collect. vol. 1. p. 342.

SAINT ETHBIN OR EGBIN, ABBOT.

HE was of a noble British family, and was sent early into France to be educated under the care of his countryman, St