

for purity of the heart, and the disengagement of the affections from all irregular passions, render the understanding clear, qualify the mind to judge impartially of truth in its researches, divest it of many prejudices, the fatal sources of errors, and inspire a modest distrust in a person's own abilities and lights. Thus virtue and learning mutually assist and improve each other.

## SS. PERPETUA, AND FELICITAS, MM.

### WITH THEIR COMPANIONS.

From their most valuable genuine acts, quoted by Tertullian, l. de anima, c. 55. and by St. Austin, serm. 280. 283. 294. The first part of these acts, which reaches to the eve of her martyrdom, was written by Saint Perpetua. The vision of St. Saturus was added by him. The rest was subjoined by an eye-witness of their death. See Tillemont, t. 3. p. 139. Ceillier, t. 2. p. 213. These acts have been often republished: but are extant, most ample and correct, in Ruinart. They were publicly read in the churches of Africa, as appears from St. Austin, Sermon. 180. See them vindicated from the suspicion of Montanism, by Orsi, *Vindiciæ Act. SS. Perpetuæ et Felicitatis*.

A.D. 203.

A VIOLENT persecution being set on foot by the emperor Severus, in 202, it reached Africa the following year; when, by order of Minutius Timinianus, (or Firminianus) five catechumens were apprehended at Carthage for the faith: namely Revocatus and his fellow-slave Felicitas, Saturninus, Secundulus, and Vibia Perpetua. Felicitas was seven months gone with child; and Perpetua had an infant at her breast, was of a good family, twenty-two years of age, and married to a person of quality in the city. She had a father, a mother, and two brothers; the third, Dinocrates, died about seven years old. These five martyrs were joined by Saturus, probably brother to Saturninus, and who seems to have been their instructor: he underwent a voluntary imprisonment, because he would not abandon them. The father of St. Perpetua, who was a pagan, and advanced in years, loved her more than all his other children. Her mother was probably a Christian, as was one of her brothers, the other a catechumen. The martyrs were for some days before their commitment kept under a strong guard in a private house: and the account Perpetua gives of their sufferings to the eve of their death, is as follows: "We were in the hands of our persecutors, when my father, out of the affection he bore me, made new

efforts to shake my resolution. I said to him : ' Can that vessel, which you see, change its name ? ' He said : ' No. ' I replied : ' Nor can I call myself any other than I am, that is to say a Christian. ' At that word my father in a rage fell upon me, as if he would have pulled my eyes out, and beat me : but went away in confusion, seeing me invincible : after this we enjoyed a little repose, and in that interval received baptism. The Holy Ghost, on our coming out of the water, inspired me to pray for nothing but patience under corporal pains. A few days after this we were put into prison : I was shocked at the horror and darkness of the place \* for till then I knew not what such sort of places were.

We suffered much that day, chiefly on account of the great heat caused by the crowd, and the ill-treatment we met with from the soldiers. I was moreover tortured with concern, for that I had not my infant. But the deacons, Tertius and Pomponius, who assisted us, obtained, by money, that we might pass some hours in a more commodious part of the prison to refresh ourselves. My infant being brought to me almost famished, I gave it the breast. I recommended him afterwards carefully to my mother, and encouraged my brother ; but was much afflicted to see their concern for me. After a few days my sorrow was changed into comfort, and my prison itself seemed agreeable. One day my brother said to me : ' Sister, I am persuaded that you are a peculiar favourite of heaven : pray to God to reveal to you whether this imprisonment will end in martyrdom or not, and acquaint me of it. ' I, knowing God gave me daily tokens of his goodness, answered full of confidence, I will inform you to-morrow. I therefore asked that favour of God, and had this vision. I saw a golden ladder which reached from earth to the heavens ; but so narrow that only one could mount it at a time. To the two sides were fastened all sorts of iron instruments, as swords, lances, hooks, and knives ; so that if any one went up carelessly he was in great danger of having his flesh torn by those weapons. At the foot of the ladder lay a dragon of an enormous size, who kept guard to turn back and terrify those who endeavoured to mount it. The first that went up was Saturus, who was not apprehended with us, but voluntarily

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\* The prisons of the ancient Romans, still to be seen in many old amphitheatres, &c. are dismal holes ; having at most one very small aperture for light, just enough to show day.

surrendered himself afterwards on our account : when he was got to the top of the ladder, he turned towards me and said : 'Perpetua, I wait for you ; but take care lest the dragon bite you.' I answered : 'In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, he shall not hurt me.' Then the dragon, as if afraid of me, gently lifted his head from under the ladder, and I, having got upon the first step, set my foot upon his head. Thus I mounted to the top, and there I saw a garden of an immense space, and in the middle of it a tall man sitting down dressed like a shepherd, having white hair. He was milking his sheep, surrounded with many thousands of persons clad in white. He called me by my name, bid me welcome, and gave me some curds made of the milk which he had drawn : I put my hands together and took and eat them ; and all that were present said aloud Amen. The noise awaked me, chewing something very sweet. As soon as I had related to my brother this vision, we both concluded that we should suffer death.

"After some days, a rumour, being spread that we were to be examined, my father came from the city to the prison overwhelmed with grief : 'Daughter,' said he, 'have pity on my gray hairs, have compassion on your father, if I yet deserve to be called your father ; if I myself have brought you up to this age : if you consider that my extreme love of you, made me always prefer you to all your brothers, make me not a reproach to mankind. Have respect for your mother and your aunt ; have compassion on your child that cannot survive you ; lay aside this resolution, this obstinacy, lest you ruin us all : for not one of us will dare open his lips any more if any misfortune befall you.' He took me by the hands at the same time and kissed them ; he threw himself at my feet in tears, and called me no longer daughter, but, my lady. I confess, I was pierced with sharp sorrow when I considered that my father was the only person of our family that would not rejoice at my martyrdom. I endeavoured to comfort him, saying : 'Father, grieve not ; nothing will happen but what pleases God ; for we are not at our own disposal.' He then departed very much concerned. The next day, whilst we were at dinner, a person came all on a sudden to summon us to examination. The report of this was soon spread, and brought together a vast crowd of people into the audience chamber. We were placed on a sort of scaffold before the judge, who was Hilarian, procurator of the province, the proconsul being lately

dead. All who were interrogated before me confessed boldly Jesus Christ. When it came to my turn, my father instantly appeared with my infant. He drew me a little aside, conjuring me in the most tender manner not to be insensible to the misery I should bring on that innocent creature to which I had given life. The president Hilarian joined with my father and said: 'What! will neither the gray hairs of a father you are going to make miserable, nor the tender innocence of a child, which your death will leave an orphan, move you? Sacrifice for the prosperity of the emperors.' I replied, 'I will not do it.' 'Are you then a Christian?' said Hilarian. I answered: 'Yes, I am.' As my father attempted to draw me from the scaffold, Hilarian commanded him to be beaten off, and he had a blow given him with a stick, which I felt as much as if I had been struck myself, so much was I grieved to see my father thus treated in his old age. Then the judge pronounced our sentence, by which we were all condemned to be exposed to wild beasts. We then joyfully returned to our prison; and as my infant had been used to the breast, I immediately sent Pomponius, the deacon, to demand him of my father, who refused to send him. And God so ordered it that the child no longer required to suck, nor did my milk incommode me." Secundulus, being no more mentioned, seems to have died in prison before this interrogatory. Before Hilarian pronounced sentence he had caused Saturus, Saturninus, and Revocatus to be scourged; and Perpetua and Felicitas to be beaten on the face. They were reserved for the shows which were to be exhibited for the soldiers in the camp, on the festival of Geta, who had been made Cæsar four years before by his father Severus, when his brother Caracalla was created Augustus.

St. Perpetua relates another vision with which she was favoured, as follows; "A few days after receiving sentence, when we were altogether in prayer, I happened to name Dinocrates, at which I was astonished, because I had not before had him in my thoughts; and I that moment knew that I ought to pray for him. This I began to do with great fervour and sighing before God; and the same night I had the following vision: I saw Dinocrates coming out of a dark place, where there were many others, exceedingly hot and thirsty; his face was dirty, his complexion pale, with the ulcer in his face of which he died at seven years of age, and it was for him that I had prayed. There

seemed a great distance between him and me, so that it was impossible for us to come to each other. Near him stood a vessel full of water, whose brim was higher than the statue of an infant : he attempted to drink, but though he had water he could not reach it. This mightily grieved me, and I awoke. By this I knew my brother was in pain, but I trusted I could by prayer relieve him : so I began to pray for him, beseeching God with tears, day and night, that he would grant me my request ; as I continued to do till we were removed to the camp prison : being destined for a public show on the festival of Cæsar Geta. The day we were in the stocks\* I had this vision : I saw the place which I had beheld dark before, now luminous ; and Dinocrates, with his body very clean and well clad, refreshing himself, and instead of his wound a scar only. I awaked, and I knew he was relieved from his pain.†

"Some days after, Pudens the officer, who commanded the guards of the prison, seeing that God favoured us with many gifts, had a great esteem of us, and admitted many people to visit us for our mutual comfort. On the day of the public shows

\* These stocks, called *Nervus*, were a wooden machine with many holes, in which the prisoners' feet were fastened and stretched to great distances, as to the fourth or fifth holes, for the increase of their torment. St. Perpetua remarks, they were chained, and also set in this engine during their stay in the camp-prison, which seems to have been several days, in expectation of the day of the public shows.

† By the conclusions which St. Perpetua was led to make from her two visions, it evidently appears that the church, in that early age, believed the doctrine of the expiation of certain sins after death, and prayed for the faithful departed. This must be allowed, even though it should be pretended that her visions were not from God. But neither St. Austin, nor any other ancient father, ever entertained the least suspicion on that head. Nor can we presume that the goodness of God would permit one full of such ardent love of him to be imposed upon in a point of this nature. The Oxonian editor of these acts knew not what other answer to make to this ancient testimony, than that St. Perpetua seems to have been a Montanist. (p. 14.) But this unjust censure Dodwell (*Diss. Cypr. A. n. 8. p. 15.*) and others have confuted. And could St. Austin, with the whole Catholic church, have ranked a Montanist among the most illustrious martyrs ? That father himself, in many places of his works, clearly explains the same doctrine of the Catholic faith, concerning a state of temporary sufferings in the other world, and conformably to it speaks of these visions. (*L. de Orig. Animæ, l. 1. c. 10. p. 343. & l. 4. c. 18. p. 401. t. 10. &c.*) He says, that Dinocrates must have received baptism, but afterwards sinned, perhaps by having been seduced by his pagan father into some act of superstition, or by lying, or by some other faults of which children in that tender age may be guilty. *Illius ætatis pueri et mentiri et verum loqui, et confiteri et negare jam possunt. Lib. 1. c. 10.* See Orsi, *Diss. de Actis SS. Perpetuæ et Felicitatis. Florentiæ, 1738, 4to.*

my father came to find me out, overwhelmed with sorrow. He tore his beard, he threw himself prostrate on the ground, cursed his years, and said enough to move any creature; and I was ready to die with sorrow to see my father in so deplorable a condition. On the eve of the shows I was favoured with the following vision. The deacon Pomponius, methought, knocked very hard at the prison-door, which I opened to him. He was clothed with a white robe, embroidered with innumerable pomegranates of gold. He said to me: 'Perpetua, we wait for you, come along.' He then took me by the hand and led me through very rough places into the middle of the amphitheatre, and said: 'Fear not.' And, leaving me, said again: 'I will be with you in a moment, and bear a part with you in your pains.' I was wondering the beasts were not let out against us, when there appeared a very ill-favoured Egyptian, who came to encounter me with others. But another beautiful troop of young men declared for me, and anointed me with oil for the combat. Then appeared a man of a prodigious stature, in rich apparel, having a wand in his hand like the masters of the gladiators, and a green bough on which hung golden apples. Having ordered silence, he said that the bough should be my prize, if I vanquished the Egyptian: but that if he conquered me, he should kill me with a sword. After a long and obstinate engagement, I threw him on his face, and trod upon his head. The people applauded my victory with loud acclamations. I then approached the master of the amphitheatre, who gave me the bough with a kiss, and said: 'Peace be with you, my daughter.' After this I awoke, and found that I was not so much to combat with wild beasts as with the devils." Here ends the relation of St. Perpetua.

St. Satorus had also a vision which he wrote himself. He and his companions were conducted by a bright angel into a most delightful garden, in which they met some holy martyrs, lately dead, named Jocundus, Saturninus, and Artaxius, who had been burned alive for the faith, and Quintus, who died in prison. They inquired after other martyrs of their acquaintance, say the acts, and were conducted into a most stately palace, shining like the sun: and in it saw the king of this most glorious place surrounded by his happy subjects, and heard a voice composed of many, which continually cried, "Holy, holy, holy!" Satorus, turning to Perpetua, said, "You have here what you desired." She

replied, "God be praised, I have more joy here than ever I had in the flesh." He adds, "Going out of the garden they found before the gate, on the right hand, their bishop of Carthage, Optatus, and on the left, Aspasius, priest of the same church, both of them alone and sorrowful. They fell at the martyrs' feet, and begged they would reconcile them together, for a dissension had happened between them. The martyrs embraced them, saying: "Are not you our bishop, and you a priest of our Lord? It is our duty to prostrate ourselves before you." Perpetua was discoursing with them; but certain angels came and drove hence Optatus and Aspasius; and bade them not to disturb the martyrs, but be reconciled to each other. The bishop Optatus was also charged to heal the divisions that reigned among several of his church. The angels, after these reprimands, seemed ready to shut the gates of the garden. "Here," says he, "we saw many of our brethren and martyrs likewise. We were fed with an ineffable odour, which delighted and satisfied us." Such was the vision of Satorus. The rest of the acts were added by an eye-witness. God had called to himself Secundulus in prison. Felicitas was eight months gone with child, and as the day of the shows approached she was inconsolable lest she should not be brought to bed before it came; fearing that her martyrdom would be deferred on that account, because women with child were not allowed to be executed before they were delivered: the rest also were sensibly afflicted on their part to leave her alone in the road to their common hope. Wherefore they unanimously joined in prayer to obtain of God that she might be delivered against the shows. Scarcely had they finished their prayer, when Felicitas found herself in labour. She cried out under the violence of her pain: one of the guards asked her, if she could not bear the throes of child-birth without crying out, what she would do when exposed to the wild beasts? She answered: "It is I who suffer what I now suffer; but then there will be another in me that will suffer for me, because I shall suffer for him." She was then delivered of a daughter, which a certain Christian woman took care of, and brought up as her own child. The tribune, who had the holy martyrs in custody, being informed by some persons of little credit, that the Christians would free themselves out of prison by some magic enchantments, used them the more cruelly on that account, and forbade any to see them. Thereupon Perpetua said to him: "Why do you not afford us some relief, since we are condemned by Cæsar, and destined to combat at his festival? Will it not be to your honor

that we appear well fed?" At this the tribune trembled and blushed, and ordered them to be used with more humanity, and their friends to be admitted to see them. Pudens, the keeper of the prison, being already converted, secretly did them all the good offices in his power.

The day before they suffered they gave them, according to custom, their last meal, which was called a free supper, and they eat in public. But the martyrs did their utmost to change it into an Agape, or Love-feast. Their chamber was full of people, whom they talked to with their usual resolution, threatened them with the judgments of God, and extolling the happiness of their own sufferings. Saturus, smiling at the curiosity of those who came to see them, said to them: "Will not to-morrow suffice to satisfy your inhuman curiosity in our regard? However you may seem now to pity us, to-morrow you will clap your hands at our death, and applaud our murderers. But observe well our faces, that you may know them again at that terrible day when all men shall be judged." They spoke with such courage and intrepidity, as astonished the infidels, and occasioned the conversion of several among them.

The day of their triumph being come, they went out of the prison to go to the amphitheatre. Joy sparkled in their eyes, and appeared in all their gestures and words. Perpetua walked with a composed countenance and easy pace, as a woman cherished by Jesus Christ, with her eyes modestly cast down: Felicitas went with her, following the men, not able to contain her joy. When they came to the gate of the amphitheatre the guards would have given them, according to custom the superstitious habits with which they adorned such as appeared at these sights.—For the men, a red mantle, which was the habit of the priest of Saturn: for the women, a little fillet round the head, by which the priestesses of Ceres were known. The martyrs rejected those idolatrous ceremonies; and by the mouth of Perpetua, said, they came thither of their own accord on the promise made them that they should not be forced to anything contrary to their religion. The tribune then consented that they might appear in the amphitheatre habited as they were. Perpetua sung, as being already victorious; Revocatus, Saturninus, and Saturus threatened the people that beheld them with the judgments of God: and as they passed over against the balcony of Hilarian, they said to him: "You judge us in this world, but God will judge you in the next."



The people enraged at their boldness, begged they might be scourged, which was granted. They accordingly passed before the Venatores,\* or hunters, each of whom gave them a lash. They rejoiced exceedingly in being thought worthy to resemble our Saviour in his sufferings. God granted to each of them the death they desired; for when they were discoursing together about what kind of martyrdom would be agreeable to each, Saturninus declared that he would choose to be exposed to beasts of several sorts in order to the aggravation of his sufferings. Accordingly he and Revocatus, after having been attacked by a leopard, were also assaulted by a bear. Satorus dreaded nothing so much as a bear, and therefore hoped a leopard would despatch him at once with his teeth. He was then exposed to a wild boar, but the beast turned upon his keeper, who received such a wound from him that he died in a few days after, and Satorus was only dragged along by him. Then they tied the martyr to the bridge near a bear, but that beast came not out of his lodge, so that Satorus, being sound and not hurt, was called upon for a second encounter. This gave him an opportunity of speaking to Pudens, the jailor who had been converted. The martyr encouraged him to constancy in the faith, and said to him: "You see I have not yet been hurt by any beast, as I desired and foretold; believe then steadfastly in Christ; I am going where you will see a leopard with one bite take away my life." It happened so, for a leopard being let out upon him covered him all over with blood, whereupon the people jeering, cried out, "He is well baptized." The martyr said to Pudens, "Go, remember my faith, and let our sufferings rather strengthen than trouble you. Give me the ring you have on your finger." Satorus, having dipt it in his wound, gave it him back to keep as a pledge to animate him to a constancy in his faith, and fell down dead soon after. Thus he went first to glory to wait for Perpetua, according to her vision. Some with Mabillon,(1) think this Pudens is the martyr honoured in Africa, on the 29th of April.

(1) Analect. t. 3. p. 403.

\* Pro ordine venatorum. Venatores, is the name given to those that were armed to encounter the beasts, who put themselves in ranks, with whips in their hands, and each of them gave a lash to the Bestiarii, or those condemned to the beasts, whom they obliged to pass naked before them in the middle of the pit or arena.

In the mean time, Perpetua and Felicitas had been exposed to a wild cow; Perpetua was first attacked, and the cow having tossed her up, she fell on her back. Then putting herself in a sitting posture, and perceiving her clothes were torn, she gathered them about her in the best manner she could to cover herself, thinking more of decency than her sufferings. Getting up, not to seem disconsolate, she tied up her hair, which was fallen loose, and perceiving Felicitas on the ground much hurt by a toss of the cow, she helped her to rise. They stood together, expecting another assault from the beasts, but the people crying out that it was enough, they were led to the gate Sanevivia, where those that were not killed by the beasts were despatched at the end of the shows by the confectores. Perpetua was here received by Rusticus, a catechumen, who attended her. This admirable woman seemed just returning to herself out of a long ecstasy, and asked when she was to fight the wild cow. Being told what had passed, she could not believe it till she saw on her body and clothes the marks of what she had suffered, and knew the catechumen. With regard to this circumstance of her acts, St. Austin cries out, "Where was she when assaulted and torn by so furious a wild beast, without feeling her wounds, and when after that furious combat, she asked when it would begin? What did she, not to see what all the world saw? What did she enjoy who did not feel such pain? By what love, by what vision, by what potion was she so transported out of herself, and as it were divinely inebriated, to seem without feeling in a mortal body?" She called for her brother, and said to him and Rusticus: "Continue firm in the faith, love one another, and be not scandalized at our sufferings." All the martyrs were now brought to the place of their butchery. But the people not yet satisfied with beholding blood, cried out to have them brought into the middle of the amphitheatre, that they might have the pleasure of seeing them receive the last blow. Upon this, some of the martyrs rose up, and having given one another the kiss of peace, went of their own accord into the middle of the arena; others were despatched without speaking, or stirring out of the place they were in. St. Perpetua fell into the hands of a very timorous and unskilful apprentice of the gladiators, who, with a trembling hand, gave her many slight wounds, which made her languish a long time. Thus, says St. Austin, did two women, amidst fierce beasts and the swords of gladiators, vanquish the devil and all

his fury. Their day of their martyrdom was the 7th of March, as it is marked in the most ancient martyrologies, and in the Roman calendar as old as the year 354, published by Bucherius. St. Prosper says they suffered at Carthage, which agrees with all the circumstances. Their bodies were in the great church of Carthage, in the fifth age, as St. Victor(1) informs us. St. Austin says, their festival drew yearly more to honour their memory in their church, than curiosity had done to their martyrdom. They are mentioned in the canon of the mass.

### SAINT PAUL, ANCHORET.

FROM his ignorance of secular learning, and his extraordinary humility, he was surnamed the Simple. He served God in the world to the age of sixty, in the toils of a poor and laborious country life. The incontinency of his wife contributed to wean his soul from all earthly ties. Checks and crosses which men meet with in this life are great graces. God's sweet providence sows our roads with thorns, that we may learn to despise the vanity, and hate the treachery of the world. "When mothers would wean their children," says St. Austin, "they anoint their breasts with aloes, that the babe, being offended at the bitterness, may no more seek the nipple." Thus has God in his mercy filled the world with sorrow and vexation; but woe to those who still continue to love it! Even in this life miseries will be the wages of their sin and folly, and their eternal portion will be the second death. Paul found true happiness because he converted his heart perfectly from the world to God. Desiring to devote himself totally to his love, he determined to betake himself to the great St. Antony. He went eight days' journey into the desert, to the holy patriarch, and begged that he would admit him among his disciples, and teach him the way of salvation. Antony harshly rejected him, telling him, he was too old to bear the austerities of that state. He therefore bade him return home, and follow the business of his calling, and sanctify it by the spirit of recollection and assiduous prayer. Having said this he shut his door; but Paul continued fasting and praying before his door, till Antony seeing his fervour, on the fourth day opened it again, and going out to him, after several trials of his obedience, admitted him to the monastic state, and prescribed him a rule of life; teaching him, by the most perfect

(1) Victor. l. 1. p. 4.