

SEPTEMBER XI.

SAINTS PROTUS AND HYACINTHUS, MARTYRS.

THE saints whose victory the church commemorates on this day are honoured among the most illustrious martyrs that ennobled Rome with their blood, when the emperors of the world attempted, with the whole weight of their power, to crush the little flock of Christ. Their epitaph, among the works of Pope Damasus, calls them brothers, and informs us that Hyacinthus sustained the first conflict, but that Protus obtained his crown before him. They are said, in the Acts of St. Eugenia, to have been eunuchs and retainers to that virtuous lady and martyr, who is honoured on the 25th of December. Their martyrdom, and that of Eugenia, is placed in these acts under Valerian, in 257, but the Liberian Calendar assures us, that St. Basilla, who seems to have been a companion of St. Eugenia, received her crown on the 22d of September, in the persecution of Dioclesian, in 304, and was buried on the Salarian Way. St. Avitus, of Vienna, about the year 500; Fortunatus, and others, make mention of St. Eugenia among the most celebrated virgins and martyrs.(1) The ancient calendar, drawn up in the pontificate of Liberius, mentions the festival of Saints Protus and Hyacinthus on the 11th of September, as celebrated at their tomb on the old Salarian Way, in the cemetery of Basilla, who lay buried at some distance. Her name ought rather to be written Bassilla, as it is in the Liberian Calendar; for it is derived from Bassus. This cemetery was afterwards comprised under that of St. Priscilla, who was buried not far off on the new Salarian Way.(2) Saints Protus and Hyacinthus are honoured in the sacramentary of St. Gregory, in the ancient martyrology, published by F. Fronto, and in those of Bede, Usuard, Vandelbert, &c. Pope Damasus, in 366, removed the earth which hid the tomb of these two martyrs from the view of the faithful; and, during his pontificate, a priest named Theodorus built over it a church, as appears from an ancient epitaph, published by Baronius. Anastasius relates, that Pope Symmachus

(1) Avit de Virgin. p. 1312.

(2) Bosius and Aringhi, Roma Subterranea. l. 3, c. 30, l. 4, c. 34, 37.

afterwards adorned it with plates and vessels of silver. Pope Clement VIII., in 1592, caused the sacred remains of Saints Protus and Hyacinthus to be removed from this church into the city, and to be deposited in the church of St. John Baptist, belonging to the Florentines; of which translation an account is given us by Sarazanius, an eye-witness, in his notes on the poems of Pope Damasus. A considerable part of their relics was given to the Benedictin abbey at Mulinheim, now called Saligunstat—*i. e.*, seat of the blessed, in the diocess of Mentz, in 829, as Eginhard and others relate; part to the church of St. Vincent, at Metz, about the year 972, &c. See Perier the Bollandist, t. 2, Sept., p. 758. Pope Damasus's poems, carm. 27, p. 74. Tillemont, Persecut. de Valerien, art. 6.

What words can we find sufficiently to extol the heroic virtue and invincible fortitude of the martyrs! They stood out against the fury of those tyrants whose arms had subdued the most distant nations; to whose yoke almost the whole known world was subject, and whose power both kings and people revered. They, standing alone, without any preparation of war, appeared undaunted in the presence of those proud conquerors, who seemed to think that the very earth ought to bend under their feet. Armed with virtue and divine grace, they were an over-match for all the powers of the world and hell; they fought with wild beasts, fires, and swords; with intrepidity and wonderful cheerfulness they braved the most cruel torments, and by humility, patience, meekness, and constancy, baffled all enemies, and triumphed over men and devils. How glorious was the victory of such an invincible virtue! Having before our eyes the examples of so many holy saints, are we yet so dastardly as to shrink under temptations, or to lose patience under the most ordinary trials?

ST. PAPHNUTIUS, B. C.

THE holy confessor Paphnutius was an Egyptian, and after having spent several years in the desert, under the direction of the great St. Antony, was made bishop in Upper Thebais. He was one of those confessors who, under the tyrant Maximin Daia, lost their right eye, and were afterwards sent to work in the mines. Sozomen and Theodoret add, that his left ham was