

favoured with the gifts of miracles and prophecy : but said she had been sometimes deceived by the devil. She died on the 9th of March, 1463, in the fiftieth year of her age. Her body is still entire, and shown in the church of her convent through bars and glass, sitting richly covered, but the hands, face, and feet naked. It was seen and described by Henschenius, Las-sels, and other travellers. Her name was inserted in the Roman Martyrology by Clement VIII., in 1592. The solemnity of her canonization was performed by Clement XI., though the bull was only published by Benedict XIII., in 1724.(1) A book of her revelations was printed at Bologna, in 1611. She also left notes in her prayer-book of certain singular favours which she had received from God. These revelations were published and received their dress from another hand, which circumstance is often as great a disadvantage in such works as if an illiterate and bold transcriber were to copy, from a single defective manuscript, Lycophron, or some other obscure author, which he did not understand. St. Catherine wrote some treatises in Italian, others in Latin, in which language she was well skilled. The most famous of her works is the book entitled, On the Seven Spiritual Arms. See her life in Bollandus, written by F. Paleotti, fifty years after her death.

MARCH X.

THE FORTY MARTYRS OF SEBASTE.

From St. Basil's Homily on their festival, Hom. 20. t. 1. p. 453. and three discourses of St. Gregory of Nyssa, t. 2. p. 203. t. 3. p. 499. 504. followed by St. Ephrem. ed. Vatic. Gr. and Lat. t. 2. p. 341. St. Gaudentius, St. Chrysostom, quoted by Photius. See Tillemont, t. 5. p. 518. Rainart, p. 523. Ceillier, t. 4. p. 62. Jos. Assemani in Cal. Univ. ad. 11. Martii, t. 6. p. 172.

A.D. 320.

THESE holy martyrs suffered at Sebaste, in the Lesser Armenia, under the emperor Licinius, in 320. They were of different countries, but enrolled in the same troop; all in the flower of their age, comely, brave, and robust, and were become considerable for their services. St. Gregory of Nyssa and Procopius

(1) Bullar. Roman. t. 13. p. 87.

say, they were of the thundering legion, so famous under Marcus Aurelius for the miraculous rain and victory obtained by their prayers. This was the twelfth legion, and then quartered in Armenia. Lysias was duke or general of the forces, and Agricola, the governor of the province. The latter having signified to the army the orders of the emperor Licinius, for all to sacrifice, these forty went boldly up to him, and said they were Christians, and that no torments should make them ever abandon their holy religion. The judge first endeavoured to gain them by mild usage; as by representing to them the dishonour that would attend their refusal to do what was required, and by making them large promises of preferment and high favour with the emperor in case of compliance. Finding these methods of gentleness ineffectual, he had recourse to threats, and these the most terrifying, if they continued disobedient to the emperor's order but all in vain. To his promises they answered, that he could give them nothing equal to what he would deprive them of: and to his threats, that his power only extended over their bodies, which they had learned to despise when their souls were at stake. The governor, finding them all resolute, caused them to be torn with whips, and their sides to be rent with iron hooks. After which they were loaded with chains, and committed to jail.

After some days, Lysias, their general, coming from Cæsarea to Sebaste, they were re-examined, and no less generously rejected the large promises made them than they despised the torments they were threatened with. The governor, highly offended at their courage, and that liberty of speech with which they accosted him, devised an extraordinary kind of death; which being slow and severe, he hoped would shake their constancy. The cold in Armenia is very sharp, especially in March, and towards the end of winter, when the wind is north, as it then was; it being also at that time a severe frost. Under the walls of the town stood a pond which was frozen so hard that it would bear walking upon with safety. The judge ordered the saints to be exposed quite naked on the ice.* And in order to tempt them the more powerfully to renounce their faith, a warm-bath was

* The acts and the greater part of the writers of their lives suppose they were to stand in the very water. But this is a circumstance which Tillemont, Baillet, Ruinart, Ceillier, and others correct from St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nyssa.

prepared at a small distance from the frozen pond, for any of this company to go to, who were disposed to purchase their temporal ease and safety on that condition. The martyrs on hearing their sentence, ran joyfully to the place, and without waiting to be stripped, undressed themselves, encouraging one another in the same manner as is usual among soldiers in military expeditions attended with hardships and dangers, saying, that one bad night would purchase them a happy eternity.* They also made this their joint prayer: "Lord, we are forty who are engaged in this combat; grant that we may be forty crowned, and that not one be wanting to this sacred number." The guards in the mean time ceased not to persuade them to sacrifice, that by so doing they might be allowed to pass to the warm bath. But though it is not easy to form a just idea of the bitter pain they must have undergone, of the whole number only one had the misfortune to be overcome; who losing courage went off from the pond to seek the relief in readiness for such as were disposed to renounce their faith: but as the devil usually deceives his adorers, the apostate no sooner entered the warm water but he expired. This misfortune afflicted the martyrs; but they were quickly comforted by seeing his place and their number miraculously filled up. A sentinel was warming himself near the bath, having been posted there to observe if any of the martyrs were inclined to submit. While he was attending, he had a vision of blessed spirits descending from heaven on the martyrs, and distributing, as from their king, rich presents, and precious garments, St. Ephrem adds crowns, to all these generous soldiers, one only excepted, who was their faint-hearted companion, already mentioned. The guard being struck with the celestial vision and the apostate's desertion, was converted upon it; and by a particular motion of the Holy Ghost, threw off his clothes, and placed himself in his stead among the thirty-nine martyrs. Thus God heard their request though in another manner than they imagined: "Which ought to make us adore the impenetrable secrets of his mercy and justice," says St. Ephrem, "in this instance, no less than in the reprobation of Judas, and the election of St. Matthias."

In the morning the judge ordered both those who were dead

* St. Gregory of Nyssa says, that they endured three days and three nights this lingering death, which carried off their limbs one after another.

with the cold, and those that were still alive, to be laid on carriages, and cast into a fire. When the rest were thrown into a waggon to be carried to the pile, the youngest of them, (whom the acts call Melito) was found alive; and the executioners hoping he would change his resolution when he came to himself, left him behind. His mother, a woman of mean condition and a widow, but rich in faith, and worthy to have a son a martyr, observing this false compassion, reproached the executioners; and when she came up to her son, whom she found quite frozen, not able to stir, and scarcely breathing, he looked on her with languishing eyes, and made a little sign with his weak hand to comfort her. She exhorted him to persevere to the end, and, fortified by the Holy Ghost, took him up, and put him with her own hands into the waggon with the rest of the martyrs, not only without shedding a tear, but with a countenance full of joy, saying courageously, "Go, go, son, proceed to the end of this happy journey with thy companions, that thou mayest not be the last of them that shall present themselves before God." Nothing can be more inflamed or more pathetic than the discourse which St. Ephrem puts into her mouth, by which he expresses her contempt of life and all earthly things, and her ardent love and desire of eternal life. This holy father earnestly entreats her to conjure this whole troop of martyrs to join in imploring the divine mercy in favour of his sinful soul. (1) Their bodies were burned, and their ashes thrown into the river; but the Christians secretly carried off, or purchased part of them with money. Some of these precious relics were kept at Cæsarea, and St. Basil says of them: "Like bulwarks they are our protection against the inroads of enemies." (2) He adds, that every one implored their succour, and that they raised up those who had fallen, strengthened the weak, and invigorated the fervour of the saints. SS. Basil and Emmelia, the holy parents of St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Peter of Sebaste, and St. Macrina, procured a great share of these relics. (3) St. Emmelia put some of them in the church she built near Anneses, the village where they resided. The solemnity with which they were received was extraordinary and they were honoured by miracles, as St. Gregory relates.

(1) St. Ephrem, Or. in 40 Mart. t. 2. Op. Gr. and Lat. p. 354. ed. Nov Vatic. an. 1743.

(2) St. Basil, Or. 20. p. 459.

(3) St. Greg. Nyss. Or. 3. de 40 Mart. t. 2. p. 212, 213.

One of these was a miraculous cure wrought on a lame soldier, the truth of which he attests from his own knowledge, both of the fact and the person, who published it every where. He adds: "I buried the bodies of my parents by the relics of these holy martyrs, that in the resurrection they may rise with the encouragers of their faith; for I know they have great power with God, of which I have seen clear proofs and undoubted testimonies." St. Gaudentius, bishop of Brescia, writes in his sermon on these martyrs: "God gave me a share of these venerable relics, and granted me to found this church in their honour." (1) He says, that the two nieces of St. Basil, both abbesses, gave them to him as he passed by Cæsarea, in a journey to Jerusalem; which venerable treasure they had received from their uncle. Portions of their relics were also carried to Constantinople, and there honoured with great veneration, as Sozomen (2) and Procopius (3) have recorded at large, with an account of several visions and miracles which attended the veneration paid to them in that city.

Though we are not all called to the trial of martyrdom, we are all bound daily to fight and to conquer too. By multiplied victories which we gain over our passions and spiritual enemies, by the exercise of meekness, patience, humility, purity, and all other virtues, we shall render our triumph complete, and attain to the crown of bliss. But are we not confounded at our sloth in our spiritual warfare, when we look on the conflicts of the martyrs? "The eloquence of the greatest orators, and the wisdom of the philosophers were struck dumb: the very tyrants and judges stood amazed, and were not able to find words to express their admiration, when they beheld the faith, the cheerfulness and constancy of the holy martyrs in their sufferings. But what excuse shall we allege in the tremendous judgment, who, without meeting with such cruel persecution and torments, are so remiss and slothful in maintaining the spiritual life of our souls, and the charity of God! What shall we do in that terrible day, when the holy martyrs placed near the throne of God, with great confidence shall display their glorious scars, the proofs of their fidelity? What shall we then show? shall we produce our love for God? true faith? a disengagement of our affections from

(1) S. Gaud. Brix. Serm. 17. de 40 Mart. (2) L. 9. c. 1, 2.

(3) L. 1. de ædific. Justinian. c. 7.

earthly things? souls freed from the tyranny of the passions? retirement and peace of mind? meekness? alms deeds and compassion? holy and pure prayer? sincere compunction? watching and tears? Happy shall he be whom these works shall attend. He shall then be the companion of the martyrs and shall appear with the same confidence before Christ and his Angels. We beseech you, O most holy martyrs, who cheerfully suffered torments and death for his love, and are now more familiarly united to him, that you intercede with God for us slothful and wretched sinners, that he bestow on us the grace of Christ by which we may be enlightened and enabled to love him."(1)

ST. DROCTOVÆUS, ABBOT.

KING CHILDEBERT having built at Paris a famous abbey in honour of St. Vincent, this saint, who was a native of the diocese of Autun, had been educated under St. Germanus, abbot of St. Symphorian's at Autun, and was a person eminent for his learning and extraordinary spirit of mortification and prayer, was appointed the second, according to Duplessis (2) according to others, the first Abbot of this house, since called St. Germain-des-Prez, in which he died about the year 580. His body is kept in that abbey, and he is honoured by the church on the 10th of March. His original life being lost, Gislemar, a Benedictin monk of this house, in the ninth age, collected from tradition and scattered memoirs that which we have in Bollandus, and more accurately in Mabillon.

ST. MACKESSOGE, OR KESSOGE, C.

BISHOP IN THE PROVINCES OF LEVIN AND BOIN IN SCOTLAND.

BY his instructions and counsels the pious King Congal II. governed with extraordinary prudence, zeal, and sanctity. This saint was illustrious for miracles, and died in 560. A celebrated church in that country still bears the title of Saint Kessoge-Kirk. The Scots for their cry in battle for some time used his name, but afterwards changed it for that of St. Andrew. They sometimes painted St. Kessoge in a soldier's habit, holding

(1) St. Eprem Homil. in SS. Martyres Op. Gr. and Lat. ed. Vat. an. 1743. t. 2. 341.

(2) Duplessis' *Annales de Paris*, p. 60. 68.