

SS. CRISPIN AND CRISPINIAN, MM.

See Tillemont, t. 4, p. 461. Bosquet, *Hist. Eccl. de France*, l. 5, c. 156. Le Moine, *Hist. Antiq. Soissons*, Paris, 1771, t. 1, p. 154.—

The new *Paris Breviary*, and Baillet from ancient *Martyrologies*; for the acts of these martyrs are of small authority.

A. D. 287.

THE names of these two glorious martyrs are not less famous in France than those of the two former at Rome. They came from Rome to preach the faith in Gaul towards the middle of the third century, together with St. Quintin and others. Fixing their residence at Soissons, in imitation of St. Paul they instructed many in the faith of Christ, which they preached publicly in the day, at seasonable times; and, in imitation of St. Paul, worked with their hands in the night, making shoes, though they are said to have been nobly born, and brothers. The infidels listened to their instructions, and were astonished at the example of their lives, especially of their charity, disinterestedness, heavenly piety, and contempt of glory and all earthly things: and the effect was the conversion of many to the Christian faith. The brothers had continued this employment several years, when the Emperor Maximian Hercules coming into the Belgic Gaul, a complaint was lodged against them. The emperor, perhaps as much to gratify their accusers as to indulge his own superstition and give way to his savage cruelty, gave order that they should be convened before Rictius Varus, the most implacable enemy of the Christian name, whom he had first made governor of that part of Gaul, and had then advanced to the dignity of prefect of the prætorium. The martyrs were victorious over this most inhuman judge, by the patience and constancy with which they bore the most cruel torments, and finished their course by the sword about the year 287.* They are mentioned in the *Martyrologies* of St. Jerom,

* SS. Crispin and Crispinian are the patrons and models of the pious confraternity of brother shoemakers, an establishment begun by Henry Michael Buch, commonly called Good Henry. His parents were poor day-labourers at Erlon, in the duchy of Luxemburg. Henry was distinguished from his infancy for his parts and extraordinary piety and prudence. He was put apprentice very young to a shoemaker. With the duties of his calling he joined constant devotion and the exercise of all virtues. Sundays and holidays he spent chiefly in the churches, was

Bede, Florus, Ado, Usuard, &c. A great church was built at Soissons in their honour in the sixth century, and St. Eligius richly ornamented their sacred shrine.

From the example of the saints it appears how foolish the

a great lover of holy prayer, and studied earnestly to know and condemn himself, to mortify his senses and to deny his own will. He took SS. Crispin and Crispinian for his models, and, at his work, had them before his eyes, considering often how they worked with a view purely to please God, and to have an opportunity to convert infidels, and to relieve the poor. It was to him a subject of grief to see many in the same or the like trades ill instructed, slothful in the practice of virtue, and engaged in dangerous or criminal habits; and, by his zealous and prudent exhortations and endeavours, he induced many such to assist diligently at catechism and pious instructions, to shun ale-houses and dangerous company, to frequent the sacraments, to pray devoutly; especially to make every evening acts of faith, hope, divine love, and contrition, and to love only virtuous company, and whatever promoted piety and religion. In this manner, he laid himself out with great zeal and success, when, the term of his apprenticeship being expired, he worked as journeyman; and God so abundantly diffused in his heart his holy spirit and charity, and gave such authority and weight to his words, by the character of his sanctity, that he seemed to have established him the father of his family, to hear the complaints, reconcile the differences, inquire into the distresses, comfort the sorrows, and even relieve the wants of many. The servant of God went always very meanly clad, yet often gave to the poor some of the clothes off his back; he retrenched everything that was superfluous, and often contented himself with bread and water that he might feed the hungry, and clothe the naked. Thus he had lived at his work several years at Luxemburg and Messen, when providence conducted him to Paris, where he continued the same zealous life among the young men of his low rank and profession.

He was forty-five years old when the Baron of Renty, whose piety has rendered his name famous, having heard him spoken of, was extremely desirous to see him. The simplicity and most edifying and enlightened discourse of the poor shoemaker surprised and charmed the good baron, who discovered in him an extraordinary prudence and penetration in spiritual things, and an invincible courage to undertake and execute great projects for the honour of God. He was informed that Henry reformed many dissolute apprentices and children, and, with great address and piety, reconciled to them their angry masters or parents; that he prescribed to many that were so disposed, excellent rules of a pious life: and that he had an excellent talent at instructing and exhorting poor strangers who had no friends, and seemed destitute of comfort, in the hospital of St. Gervaise, which he visited every day. But what gave him the highest idea of Henry's sanctity, was the eminent spirit of prayer and humility, and the supernatural graces with which he discovered him to be endowed. Thinking him, therefore, a proper instrument for advancing the divine honour, he proposed to him a project of establishing a confraternity to facilitate the heroic exercise of all virtues among persons of his low profession. For this end, he purchased for him the freedom and privilege of a burgess; and made him commence master in his trade that he might take apprentices and journeymen who were willing to follow the rules that were proscribed them, and were drawn up by the curate of St.

pretences of many Christians are, who imagine the care of a family, the business of a farm or a shop, the attention which they are obliged to give to their worldly profession are impediments which excuse them from aiming at perfection. Such,

Paul's, regarding frequent prayer, the use of the sacraments, the constant practice of the divine presence, mutual succours in time of sickness, and affording relief and comfort to the sick and distressed. Seven apprentices and journeymen joined him, and the foundation of his confraternity was laid in 1645, Henry being appointed the first superior. It appeared visibly, by the innocence and sanctity of this company of pious artisans, how much God had chosen to be honoured by it: the spirit of the primitive Christians seemed revived amongst them.

Two years after this, certain pious tailors who were charmed with the heavenly life of these shoemakers, whom they heard often singing devoutly the divine praises at their work, and saw employing, in penance and good works, that time which many throw away in idleness and sin, begged of good Henry a copy of these rules, and, with the assistance of the same curate, formed a like confraternity of their profession, in 1647. Both these confraternities are propagated in several parts of France and Italy, and are settled in Rome. The principal rules are, that all the members rise at five o'clock every morning, meet together to pray before they go to work; that, as often as the clock strikes, the superior recites aloud some suitable prayer, at some hours a *De Profundis*, at others some devotion to honour the passion of our Redeemer, or for the conversion of sinners, &c.: that all hear mass every day at an appointed hour; at their work to say certain prayers, as the beads; and sometimes sing a devout hymn, at other times work mostly in silence; make a meditation before dinner; hear pious reading at table; make every year a retreat for a few days; on Sundays and holydays assist at sermons, and at the whole divine office; visit hospitals and prisons, or poor sick persons in their private houses; make an examination of their consciences, say night prayers together, and retire to their rooms at nine o'clock. It would require a volume to give a true idea of the great virtues and edifying deportment of the pious institutor of this religious establishment. After three years' sickness he died at Paris, of an ulcer in his lungs, on the 9th of June, in 1666, and was buried in the churchyard at St. Gervaise's. (See *Le Vachet, L'Artisan Chrétien, ou la Vie du Bon Henri*; and *Helyot, Hist. des Ord. Rel. t. 8, p. 175.*) An enterprise which the pious Baron of Renty had extremely at heart, was to engage persons in the world, of all professions, especially artisans and the poor, to instruct themselves in, and faithfully to practise, all the means of Christian perfection, of which his own life was a model.

Gaston John Baptist, baron of Renty, son of Charles, baron of Renty, of an ancient noble family of Artois, was born at the castle of Beni, in the diocese of Bayeux in Normandy, in 1611. He was placed very young in the college of Navarre at Paris, and afterwards in the college of the Jesuits at Caën with a clergyman for his preceptor, and a secular governor: at seventeen, he was sent to the academy at Paris, and gained great reputation by his progress in learning, and his address in all his exercises, especially riding and fencing. Piety from the cradle was his favourite inclination, which was much strengthened by his reading the Imitation of Christ. His desire of becoming a Carthusian was overruled by his parents; and, in the twenty-second year of his age, he married

indeed, they make them; but this is altogether owing to their own sloth and malice. How many saints have made these very employments the means of their perfection! St. Paul made tents; Saints Crispin and Crispinian were shoemakers; the

Elizabeth of Balzac, of the family of Entragues, daughter to the Count of Graville, by whom he left two sons and two daughters. His great abilities, modesty, and prudence rendered him conspicuous in the world, especially in the states at Rouen, wherein he assisted as deputy of the nobility of the Bailiwick of Vire, and in the army, in which he served in Lorraine, being captain of a select company of six-score men, of whom sixty were gentlemen of good families. His valour, watchful and tender care of all under his charge, regular and fervent devotion, attention to every duty, excessive charity, humility, penance, and the exercise of all virtues cannot be recounted in this place. He was much esteemed by King Lewis XIII.; but it was his greatest happiness, that in the midst of the world his heart appeared as perfectly disengaged from it, and raised above it as the Pauls, Antonies, and Arseniuses were in their deserts. In the twenty-seventh year of his age, the sermons of a certain Oratorian who preached a mission, about seven leagues from Paris, made so strong an impression upon his soul, that after making a general confession to that pious priest, by his advice, he entered upon a new course of life, resolving to break all his connexions with the court, resign all public business, and lay aside superfluous visits that he might give his whole heart to God in prayer, and to works of duty and charity. He chose for his director F. Condren, general of the Oratorians, a most holy and experienced master in an interior life, as his pious writings and the history of his life show. As the whole secret of a Christian consists in destroying what is vicious in our affections that grace may reign in us, and in making the old man die that Christ alone may live in our hearts, the baron, by the counsels of his director, redoubled his application to subdue his passions, and regulate all the interior and exterior motions of his heart and senses. By vigorously thwarting the inclinations of nature and the senses, he brought them into subjection; and wherever he discovered any symptom of the least irregularity, he strongly counteracted the inclination, by doing the contrary. He made every day two examinations of conscience, at noon and at night; went to confession twice, and to communion three or four times a week: rose at midnight to say matins with an hour's meditation; had regular hours in the day for meditation, mass, and other devotions, and all family duties. His fasts and abstinence were most rigorous and continual; his clothes plain; the interior peace and serenity of his mind demonstrated the submission of his passions to reason and the divine will, and that he very little desired or feared anything temporal, considering God alone, whether in prosperity or adversity. His retrenchment of every superfluity showed his love of poverty. He looked upon himself as the most unworthy and the basest of all creatures; in his letters took the title of sinner, or the most grievous sinner, and lived in a total annihilation of himself before God and all creatures; when he spoke of God, he humbled himself to the very centre of the earth, and he would feelingly say, that so base a creature ought with trembling to adore God in silence, without presuming to pronounce his name. In a sincere love for a hidden and unknown life he shunned and dreaded esteem and honour, insomuch that it would have been a pleasure to him to be banished from all hearts, and forgotten by all men. He earnestly con-

Blessed Virgin was taken up in the care of her poor cottage; Christ himself worked with his reputed father; and those saints who renounced all commerce with the world to devote themselves totally to the contemplation of heavenly things, made mats, tilled the earth, or copied and bound good books. The secret of the art of their sanctification was, that fulfilling the

jured his devout friends to sigh to God for him, that the spirit of his divine Son might be his life, or that he might live in him and for him alone. It was his custom to consecrate frequently to God, in the most solemn manner, his whole being, his body, soul, wife, children, estate, and whatever could concern him, earnestly praying that with the utmost purity, simplicity, and innocency he might do all things purely for God, without the least secret spark of self-love, and without feeling joy or sorrow, or any other sentiment which he did not totally refer to Him. His devotion to the blessed sacrament was such, that he usually spent several hours in the day on his knees before it; and when others wondered he could abide so long together on his knees, he said it was this that gave him vigour and strength, and revived his soul. He often served at mass himself: he rebuilt the church at Beni; and out of devotion to the holy sacrament, he furnished a great number of poor parish-churches with neat silver chalices and ciboriums. It would be too long here to mention his care of his family, and of all his tenants, but especially of his children; frequent attendance upon the sick in hospitals, and in their cottages, and his incredible and perpetual charities not only among his own vassals and in neighbouring places, but also among the distant hospitals, the slaves at Marseilles, the Christian slaves in Barbary, the missions in the Indies, several English and Irish Catholic exiles, &c. After the death of P. Condren, he chose for his director a devout father of the Society of Jesus, and, for some time before his death, communicated usually every day. Prayer being the great channel through which the divine gifts are chiefly communicated to our souls, in imitation of all the saints he made this his ordinary employment, and his whole life might be called a continued prayer. His eminent spirit of prayer was founded in the most profound humility, and constant mortification. The soul must die before she can live by the true life; she must be crucified to herself and the world before she is capable of uniting herself intimately to God, in which consists her perfection. This faithful servant of God was dead to the love of riches and the goods of the world; to its amusements, pleasures, and honours; to the esteem and applause of men, and also to their contempt; to the inordinate affections or inclinations of self-love, so that his heart seemed to be withheld by no ties, but totally possessed by God and his pure love. In these dispositions he was prepared for the company of the heavenly spirits. The latter years of his life he spent partly at Paris, and partly at his country seat or castle at his manor of Citri, in the diocese of Soissons. It was at Paris that he fell ill of his last sickness, in which he suffered great pains without giving the least sign of complaint. Having most devoutly received all the sacraments he calmly expired on the 24th of April, in the year 1649, of his age the thirty-seventh. He was buried at Citri; his body was taken up on the 15th of September, in 1658, by an order of the bishop, to be removed to a more honourable place; and was found as fresh and entire as if he had been but just dead. See his life by F. St. Jure, a Jesuit of singular piety and learning.

maxims of Christ, they studied to subdue their passions and die to themselves; they, with much earnestness and application, obtained of God, and improved daily in their souls, a spirit of devotion and prayer; their temporal business they regarded as a duty which they owed to God, and sanctified it by a pure and perfect intention, as Christ on earth directed everything he did to the glory of his Father. In these very employments, they were careful to improve themselves in humility, meekness, resignation, divine charity, and all other virtues, by the occasions which call them forth at every moment, and in every action. Opportunities of every virtue, and every kind of good work never fail in all circumstances; and the chief means of our sanctification may be practised in every state of life, which are self-denial and assiduous prayer, frequent aspirations, and pious meditation or reflections on spiritual truths, which disengage the affections from earthly things, and deeply imprint in the heart those of piety and religion.

ST. GAUDENTIUS OF BRESCIA, B. C.

HE seems to have been educated under St. Philastrius, bishop of Brescia, whom he styles his father. His reputation ran very high when he travelled to Jerusalem, partly to shun applause and honours, and partly hoping by his absence to be at last forgotten at home. In this, however, he was mistaken. In a monastery at Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, he met with the sisters and nieces of St. Basil, who, as a rich present, bestowed on him certain relics of the forty martyrs and some other saints, knowing that he would honour those sacred pledges as they had honoured them.(1) During his absence St. Philastrius died, and the clergy and people of Brescia, who had been accustomed to receive from him solid instructions, and in his person to see at their head a perfect model of Christian virtue, pitched upon him for their bishop, and fearing obstacles from his humility, bound themselves by oath to receive no other for their pastor. The bishops of the province met, and with St. Ambrose, their metropolitan, confirmed the election. Letters were despatched to St. Gaudentius, who was then in Cappadocia, to press his speedy return; but he only yielded to the threat of

(1) Gaudent. Serm. 17.