

timents of piety and religion. In endeavouring to save the lives of some of his flock, he exposed himself to the swords of the infidels, who, after a thousand insults and indignities, (which he endured with the meekness and fortitude of a true disciple of God crucified for us) cut off his head. Florens his deacon, and Jocond his lector, were massacred by his side. His sister Eutropia, a virtuous virgin, seeing herself spared in order to be reserved for wicked purposes, boldly cried out to the infidels, that it was her unalterable resolution rather to sacrifice her life, than her faith or her integrity and virtue. Upon which they despatched her with their cutlasses. St. Nicasius and St. Eutropia were buried in the church-yard of St. Agricola. Many miracles rendered their tombs illustrious, and this church was converted into a famous abbey, which bears the name of St. Nicasius, and is now a member of the congregation of St. Maur. The archbishop Fulco, in 893, translated the body of St. Nicasius into the cathedral, which the martyr himself had built, and dedicated to God in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. His head is kept in the abbey of St. Vedast at Arras. See St. Gregory of Tours, and Gall. Chr. Nov. t. 9. p. 6. The Acts of St. Nicasius in Surius (14 Dec.) were written before Hincmar, probably in the seventh century, but are of small importance, as Dom. Rivet observes.

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## DECEMBER XV.

### ST. EUSEBIUS, BISHOP OF VERCELLI.

From the fathers and ecclesiastical historians of the fourth century. See Tillemont, Ughelli, t. 4, p. 1044. Ceillier, t. 5, p. 440. Orai, l. 14. Fleury, l. 13, n. 14, 16, and 41; l. 15, n. 30.

A. D. 371.

ST. EUSEBIUS was born of a noble family in the isle of Sardinia, where his father is said to have died in chains for the faith. His mother, whose name was Restituta, being left a widow, carried him and a daughter she had, both in their infancy, to Rome.(1) Eusebius was brought up in the practice of piety, and in the study of sacred learning, and ordained lector

(1) St. Ambr. ep. 63, p. 1038. St. Hier. in Catal. c. 96.

by St. Sylvester. We know not by what accident he was called to Vercelli, a city now in Piedmont. He served that church among the clergy with such applause, that the episcopal chair becoming vacant, he was unanimously chosen by the clergy and people to fill it. He is the first bishop of Vercelli whose name we know. St. Ambrose assures us, that he was the first who in the West united the monastic life with the clerical, living himself and making his clergy in the city live almost in the same manner as the monks in the East did in the deserts. They shut themselves up in one house with their pastor, and exercised themselves night and day in a heavenly warfare, continually occupied in the praises of God, having no other ambition than to appease his anger by fervent and uninterrupted prayers. Their minds were always employed in reading, or at work. "Can any thing be more admirable than this life," cries out St. Ambrose, "where there is nothing to fear, and every thing is worthy of imitation! where the austerity of fasting is compensated by tranquillity and peace of mind, supported by example, sweetened by habit, and charmed by the occupations of virtue! This life is neither troubled with temporal cares, nor distracted with the tumults of the world; nor hindered by idle visits, nor relaxed by the commerce of the world." The holy bishop saw that the best and first means to labour effectually for the edification and sanctification of his people, was to form a clergy under his eyes, on whose innocence, piety, and zeal in the functions of their ministry he could depend. In this design he succeeded so well, that other churches earnestly demanded his disciples for their bishops, and a great number of holy prelates came out of his school, who were burning and shining lamps in the church of God. He was at the same time very careful to instruct his flock, and inspire them with the maxims of the gospel. Many, moved by his exhortations, embraced virginity to serve God in purity of heart, without being divided by the cares or pleasures of the world. In a short time the whole city of Vercelli appeared inflamed with the fire of divine love which Jesus Christ came to bring on earth, and which he ardently desired to see kindled in all hearts. Convicted by the force of the truth which the zealous pastor preached, persuaded by the sweetness and charity of his conduct, and still more powerfully excited

by his example, sinners encouraged themselves to a change of their lives, and all were animated to advance more and more in virtue. But his sanctity would have been imperfect without the trial of persecutions.

The Arians governed all things by violence under the authority of the Arian Emperor Constantius. In 354 Pope Liberius deputed St. Eusebius with Lucifer of Cagliari to beg leave of that emperor, who passed the winter at Arles in Gaul, to assemble a free council.(1) Constantius agreed to a council, which met at Milan in 355, whilst the emperor resided in that city. Eusebius seeing all things would be there carried on by violence through the power of the Arians, though the Catholic prelates were more numerous, refused to go to it till he was pressed by Liberius himself, and by his legates Lucifer of Cagliari, Pancratius, and Hilary,(2) in order to resist the Arians, as St. Peter had done Simon the magician. When he was come to Milan the Arians excluded him the council for the ten first days. When he was admitted, he laid the Nicene Creed on the table, and insisted on all signing that rule of faith before the cause of St. Athanasius should be brought to a hearing; for the chief drift of the heretics was to procure if possible the condemnation of that most formidable champion of the faith. St. Dionysius of Milan offered to subscribe his name to the creed; but Valens bishop of Mursia, the most furious of the Arians, tore the paper out of his hands, and broke his pen. The Arians, to set aside the motion for the previous signing of the Nicene Creed, procured the removal of the synod to the emperor's palace, where the subscription to the Catholic faith was superseded, and the condemnation of St. Athanasius immediately brought upon the carpet. Many were gained by the artifices of the Arians, or intimidated by the threats of the emperor, and signed the sentence which was pronounced against him. St. Dionysius of Milan had once given his subscription, only exacting a promise that the Arians would receive the Nicene faith. But St. Eusebius of Vercelli discovered the snare to him, and in order to withdraw his friend's subscription, objected that he could not sign the sentence after

(1) Liber. ep. 5, 6.

(2) Sulpit. Sever. S. Athan. S. Hilary.

Dionysius, who was younger, and his son.(1) Upon which the Arians consented to blot out the name of Dionysius ; and both afterwards peremptorily refused to subscribe a decree which was injurious to an innocent and holy prelate. The emperor sent for St. Eusebius, St. Dionysius, and Lucifer of Cagliari, and pressed them to condemn Athanasius. They insisted upon his innocence, and that he could not be condemned without being heard. "I am his accuser," said Constantius: "believe upon my word the charge brought against him." The bishops answered: "This is not a secular affair, that requires your opinion as emperor." Constantius took them up in anger, saying: "My will ought to pass for a rule. The bishops of Syria are satisfied that it should be so. Obey, or you shall be banished." The bishops represented to him, that he must one day give an account to God of his administration. The prince, in the transport of his rage, thought once of putting them to death ; but was content to banish them. The officers entered the sanctuary, tore the holy prelates from the altar, and conducted them to different places. Dionysius was sent into Cappadocia, where he died. He is commemorated in the Roman Martyrology on the 25th of May. Lucifer was banished to Germanicia in Syria, of which city Eudoxus, a celebrated Arian, was bishop ; and our saint to Scythopolis, in Palestine, there to be treated at the discretion of the Arian bishop Patrophilus. Their chains did not hinder them from serving the church, and they confounded the heretics wherever they went. Pope Liberius wrote to them a letter of congratulation, exhorting them to courage and constancy.

St. Eusebius was lodged at first with the good Count Joseph, and was comforted by the visits of St. Epiphanius and other holy men, and by the arrival of the deputies of his church of Vercelli, with presents for his subsistence. He wept for joy to hear of the zeal and constancy of his whole flock in the Catholic faith under the priests whom he had appointed to govern his church in his absence. A great share of the presents he gave to his fellow-confessors, and to the poor. But his patience was to be exercised by greater trials. Count Joseph

(1) See this account in the anonymous author of the eleventh sermon attributed to St. Ambrose, and in Tillemont, t. 7.

died, and the Arians, with the emperor's officers, insulted the saint, dragged him on the ground through the streets, sometimes carried him backwards half naked, and at last shut him up in a little chamber, plying him for four days with all manner of violences, to engage him to conform. They forbade his deacons and other fellow-confessors to be admitted to see him. The saint had abandoned his body to suffer all manner of evil treatments from their hands, without opening his mouth all that while; but seeing himself debarred of his only comfort and support, he sent a letter to the Arian bishop Patrophilus, with the following direction: "Eusebius, the servant of God, with the other servants of God who suffer with me for the faith, to Patrophilus, the jailer, and to his officers." After a short relation of what he had suffered, he desired that his deacons might be allowed to come to him. After he remained in that confinement four days without eating, the Arians sent him back in his lodgings. Twenty-five days afterwards they came again, armed with clubs, broke down a wall in the house, and dragged him again into a little dungeon, with a priest named Tegrinus. They rifled his lodgings, plundered all his provisions, and cast many priests, monks, and even nuns into the public prisons. St. Eusebius found means to write a letter out of his dungeon to his flock, extant in Baronius, in which he mentions these particulars. His sufferings here were aggravated every day, till the place of his exile was changed. From Scythopolis he was sent into Cappadocia, and, some time afterwards, into Upper Thebais in Egypt. We have a letter which he wrote from this third place of his banishment, to Gregory bishop of Elvire, to encourage him vigorously to oppose Osius (who had unhappily fallen) and all who had forsaken the faith of the church, without fearing the power of kings. He expressed a desire to end his life in sufferings, that he might be glorified in the kingdom of God. This short letter discovers the zeal of a holy pastor, joined with the courage of a martyr. Constantius being dead, towards the end of the year 361, Julian gave leave to all the banished prelates to return to their sees. St. Eusebius left Thebais, and came to Alexandria, to concert measures with St. Athanasius for applying proper remedies to the evils of the church. He was present, and sub-

scribed immediately after St. Athanasius, in the council held there in 362, by which it was resolved to allow the penitent prelates, who had been deceived by the Arians, especially at Rimini, to preserve their dignity. From Alexandria our saint went to Antioch, to endeavour to extinguish the great schism there; but found it widened by Lucifer of Cagliari, who had blown up the coals afresh, and ordained Paulinus bishop. He would not communicate with Paulinus, but made haste out of Antioch. Lucifer resented this behaviour, and broke off communion with him, and with all who with the late council of Alexandria received the Arian bishops in their dignity upon their return to the true faith. This was the origin of the schism of Lucifer, who, by pride, lost the fruit of his former zeal and sufferings.

St. Eusebius travelled over the East, and through Illyricum, confirming in the faith those who were wavering, and bringing back many that were gone astray. Italy, at his return, changed its mourning garments, according to the expression of St. Jerom. There St. Hilary of Poitiers and St. Eusebius met, and were employed in opposing the Arians, particularly Auxentius of Milan: but that crafty heretic had gained the favour of Valentinian, and maintained himself under his protection against the united zealous efforts of St. Hilary and St. Eusebius. St. Jerom, in his chronicle places the death of the latter in 371. An ancient author says it happened on the 1st of August. He is styled a martyr in two old panegyrics in his praise, printed in the appendix of the works of St. Ambrose. There only remain of his works the three epistles above quoted. In the cathedral of Vercelli is shown an old MS. copy of the gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark, said to be written by St. Eusebius; it was almost worn out with age near eight hundred years ago, when King Berengarius caused it to be covered with plates of silver. The body of St. Eusebius is laid in a shrine raised above a side altar in the cathedral at Vercelli. The Roman Missal and Breviary give his office on the 15th of December, which is probably the day on which his relics were removed; for his name occurs in ancient calendars on the 1st of August.

The holy fathers, who by their zeal and learning maintained the true faith, shunned the dangerous rocks of error, because in

their studies they followed the rules laid down by divine revelation, and made sincere humility the foundation of all their literary pursuits. Conscious that they were liable to mistakes, they entertained a modest diffidence in themselves and their own judgment, and said with St. Austin: "I may err, but a heretic I will never be." This humility and caution is a sure guard against any fatal errors in religion, or dangerous miscarriages in civil conduct, with regard to literary attempts, into which an overbearing pride chiefly betrays men. How many by it become pedants, falling into an ostentatious show of trifling or pretended learning! How many are perpetually wrangling and disputing, eager not for the point in debate, but for the victory, and desirous to display their imaginary parts! How many tease all company by their impertinence, talking always of mythology, metaphysics, or the jargon of the schools,\* or stun others with the loudness of their voice, or an overbearing tone of authority! Many, in studying, pursue their speculations so far as to lose sight of common sense, and by too intense an application to things beyond their sphere, upset and unhinge their understanding. Many mistake the wildest fancies of their brain for reason. Hence Cicero justly remarks, that nothing can be invented ever so absurd or monstrous, which has not been said by some of the philosophers. How many heresies have been set up by scholars among Christians! The root of these abuses is, a secret vanity, self-sufficiency, or complacency in an opinion of their own knowledge or penetration, which scholars easily entertain. So true it is, as the apostle tells us, that *science puffs up*; not of itself, but through the propensity of the human heart to pride. It is therefore necessary that every student learn, in the first place, never to trust in his own abilities, and make modesty and humility, by which men know themselves, the foundation of his learning. The most ignorant among scholars are usually the most apt to overrate their knowledge and abilities.

The Irish commemorate on this day ST. FLORENCE or FLANN, abbot of Bensor. Colgan MSS.

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\* Dieu me garde d'être savant  
 D'une science si profonde :  
 Les plus doctes le plus souvent  
 Sont le plus sottes gens du monde.—*Chev. de Caillly.*