

After a prodigious effusion of Christian blood almost all the world over during the space of three hundred years, the persecuting kingdoms at length laid down their arms, and submitted to the faith and worship of a God crucified for us. This ought to be to us a subject of thanksgiving. But do our lives express this faith? Does it triumph in our hearts? It is one of its first precepts that in all our actions we make God our beginning and end, and have only his divine honour and his holy law in view. All our various employments, all our thoughts and designs must be referred to, and terminate in this, as all the lines drawn from the circumference of a circle meet in the centre. We ought therefore so to live that the days, hours, and moments of the year may form a crown made up of good works, which we may offer to God. Our forgetfulness of him who is our last end, in almost all that we do, calls for a sacrifice of compunction in the close of the year: but this cannot be perfect or acceptable to God, unless we sincerely devote our whole hearts and lives to his holy love for the time to come. Let us therefore examine into the sources of former omissions, failures, and transgressions, and take effectual measures for our amendment, and for the perfect regulation of all our affections and actions for the future, or that part of our life which may remain.

ST. COLUMBA, V. M.

THE new Paris Breviary fixes her death either in 258 or in 273. The latter date reduces it to the journey which Aurelian took into Gaul in that year, when he gained a great victory at Chalons. She suffered at Sens. Her relics were kept in the Benedictin abbey till they were dispersed by the Huguenots, together with those of many other saints kept there, as Baillet observes. St. Owen, in his life of St. Eligius, mentions a chapel which bore her name at Paris.

ST. MELANIA THE YOUNGER.

MELANIA the Elder was of a most noble Spanish family, though descended of a Roman pedigree, and a relation of St. Paulinus of Nola, second to no one in Aquitain and Spain in riches or

nobility. Being married young, she was left a widow at twenty-three years of age. Upon the death of her husband she said to God: "Now, O Lord, I shall be at liberty to devote myself without distraction to thy service." Having put her son Publicola into the hands of good tutors, she embarked with Rufinus for Egypt in 371: and after spending six months in visiting the monks of those parts, went into Palestine, but so much disguised, that the governor of Jerusalem cast her into gaol for visiting certain prisoners, till she made herself known to him, and then he treated her with the greatest respect. After some time she built a monastery at Jerusalem, wore a coarse habit, and had no other bed than a rough cloth spread on the floor, without any other cover than a sackcloth. Thus she lived in Palestine twenty-seven years, making prayer and the meditation of the holy scriptures her principal employment. Her son Publicola grew up, and becoming most accomplished in the necessary qualifications of mind and body, was married to Albina, by whom he had two children, a son and a daughter, this latter being our saint. She was married at thirteen years of age to Pinian, the son of Severus, who had been prefect of Rome. Her children both died young, and by her moving discourses and entreaties she gained his consent that they should bind themselves by mutual vows to serve God in perpetual chastity. The elder Melania, at this news, left the East, and returned to Rome, after having been thirty-seven years absent. She was met at Naples by a train of the most illustrious personages of the nobility of Rome, who attended her from thence glittering in rich attire, and sumptuous equipages. The humble Melania travelled at their head, meanly mounted on horseback, and clothed with coarse and threadbare garments. During her stay in Rome it was her first care to caution Pinian and her granddaughter against the heresies of that age. She staid in the West four years, during which interval she took a journey into Africa. There she received news of the death of her son Publicola. At her return to Rome she advised Pinian and our saint to give what they possessed to the poor, and to choose some remote retirement. This council they readily embraced, and were imitated by Albina. Avita, a niece of Melania, after

converting her husband from the errors of idolatry, induced him to join her in a vow of perpetual continency. Their son Asterius, and their daughter Eunomia, followed the same example. All these fervent and illustrious persons went together to pay a visit to St. Paulinus at Nola. So many wonderful conversions astonished not only Rome, but all Christendom. The elder Melania had no sooner completed this great work, but she hastened back to her dear solitude. The tumult of Rome made that great city seem to her a place of exile, and a true prison; nor was she able to bear the noise of the world, and the distraction of visits. Rufinus accompanied her as far as Sicily, where he died. Melania arrived at Jerusalem, distributed the residue of her money among the poor, and shut herself up in a monastery. But exchanged this mortal life for a better, forty days after, in the year 410, being about sixty-eight years old. Melania the Elder seemed some time too warmly engaged with Rufinus in the defence of Origen. The commendations which St. Austin, St. Paulinus, and others bestow on her, bear evidence to her orthodoxy and her edifying virtue, though her name has never been placed among the saints, unless she be meant on the 8th of June in the manuscript calendar mentioned by Chiffletius, as Papebroke and Joseph Assemani⁽¹⁾ take notice.

Albina, Melania the Younger, and Pinian first made over their estates in Spain and Gaul, reserving those which they possessed in Italy, Sicily, and Africa. They made free eight thousand of their slaves, and those who would not accept of their freedom, they gave to the brother of Melania. Their most precious furniture they bestowed on churches and altars. Their first retreat was in retired country places in Campania and Sicily, and their time they spent in prayer, reading, and visiting the poor and the sick, in order to comfort and relieve them. For this end they also sold their estates in Italy, and passed into Africa, where they made some stay, first at Carthage, and afterwards at Tagasté, under the direction of St. Alypius, who was at that time bishop of this city. In a journey they made to Hippo, to see St. Austin, the people there

(1) See Jos. Assem. in Calend. p. 522.

seized Pinian, demanding that St. Austin would ordain him priest; but he escaped out of their hands, by promising that if he ever took holy orders, it should be to serve their church. The poverty and austerity in which they lived seven years at Tagasté appeared extreme. Melania by degrees arrived at such a habit of long fasting, as often to eat only once a week, and to take nothing but bread and water, except that on solemn occasions to her bread she added a little oil. Their occupation was to read and copy good books; Pinian also tilled his garden. In 417 they left Africa and went to Jerusalem, where they continued the same manner of life. St. Melania buried her mother Albina in 433, and her husband Pinian two years after. She survived him four years, shutting herself up in a monastery of nuns, which she built and governed. Her cell was her paradise; yet she left it to go to Constantinople, to convert her uncle Volusian, who was an idolater, and she had the comfort to see him baptized, and die full of hope and holy joy. After she had closed his eyes, she made haste back to Jerusalem. She went to Bethlehem to pass Christmas-day at the holy crib, and came back the day following; and found herself seized with her last sickness, which she discovered to those about her. A great number of holy monks and others visited her, whom she exhorted, and when she saw them ween tenderly comforted. She departed to our Lord in the year 439, the fifty-seventh of her age, on a Sunday, which was the 31st of December, on which day her name stands in the Roman Martyrology. See Palladius in Lausiac, and several letters of St. Paulinus, St. Jerom, St. Austin, &c. Her Greek Acts, extant in Metaphrastes, are translated in Lipomannus, t. 5. Other Greek acts of the same age are mentioned and commended by Allatius. See Fabricius, Bibl. Gr. t. 6, p. 548, and Fontanini, Hist. Eccl. Aquil. l. 4.

Men often say, we are not obliged to do so much for salvation; but the example of the saints ought to convince us, that we are bound at least by extraordinary watchfulness and fervour to surpass the multitude, and not go with the world. In the general torrent of example every one flatters himself, and relies upon the crowd which goes the same way. Men follow one another to run upon destruction: they are seduced, and

they seduce.' We perhaps rely sometimes on the example of those who follow ours. Does not Christ assure us that the way to life is narrow, and trodden by few? If we are content to follow the crowd, we condemn ourselves by taking the broad way. The saints by fearing to fall into it, seemed to set no bounds to their fervour.