

MAY XXXI.

ST. PETRONILLA, V.

AMONG the disciples of the apostles in the primitive age of saints, this holy virgin shone as a bright star in the Church. She lived when Christians were more solicitous to live well than to write much: they knew how to die for Christ; but did not compile long books or disputations,¹ in which vanity has often a greater share than charity. Hence no particular account of her actions hath been transmitted down to us. But how eminent her sanctity was we may judge from the lustre by which it was distinguished among apostles, prophets, and martyrs. Her name is the feminine and diminutive of Peter, and she is said to have been a daughter of the apostle St. Peter, which tradition is confirmed by certain writings quoted by the Manichees in the time of St. Austin,² which affirm that St. Peter had a daughter whom he cured of a palsy. That St. Peter was married before his vocation to the apostleship we learn from the gospel; though St. Jerom and other ancient fathers testify that he lived in continency after his call. St. Clement of Alexandria assures us,³ that his wife attained to the glory of martyrdom; at which that apostle himself encouraged her, bidding her to remember our Lord. But it seems not certain whether St. Petronilla was more than the spiritual daughter of that apostle. She flourished at Rome, and was buried on the way to Ardea, where anciently a cemetery and a church bore her name; so famous that in it a station or place for the assembly of the city in public prayer, was established by Gregory

¹ Sciebant mori, non sciebant disputare. *St. Cypr.*

² St. Aug. 1. *Contra Adimant.* c. 7.

³ Strom. 1. 7. p. 736.

III. She is commemorated in the true Martyrology of Bede, in those which bear the name of St. Jerom, &c.

The saints, whether in sickness or in health, in public or in private life, devoted all their thoughts and actions to God, and thus sanctified all their employments. The great end for which they lived was always present to their minds, and they thought every moment lost in which they did not make some advances towards eternal bliss. How will their example condemn at the last day the trifling fooleries, and the greatest part of the conversation and employments of the world, which aim at nothing but present amusements, as if it were the business of a rational creature to divert his mind from thought and reflection, and forget the only affair,—the business of eternity.

SAINTS CANTIUS AND CANTIANUS,
BROTHERS, AND CANTIANILLA THEIR
SISTER, MM.

IF riches are loaded with the curses of the gospel, because to many they prove dangerous, and afford the strongest incentives to the passions, the greater is their crown who make them the means of their sanctification. This circumstance enhances the glory of these holy martyrs. They were of the most illustrious family of the Anicii in Rome, and near relations to the emperor Carinus, who was himself a favourer of the Christians in Gaul. They were brought up together in their own palace in Rome, under the care of a pious Christian preceptor named Protus, who instructed them in the faith, and in the most perfect maxims of our divine religion. When the persecution of Dioclesian began to fill Rome with terror, they sold their possessions in that city, and retired to Aquileia, where they had a good estate. The bloody edicts had also reached that country and