

those he left, and not to be let downe vntill either through the intolerableness of the payne, or by the extremitie of cold, they being neare the point of death, should be let downe: and so were they haled vpon the ground. And further they were commaunded that they should shew not so much as one sparke of mercy or compassion vpon vs, but so extremely and furiously did deale with vs, as though our soules and bodies should haue died together. And therefore yet another torment our aduerfaries deuised to augmet our former plagues. After that they had most lamentably beaten them, they deuised moreouer a new kinde of racke, wherein they lying vpright, were stretched by both the feete about the fourth stop or hole with sharpe shels or shares strowed vnder them, after a strange kind of engine to vs here vnknown. Other some were cast downe vpon the pavement where they were oppressed so thicke, and so grieuouly with tormentes, that it is not almost to be thought what afflictions they suffred.

Thus they lying in paines and tormentes, some died therewith, not a little shaming and confounding their enemies by their singular patience. Some halfe dead and halfe aliue, were thrust into prison, where shortly after by paynes and woundes of their bodies they ended their bitter life. Some again beyng cured of their woundes by their indurance in prison, were more confirmed, who beyng put to the choise whether they would come to their curfed sacrifice, and enioy their wicked libertie, or els sustaine the sentence of death, did willingly and without delay abide the extremitie, remembering with themselves what is written in the Scriptures: He that sacrificeth (sayth he) to straunge Gods, shall be extermiate, &c. Item, thou shalt not haue any strange Gods beside me, &c. Thus much wrote Phileas to the Congregation where he was Bishop, before he receyued the sentence of death, beyng yet in bandes; and in the same exhorteth his brethren constantly to persist after his death, in the truth of Christ professed. Euseb. Lib 8. cap. 10.

Sabellicus in his viij. Ennead. and viij. booke, sayth that that christened man, which tore and pulled down the wicked Edict of the Emperour in Nicomedia, beyng stript and beaten y the bones appeared, and after washed in salt and vinegar, was then slaine with this cruell kind of torment. But Platina writeth that Dorotheus and Gorgonius exhorted him to dye so constantly.

But as all their tormentes were for their horriblenesse, meruailous and notable, and therewithall so iudiciously, deuised, & no lesse greuous and sharpe: so notwithstanding therewith were these Martyrs neither dismayd, nor overcome, but rather thereby confirmed and strengthened, so merily and ioyfully sustained they what so euer was put vnto them. Eusebius sayth that he himselfe beheld and sawe in so much that the very swordes of the hangmen and persecutors beyng blunt with the great and often slaughter, they themselves for wearines sake downe to rest them, and other were sayne to take their places. And yet all this notwithstanding the murdered christians, shewed their meruailous readines, willingness, and diuine fortitude, which they were indued with; with stout courage, ioy, and smiling, receiving the sentence of death pronounced vpon the, and long euen vnto the last gaspe, Hymnes and Psalmes to God. So did also the Martyrs of Alexandria, as witnesseth Phileas aboue mentioned. The holy martyrs (sayth he) keeping Christ in their myndes, beyng led with the loue of better rewards, sustained not onely at one tyme, whatsoeuer labour and deuised punishments they had to lay vpon them: but now also the second tyme haue done the same, and haue hozne all the maneres of the cruell souldiours, not onely in wordes, wherewith they threated them, but also whatsoeuer in deepe and worke they could deuise to their destruction, and that with most manly stomaches, excluding all feare, with the perfection of their inspeakeable loue towards Christ, whose great strength and fortitude cannot by wordes bee exprest. And Sulpitius sayth in the second booke of his sacred history, that then the Christians with more greedie desire preased and sought for Martyrdome, than now they desire bishoprikes.

Although some there were also, as I haue sayd, that with feare and threatnings, and by their owne induritie, were overcome and went backe. Eusebius, Lib. 8. cap. 3. Amongst whom Socrates nameth Miletius, Lib. 1. cap. 6. and Athanasius in his second Apologie, nameth the bishop of Licia a Citie in litle Egypt, whom Peter the Bishop of Alexandria, excommunicated, for that in this persecution he sacrificed to the Gentiles Gods. Of the fall of Marcellinus the Bishop of Rome, I will speake afterwarde. For he beyng perswaded by others, and specially of the Emperour Dioclesian himselfe, did sacrifice, wherupon he was excommunicated; but afterwarde he reperting the same, was agayne receaued into the congregation, and made Martyr, as Platina and the compiler of the booke of the general con-

cells, affirme. The number of the Martyrs increased daily, sometyms tenne, sometyms twenty were slaine at once, some whyles 30. and oftentymes 60. and otherwhyles a C. in one day. men, women, and children by diuers kindes of death. Eusebius, Lib 8. cap. 9. also Damascus, Beda, Orosius, Honorius and others do witness, that there were slaine in this persecution by the names of Martyrs, within the space of 30. days, 17. thousand persons, beside an other great number and multitude that were condemned to the mettall mines and quarries with like crueltie.

At Alexandria with Peter the Bishop, of whom I haue made mention before, were slayne with axes 300. & about, as Sabellicus declareth. Gereon was beheaded at Colonia Agrippina, with 300. of his fellowes, as saith Henricus de Erfordia. Mauritius the Captaine of Christian religion, with his fellowes 6666. Victor in the citie of Troy now called Xanthus, with his fellowes 360. were slayne, as sayth Otto Phrisigenfis, Lib. 2. cap. 45. Reginus reciteth the names of many other Martyrs, to the number of 120.

And for as much as mention here hath bene made of Mauritius and Victor, the particular description of the same history I thought here to insert, taken out of Ado & other story writers, as insueth.

Mauritius came out of Syria into France and Italy, beyng Captaine of the bande of the Theban souldiours, to the number of 6660. beyng sent for of Maximianus, to goe agaynst the rebellious Bangandes, but rather as it should seeme by the treason of the trait, which thought he might better in these quarters vse his tyranny vpon the Christians, then in the East part. These Thebans with Mauritius the Captaine, after that they had entred into Rome, who were there of Marcellus the blessed bishop, confirmed in the sayth, promising by othe that they would rather be slayne of their enemies, then forsake that faith which they had receaued, who followed the Emperours hostes through the Alpes euen into France. At that tyme the Cæsarians were incamped not farre from the towne called Ottodor, where Maximianus offered sacrifice to his deuils, and called all the souldiours both of the East and west to the same, straightly charging them by the aultars of his Gods, that they would fight agaynst those rebels the Bangandes, and persecute the christian enemies of the Emperours Gods: which his commaundement was shewed to the Thebanes hoste, which were also incamped about the riner of Rome, and in a place that was named Agawne, but to Ottodor they would in no wise come, for that euerly man did certainly appointe and perswade with themselves rather in that place to dye, then either to sacrifice to the gods, or beate armour agaynst the Christians. Which thing in deepe very stoutly and valiantly they affirmed, vpon their othe before taken to Maximianus when he sent for them. Wherewith the tyrant beyng wrathfull and all moued, commaunded every tenth man of that whole band to be put to the sword, whereto strydingly and with great reioysing they committed their neckes. To which notable thing and great force of sayth, Mauritius himselfe was a great encourager, who by & by to a most graue Oracion exhorted & animated his souldiours both to fortitude & constancie. Which beyng again called of the Emperour, answered in this wise sayng: We are O Emperour your souldiours, but yet also to speake freely, the seruants of god. We owe to thee seruice of war, to him innocencie: of thee we receaue for our trauell, wages: of hym the beginning of lyfe. But in this we may in no wayes obey thee O Emperour, to deny God our author and Lord, and not onely ours, but your Lord likewise, will ye, nillye. If we be not so extremely enforced that we offend him, doubtles as we haue hitherto before, we will yet obey you, but otherwise we will rather obey hym then you. We offer here our handes agaynst any other enemies: but to desile our handes with the blood of innocents, that we may not doe. These right hands of ours haue skill to fight agaynst the wicked and true enemies: but to spoyle and murder the godly and Citizens, they haue no skill at all. We haue in remembrance how we tooke armour in hand for the defence of the Citizens, and not agaynst them. We fought alwayes for iustice sake, pietie, and for the health of innocents. These haue bene alwayes the rewardes of our perils and trauell. We haue fought in the quarrell of fayth, whiche in no wise we can keepe to you, if we doe not shewe the fame to our God. We first sware vpon the Sacramentes of our God, then afterward to the king: and doe you thinke the second will aduaile vs if we breake the first: By vs you would plague the Christians, to doe which feate we are onely commaunded by you. We are here ready to confesse God the author of all things, and beleue in hys sonne Iesus Christ our Lord. We see before our eyes our fellowes and partakers of our labours and trauales, to be put to the sword, and we sprinkled with their blood, of which our most blessed companions and brethre, their end and death we haue not bewayled nor mourned, but rather haue bene glad, and haue re-

Every tenth man in the legion slayne.

The oracion of the souldiours to the Emperour.

Strange kindes of tormentes.

Euseb. Lib. 3. cap. 10. Ex Sabellico. Lib. 7. cap. 9.

An holy marty of Nicomedia tormented.

Eusebius a beholder and a witness of their suffering. The swordes blunt, and the hangmen wearyed with slaughter.

The meruailous constancie of the martyrs of God in persecution and at the tyme of death.

Martyrdome more desired in the olde tyme, than bishopricke be now. Christians that denyed in this persecution.

Miletius reuolte from the fayth, and is excommunicated. Marcellinus the bishop reuolte and someth agayne.

to the fayth and is martyred. A hundred slaynes in one day.

Euseb. lib. 8. cap. 9.

Seuenteene thousand Martyrs in one moneth.

Three hundred slayne at one tyme in Alexandria.

Gereon Martyr.

Mauritius with 6666 Martyrs.

Victor with 360. martirs slayne.

The history of Mauritius captaine of the Theban souldiours.