

them, than they despised the torments they were threatened with. The governor, highly offended at their courage, and that liberty of speech with which they accosted him, devised an extraordinary kind of death, which being slow and severe, he hoped would shake their constancy. The cold in Armenia is very sharp, especially in March, and towards the end of winter, when the wind is north, as it then was; it being also at that time a severe frost. Under the walls of the town stood a pond, which was frozen so hard that it would bear walking upon with safety. The judge ordered the saints to be exposed quite naked on the ice.\* And in order to tempt them the more powerfully to renounce their faith, a warm-bath was prepared at a small distance from the frozen pond, for any of the company to go to, who were disposed to purchase their temporal ease and safety on that condition. The martyrs on hearing their sentence, ran joyfully to the place, and without waiting to be stripped, undressed themselves, encouraging one another in the same manner as is usual among soldiers in military expeditions, attended with hardships and dangers, saying, that one bad night would purchase them a happy eter-

nity.† They also made this their joint prayer, "Lord, we are forty who are engaged in this combat; grant that we may be forty crowned, and that not one be wanting to this sacred number." The guards in the mean time ceased not to persuade them to sacrifice, that by so doing they might be allowed to pass to the warm bath. But though it is not easy to form a just idea of the bitter pain they must have undergone, of the whole number only one had the misfortune to be overcome, who losing courage went off from the pond, to seek the relief in readiness for such as were disposed to renounce their faith; but as the devil usually deceives his adorers, the apostate no sooner entered the warm water but he expired. This misfortune afflicted the martyrs; but they were quickly comforted by seeing his place and their number miraculously filled up. A sentinel was warming himself near the bath, having been posted there to observe if any of the martyrs were inclined to submit. While he was attending he had a vision of blessed spirits descending from heaven on the martyrs, and distributing, as from their king, rich presents, and precious garments, Saint Ephrem adds crowns, to all these generous soldiers, one only excepted, their saint-hearted companion already mentioned. The guard being struck with

\*The ages and the greater part of the writers of their lives suppose, they were to stand in the very water, but this is a circumstance which Tillamont, Baillet, Ruinart, Ceillier, and others correct from Saint Basil, and Saint Gregory of Nyssa.

† Saint Gregory of Nyssa says that they endured three days and three nights, this lingering death, which carried off their limbs one after another.