

prian calls virgins the "blossom of ecclesiastical seed, the glory and ornament of spiritual grace, the nobler part of the flock of Christ." (1) "Who," says the great St. Ambrose, the panegyrist of St. Agnes, "can esteem any beauty greater than the splendor of virginity, which is loved by the king, approved by the judge, dedicated to the Lord, consecrated to God." (2) Such was the beauty of Agnes, for she is counted among those who "follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth," and "sing a new canticle before the throne," which no one else can sing (3).

St. Agnes had made a solemn vow of virginity, the most perfect and the most heroic of all the sacrifices that have purity for their object. She had thus consecrated her soul and body to Jesus Christ, whom in the whole course of her trial she calls her Spouse, to the wonder of the judge and the anger and the jealousy of her pagan lover, who could not understand her. Her answer to his entreaties was that she was pledged for life to Him. "whose ministers are angels," to One "whose power is greater, whose aspect is more charming, whose love

(1) Lib. de virginitate.

(2) Lib. de virginibus.

(3) Apocalypse, xiv, 4