

through the streets of Rome, that there is no other God of heaven or of earth but the God of the Christians.

On witnessing so many marvels, the Prefect would gladly have saved the holy maiden's life, but as the people, urged on by the priests of the idols, loudly demanded her death, he dared not face the universal rage, and basely retired, leaving the case in the hands of his officer, who condemned the heroic child to be burned alive.

And thereupon, an immense fire was lighted into which Agnes was thrown. But the flames, separating, rose up like a veil around the sacred virgin, leaving her in the center without touching her, while they turned with fury on the idolators, many of whom were reduced to ashes.

In the meantime, Agnes, her arms extended, her eyes raised towards heaven, prayed in a loud voice, saying :

"O my Father, Allpowerful, Adorable, Omnipotent God, I invoke Thee. Through the merits of Thy divine Son, I have escaped the fury of a sacrilegious tyrant, and behold now Thou dost temper the fierce heat of this fire and dost render its flames mild, its heat soothing. Permit then, that, on the wings of this same fire, my soul may soar away to Thee."

Her face then brightened, her arms fell, and she was rapt in ecstasy. For her heavenly Spouse, He who had already ravished her heart, had now appeared to her, for the last time on earth. He was beautiful with that beauty which transfixes the heavens in mute admiration ; and with divine rapture she cried ; "What I believed, I now see ; what I hoped for, I now possess ; what I loved, I now embrace : may my heart and my tongue, praise and glorify Thee, O my God !"

And, like a heavenly dew, her prayer quenched the fire, leaving not even a trace or a spark to be seen.

Many of the spectators were moved with deep emotion. The judge, astounded, ordered one of the executioners to plunge his sword into her throat ; but, sword in hand, the executioner trembled and dared not strike ! Agnes, seeing his hesitation, smiling sweetly seemed to say : "Do not be afraid. . . Strike ! . . I will not turn away from you, you are a pleasing lover to me, because you are about to des-