

little girl is dragged through the streets of Rome into the court of the Roman prefect. What is her offense? Can it be that this young and beautiful girl has committed some terrible crime? No; the sole charge against her is that she is a Christian, and to be a Christian was, in the eyes of the Roman law, to be a foe of the gods and a traitor to the state. It is the same old charge, my brethren, against the Church. The Roman emperors, like many more recent rulers, charged the victims with being disloyal because they thwarted their tyranny. They persecuted her as an enemy of the empire, when she was the very salt that would have saved it from decay. The modern state persecutes her on the same false supposition. Her only offense is, that she will not, like all human creeds, "crook the pregnant hinges of the knee, that thrift may follow fawning;" but stands erect, defending true liberty of conscience, holding aloft the banner of spiritual independence which she will never lower either for hereditary despot or for the fickle mob crowned majority of a republic.

There sits the judge Symphronius, who is also the father of Procopius, the wooer of Agnes. Near by are ranged the statues of the gods and of the emperor, to which all but