

To the Mother of the Babe of Bethlehem.

BY R. D. WILLIAMS.

Rose dawn, the orient flushing,
Dews o'er purple flowers that flow
Crimson wings of martyrs, blushing
Like the blood ye shed below;
Yet in light celestial glowing—
Gems that pave Jehovah's hall,
Etern streams in music flowing
Lulls o'er opal roses that fall.
Lamb of God entering o'er us,
Robed in more than regal sheen,
Sing aloud in pealing chorus,
"Hail, Holy Queen!"

While she clasps the pretty Lisper
To her holy Virgin breast,
White-winged cherubs round her whisper,
Angel armies o'er her rest.
'Tis the lip that now on Mary
Sweetly sheds seraphic smiles,
'Mid the tides of ocean vary,
Lights on ah! the starry isles.
Ye who from our children's tombs
Gaze upon that heavenly scene,
Sing to harps, with quivering pinions,
"Hail, Holy Queen!"

All the spheres behold with wonder
Sleeping on thy bosom lie
Him whom thou in cloud and thunder
Hurl'dst them flaming through the sky.
Hail! sacred stars of heaven,
Rise thou o'er the stormy brine,
Quell the passions which commotion
Cheer and save us, Mother mine!
Round us while the tempest rages,
Be thy guiding star,
And our song through endless ages,
"Hail, Holy Queen!"

FABIOLA:

THE CHURCH OF THE CATACOMBS

BY HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL WISEMAN.

"The panther?" shouted out a voice. "The panther?"
I responded in a hoarse, "The panther?"
I heard a hundred thousand, in a chorus like
the roaring of an avalanche.
(The amphitheatre
could contain 150,000.) A cage started up, as if
by magic, from the midst of the sand, and as it rose,
its side fell down, and freed the captive of the
desert.
(This was an ordinary device. The under-
ground constructions for its practice have been
found in the Colosseum.) With one graceful bound
the elegant savage gained its liberty, and, though
engaged by darkness, confinement, and hunger, it
seemed almost playful, as it leaped and turned
about, frisked and gambolled noiselessly on the sand.
At last it caught sight of its prey. All its feline
cunning and cruelty seemed to return, and to conspire
together in animating the cautions and treach-
erous movements of its velvet-clad frame. The
cross movements of its sleek and sinuous body,
the whole amphitheatre was silent as if it had been
a hermit's cell, while every eye was intent, watching
the stealthy approaches of the sleek brute to its vic-
tim. Pantratus was still standing in the same place,
facing the emperor, apparently so absorbed in higher
thoughts, as not to heed the movements of his
enemy. The panther had stolen round him, as if
disdaining to attack him except in front. Creeping
upon its breast, slowly advancing one paw be-
fore another, it had gained its measured distance;
and there it lay for some moments of breathless
suspense. A deep snarling growl, an elastic spring
through the air, and it was seen gathered up like a
leech, with its hind feet on the chest, and its fangs
and fore claws on the throat of the martyr.

CHAPTER XXIV. THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER.

The body of the young martyr was deposited in
peace on the Aurelian way, in the cemetery which
soon bore his name, and gave it, as we have before
observed, to the neighbouring gate. In times of
peace, a basilica was raised over his tomb, and yet
stands to perpetuate his honored life, and multi-
plied its daily victims. Many whose names have
appeared in our pages, especially the community of
Chromatius's villa, rapidly fell. The first was Zoe,
whose dumbness Sebastian had cured. She was
surprised by a heathen rabble, praying at St. Peter's
head over a smoky fire, till she died. Her husband,
with three others of the same party, was taken, re-
peatedly tortured, and beheaded. Tranquillus,
the father of Marcus and Marcellianus, jealous of
Zoe's conversion, prayed openly at St. Paul's tomb;
he was taken and summarily stoned to death. His
two sons suffered also a cruel death. The treachery
of Torquatus, by his describing his former com-
panions, especially the gallant Thaurinus, who was
now beheaded, (He is commemorated on the 11th
of August, with his father Chromatius, as has been
already observed,) greatly facilitated this wholesale
destruction.

Sebastian moved in the midst of this slaughter,
not like a builder who saw his work destroyed by a
tempest, nor a shepherd who beheld his flock borne
off by marauders. He felt as a general on the bat-
tle-field, who looked only to the victory; counting
every one as ready to give his own should it prove
to be the required price. Every friend that fell be-
fore him was a bond less to earth, and a link more
to heaven; a care less below, a claim more above.
He sometimes sat lonely, or paused silently, on the
spots where he had conversed with Pantratus, re-
calling to mind the buoyant cheerfulness, the grace-
ful thoughts, and the unconscious virtue of the
amiable and comely youth. But he never felt as if
they were more separated, than when he sent him
on his expedition to Campania. He had redeemed
his pledge to him; and now it was soon to be his
own turn. He knew it well; he felt the grace of
martyrdom swelling in his breast, and in tranquil
certainty he awaited its hour. His preparation was
simple; whatever he had of value he distributed to
the poor; and he settled his property, by sale, be-
yond the reach of confiscation. Fulvius had picked up his fair share of Christian
spoils; but, on the whole, he had been disappointed.
He had not been obliged to ask for assistance from
the emperor, whose presence he avoided; but he
had not nothing by, he was not getting rich. Every
evening he had to bear the reproaches and scornful
interrogatory of Eurostus, the eunuch, who was
however, he told his stern master—strike at higher game,
the emperor's favourite officer, who must have made
a large fortune in the service.

He had not long to wait for his opportunity. On
the 9th of January, a court was held, attended
by all aspirants for favours, or fears of imper-
ial wrath. Fulvius was there, and, as usual, met

with a cold reception. But after bearing silently
the muttered curses of the royal brute, he boldly
advanced, dropped on one knee, and thus addressed
him.
"Sir, your divinity has often reproached me
with having made, by my discoveries, but a poor
return for your gracious countenance and liberal
subsidies. But now I have found out the foulest of
plots, and the basest of ingratitude, in immediate
contact with your divine person.
" 'What dost thou mean, booby?' asked impa-
tiently the tyrant. "Speak at once, or I'll have the
words pulled out of thy throat by an iron hook."
Fulvius rose, and directing his hand, in accom-
paniment to his words, said with a bitter blunder
of tone: "Sebastian is a Christian."

The emperor started from his throne in fury.
"Thou liest, villain! Thou shalt prove thy
words, or thou shalt die such a piecemeal death, as
no Christian dog ever endured."
"I have sufficient proof recorded here," he re-
plied, producing a parchment, and offering it, kneel-
ing.
The emperor was about to make an angry answer,
when, to his utter amazement, Sebastian, with un-
ruffled looks and noble mien, stood before him, and
in the calmest accents said:
" My liege, I spare you all trouble of proof. I
am a Christian, and I glory in the name."
As Maximian, a rude though clever soldier, with-
out education, could hardly when calm express him-
self in decent Latin; when he was in a passion his
language was composed of broken sentences, mixed
with every vulgar and coarse epithet. In this
state he was now; and he poured out on Sebastian
a torrent of abuse, in which he reproached him with
every crime, and called him by every opprobrious
name, within his well-stocked repertory of vituperation.
The two crimes, however, on which he raged
his loudest changes were, ingratitude and treachery.
He had nursed, he said, a viper in his bosom, a
scorpion, an evil demon; and he only wondered he
was still alive.

The Christian officer stood the volley, as intrepid-
ly as ever he had borne the enemy's assault, on the
field of battle.
"Listen to me, my royal master," he replied,
"perhaps for the last time. I have said I am a
Christian; and in this you have had the best pledge
of your security."
" How do you mean, ungrateful man?"
" Thus, noble emperor; that if you want a body-
guard around you of men who will spill their last
drop of life-blood for you, go to the prison and
take the Christians from the stocks on the floor and
from the fetter-rings on the walls; send to the
courts and bear away the mutilated confessors from
the rack and gridiron; issue orders to the amphi-
theatres, and snatch the mangled half that lives,
from the jaws of tigers; restore them to such shape
as yet they are capable of, put weapons into their
hands, and place them around you; and in this
manner, and in this favoured host there will be more
fidelity, more loyalty, more daring for you, than in
all your Dacian and Pannonian legions. You have
taken half their blood from them, and they will
give you willingly the other half."
" Folly and madness!" returned the sneering
savage. "I would sooner surround myself with
wolves than with Christians. Your treachery proves
enough for me."

"And what would have prevented me at any
time from acting the traitor, if I had been one?
Have I not had access to your royal person by night
as by day; and have I proved a traitor? No, em-
peror, none has ever been more faithful than I to
you; but I have another, and a higher Lord to
serve; one who will judge us both; and His laws I
must obey rather than yours."
" And why have you, like a coward, concealed
your religion? To escape, perhaps, the bitter death
you have deserved?"
" No, sire; no more coward than traitor. No
one better than yourself knows that I am neither.
So long as I could do any good to my brethren, I
refused not to live amidst their carnage and cry
of afflictions. But hope had at last fled within me;
and I thank Fulvius with all my heart, for having,
by his accusation, spared me the embarrassment of
choice between seeking death or enduring life."

"I will decide that point for you. Death is your
award, and a slow lingering one it shall be. But,"
he added, in a lower tone, as if speaking to himself,
"this must not get out. All must be done quietly
at home, or treachery will spread. Here, Quatratus,
take your Christian tribune under arrest. Do you
hear, do! Why do you not move?"
" Because I too am a Christian!"
Another burst of fury, another storm of vile lan-
guage, which ended in the stout centurion's being
ordered at once to execution. But Sebastian was
to be differently dealt with.

"Order Hyphax to come hither," roared the ty-
rant. In a few minutes, a tall, half-naked Numid-
ian made his appearance. A bow of immense
length, a gaily-painted quiver full of arrows, and a
short broadsword, were at once the ornaments and
the weapons of the captain of the African archers.
He stood erect before the emperor, like a handsome
bronze statue, with bright enamelled eyes.
" Hyphax, I have a job for you to-morrow morn-
ing. It must be well done."
" Perfectly, sire," replied the dusky chief, with a
grin which showed another set of enamel in his
face.
" You see the captain Sebastian? The negro
bowed assent. "He turns out to be a Christian?"
If Hyphax had been on his native soil, and had
trodden suddenly on a hooded asp or a scorpion's
nest, he could not have started more. The thought
of being so near a Christian, to him who worshiped
every abomination, believed every absurdity,
practised every lewdness, committed any atrocity!
Maximian proceeded, and Hyphax kept time to
every member of his sentences by a nod, and what
he meant to be a smile—it was hardly an earthly
one.

"You will take Sebastian to your quarters; and
early to-morrow morning—not this evening, mind,
for I know that by this time of day you are all
drunk,—but to-morrow morning, when your hands
are steady, you will tie him to a tree in the grove
of Adonis, and you will slowly shoot him to death.
Slowly, mind; none of your fine shots straight
through the heart or the brain, but plenty of arrows,
till he be exhausted by pain and loss of blood. Do
you understand me? Then take him off at once.
And mind, silence; or else—"

CHAPTER XXV. THE RESCUE.

In spite of every attempt at concealment, the
news was soon spread among all connected with
the court, that Sebastian had been discovered to be
a Christian, and was to be shot to death on the mor-
row. But on none did the double intelligence
make such an impression as on Fabiola.

One solution never occurred to Fabiola's mind,
that he was all this, because he was a Christian. She
only saw the problem in another form; how could
he be all that he was, in spite of being a Christian?
She turned it variously in her mind, in vain.
Then it came to her thought thus. Perhaps, after
all, good old Chromatius was right, and Christian-
ity may not be what I have fancied; and I ought to
have inquired more about it. I am sure Sebastian
never did the horrible things imputed to Christians.
Yet every body charges them with them.

Might there not be a more refined form of this
religion, and; more grovelling one; just as she
knew there was in her own sect, Epicureanism? one
coarse, material, wallowing in the very mire of sen-
sualism; the other refined, sceptical, and reflective.
Sebastian would belong to the higher class, and
despise and loathe the superstitions and vices of the
commoner Christians. Such a hypothesis might be
tenable; but it was hard to reconcile to her intellect,
how a man like that noble soldier could, any way,
have belonged to that hated race. And yet he was
ready to die for their faith! As to Zoe and the
others, she had heard nothing; for she had only re-
turned the day before from a journey made into
Campania, to arrange her father's affairs.

What a pity, she thought, that she had not talked
more to Sebastian on such subjects! But it was
now too late; to-morrow morning he would be no
more; this second thought came with the sharp
pang of a shaft shot into her heart. She felt as if
she personally were about to suffer a loss, as if
Sebastian's fate were going to fall on some one
closely bound to her, by some secret and mysterious
tie.

Her thoughts grew darker and sadder, as she
dwelt on these ideas, and the deepening gloom.
She was suddenly disturbed by the entrance of a
slave with a light. It was Afro, the black servant,
who came to prepare her mistress's evening repast,
which she wished to take alone. While busy with
her arrangements, she said, "Have you heard the
news, madam?"
" Only that Sebastian is going to be shot with
arrows to-morrow morning. What a pity; he was
such a handsome youth!"
" Be silent, Afro; unless you have some informa-
tion to give me on the subject."

" Oh, of course, my mistress; and my information
is indeed very astonishing. Do you know that he
turns out to be one of those wretched Christians?"
" Hold your peace, I pray you; and do not prate
any more about what you do not understand."

" Certainly not, if you so wish it; I suppose his
fate is quite a matter of indifference to you, madam.
It certainly is to me. He won't be the first officer
that my countrymen have shot. Many they have
killed, and some they have saved. But of course
that was all chance."

There was a significance in her words and tones,
which did not escape the quick ear and mind of
Fabiola. She looked up, for the first time, and
fixed her eyes searchingly on her maid's swart face.
There was no emotion in it; she was placing a
flagon of wine upon the table, just as if she had
not spoken. "Length, the lady said to her:
" What do you mean?"
" Oh, nothing, nothing. What can a poor slave
know? Still more, what can she do?"

" Come, come, you mean, by your words, some-
thing that I must know."

" The slave came round the table, close to the
couch on which Fabiola rested, looked behind her,
and around her, then whispered, "Do you want
Sebastian's life preserved?"
Fabiola almost leapt up, as she replied, " Certain-
ly."

The servant put her finger to her lip, to enforce
silence, and said, "It will cost dear."

" Name your price."

" A hundred *asertori*, (about £800,) and my lib-
erty."

" Accept your terms; but what is my security?"

" They shall be binding only, if twenty-four hours
after the execution, he is still alive."

" Agreed; and what is yours?"

" Your word, lady."

" Go, Afro, lose not a moment."

" He has no hurry," quietly replied the slave, as
she completed, undisturbed, the preparations for sup-
per.

She then proceeded at once to the palace, and to
the Mauritanian quarters, and went in directly to
the commander.

"What dost thou want, Jubala," he said, "at this
hour? There is no festival to-night."

"I know, Hyphax; but I have important busi-
ness with thee."

"What is it about?"

"About thee, about myself, and about thy prison-
er."

"Look at him there," said the barbarian, point-
ing across the court, which his door commanded.

"You would not think that he is going to be shot
to-morrow. See how soundly he sleeps. He could
not do so better, if he were going to be married in-
stead."

"Come, not quite so fast; there are certain con-
ditions to be fulfilled first."

"Well, what are they?"

"First, thy manumission. I cannot marry a
slave."

"That is secured."

"Secondly, a dowry, a good dowry, mind; for I
never wanted money more than now."

of covetousness coming uppermost. "Let us see.
Why, my fellows will consume half the money, in
bribes and feasting."

"Well, I have two hundred more in reserve for
that."

"Sayest thou so, my princess, my sorceress, my
charming demon? But that will be too much for
my scoundrels. We will give them half, and add the
other half—to our marriage-settlements, shan't we?"

"As it pleases thee, provided the thing is done
according to my proposal."

"It is a bargain, then. We shall live twenty-four
hours; and after that we will have a glorious wed-
ding."

Sebastian, in the meantime, was unconscious of
these amiable negotiations for his safety; for, like
Peter between two guards, he was slumbering
soundly by the wall of the court. Fatigued with
his day's work, he had enjoyed the rare advantage
of retiring early to rest; and the marble pavement
was a good enough soldier's bed. But after a few
hours' repose, he awoke refreshed; and now that
all was hushed, he stealthily rose, and with out-
stretched arms, gave himself up to prayer.

The martyr's prayer is not a preparation for
death; for his is a death that needs no preparation.
The soldier who suddenly declares himself a Chris-
tian, bends down his head, and mingles his blood
with that of the confessor, whom he had come to
execute; or the friend, of unknown name, who suffers
the martyr going to death, is seized, and made to
bear him willing company, (called thence St. Adan-
tus) is as prepared for martyrdom, as he who has
passed months in prison engaged in prayer. It is
not a cry, therefore, for the forgiveness of past sin;
for there is a consciousness of that perfect love,
which sendeth out fear, and inward assurance of
that highest grace, which is incompatible with sin.

Nor in Sebastian was it a prayer for courage or
strength; for the opposite feelings, which could sug-
gest it, were alien to him. It never entered into
his mind to doubt, that as he had faced death
intrepidly for his earthly sovereign on the battle-
field, so he should meet it joyfully for his heavenly
Lord, in any place.

His prayer, then, till morning, was a glad some
hymn of glory and honour to the King of kings, a
joining with the seraph's glowing eyes, and every-
thing in a reckless homage.

Then when the stars in the bright heavens caught
his eyes, he challenged them as wakeful sentinels
like himself, to exchange the watchword of Divine
praises; and as the night-wind rustled in the leafless
trees of the neighbouring court of Adonis, he bade
its wayward music compose itself, and its rude
lurping upon the vibrating boughs form softer
hymns,—the only ones that earth could utter in its
winter night.

Now burst on him the thrilling thought that the
morning hour approached, for the cock had crowed;
and he would soon hear those branches murmuring
over him to the sharp whistle of flying arrows, un-
erring in their aim. And he offered himself gladly
to their sharp tongues, hissing as the serpent's, to
drink his blood. He offered himself as an oblation
for God's honour, and for the appeasing of His
wrath. He offered himself particularly for the af-
flicted Church, and prayed that his death might
mitigate her sufferings.

CHAPTER XXVI. THE REVIVAL.

Night was far advanced, when the black slave,
having completed her marriage settlement, quite to
her own satisfaction, was returning to her mistress's
house. It was indeed a cold wintry night, so she
was well wrapped up, and in no humor to be dis-
turbed. But it was a lovely night, and the moon
seemed to be stroking, with a silvery hand, the
downy robe of the *meta sudena*. (The fountain be-
fore described.) She paused beside it; and after a
silence of some moments, broke out into a loud
laugh, as if some ridiculous recollection connected
itself in her mind with that beautiful object. She
was turning round to proceed on her way, when she
felt herself roughly seized by the arm.

"If you had not laughed," said her captor, bitterly,
" I should not have recognized you. But that
hyena laugh of yours is unmistakable. Listen, the
wild beasts, your African cousins, are answering it
from the amphitheatre. What was it about,
pray?"

"About you?"

"How about me?"

"I was thinking of our last interview in this
place, and what a fool you made of yourself."

"How kind of you, Afro, to be thinking of me,
especially as I was not just then thinking of you,
but of your countrymen in those cells."

"Cease your impudences, and call people by their
proper names. I am not Afro the slave any
longer, at least I shall not be so in a few hours;
but Jubala, the wife of Hyphax, commander of the
Mauritanian archers."

"A very respectable man, no doubt, if he could
speak any language besides his gibberish; but these
few hours of interval may suffice for the transaction
of our business. You made a mistake, methinks,
in what you said just now. It was *you* who was it
that made a fool of me at our last meeting? What
has become of your fair promises, and of my fairer
gold, which were exchanged on that occasion?
Mine, I know, proved sterling; yours, I fear, turned
out but dust."

"No doubt; for so says a proverb in my lan-
guage; 'the dust on the wise man's skirts is better
than the gold in the fool's girdle.' But let us come
to the point; did you really ever believe in the
power of my charms and philtres?"

"To be sure I did; do you mean they were all
impotence?"

"Not quite all; you see we have got rid of Fabi-
lus, and the daughter is in possession of the fortune.
That was a preliminary step of absolute necessity."

"What! do you mean that your incantations re-
moved the father?" asked Corvinius amazed, and
shaking from her. It was only a sudden bright
thought of Afro's, so she pushed her advantage,
saying:

"To be sure; what else? It is easy thus to get
rid of any one that is too much in the way."

"Good night, good night," he replied in great fear.

(To be Continued.)

A LAUGHABLE OCCURRENCE.

Last night two buggies stopped at the Capital
Hotel, and two gentlemen jumped out almost simul-
taneously and went into the hotel, leaving two
ladies in their respective buggies. One of the men
went out ahead of the other, and by the uncertain
light thrown from the hotel, was led aside from the
actual fact in the little matter of getting in the right
buggy. In a word Mr. J. got in with Mrs. F., who
were as totally unknown to each other, as far as
acquaintance was concerned, as if one had died
in Africa and the other hadn't been born. As mar-
ried men often do, Mr. J. drove some distance be-
fore speaking.

"I got a corn on my toe—the one you persist in
putting your foot on, too—that hurts about as
bad as the general run of things generally do."

The lady was very much surprised, and rather
laughly replied:—

"You've been trying to pick a quarrel with me
all day, and now to make matters more exasperating,
you change your voice to the voice of an angel."

"It's you, madam, who have changed. My voice
is natural. I am not trying to assume anything.
You screech like an old gate."

"You are an old fool!"

"Give my teeth here; you shan't wear them an-
other minute."

"Teeth! teeth! what in the world do you mean?"

But just then passing through a flood of light, the
parties recognized that they didn't recognize each
other.

"Madam!" said Mr. J., stopping the horse and
straightening up, "I hope you will excuse me, but
I would like to know how you came in my buggy,
and furthermore, I'd like a little intelligence as re-
gards to the whereabouts of my wife. What have
you done with her, madam?"

"I don't know what you mean sir. Get out of my
buggy."

"You buggy! why madam you are beside your-
self."

"Yes, and beside yourself, which fact I deplore to
such an extent that I will be forced to call upon the
police."

"Police! police!" was shouted lustily, and when
Officer Danley came to the spot the woman insisted
on the man's arrest.

The buggy was driven back to the Capital just in
time to meet another buggy, the occupants of which
had a similar experience.—*Athens Democrat.*

Pleasure and recreation of one kind or
other are absolutely necessary to relieve our
minds and bodies from too constant attention
and labor.

Hard words are like hailstones in summer,
beating down and destroying what they would
nourish if they were melted into drops.