

Speratus answered: "I know no genius* of an Emperor of the world, but I serve my own God of Heaven, Whom no man hath seen, nor can see. I have never been dishonest, but on whatever I purchase I pay the duty, since I acknowledge the Emperor as my lord; but I adore as my Lord the King of Kings, and the Lord of all nations."†

Saturninus, the proconsul, said: "For the future hold your tongue, and without further parley come and sacrifice to the gods."

Speratus answered: "That is a wrong summons which pretends homicide and false accusation against some one." (This was probably the original pretence on which they were arrested; homicide may refer to the charge of eating human flesh, which as S. Irenæus said arose from a heathen misunderstanding of the language used about the Holy Communion.‡)

Saturninus, the proconsul, then turned to the others and said: "I hope you will not share the folly of this man's madness, but rather fear our King, and obey his commands."

Cittinus, said: "We have none to fear saving our Lord God who is in Heaven."

Saturninus, the proconsul, said: "Put them in prison, in the stocks, till to-morrow."

On the next day, Saturninus, the proconsul, sitting at the tribunal ordered them to be brought forward. When they appeared, he said to the women: "Honour our King, and sacrifice to the gods."

Then Donata said: "We yield honour to Cæsar as Cæsar; but to our God we offer honour and prayer."

Vestina stood up and said: "I, too, am a Christian."

Secunda likewise said. "And I believe in my own God, and wish to be in union with Him: but your gods we do not serve or adore."

Saturninus, the proconsul, when he heard this ordered them to be removed.

Then calling the men, he said to Speratus: "Do you persevere in saying that you are a Christian?"

Speratus said: "I certainly persevere: and let all of you hear that I profess myself a Christian." When all that were in custody with him heard him say this they assented to his confession, saying, "We are all of us equally Christians."

*The "genius" was the guardian god of the person. To swear by the "genius" of the Emperor involved the recognition of a false god. Hence the Christians refused the oath.

†To understand this we must remember that while S. John was still alive the Emperor Domitian claimed the title of "our lord and god." No Christian could admit this claim, which was also involved in the oath "by the genius of our lord the Emperor." Later Emperors made the same claim.

‡See the preceding number of the Magazine.

Saturninus, the proconsul, said: "Do you mean to say that you desire neither to be set free, nor to be pardoned?"

"Speratus answered: "In a righteous quarrel there is no pardon. Do what you wish. For we are glad to die for Christ."

Saturninus, the proconsul, said: "What are the books which you read with great reverence?"

Speratus answered: "The four Gospels of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Epistles of S. Paul the Apostle and all divinely inspired Scripture."

Saturninus, the proconsul, said: "I give you three days time, to reconsider the matter."

Speratus said: "I am a Christian, and so are all these who are with me. We do not intend to deviate from the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Do what you wish."

The proconsul seeing the determination of their mind, and the firmness of their faith, gave sentence upon them through the Clerk of the Court, saying: "Speratus, Narzales, Cittinus, Veturius, Felix, Acyllinus, Lætantius, men, and the women, Januaria, Generosa, Vestina, Donata and Secunda, who have confessed that they are Christians and refuse to give honour and reverence to the Emperor, are to be beheaded."

When this was read out from the written sentence, Speratus and those that were with him said, one and all, "We offer thanks to God, because He has deigned to receive us in Heaven as Martyrs for confessing Him."

When they had said this they were led away; and kneeling down with one consent, when they had again given thanks to Christ, each one of them was beheaded.

The martyrs of Christ were made perfect on the seventeenth day of July, and they are now interceding for us to the Lord Jesus Christ,* to whom be honour and glory with the Father and Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Thus ends the simple narrative of these famous martyrs. As Tertullian has told us that Saturninus was the first to unsheathe the sword of persecution against the Church in Africa, it may be that these were his first victims, which would account for their having been so famous in the Church.

The Clergy of the Diocese are now preparing for Lenten work. More frequent Services with Lectures, Addresses and Lectures will be held, and in a great many Parishes Confirmation and Communicants' Classes will be formed.

*See Rev. vi. 9., where the souls of the martyrs are spoken of as interceding, by praying for the advent to judgment.