

her husband, the nurse of her own family, humble to all, a lover of the poor."

In the following, which is more than usually irregular in its lettering, a disconsolate husband mourns the wife of his youth, with the pleasing illusion that such love as theirs the world had never seen before:

DOMNINÆ

INNOCENTISSIMÆ. ET. DVLCISSIMÆ. CONJUGI.

QVÆ VIXIT ANN. XVI. M. IIII. ET FVIT
MARITATA. ANN. DVOBVS. M. IIII. D. VIII.

VM QVA NON LICVIT FVISSE. PROPTER
CAVSAS PEREGRATIONIS
NISI MENSIBVS. VI.

QVO TEMPORE VT EGO SENSI EXHIBVI
AMOREM MEVM

NVLISVALLII. SIC DILIXERVNT. :

"To Domnina, my sweetest and most innocent wife, who lived sixteen years and four months, and was married two years, four months and nine days ;* with whom I was not able to live, on account of my travelling, more than six months ; during which time I showed my love as I felt it. None others ever loved each other so."

Similar language of mingled love and grief occurs in Pagan inscriptions, but without the chastening influence of Christian resignation. Thus we find frequent record of over half a century passed in marriage, SINE IVRGIS, SINE ÆMVLATIONE, SINE DISIDIO, SINE QVERVLA ; "without contention, without emulation, without dissension, without strife." With ceaseless iteration the virtues of the deceased are lovingly proclaimed, as in the following examples : CONIVGEM FIDELISSIMAM, "most faithful wife ;" MARITÆ FIISSIMÆ DVLCISSIMÆ RARISSIMÆ, "to a most sweet and pious wife of rarest excellence ;" ANYMONE OPTIMA ET PVLCHERRIMA LANIFICA

* It will be observed that Domnina must have been married before her fourteenth birthday. We have noticed frequent records of marriage at fifteen and sixteen years of age ; also one at twelve, and another at less than eleven.

PIA PVDICA FRVGI CASTA DOMISEDA, "Any mone, best and most beautiful, a spinner of wool, pious, modest, frugal, chaste, home-abiding." In a poetic dialogue a husband expresses a wish to die that he may rejoin his wife, while she hopes that her premature death may prolong his days. He says:

AT NVNC QVOD POSSVM FVGIAM LVCEMQUE
DEOSQVE

VT TE MATRUA PER STYGA MORTE SEQVAR.

To this she replies :

QVODQVE MIHI ERIPVIT MORS IMMATVRA IYVEN-
TÆ

ID TIBI LICTVRO PROROGET VLTERRVS.

Such examples of conjugal affection recall to mind the love of Alcestos, in the Greek myth, dying for her lord ; and of Arria, in the Roman story, refusing to survive her husband, and, having plunged the dagger into her own breast, exclaiming with a smile — "*Pæte non dolet*," "It hurts not, my Pætus."

But we have also illustrations of the fatal facility of divorce among the Pagan Romans, and of the domestic strife and crime resulting therefrom. In the following epitaph a discarded wife laments the murder of her child by the usurper of her rights. MATER FILIO PIISSIMO MISERA ET IN LVTCV ETERNALI VENEVICIS NOVERCÆ, "To her most affectionate son, the wretched mother, plunged in perpetual grief by the poison of his step-mother (raised this slab)." There is also a curious inscription written jointly by two living husbands to one deceased wife, in which she is designated "a well-deserving consort."

We should do scant justice to the blameless character, simple dignity, and moral purity of the primitive Christians, as indicated in these epigraphic remains, if we forget the thoroughly effete and corrupt condition of the society by which they were surrounded. It would seem almost impossible for the Christian graces to grow in such a noxious soil and fetid atmosphere. Like the snow-white lily