

Our Lord Himself had declared that "As Moses lifted up the serpent, in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (St. John III, 14, 15).

Hence that marvellous unanimity in the veneration of the Cross in every age of the New Dispensation.

When the Church was yet in her infancy, when solemn rites were perforce hushed within the deep galleries of the catacombs, when her children were hunted down and the blood of her sons flowed in torrents over every province of the Roman Empire, fertilizing those vast fields and scattering broadcast the blessed seed from which, as a harvest for the Divine Husbandman, new generations of believers were to spring : then it was, that every Christian hero who was called upon to make profession of his faith entered the arena signed with that sign of sacrifice. While it imparted strength within, it beamed before the upturned gaze as a sure token of triumph, for round it was twined the branch of laurel and on it hung a victor's crown.

Martyrs of the Crucified, signed with that sign, scorned the jeering and scoffing of the pagan throng ; with it they stood undismayed before the wild beasts of the amphitheatre and were ground as wheat to become the bread of Christ. It was with that sign upon their foreheads and with it graven in their hearts, that they withstood the straining of the rack, the scalding of the boiling caldron, and the blistering, all-permeating flame. Youths uninured to hardship and timid maidens, aged matrons accustomed to every comfort and refinement, all, in a word, that was weak humanly, when signed with that sign, showed the same eagerness to face death as the sturdy bondsman or the scarred legionary.

And when the sun had gone down on the bloody scene, and the Roman holiday was over, and loving hands had stealthily borne the mangled bodies to their last resting place in the catacombs, it was under the shadow of that same sign they slept awaiting resurrection. The sight seer