



Boston Catholic Journal

Nihil autem nisi Jesu



Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

The Tortures and Torments of the Christian Martyrs

(A Modern Edition)

De SS. Martyrum Cruciatibus

by Reverend Father Antonio Gallonio, translated from the Latin by A.R. Allison, 1591

**Revised and Edited into Contemporary English by Geoffrey K. Mondello,
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"Father Gallonio's work was intended for the edification of the Faithful, and was issued with the full authority and approbation of the Church." A. R. Allison

Note: This translation by the Boston Catholic Journal has been edited for abstruse and confusing archaisms, needless redundancies, and rendered into Modern (American) English. It is our goal to render this important, historical document into an easily readable format. However, we encourage the reader to consult the following important link: [Acta Martyrum](#) for a necessary perspective on the important distinction between authentic *Acta Martyrum*, scholarly hagiography, and edifying historical literature. This does not pretend to be a scholarly edition, replete with footnotes and historical references. Indeed, the original vexes us with its inconsistent references, and the absence of any methodical attribution to the works or authors cited. However, it must be remembered that the present work is not offered to us as a compendium, or even a

work of scholarship. That is not its intended purpose. It *is*, however, intended to accompany the Roman Martyrology which the Boston Catholic Journal brings to you each day, in the way of supplementing the often abbreviated account of the Catholic Martyrs with an historical perspective and a deeper understanding of the suffering they endured for the sake of Christ, His Holy Catholic Church, and the Faith of our fathers which, in our own times, sadly, recedes from memory for the sake of temporizing our own Catholic Faith to accommodate the world at the cost of Christ.

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CHAPTER I

Of the Cross, of Stakes, and other Means by which the Bodies of the Christians Remaining Steadfast in their Faith were Suspended

Since we propose in this book to discuss the many instruments of Martyrdom and the countless methods by which the most glorious and unconquered soldiers of our Lord Jesus Christ underwent death with a brave heart for His honor, it is entirely proper that we begin our task with the blessed and holy Sign of the Cross. For it was this upon which the Savior of the World, bursting the bonds of death, vanquished that cunning serpent, the Devil, and by His sufferings earned for His servants such tremendous fortitude that they were happy to endure the most arduous hardships of every sort, even, if need be, to the shedding of their blood and the cruel dismemberment of all their limbs. If, that is to say, the Martyrs won from the *Cross* the strength which they displayed in tortures and torments, it seems to us all the more appropriate to discuss the Cross first, as an instrument of torture and martyrdom in this book.

Since, however, *stakes set up in the ground* were included in antiquity under the common term of *crosses*, we must also examine these in this chapter, as well as other means by which the bodies of the Blessed Martyrs were suspended as punishment for defending of the Faith of Christ; for, indeed, whether nailed to the cross or bound to wooden poles, they may equally be said in a sense to have hung suspended.

In beginning our discussion of the Cross, it is important for us to understand that not only were the Jews accustomed to nail condemned criminals to the cross [Deut 21:22-23], but the Gentiles as well. This is expressly stated by many of their own authors — by Cicero in several places (especially in the *Philippics* and *De Finibus*), no less than by Valerius Maximus, Livy, Curtius, Suetonius (*Galba*), and Seneca (*De Consolatione*). This last passage shows that crosses were of more than one kind, as we see from the words quoted below:

"From this I gather that crosses were not all of one kind, but differently made by different people. Some hang the criminal head downwards, while others drive a stake through his entrails, and others again stretched out his arms on a forked gallows ..."

What Seneca says here, to wit, that "others drive a stake through his entrails," he explains elsewhere, for he calls this kind of cross, in his indictment of the Mecaenas, a sharp-pointed cross. From this we may readily understand that, while one form of cross was of the type most commonly associated with the word, another resembled the sharp stakes which the Turks now employ for executing criminals, driving them through the victims' middle up to the head. We may also find this in Procopius's, *Vandal War*.

Upon the first kind of Cross (as Seneca states above, and as we find in numerous *Acts* of the Saints) [[Acta Martyrum](#)] some were fixed with their heads toward the ground, while others with them raised to heaven. Christian martyrs were, in fact, crucified in both ways by the worshippers of idols. Among others who won the crown of martyrdom by crucifixion head *downwards* was the chief of the Apostles himself, St. Peter, concerning whom Origen writes:

"When Peter was come to the outskirts of Rome, with head placed downwards (for so he desired himself to suffer), he was nailed to the Cross."

St. Augustine writes that:

"So both (Peter and Paul) hasten to attain to the palm of martyrdom, and win the crown thereof." And elsewhere: "Peter for Christ's sake is suspended on the tree head downward; Paul slain with the sword. The Apostle went with his own feet to meet Christ, and looking upward with his eyes to Heaven, sent forth his blessed spirit to the Heavens above."

This is also described by St. John Chrysostom in his *Homily on the Chief of the Apostles*:

"Rejoice, Peter, to whom has been granted to enjoy Christ on the tree, and who was happy to be crucified as thy Master was, yet not with form upright like Christ the Lord, but with head turned to the ground, as one journeying from earth to heaven. Blessed the nails which did pierce those holy limbs."

To this most holy Apostle of Christ may be further added St. Calliopos, who died the same death for guarding the Christian Faith, bravely and signally triumphing over the World and the Devil. We clearly see, then, that some Martyrs were crucified with feet upward towards the sky.

As to those who suffered with feet pointing to the ground, we find many outspoken champions of the Christian Law: St. Philip and St. Andrew, Apostles; Nestor, a Bishop; Timon, a Deacon, and many others. The Roman Martyrology itself speaks of ten thousand Martyrs so crucified, including Simeon, a Bishop, who at the date of his Martyrdom was in the one hundred and twentieth year of his age. Concerning the ten thousand who were lifted up on the Cross (22 June), we read:

"On Mount Ararat the passion of ten thousand blessed Martyrs who were crucified."

Concerning St. Simeon (20 April) we read:

"At Jerusalem anniversary of the Blessed Simeon, Bishop and Martyr, who is said to have been the son of Cleophas and a kinsman of the Savior according to the flesh. Ordained Bishop of Jerusalem next after James, brother of Our Lord, after suffering in the persecution of Trajan many tortures, he died a Martyr, and all present, including the very Judge himself, marveled how an old man of one hundred and twenty years should have endured the punishment of the Cross bravely and unflinchingly."

The Method Employed by the Heathen for Crucifying Christians

In the first place, the ministers of cruelty would make ready (as many passages from the *Acts of the Saints* above refer to, particularly concerning St. Pionius) mallet, iron nails, and a cross made of wood, which they then set on the ground, sometimes attaching ropes to it for fastening to the hands and feet of those to be crucified. Then laying the holy Martyrs — or it may be others of

their own vain religion who had been condemned for some crime — on the wood, after stripping them of their clothes, they hung them upon it by means of four nails (this appears most probably to have been the number). This done, they raised the cross along with the victim fixed to it, and set it in a hole in the ground dug out for the purpose, and left them to the bitter agony of a lingering death — hanging there until they rotted away, as Valerius Maximus in several passages clearly implies. From this we gather that the Jews differed from the Gentiles with regard to removing the bodies of those crucified from the cross. The latter, as we have just noted, left them to hang on the gibbet until they rotted; but the Jews, in accordance with the Law declared in Deuteronomy 21, took them down the same day and buried them in a convenient place.

As for the other sort of Cross mentioned on Seneca's authority at the beginning of this chapter — that is, to its having been a sharp stake — we have been unable to find mention of it in the *Histories* of the ancient Martyrs unless we choose to include under this heading the torture inflicted on certain most glorious athletes of Christ by having pointed sticks driven through their inwards. But we shall discuss this, as God wills, in the last chapter of the book. Another similar punishment is described by Theodoret (*Ecclesiastical History*) in the following words:

"But when he beheld him (St. Benjamin) mocking this torture, he commanded yet another reed to be pushed, this time into his genital member, which, being drawn out and pushed in again, caused him inexpressible torments. Afterward the savage tyrant ordered a stout rod, thick and extremely rough with branches that stuck out all over it, to be inserted up his rectum ..."

We also know that the Turks impaled Hadrian of the Order of St. Dominic and twenty-six others, his companions, on stakes; and the same punishment is spoken of by Procopius in his *Vandal War*.

Stakes, in fact, were employed in many ways by the heathen Devil-worshippers for the tormenting of Christians. Fastening the blessed Martyrs to a stake after stripping their bodies as near naked as possible, either by means of iron nails or with ropes, they would then tear their flesh mercilessly with claws of iron or with hooks or currycombs, transfix them with arrows, beat them with cudgels, scourges, and the like, expose them to the bites of wild beasts, pull out their teeth, cut out their tongues, in the case of women amputate their bosoms, in a word, torture them in every horrible manner possible after first attaching them to stakes or poles set in the ground. This is confirmed by numerous *Acts* of the Holy Martyrs, such as those of Gregory Thaumaturgus, Polycarp, Gaiana, and Febronia, Virgins, and a nearly countless host of others of either sex. The same method is also mentioned by Classical authors, such as Cicero, Valerius Maximus, and Suetonius.

It should be noted here that the Martyrs who were fastened to stakes with iron nails and so tortured, were sometimes also bound with ropes, possibly for their yet greater torment.

Of Pillars and Trees Employed for the Same Purpose

Although the Worshippers of Devils most often punished those condemned to death after binding them to stakes or crosses, it is sometimes recorded that the Martyrs were tied to pillars or trees, or fastened to them with nails at the command of their tormentors, and then tortured.

Eusebius tells us of pillars used in this way, as do the *Acts* of different Martyrs. There is also the famous Pillar religiously preserved in the Basilica of St. Sebastian outside the Walls, which, according to ancient Christian tradition, is believed to be the very same to which this Blessed Martyr was bound and shot to death with arrows for confessing his faith in Christ. We also have record of trees used for this purpose in the *Acts* of many Martyrs, such as those of St. Zoe and of St. Paphnutius.

Of Different Methods of Suspending from the Cross

Having explained the use of the *Cross* and of *Stakes* used for crucifixion, let us now examine the methods of suspension that were used; that is to say, the ways the Blessed Martyrs and champions of the Holy Gospel were hung upon crosses and stakes by the Heathen. The methods of hanging in which we find them suffering at the caprice of their tormentors are both horrible and cruel. Of some we read that they were suspended by one foot only, others by both feet, or else (as Nicephorus describes in his *History*) by one foot drawn up to the level of the head, with a slow fire kindled underneath in such a way as to suffocate them with the smoke coming from the burning fuel. Yet others were suspended by the arms, both or only one, or else by the tips of the thumbs, while heavy weights were attached at the same time to their feet. Of others again we find it recorded that they were suspended hanging from a high wall, stones being fastened to neck and feet, or ropes bound to their bodies, their shoulders loaded with great lumps of salt, and for their greater torment wooden gags being placed in their mouths.

Others were smeared with honey and attached to upright stakes under a blazing sun to be tortured by the stings of flies and bees. Still others are said to have been suspended from iron hooks, or from a noose, until they were dead. Last of all, some were tied to pillars, their faces turned toward each other, with their feet not quite reaching the ground, or else hung up by the hair, as was often done to women contending for the Faith of Christ. The *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs make frequent mention of these methods — and of the first especially in the *Acts* of St. Gregory, Bishop of Armenia.

Christian women, likewise, were often hung up by one foot the whole day long (as Eusebius's, *Ecclesiastical History* bears witness), in such a way that not even their private parts were covered, in order to show the greatest possible scorn for Christ's holy Religion.

The *Methods*, however, through which the Martyrs were tortured by suspension, were themselves many and varied. Sometimes the Martyrs were simply hung up by one foot, while at other times smoke from damp and evil-smelling fuel, such as the dung of animals, was added to increase the agony — while a dozen executioners thrashed the victim at the same time with rods. In other instances they were suspended by one foot, the leg being bent at the knee and an iron band fixed around that joint, and then an iron weight fastened to the other foot in such a way that the helpless victims were miserably strained asunder. Thus in the *Acts* of St. Samona we find written:

"But the Magistrate at once ordered Samona to have one leg bent at the knee and an iron band put around the joint. This done, he hung him head down by the foot of the bent leg, at the same time dragging the other downwards by means of an iron weight."

Of Martyrs who suffered by the first of these Methods of torment, we read, among others, the names of those most noble soldiers of Christ mentioned above: St. Gregory of Armenia and St. Samona.

As to the second method — in which the victims were hung up by both feet — we have ample testimony in the *Acts* of the Saints; for example, those of St. Venantius, of the holy Virgins Euphemia and her sisters, of Bishop Aceptsima and his companions, as well as the Cappadocian Martyrs, a great host commemorated in the *Roman Martyrology*, on May 23rd, where it is written:

"In Cappadocia, commemoration of the Blessed Martyrs who in the persecution of Maximianus were slain and their limbs broken; likewise of those who at the same date in **Mesopotamia** [the geographic area north of the Persian Gulf, including present-day Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey] were hung aloft by the feet head down, suffocated with smoke, and consumed over a slow fire, and so fulfilled their Martyrdom."

Actually it was not in one way only, but in many and various, that the Martyrs were suspended by these Servants of the Devil (as we gather from the *Acts* quoted above) and tormented. For sometimes they were suffocated with smoke; sometimes their heads pounded with hammers by their executioners; sometimes great stones fastened round their necks; and sometimes they were cruelly burned with blazing torches.

In the first of these ways many Christians are known to have suffered in the region of Mesopotamia; in the second, Euphemia, Thecla, Erasma, and Dorothea, most noble Virgins and Martyrs of Christ; in the third, Saints Theopompus, Mercurius and the already mentioned Venantius.

Of the Third Method of Suspending, that is, Martyrs Hung up by One Arm

This third Method of suspending, that is to say, hanging up by one arm, is often mentioned in the *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs, among which are St. Samona just cited, and St. Antonia, that most noble-hearted martyr, of whom it is recorded on May 4th in the *Roman Martyrology*:

"At Nicomedia, the anniversary of St. Antonia, Martyr, who, after being savagely racked and tortured, was suspended three days by one arm, kept imprisoned two years in a dungeon, and was finally burned at the stake by the Governor Priscillianus, confessing the Lord Jesus."

It should also be noted that sometimes the executioners of Martyrs suspended in this way fastened stones of great weight to their feet, so that all the joints of their bodies might be drawn asunder. We find clear testimony to this in the *Histories* of various Saints, especially that of St.

Samona of whom we spoke earlier.

Of Weights by which the Martyrs of Our Lord Jesus were Tortured

We read again and again in the *Histories* of the Martyrs how, after being suspended aloft, they were, among other torments, loaded with weights, sometimes lead or iron (which we will describe elsewhere), others again of stone. Of the latter we have evidence preserved to this day in Rome in the Churches of the Holy Apostles, as also in those of St. Apollinaris and St. Anastasius not far from the City. They were stones of great weight, black in color, round or oval in shape, having an iron ring imbedded in the stone through which a rope for binding and hanging could be passed and so attached to the feet or hands of those suspended.

Certain authorities have erroneously maintained that these stone balls, called by Josephus in his *Maccabees* "*Orbicularia*", or Round Stones, were not designed specially for purposes of inflicting torture, but for weighing. This is not so. Stones of this latter kind always had (as Isidore and Alciatus, *On Weights*, state) the figure of the weight inscribed on them, while those used to torture the Martyrs did not.

These weights were also entirely different from those to which debtors were condemned in Law XII of the "Twelve Tables," for these were nothing more than fetters. Of them Aulus Gellius says, "Bind him either with a thong, or else with fetters of not less than fifteen pounds weight; or if a greater weight is desired, with heavier still."

Of the Fourth Method of Suspending, that is, Hanging by Both Arms

This fourth method of suspending is mentioned in the *Acts* of Saints Procopius, Andochius, Thyrsus and Felix, and their companions.

Much as we had seen above, it was occasionally the custom of the Heathen to either attach heavy weights to the feet of those suffering this method of hanging, or else, after twisting their arms behind their backs, to haul the weights aloft and then release them. Thus in the *Roman Martyrology*, on September 24th, we read of those blessed Confessors of Christ, St. Andochius and his Companions:

"At Augustodunum (Autun), the anniversary of the Holy Martyrs Andochius, Priest, Thyrsus, Deacon, and Felix, who being sent by the Blessed Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, from the East to teach Gaul Christianity, were there cruelly scourged, and suspended all day with hands tied behind their backs and thrown into the fire, but not consumed. Finally their necks were struck with heavy bars, and they thus won the crown of martyrdom."

Of the Fifth Method of Suspending: Hanging up by the Thumbs

This fifth method is described in the *Acts* of Saints Jacob and Marianus, in which the following narrative is written concerning Marianus, servant of Christ:

"Marianus was condemned to torture because he confessed himself a reader only, as indeed he was. And what torments were these, how new and strange, how imbued with the poisoned ingenuity of the Devil, how cunningly contrived to break the spirit! Marianus was hung up to be tortured; and what grace the Martyr showed even in the midst of his sufferings, the very torment and punishment merely serving to increase his courage! Now the cord which kept him suspended was attached not to his hands but to the tips of his thumbs, in such a way that the slenderness of those parts added to the agony endured in supporting the weight of the rest of the body. Moreover, unconscionably great weights were further attached to his feet, so that the whole framework of his body should hang suspended, torn asunder by pain and agonizing internal convulsions."

Of the Sixth Method of Suspending: Hanging up with Weights Fastened Around the Neck and to the Feet

The *History* of the most Blessed Martyr St. Severianus details this method:

"The Prefect, taking Severianus' silence for contempt, as indeed it was, devised a yet more terrible punishment for him; and after removing him from the rack, had him taken to a wall. Then after attaching two enormous and very heavy stones, one to his neck, the other to his feet, and tying a rope round the Martyr's middle, he left him hanging in the air from the wall, so that his members, being dragged apart by the weights, may be separated in this violent fashion."

Of the Seventh: When the Sufferers 'Bodies are Suspended by Ropes, their Shoulders at the same Time being Loaded with Heavy Lumps of Salt and the like

This seventh kind is mentioned in the *Acts* of St. Gregory of Armenia, where we read:

"When St. Gregory had ended discoursing at length on these matters, Tyridates was filled with anger above all measure, and was furiously stirred up against him. As a result, the most noble hero was immediately bound. After inserting a wooden gag into his mouth, parting the upper and lower jaws as widely as possible, they loaded his shoulders with lumps of salt, that is dug up in Armenia. Then binding his holy body with ropes, they suspended the Saint aloft, prolonging this bitter torment for seven entire days."

Of the Seventh Method: Suspending Victims from Upright Stakes after Smearing them with Honey so that they should be Tortured by the Bites of Flies and Bees

This form of torture is spoke of in the *Histories* of St. Maurice and his companions, and of St. Mark of Arethusa.

Three Methods are recorded in the *Histories* of the Martyrs in which Christians were exposed to the rays of the sun with this end in view. Sometimes they were merely bound to stakes, as was done with St. Maurice and his companions; sometimes they were raised aloft in baskets made of rushes as we find in the account of St. Mark of Arethusa mentioned above; and sometimes (as St. Jerome records in the *History* of Paul, the first Eremite), they were laid on the ground with hands tied behind their backs.

Coelius Rhodiginus states that there existed in antiquity a form of punishment known as "Cyphonismus" so named from the word *Cyphon*, "from which also *Cyphon* is so called in Aristophanes' play of *Plutus*," writes Rhodiginus:

"because it was a sort of fetter of wood or, as in the present day, of iron, commonly called a pillory, to which the prisoner was ignominiously fastened and detained, smeared with honey and exposed to the bites of the flies." Hence it came about, adds the same author, "that this title of '*Cyphon*' was given to scamps, and the punishment was called '*Cyphonismus*.' Then adding a little later: "I note among certain people a regulation to the following effect — that any man who insolently demonstrates contempt for the decrees of the law, shall be kept in fetters at the public place of execution for twenty days, naked and smeared over with honey and milk, to be food for bees and flies; and when these have done their work, he shall be dressed in women's clothes and cast headlong down a cliff."

The Persians employed a similar Method of punishment for criminals condemned to death which they themselves called *Scaphismus*. Plutarch in his *Artaxerxes* speaks of it in these terms:

"Accordingly he ordered Mithridates to be put to death by the punishment of the boats (*scaphae*) The nature of this form of death and punishment is as follows: Two boats are built of the same size and shape. In the one they lay the man destined for the torture, and putting the other boat on top of him, joined the two together in such a way that the man's hands and feet were left outside, while the remainder of his body (except the head) was imprisoned. They supplied the man with food, and by prodding his eyes with sharp points forced him to eat, even against his will. But on his eating, they poured a mixture of milk and honey into his mouth, and smeared his face with it. Turning the boat, they so arranged it that his eyes always faced the sun, his head and face being covered every day with a host of flies that settled upon him.

Moreover, being compelled to defecate and urinate inside the closed boats, the resulting corruption and putrefaction give birth to swarms of worms of many sorts which penetrate his clothes, and eat away his flesh. Indeed, after the man is dead, and the upper boat is removed, his body is seen to be gnawed away, and all about his viscera is found a multitude of these and similar insects, that grows denser every day. Subjected to this form of torture, Mithridates actually endured the agonizing existence to the seventeenth day, before finally dying."

Plutarch's account differs little from that given by [the Byzantine historian] Zonaras who, in his *Annals*, states that:

"The Persians outdo all other Barbarians in the horrid cruelty of their punishments, employing tortures that are peculiarly terrible and long-drawn, namely the 'boats' and sewing men up in raw hides.

But what is meant by the 'boats' I must now explain. To wit, two boats are joined together, one on top of the other, with holes cut in them in such a way that the victim's head, hands, and feet only are left outside. Within these boats the man to be punished is placed lying on his back, and the boats are then bolted together. Next they pour a mixture of milk and honey into the unfortunate man's mouth until he is filled to the point of nausea, smearing his face, feet, and arms with the same mixture, and then leave him exposed to the sun. This is repeated every day to the effect that the flies, wasps, and bees, attracted by the sweetness, settle on his face and all the parts of his body that project outside the boats, miserably tormenting and stinging the wretched man.

Moreover his stomach, distended as it is with milk and honey, throws off liquid excrements, and these, putrefying, breed swarms of worms, intestinal and of other sorts. Thus the victim lying in the boats, his flesh rotting away in his own filth and being devoured by worms, dies a lingering and horrible death. By this punishment Parysatis, mother of Artaxerxes and Cyrus is said to have executed the man who boasted of having slain Cyrus when contending with his brother for the Kingship; he endured the torment fourteen days before he died. Such, then, is the nature of "*Scaphismus*, or the boat-torture."

Something similar awaited those who were sewn up in an ox-hide. In this case the head alone was left outside, while the rest of the body was stripped naked and sewn up inside the hide. So we read in the *Acts* of St. Chrysanthus:

"Carrying him from that place, they proceeded to flay a calf, and to wrap him up naked in the fresh hide, placing him so as to face the sun; nevertheless, despite being exposed all day long to the excessive heat of a blazing sun, he felt no excessive warmth and remained unaffected in any way, for the hide could in no way hurt God's servant. So afterward they laid on him fetters and the like."

From this it is plainly evident how this punishment of the raw hide was distinct from that just described under the name "*Scaphismus*".

Similar forms of torture may be found abundantly described in Lucian's Dialogue [actually Apuleius's *Asinus Aureus*, or the 'Golden Ass'], *Lucius or the Ass*, in which the following story is related:

"We must discover," he then said, "some sort of death through which this maiden may endure long-drawn and bitter torment ... So let us kill this ass, and afterwards cut open its stomach and after removing the inwards, shut up the girl inside in such a way that only her head would be left outside (this, of course, to prevent her being suffocated altogether), while the rest of her body is hidden within the carcass. Then, when this has been sewn up, let us expose them both to the vultures — a strange meal prepared in a new and strange fashion. Now just consider the nature of this torture, I beg you. To begin with, a living woman will be shut up inside a dead ass; then by

reason of the heat of the sun will she be roasted within its stomach; further, she will be tormented with mortal hunger, yet entirely unable to destroy herself. The other gruesome aspects of her agony, both from the stench of the dead body as it rots, and the swarm of writhing worms, I say nothing of. Lastly, the vultures that feed on the carcass will rend in pieces the living woman at the same time. All shouted assent to this monstrous proposal, and unanimously approved its being put in execution."

To the same effect Apuleius in his *Golden Ass*, writes:

"Let us decide to cut this ass's throat tomorrow, and when it has been cleared of all the entrails, sew the virgin naked into the middle of its stomach so that only the girl's face projects while all the rest of her remains imprisoned within the animal, and this done, let us expose the ass with its contents on some craggy height to the exhalations of the blazing sun."

Of the Ninth and Tenth Methods of Hanging: Suspending from a Hook and Putting to Death with a Noose

These two Methods of Martyrdom are amply attested to in various *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs — in the first instance especially by those of St. Nicetus, as also of Saints Gorgonius and Dorotheus, whose deaths are likewise recorded by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*.

Of the Eleventh Method: Binding Victims to Pillars with Feet not Touching the Ground

This method is spoken of by Bishop Philreas, and quoted by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* as follows:

"Others again were bound facing each other, suspended from pillars with their feet not reaching the ground, in such a way that the greater the strain put upon the ropes and the tighter these were drawn, the more cruelly did the victims feel the agony caused by the dragging weight of their own bodies. Nor was it for a short while only — that is to say, just while the Magistrate was putting them to cross-examination, and was at liberty to question them — but throughout the entire day that they endured this kind of torment. Moreover when, as he went on from them to others, he left subordinate officers to carefully watch the first group in the event that any of them should appear in imminent danger of dying from the torture, giving orders that they be racked by means of the ropes without an instant's respite, and finally, when at the point of dying, that they be let down again to the ground and dragged unmercifully to and fro."

The same writer earlier states that:

"Others were suspended from the portico or arch, attached by one arm, and endured the stretching and straining of all their limbs and joints — a bitter torment surpassing almost every other in severity. Others again were bound to pillars, their faces turned inward toward one another, with nothing for their feet to rest upon."

The Martyrs were lashed to the pillars in the following way: fastened to the upper portions of these pillars were either iron rings or, more likely still, various pulleys, over which ropes were led. By means of these ropes the Blessed Martyrs were then, with arms tied behind their backs and faces turned toward the pillars, all day long first hoisted up by the tormentors, and afterward let down again with a rush, but in such a way that they never quite touched the ground in order that they might suffer the more agonizing pain. Finally, when they were at the point of dying, the executioners, at a sign from the Judge, would lower them to the earth and cruelly drag them around.

Of the Last Method: Hanging Christian Women by their Hair

Evidence of this manner of torture is found in many *Histories* of the Holy Martyrs; we encounter it in the account of the passion of St. Eulampia, St. Juliana, virgin and martyr, as well as Saints Theonilla, Euphemia, and lastly, St. Symphorosa.

So much for the various methods of suspension used by the Heathen against Christian men and women. If the reader wishes to learn more about this, he should consult the various authorities and the *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs already cited. Yet before leaving the subject altogether we will quote one other passage, from St. Gregory Nazianzen, in which he writes, speaking of St. Mark of Arethusa:

"From one crowd of lads to the other he was tossed to and fro, swinging as it were suspended, the boys alternately catching that gallant body on their penknives, and in this tragic way doing the holy man to death, as it had been some sort of game ..." that is to say, the martyr in question was thrown backward and forward between two sets of schoolboys.

Many other instances of the same or similar Methods of martyrdom could be provided, but which we must omit for the sake of brevity.

The Tortures and Torments of the Christian Martyrs

from

De SS. Martyrum Cruciatibus

(A Modern Edition)

Chapter II

Of the Wheel, the Pulley, and the Press, as Instruments of Torture

We now come to other instruments of torture applied to the Holy Martyrs apart from the various types of *hanging*, both on *Cross* and *Stake* discussed in the previous chapter. However, since the instruments named above, together with the *Wooden Horse*, are without doubt the most terrible and appalling of all, we will look at them now — and the Horse in the following chapter. Concerning the torture of the Wheel, which is widely held to be the severest of all, it is significant to note its antiquity. This form of torment was first practiced earlier by the Greeks.

We learn this from numerous statements made by their own writers and preserved among us. Aristophanes in the *Plutus* says:

"By rights you should be bound to the Wheel, and so forced to reveal your evil doings."

Commenting on this same passage, one ancient commentator adds:

"The Wheel was a contrivance on which slaves were bound down for punishment."

Again the same poet, in his *Lysistrata* states:

"For sorrow! What a convulsion and a straining of every limb do I feel, for all the world as though I were being racked on the Wheel!"

Anacreon, as quoted by Atheneus, speaks of the same thing, when he says,

"Many torments and rackings of the neck I endured on the Wooden Horse, and many on the Wheel."

Similarly Demosthenes in his *Oration against Aphobus* says:

"Let us set Miliastres on the Wheel to be tortured"

And Plutarch, in his *Nicias*:

"Then he proceeded to bind the barber to the Wheel, and further torture him."

Also, Lucian in the *Epistle to Stesichorus* writes:

"After being lopped of their extremities, they were racked and stretched on Wheels;"

And Suidas in his *Dictionary* under the word *Wheel* describes it thus:

"The Wheel was an instrument of torture for racking men's bodies. Whence Aristophanes: 'Let him be torn on the wheel and flogged.' So slaves were bound to the Wheel and thrashed. And in another passage: 'You will have to speak up on the Wheel and confess your crimes.' Thus we see people were tortured on the Wheel and questioned to discover their complicity with others and their own wrong doings. Similarly the Wheel was an apparatus of wood, on which slaves were bound for punishment."

Phalaris seems to give concurrent testimony in one of his *Epistles*, where we read:

"They were being tortured, or racked, on the Wheels."

The device is alternately spoken of by Pindar, Homer (both in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*), Lucian, Ovid, Propertius, Seneca, and Claudian.

Other ancient authors also make mention of the torture of the Wheel, especially Josephus in discussing the *Maccabees* in the *Jewish War* [Bellum Judaicum]:

"Some refused to eat of polluted meats; these he ordered to be tortured on the Wheel, and put to death;" and again: "For this make ready the wheels, and blow up the fire to a fiercer heat." And further on: "But when the Apparitors [constables] had set ready the Wheels and Cords, the Tyrant adds ..."; and again, "The Apparitors were then directed to bring in the elder prisoner; and tearing away his tunic, bound him hand and foot with thongs every way. And when those who applied the lash were wearied out without gaining anything, they fixed him about a great Wheel, stretched around the circumference of which the noble-hearted youth had all his joints dislocated and all his limbs broken." And a little further on: "' Wicked hirelings,' cried the youth, 'your Wheel is no more able than you to drown my reason; cut off my limbs, and burn my flesh, and rack my joints with the twisters' On his so saying, they set fire underneath, and divided him limb from limb, stretching his body over the Wheel. And the whole Wheel was stained with his blood, and the grate, which contained the pile of coals, was put out by reason of the drops of blood

pouring down upon it, while about the axles of the wheel the gobbets of flesh were carried round and round, the parts adjoining the joints of the bones being everywhere cut to pieces. Nevertheless the noble youth Abraham never uttered so much as a groan, but nobly endured the *twisters*, that is the instruments of torment."

He reiterates this later:

"They proceeded to disarticulate Arthremboles' hands and feet at the joints, and separating these from the ligaments, tore them away with levers and so perforated his fingers, arms, legs and elbows. But when they found that they could not break his resolution, they dragged off the skin together with the tips of the fingers, and immediately led him to the Wheel, about which were crushed the joints of every limb, and he saw his own flesh cut to pieces and drops of blood distilled from his inwards."

Also yet again:

"The Apparitors dragged him bound to the catapults to which, when they had tied him at the knees, and secured them firmly with iron bands, they bent back his loins over a rounded wedge, so that all his body being dashed around its circumference, was broken in pieces." And further down: "They fastened him to the Wheel, on which he was stretched and burned with fire; moreover they applied spits, sharpened and made red-hot, to his back, and pierced his sides and inwards."

Other writers speak of the Wheel, for we find in Apuleius', *Golden Ass* [also known as *The Metamorphoses*]:

"Without an instant's delay, according to the Greek custom, fire and wheel and every kind of torture were exhibited"

And again,

"Neither the Wheel nor the Horse, after the manner of the Greeks, were lacking to his instruments of torment."

Cicero in the *Tusculan Orations*, says,

"Thus much we are justified in saying, that the happy life cannot end on the Wheel."

In Virgil's, *Aeneid*, 6 we find:

"And there they hang, stretched out on the spokes of wheels."

The 4th century biographer Julius Capitolinus also states:

"The Tribune of the Soldiers who allowed his post to be abandoned was tied beneath a wheeled wagon and so they dragged him, alive and dead, the whole stage."

St. Basil, too, in his, *Homilies on 40 Martyrs*, writes:

"Fire moreover was made ready, the sword unsheathed, the cross set up, the sack, the wheel, the scourge prepared;" and in his *Homily on St. Gordius the Centurion*: "Let his body be torn on the Wheel."

St. Gregory of Nazianzen and Nicephorus equally makes reference to these Wheels, as well as many *Lives of the Saints*, especially in the case of St. Catherine, St. Euphemia, Virgin and Martyr, and St. Felix and his companions.

These Wheels — as we have gathered from the *Histories* of different Martyrs — were not of one kind only, but of several. Some, which we find spoken of as *Machines* in the *Acts* of the Saints, were broad and large, while others were narrow. We will discuss both.

The Wheel of the first sort, that is to say, the larger Wheel of which Nicephorus and the *Acts* of St. Pantaleemon speak, was made in such a way that being taken up to some high hill, with the victim bound to its circumference, the Wheel, together with the condemned man, was then violently hurled down from the summit of the mountain by a steep and slippery way, so that each member of the Martyr's body was broken. Thus do we read of that most glorious servant of Christ, Pantaleemon, in the *History* of his Martyrdom:

"And they said to him, 'Let the great wheel be brought, and carried to the top of the mountain, and have him bound to it and hurled down the mountain in such a way that his flesh may be miserably scattered abroad, and he die.' The most blessed Pantaleemon was then led away to prison while the wheel was being constructed. As soon as it was finished, the Judge ordered the criers to proclaim through the city, that all men should come together to see the death of the Blessed Pantaleemon, and ordered him to be brought in. When the holy Martyr of Christ was led in, to their amazement he was singing Psalms to the Lord in Christ! Then the Attendants bound him over the wheel; but as soon as they began to roll the wheel, his bonds were loosed, and the Holy Martyr stood up unhurt. The wheel, however, rolling onward, killed many of the Heathen."

Other types of broad wheels were also used by the Heathen for the massacring of Christians. The circumference of these wheels, to the which the naked Martyrs were bound by cords, was imbedded with blades, sharp nails, and the like, and then suspended stationary in the air. Then revolving the martyrs along with the wheels again and again with all their might over iron spikes fixed in the earth for piercing and cutting, they caused the flesh of the sufferers thus punished to be dreadfully torn and mangled. It was precisely by such a torture wheel that we suppose the Blessed Virgin of Jesus Christ, St. Catherine, to have won the Crown of Martyrdom, to which her *Acts* in part witness.

Of Wheels of the Second Sort

Other wheels of a lesser breadth than those just described were likewise used by these Devil-worshippers for torturing faithful Christians. Around the circumference of these wheels they would very often fix sharp nails and the like, in such a way that their points, being turned

upward, might project beyond the rims. Then on the wheels thus arranged they would bind the Martyrs whose bodies were then pitifully torn by the sharp points of the spikes, as well as by others which stood planted in the earth beneath. In the *Acts* of St. George we find the following narrated:

"The Emperor ordered a wheel to be brought in stuck all round with sharp points, and the Saint to be bound naked to it, and so mangled by the various devices imbedded within it. The wheel was hung in the air, while underneath planks were laid upon which were closely fixed together a number of spikes, like sharp swords, some with their points straight upward, others curved like hooks, while still others resembled flaying knives. When the revolving wheel approached the planks — and the Holy Man bound like a lamb to it with slender lines and small cords in such a way that they cut into his flesh and were imbedded within it — it was forced, as the wheel turned, to pass over the swords, and the Martyr's body was caught on their keen edges and terribly lacerated, contorted, and torn in pieces as if with the instrument known as a "*scorpion*."

It is next to be specially noted that the Heathen, after binding the Martyrs to wheels, thrashed them cruelly with rods and cudgels as they were whirled round upon it. The *Acts* of St. Clement of Ancyra give testimony in the following terms:

"The Magistrate ordered the Martyr (that is, Clement) to be bound to the wheel, and the latter to be revolved at great speed with the Martyr upon it being simultaneously beaten savagely with rods. Immediately the Martyr was bound to the wheel, and the wheel turned rapidly. Now the Martyr, while he was on top of the wheel in its revolution, was exposed to the fellows who stood ready with their rods; but when the wheel carried him underneath, his body was bitterly crushed and his bones broken."

Nevertheless, the Heathen were not content in venting their hatred for our fellow-Christians through these means of torture alone, that is to say, through which they bound the Martyrs to wheels and tormented them, for they never ceased to invent new ones. Hence it came about sometimes that, binding them to wheels having sharp spikes fixed all round, and placed over a fire burning below, they would revolve the wheel, together with the Martyr, round and round and round at high speed. In other words, in just the same fashion as meat placed upon a spit and set to the fire be roasted and cooked, so were the Martyrs turned about and roasted, that they might become fine bread of Jesus Christ. In the *Acts* of St. Christina, Virgin and Martyr, and of St. Calliopius, we find it written: "'Set up the wheel,' he (the Prefect) said to his Apparitors, 'and kindle a great fire beneath it,' upon which the youth was tightly bound to the wheel and was racked to pieces. Then instantly an Angel of God approached, and put out the flame of the coals; and when the attendants tried to turn the wheel, they could not. But his tender limbs bespattered all the wheel with blood, for it was armed all around with sharp swords." In this way, the Blessed Martyrs, bound to wheels, and revolved upon them over a fire, happily won the most noble Crown of Martyrdom.

Moreover it was the custom with these same impious men to use the several interstices of the wheels, of the narrow sort described above, in such a way that the limbs of Christ's faithful servants, after being first broken with iron bars, were intertwined and inserted within them so that they appeared, as it were, woven in with the spokes. Then attaching the wheels to the upper

end of poles set upright in the ground, they would leave them in this condition to live on for days. This torture, as mentioned by Gregory of Tours in his *History of the Franks*, was inflicted at Valence in Gaul upon Felix, a Priest, and Fortunatus and Achilleus, Deacons, who had been sent to Tour by St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, to preach the word of God.

We have already seen that the wheels which were used for stretching and racking the bodies of Christians, were either *pulleys* or the *wooden horse* — for by means of these instruments, which contained several small wheels, and so could be collectively spoken of as *wheels*, were the bodies of Christ's faithful servants especially torn — or else in no way differed from the wheels just described, as the *History* of St. Calliopius quoted above seems clearly to imply, for it states that he was so tightly bound to the wheel with small cords, that even before his tormentors began to revolve it, the blessed youth was mangled and torn to pieces.

Of Pulleys

Pulleys, as instruments of martyrdom, are spoken of by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* and in many *Acts* of the Saints, especially those of Saints Crispinus and Crispianus, and of St. Quintinus, a Roman citizen. Further mention is made of them by Gregory of Tours who, in his *History of the Franks*, says:

"Stretched at the pulleys, he was beaten with cudgels, rods, and double thongs"; and in another place, "He was stretched on the ground at the pulleys, and finally beaten with triple thongs;" and still further that, "The King was furious and ordered them to be stretched at the pulleys, and violently beaten ..."

A careful study of these sources will show beyond a doubt that this sort of punishment was especially employed to torture criminals and murderers. It is no surprise, then, that the true worshippers of God, fighting for His honor, were racked or drawn aloft by means of pulleys at the hands of the Heathen who, after all, accounted Christians among the most criminal of all mankind.

Pulleys — what were they?

The Pulley (as is clear from Vitruvius) was a contrivance for hauling, provided with a roller or little grooved wheel, moving on a small axle, with the pulling rope being led over it. It was used either for hoisting weights to a height and into the required positions in building, or for lowering them, or else for moving things, and lastly for drawing water from wells. Pulleys (see Isidore, *Etymologicum*) may be best described as made in the likeness of the theta, or eighth letter of the Greek alphabet [Θ] and named *trockleae* from the word *trochla*, signifying a little wheel. Some modern writers, then, err who hold the *trocklea* (pulley) to have been simply a capstan or windlass.

Granted that a pulley is incapable of tearing asunder the bodies of condemned criminals without the addition of some accompanying instrument to help, whether a stake to connect it with, or some device of one sort or another; yet must it not be concluded from this that it was a capstan, but only that it required a capstan of some kind. Inasmuch as in this form of torture the bodies of the victims were often horribly stretched and racked, it appears to us certain — especially when we consider the difficulty of tearing a man's body apart, and at the same time consider the relatively little effort exerted by the executioners — that some small engine was employed in conjunction with the pulley, such as a capstan or the like. If one reads the passages of Vitruvius referring to this subject, it will become apparent that the pulley was *not* a capstan, *nor* yet the capstan a pulley. Lastly, we should note that in the accompanying Fig. IX a capstan is illustrated along with a pulley, not to imply these were one and the same, but to show the probability that the victims, for the reason just alluded to, were torn and racked by *both* these instruments at once. We say "probability" because there are other ways in which it could be done, and very likely sometimes was.

Now the way in which Christians were tortured by the pulley is as follows. First of all, as many stakes were fixed in the earth as there were victims to be punished. This done, the appointed attendants proceeded to bind the Martyrs, sometimes by their hands, sometimes by their feet, to the ropes of the pulleys one way and to the stakes the other; then the ropes being pulled tight according to the Judges' orders, their bodies were miserably stretched and racked. All this is shown in the *Acts* of the sons of St. Symphorosa the Martyr, as well as by Gregory of Tours, in his *History of the Franks*.

Those condemned to this punishment (as we see from the *History* of the Martyrs, St. Quintinus and St. Ferutius, and other passages in Gregory of Tours already noted) were, at the same time, both racked at the pulleys and simultaneously beaten with cudgels or burned with torches — or else sprinkled with red-hot sulfur, resin, boiling oil, and the like. Thus in the *Acts* of the Blessed Quintinus we find:

"Then the Prefect, raging with despotic fury, ordered the holy Quintinus to be so cruelly racked at the pulleys that his limbs were forced to part at the joints from sheer violence. Moreover, he commanded him to be beaten with small cords, and boiling oil and pitch and melted fat to be poured over his back, so that no kind of punishment and torment available may fail to contribute to his agony. When this yielded nothing the savage Prefect Rictiovarus, to glut his mad and monstrous thirst for cruelty, further ordered burning brands to be applied."

Martyrs Hoisted up with Pulleys

Lastly we must consider that the Christian martyrs were not only *stretched and racked* with pulleys, but were also *hoisted aloft* by them in the same manner by which condemned criminals at that time, with hands tied behind their backs, were hauled up in the air by a rope in order to extort the truth from them. This kind of torment is said to have been used with the holy Martyr of Christ, St. Servus, of whom we read in the *Roman Martyrology* on December 7th:

"At Tuburbo in Africa, anniversary of the Martyr, St. Servus, who in the Vandal Persecution under the Arian heretic King Hunneric, was a long time beaten with clubs, then repeatedly hoisted aloft with pulleys, and suddenly let go with the the full weight of his body onto flint stones. Thus scarified by the sharp stones he won the palm of martyrdom."

Further details concerning the same Martyr can be found in Victor's, *The Vandal Persecution*.

Of the Press as an Instrument of Torture

The Christian Martyrs were also squeezed in Presses, much in the way that grapes and olives are pressed to extract wine and oil. It was by this method of torture that most noble soldier of Christ, St. Jonas, was martyred, of whom we read in the *Acts* of this Martyr:

"They (the Persian Magi) ordered the Press to be brought and St. Jonas to be placed within it, and violently pressed and cut to pieces. The Attendants did as they were commanded, and squeezed him mercilessly in the Press, breaking all his bones, and finally cut him in two through the middle."

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Chapter III

Of the Wooden Horse as an Instrument of Martyrdom; and Other Sorts of Bonds

That the Wooden Horse was used as an instrument of torture is alluded to both by Cicero in the *Pro Deiotaro*, the *Pro Milone*, and the *Philippics*, and by other ancient writers such as Valerius Maximus, Quintilian, Seneca, and Ammianus Marcellinus. We also encounter numerous references to it in the different *Histories* and *Acts* of the Martyrs, especially those of St. Crescentianus, Sts. Dorothy, Agatha, and Eulalia, Virgins and Martyrs, Sts. Felix and Fortunatus, Sts. Alexander and Bassus, Bishops and Martyrs — not to mention countless others of either sex. In addition to these writers and the *Lives of Saints*, we find mention of the Wooden Horse made by St. Cyprian, in his *Epistle to Donatus* and elsewhere, by St. Jerome, St. Augustine, Eusebius, Isidore, and others — as well as by Prudentius, repeatedly, in his *Hymns*.

All these agree that the Horse was an ancient instrument of torture that was used for *forcing the truth* from suspected or guilty persons. Cicero, for example, in his *Pro Deiotaro*, writes:

"By the custom of our ancestors a slave may bring no charge against his master, even under examination by torture, when pain can force the truth from the most unwilling witness. Yet such was the duress brought to bear on this slave that the man whom he could not so much as name when on the horse, he openly accused once set free." And again, "To elicit facts, the horse is the proper place; to discuss points of law, the Court."

The same may be gathered from what Ammianus Marcellinus says:

"Though he stood bent double under the wooden horse, yet he persisted in a stubborn and uncompromising denial."

Apart from being used as a means of extricating the *truth* from those accused of crimes, the wooden horse, we find, was equally used as a means for torturing men and cruelly racking them to the end of *punishment* — as was plainly the case with the Christian martyrs. Accordingly we find frequent mention made of this instrument in the *Histories* in such recurring phrases as, "he was tortured on the horse", "suspended on the horse", "hoisted on to the horse", "put on the horse", etc.

With regard to the use of the wooden horse as an instrument of torture, the various writers are all agreed — but not so concerning its precise description and exact form. For some have declared in so many words that it was a red-hot plate of metal; others a sort of rack by means of which a man was suspended with hands tied above his head and with heavy weights attached to both feet.

Others again, Sigonius among them, and many religious authors who have followed him, hold it to have been a sort of wooden framework provided with pulleys and adapted, alternately, for stretching and relaxing, and intended for torturing people and compelling them to tell the truth about some circumstance:

"Now the nature of this torture," he says, "was as follows. After binding the arms and legs of the person to be tortured to this frame by means of small thongs known as fiddle strings, they then extended the framework and set it upright, so that the victim found himself suspended upon it, as on a cross. This done, they proceeded in the first place to force apart all the joints and articulations of his limbs; then they placed red-hot plates close to his body, and last of all tore his sides with two-pronged iron hooks ..."

On the contrary, others maintain that it was merely a wooden contrivance fashioned something like a horse (as we will explain further on), having two channeled wheels, or pulleys, fixed at either end in hollows made to receive them, and capable of being revolved upon their pins or axles. Over these, ropes were led in such a way that accused persons could be fastened to them, and so tortured through being racked and stretched.

These, then, are the various opinions held by different writers concerning the Wooden Horse. Given this diversity of opinion, we can only arrive at a genuine understanding of the actual nature of this device if the evidence is very carefully considered. Upon examining the first of these opinions, we find it the least compelling. For how can we suppose the "horse" itself to have been a red-hot plate, when we read in almost any *History* of the Martyrs, as well as in the works of other ancient authors, of men being *first hoisted on* the horse and once there, *then* being burned with red-hot plates?

The second and third opinions concerning the nature and construction of this device, can also be conclusively discredited. How possibly can the facts that our predecessors have presented in their writings about the wooden horse be made to accord with these conjectures? They cannot. Indeed,

we will now demonstrate that the last quoted opinion alone authentically accords with the facts. This view may be restated for the sake of clarity as such:

The "horse" in antiquity was an engine of wood fashioned to resemble a real horse, having two small, channeled wheels, or pulleys, situated at both ends which were hollowed out to receive them. Over the axles of these wheels or pulleys, ropes were led, and the wheels revolved, by which means the person tied to them was racked and stretched in various directions.

To understand this more clearly, let us examine how the ancients constructed this device we call the wooden horse. To begin with, they prepared a straight beam of wood of a convenient length and breadth; into the two ends of this, which they had previously hollowed out somewhat, they attached small channeled wheels that turned upon axles. In order to raise the entire device above the ground, they used four other pieces of timber, shorter and thinner than the first, which they then fastened with iron nails near the four corners, and so constructed a mechanical device standing on four legs and somewhat resembling a real horse.

Once completed, the victim to be tortured was placed upon its back and had his two legs forcibly drawn apart. The tormentors then took ropes, one binding the tied the man's feet, and the other his hands after they had twisted the latter behind him. Next, leading these ropes over the small wheels or pulleys and carrying them to a small device much like a winch or windlass (we conjecture) that was attached to the "horse's legs, they wound the ropes around it and turning it round, drew the bonds taut in such a way that the man, tied with his back to the horse's back and his face looking skywards, was then stretched along with them. Thus they would continue turning the winch, drawing the ropes tighter and tighter, until every limb was strained and every joint dislocated.

Eventually they would either leave him in this condition, or else at a sign from the Judge relax the ropes and let him drop and hang bent under the horse's belly, to increase his pain. Then the Judge, sufficiently assured that the pain inflicted would induce the truth that would either convict or acquit the prisoner, would proceed to question and cross-question him rigorously of his complicity in the matter in question. However, if the victim was still resolute in holding out and defied the magistrate's expectations, he would then order hot plates to be brought, or iron claws, hooks and the like, to inflict greater pain still, in the hope of yet eliciting the truth.

So much, then, for the shape, construction, and purposes of the wooden horse. It is only left now to confirm the explanation we have given in each and every particular by other considerations and the evidence provided by ancient authors.

In the first place, that this device made from wood was made in the likeness of a real horse is clear from the very name given it: "the horse" (*equuleus*) [literally, "little horse" in Latin]. Moreover, to this day many sorts of benches and other articles of furniture that are raised up from the ground on four legs are called "horses." Again, the language employed by many ancient writers shows clearly that in speaking of prisoners being set on the wooden instrument, they had in their mind the mounting of actual, live horses. Thus Cicero, in the *Tusculan Orations*, [actually, Cicero's "Disputations"]

"They mount the wooden horse," "Trying to get on the horse's back."

So again the poet Pomponius writes:

"And when I had leapt" (a word properly used of anyone mounting a horse) "on the back of the pulley horse, I was tortured full-trot," — (after mounting the horse with the channeled wheels, I was tortured at a great pace, that is to say, by means of the ropes and pulleys provided for that purpose.)

So, too, we routinely read in descriptions of the Blessed Martyrs' sufferings — particularly in that of Saints Abundius and Abundantius — that the Christians were *hoisted on the horse* to be tortured. It is perfectly plain, then, that the horse was a device of wood made in the likeness of a horse, and nothing else whatever.

Lastly, this view would seem to be strongly corroborated by St. Jerome in his, *Epistle to the Innocents*, and Seneca, of whom the former writes that persons tortured on the wooden horse kept their eyes turned heavenwards, the latter that they lay extended full length on it. Thus St. Jerome says:

"Although his body was stretched upon the horse, his eyes — the only part of him the tormentor could not bind — gazed up to heaven;"

And Seneca:

"You actually try to persuade us it makes no matter whether a man be full of joy or be lying on the horse."

If therefore, as it is said here, prisoners lay on the wooden horse and looked up to heaven, it is more likely this instrument was constructed like a horse than otherwise.

Again, the fact that the horse was fitted with little channeled wheels, or pulleys, may be concluded from the verses of the ancient poet Pomponius previously quoted, as appears to be the case from the facts and explanations we have given above.

That victims were hoisted up on the horse, with their arms twisted behind their back and their legs bound to the instrument with cords, which themselves were led over small devices that were essentially pulleys, and so stretched and torn asunder — this, I repeat, may be proved from many and various passages, particularly in Eusebius' *History* where he says:

"For in the first place some were suspended with hands tied behind them to the wood, and by means of certain engines all their limbs stretched and strained apart ..."

Further, that this is to be understood of the wooden horse, is indicated in the passage which immediately follows:

"Next, at the magistrates' command were they terribly racked in their whole body by the tormentors, and not only their sides, as is commonly done with murderers, but their stomach also, as well as their shins and knees were beaten with iron scourges or claws."

Moreover the evidence can be yet further corroborated by another passage from St. Jerome's *Epistle to the Innocents*, where he writes:

"But indeed the woman was stronger than her sex, and although the horse was racking her body, while her hands, stained with the filth of the prison, were bound with cords behind her, yet with her eyes ..."

This can also be further adduced from Prudentius' *Hymn on the Martyrdom of St. Vincent*, in which the Tyrant addresses the tormentors:

*Vinctum retortis brachiis
Sursum et deorsum extendite,
Compago donec ossium
Divulsa membratim crepet.*

("Go bind the man with arms twisted behind the back, and rack him up and down, until the framework of his bones crack, as he is torn limb from limb.")

And again from the account of St. Romanus, where the indomitable Martyr speaks from the horse's back:

*Miserum putatis. quod retortis pendeo
Extensus ulnis, pod revelluntur pedes.
Compago nervis quod sonat crepantibus.*

("You deem me unhappy, because I hang stretched here with elbows twisted behind me, because my legs are drawn asunder and all my frame cracks as the sinews are racked.")

From all these passages it plainly follows, in our opinion, that prisoners were bound hand and foot with cords, the hands being twisted behind the back, and by the revolution of certain small contrivances through which the ropes passed, were racked limb by limb and and torn apart.

That the horse was provided with devices of the nature of pulleys, may be further corroborated from what Vitruvius the architect says in his works [*De Architectura libri decem*] when treating of the use of pulleys and other instruments for hauling, such as the capstan and windlass. He lays it down that a running rope after being led over a pulley must, if weights are to be lifted or shifted, be carried eventually to some engine of the windlass kind.

The fact that victims lay stretched full length on the horse with face turned upward, while the ropes were being pulled taut, is shown vividly by the passages quoted from St. Jerome and Seneca; but there is one other point that should be noted (as we are advised in the *Epistle* of St. Jerome), to wit, that in order to further increase the torment, the executioners sometimes fastened the hair of women undergoing the punishment of the horse to its wooden frame. Little wonder that this intensified the pain, for when the ropes were slackened by the tormentors, and the

victims fell under the horse's belly (as we will soon see from the account of Ammianus Marcellinus) with bodies hanging bent in a curve, the hair was bound to be strained and dragged out of the scalp, to the extreme torment of the woman.

That victims fell underneath the instrument with bodies hanging bent when the tightened ropes were slackened, is attested to, among other authors, by Ammianus Marcellinus, who writes:

"He delivered up many innocent persons to the tormentors, and put them to hang with bodies bent underneath the horse," and again (as already quoted), "Although he remained with his body bent underneath the horse, he still persisted in a stubborn and uncompromising denial."

Now in these passages, and particularly the latter, did the author mean to imply that the ropes were slackened in order to *increase* the pain, or was it done to the end of diminishing and *relieving* it? The first is our own opinion, whereas the second is maintained by Sigonius and his followers. Sigonius holds that the ancients relaxed the ropes by which the bodies of prisoners were stretched on the horse, for the purpose of relieving the pain. Accordingly he writes:

"Even as the horse, or rather the strings upon it were drawn tight in order to increase pain, so were these relaxed again to relieve it ..."

To substantiate this practice, he quotes the following from Valerius Maximus:

"When Zeno was being tortured by Nearchus the Tyrant, he [Zeno] declared that there was something of benefit for the other [the Tyrant] to hear privately; then when the horse was slackened, he caught the tyrant's ear between his teeth and bit it off;"

And again in another place,

"Hieronymus the Tyrant exhausted the efforts of the tormentors, which were of no avail; for he broke the scourges, loosened the cords, relaxed the horse and put out the red-hot plates, before he could compel the other to reveal his confederates in tyrannicide."

Another point is to be noted. This slackening of the ropes clearly implies what we had stated at the beginning of the chapter concerning the wooden horse: that it was raised somewhat from the ground in all parts. It follows, then, that Prudentius, in his *Hymn* on the Martyrdom of St. Romanus, represents that soldier of Christ crying out from the horse as from the top of an elevated structure:

Audite cuncti: clamo longe, ac praedico,

Emito vocem de catasta celsior

(Hear all men: I cry aloud and proclaim my tidings, I utter my voice, lifted high on this scaffold.)

***Fidiculae* — What did Those in Antiquity Understand by the Word**

Signonius, in a passage quoted above, states that in his opinion these were the thongs or bands by which the prisoner's limbs were bound to the wooden horse, and that to speak of criminals as being tortured with the *fidiculae* is the same thing as saying they were attached by these thongs to the horse, and afterwards all the joints of their bones stretched and dragged apart to their extreme agony. However, there are too many considerations that convince us beyond a doubt that the scholars who hold this view are mistaken.

St. Isidore, for example, declares in no uncertain terms that *fidiculae* were not thongs at all, but rather iron claws or hooks by which those condemned to torture were lacerated. This agrees with what Prudentius says in his *Hymn* of St. Romanus the Martyr, where he speaks of *fidiculae* as if they were types of claws or hooks. These are the words, Prudentius tells us, spoken by Asclepias the Judge:

Vertat ictum carnifex

In os loquentis inque maxillas manuum,

Sulcosque actuos, et fidiculas transferat,

Verbositatis ut rumpatur locus.

("Let the executioner aim a blow at the speaker's lips, and strike his jaws with sharp cuts and *iron claws*, to the end that the place from which the words come may be destroyed.")

That by *fidiculae* here Asclepias meant claws, is made clear by the verses the author immediately subjoins:

Implet jubentis dicta lictor improbus

Charaxat ambas unguis scribentibus

Genas, cruentis et secat faciem rotis:

Hirsuta barbrissolvitur carptim cutis,

Et mentum adusque vultus omnis scinditur.

("The cruel *lictor* [the bodyguard of a Roman magistrate] obeys the Judge's orders; he marks both his cheeks with the writing of the iron claws, and ploughs his face with bloodstained wheels. The skin and the beard that roughens it are flayed away in patches, the chin and all the features are lacerated.")

On the other hand, the historian Suetonius in *De Vita Caesarum* seems to contradict this view in a passage where the *fidiculae* are spoken of, apparently, as quite a different form of punishment:

"He had devised yet another method of torture; after treacherously inducing his victims to drink long and heavily, he would suddenly have their privates tied up, so that they suffered agonies both from the constriction of the strings (*fidiculae*) and the distension of their bladders by the accumulated urine."

But without disputing Suetonius's authority, it may be conceded that what he describes here is something altogether different from what is recorded as to *fidiculae* in the *Histories* of the Blessed Martyrs and the other authorities quoted.

However, with regard to what we said above concerning other kinds of tortures in which

prisoners were stretched on the wooden horse and tormented, it should be noted that our ancestors often stretched a person on the horse, and then by means of *fidiculae* or iron claws tore at his limbs, or else burned them with red-hot plates of metal, or the like. This is to be found recorded in several collections of *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs, and particularly in St. Cyprian's *Epistle to Donatus*, where he writes:

"The spear was there, and the sword, and the executioner standing ready, the iron claw that mangles and scrapes the sides, the horse that stretches the limbs, and the fire that burns — many kinds of torments for one poor human body!"

And again in another place:

"But soon the hard-hearted Judge's cruelty was roused anew, and the victim, already worn out with pain, was again torn by the lash, beaten by the cudgels, racked on the horse, lacerated by the iron claw and scorched by the flames."

So too St. Augustine writes in his *Epistle to Marcellinus*:

"When, I ask, did you drag forth confession of such heinous crimes, not by the horse that stretches the limbs, nor the iron claws that mangle or the flames that burn, but by mere blows of the lash?"

Likewise Cicero, *In Verrem*:

"But what when fire and red-hot plates and the rest of the torturer's contrivances were brought in?" and in the *Philippics*: "Call up before your eyes bonds and lashes, the horse, the executioner, and grim Samarius the torturer."

Similarly Seneca:

"And all his apparatus of cruelty must be paid back to him, his horses and his iron claws, his fetters and crosses, his stakes and fires, and the hook that drags the mangled corpse from the arena."

Also Ammianus Marcellinus:

"The horses were stretched ready, and the executioner was fitting his hooks and preparing his instruments of torture."

It only remains to quote a few verses from the *Hymns* of Prudentius illustrating the same point. From the *Hymn* of St. Vincent, Martyr:

*Extorque si potes, fidem
Tormenta, carcer, ungulae,
Stridensque flammis lamina,
Atque ipsa poenarum ultima*

Mors Chistianis ludus est.

("Rob me of my faith, if you can. Tortures, prison, iron claws, the red-hot plate crackling with flames, and death itself, the last of punishments, all are but sport to Christian men.")

And a little further on in the same:

*Ridebat haec miles Dei,
Manus cruentas increpans
Quod fixa non profundius
Intraret artus ungula.*

("All this God's champion made mock of, clapping his bleeding hands, laughing because the hook that pierced his flesh ate not more deeply in.")

Likewise from the *Hymn* of St. Romanus, the Martyr:

*Amor coronae poenae praevenit trucem
Lictoris artem, sponte nudas offerens
Costas bisulcis excecandas ungulis.*

("Love of the crown of martyrdom forestalls the savage skill of the torturer, [the martyr] willingly offering naked flanks to be lacerated by the two-pronged hooks.")

And again in the same:

*Non unguarum tanta vis latus fodit
Mucrone, quanta dira pulsat pleuris:
Nec sic inusta laminis ardet cutis,
Ut febris atro fele venas exedit.*

"Not so sharp do the iron claws tear the side with their keen points, as pleurisy does when it makes its dread attack; not so hot the fiery plates burn and scorch the skin, as fever and black bile when they consume the veins.")

From all these passages, therefore, it very clearly appears that the view we have adopted concerning the "horse" is, in fact, the correct one; that is to say, that it was a mechanical device constructed of wood wrought in the likeness of a real horse — and not as Sigonius mistakes it, as being merely a sort of scaffold or platform. For, if it were the latter, how could the poet Pomponius, cited above, have spoken of prisoners *leaping on the horse*, and Cicero have used words of the same implication? Or how could Ammianus Marcellinus have described men being racked on the horse, and then when the ropes by which they were bound were slackened, immediately falling underneath it with the body hanging bent in a curve and not extended straight?

We must now look into Sigonius' reasons and clarify our refutation of them. His first point is that Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*), when mentioning the horse, implies that it was some sort of scaffold or platform of wood that was generally used to raise something aloft. His words are:

"But when these cruel and tyrannical forms of torture, by reason of the Saints' holy patience, which was confirmed by Christ's merits, seemed to have been applied and inflicted in vain, the devil devised new contrivances against them. For this reason they were thrown into dungeons, and lay miserably in places dark and gloomy and full of every horror, while sometimes their feet were fixed in heavy stocks and stretched wide apart, even as far as the fifth hole."

This shows the horse, Sigonius adds, to have been a wooden platform, on which the bodies of criminals were stretched. Other passages he relies on are from Sozomen's *History*, where, speaking of Busiris, a Christian from the Galatian town of Ancyra who was crucified for the Faith at Myros, a city of Phrygia, under the Emperor Julian the Apostate, he writes:

"So when they had brought him to the beam of torment, he ordered this to be raised aloft," and again, "From among the Christians which had been cast into prison he selected first a young man named Theodore, and bound him to the stake on which punishments were usually inflicted, where he was mangled with iron claws for a long time".

Similarly Prudentius — not to quote a second time the verses from his Hymn on the martyrdom of St. Romanus, where he makes that Saint speak of *uttering his voice from on high on the scaffold* — says of a martyr:

*"Scindunt utrumque milites teterrim
Mucrone bisulco pensilis latus viri."*

("The savage soldiers cut open with a two-edged sword either side of the man as he hung there.")

These are the main citations to which Sigonius and those who are in agreement with him appeal, and which we now must refute. It is clear to us that Sigonius has confused the wooden horse on the one hand, with the wooden platform or scaffold upon which criminals were set to be tortured on the other; and also with the heavy fetters or stocks in which jailed prisoners had their legs fixed and stretched asunder to the fourth or fifth hole, and so kept in constant pain.

Moreover it may be noted that this word *platform* has yet another meaning, signifying sometimes, though less properly, a device like a long and large set of stocks in which slaves were kept shackled when exposed for sale. It is also used on occasions to mean the frame or gridiron upon which St. Lawrence and other martyrs died. So Prudentius, in his *Hymn* on St. Lawrence, sings:

*Postquam vapor diutius
Decoxit exustum latus,
Ultero et catasta Judicem
Compellat affatu brevi:
Converte partem corporis,
Satis crematus jugiter.*

("When the heat had long been scorching and roasting the one side, accosting the Judge from the frame — that is from the iron gridiron — the Martyr said shortly and briefly: Turn my body now over the other side; this one is burned enough and to spare.")

But it is obvious that the true and general meaning of the word *platform* or *scaffold* pertained to a raised place upon which people were lifted up so that their tortures might be better seen by those present, and that Sigonius' understanding of the word *horse*, confused the two things, considering them the same.

One word more concerning the sort of shackles or stocks into which prisoners were set in jail with their legs parted to the fourth or fifth hole, and so kept for periods of prolonged torment. Clearly this instrument can in no way be considered the same as the wooden horse, as has been maintained, for various reasons. First, because by the operation of the former, the bodies of men were made *broader*, whereas by the latter, as we find stated by Seneca, *longer*. Secondly, it is plain that the former punishment was only used in the jail (as we shall soon see when we come to bonds and fetters), while the latter, on the contrary, and as countless *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs bear witness, was used outside the prison walls, and most generally in the public places of cities. Thirdly, on the horse not only were the legs of the victim racked and stretched prior to mangling by the iron claws, but the *entire body*. In the stocks, on the other hand, the legs alone were drawn asunder. All this suffices to show that *shackles* or *stocks* were something entirely different from the *wooden horse*.

Of Many Different Ways by which the Bodies of the Prisoners were Racked and Stretched

It had long been the practice of the ancients to rack and stretch the bodies of accused persons in several ways: by means of the horse, by pulleys, or by hanging them up with heavy weights attached to the feet — and by other methods as well, such as mangling with claws and iron combs and similar instruments, or by burning them with red-hot plates. These tortures were effected in different ways as well, either by hoisting the victims on the wooden horse, or suspending them in any of the different ways described in Chapter I, where we found that they were tied to stakes, trees, or pillars.

Of How People were Bound to the Wooden Horse, and how they were Suspended as from an Elevated Beam; also the True Significance of Being Hanged on the Horse

Again and again we read in accounts of the passions of the Blessed Martyrs words of the following sort: "The Martyr was hanged on a horse"— by which many assumed (as we had mentioned above) that the *horse* was not framed to resemble a real horse, but was, in fact, something different. When we carefully examine the works of ancient authors, however, we find that this word "*hanged*" also signified simply being *raised* or *lifted up* to any place. To speak, then, of a Martyr's being *hanged* on the horse is the same thing as saying that he was simply *lifted up* upon it. Hence it is that in reading the *Histories* of the Saints who have won the Crown of Martyrdom, we find the Judge or Emperor who is ordering someone to be tortured on the horse using words such as these: "Let the man be hoisted on the horse, and there racked." For example, in the *Acts* of the most Blessed Saints Abundius, Priest, and Abundantius, Deacon, we read the following: "Then Diocletian commanded them to be hoisted on the horse and tortured

for a long time; and when they were being so tortured ..." To be hanged on the horse, then, means nothing more nor less than simply to be lifted up and placed upon it.

This is also confirmed in the *Histories* of Sts. Regina and Marguerite, Virgins and Martyrs, for at the beginning we find written, "Marguerite was hanged on the horse", while a little further on it is added, "After many days the people again came together and she was brought before the Judge, and scorning to make sacrifice to idols, she was again hoisted on the horse ..."

This is not to say that on occasion the martyrs actually hanged suspended from the horse to which they were bound, for when the ropes by which they were tied were slackened, they would fall underneath the horse's belly with bodies bent in a curve, as we mentioned earlier. Thus they did not hang straight down from the instrument, as persons hanged usually do, but with their bodies bent underneath it — something amply referred to by Ammianus Marcellinus in many passages that we have already quoted.

Of Stretching or Extending the Wooden Horse

Mention is sometimes found in Ammianus and other writers of the horse being stretched and again relaxed. This of course is to be understood not of the engine itself, but of the ropes by which the victim to be tortured was bound to it, inasmuch as when these ropes were drawn tight or slackened, the horse itself appeared in a way to be extended and again relaxed.

Why the Wooden Horse was Called a Post, and in Other Places a Cross

The material of the wooden horse (as already stated) was formed of an oblong *post* or beam of timber, supported on four other pieces or legs. This is referred to by St. Jerome, *Epistle to the Innocents*, in these words: "Her hair was fastened to the post, and her whole body bound to the horse; then a fire was brought near her feet, and at the same moment the executioner tore both her sides ..." In the same way Prudentius speaks of the horse simply as the accursed *post* in his *Hymn* of St. Romanus the Martyr, where he says:

*Incensus his Asclepiades jusserat
Eviscerandum corpru equulleo minus
Pendere, et uncis unguisque crescere.*

("Angered by the words, Asclepiades had ordered his body to hang aloft in order to be mangled on the horse, and to endure the hooks and iron claws.")

And a few lines further down:

*Jubet amoveri noxialem stipitem
Plebeia clara poena ne damnet virum.*

("He commands the accursed *post* to be removed, to save the noble victim from so plebeian a doom.")

Neither is this the only other name given the wooden horse, for we find it also called *mala mansio*, or "bad quarters." [Literally, a bad, or evil, dwelling or place] Again, it is sometimes spoken of as a cross; thus in the *Acts* of St. Dorothy, Virgin and Martyr, among the holy days of the month of February, we find written, concerning a certain Theophilus who was tortured on the wooden horse, "Now behold! I am a Christian; for have I not been hanged upon the cross" — that is to say the wooden horse. For this same horse has a certain likeness to the cross.

It is no wonder it was so called, for in the first place we read of other sorts of instruments of torture also being called crosses; and secondly, because the bodies of those tortured upon them would be stretched out like those of persons crucified; and finally, because the wooden posts which represented the horse's legs, besides being nailed to the main timber, were also joined to one another and connected by cross pieces, although they were wide apart nearer the ground, and inasmuch as they did, each pair of posts formed, as it were, the two arms of a cross.

One more quotation should suffice this topic. Sozomen, speaking of a Christian named Busiris, writes:

"So taking him to the public place where the wooden horse was, he ordered him to be hanged up aloft upon it. Whereupon Busiris, lifting his hands to his head, stripped bare his own sides, and addressing the Governor, said there was no call for the *lictors* to take needless pains in lifting him up on to the horse and then again removing him to the ground ..."

This passage further corroborates our earlier explanation as to what the wooden horse really was, and that is to say, a mechanical device [constructed of wood, elevated on four legs, with ropes, pulleys, and a winch] made in the likeness of a live horse, upon which the Martyrs were lifted up to be tortured, and not a mere platform or scaffold.

Of the Stocks and Different other Methods of Biding Prisoners Securely

We have already made a distinction between the wooden horse and the stocks in which Martyrs were kept in torment with their legs forced apart to the fourth or fifth hole. we must now endeavor to make a distinction between different types of *bonds* that were used by the ancients, namely the *stocks*, *thongs*, *chains*, *shackles*, *fetters*, *manacles*, *neck collars*, and *the jail*. Plautus enumerates these in his play, the *Asinaria*:

Advorsum stimulos, laminas, crucesque, compedesque, Nervos, catenas, carceres, numellas, pedicas, boias. ("Against scourges and red-hot plates, against the cross and the stocks, against thongs, chains, prisons, shackles, fetters, and neck collars.")

Of the Stocks

By "stocks" we understand a device made of wood, into which the legs of prisoners and criminals were placed to be constrained, constricted, and confined. Both Plautus and Terence, among ancient writers, make mention of this device:

Plautus in the *Captivi*, says:

Ubi ponderosas crassas capiat compedes
("When he is set in the heavy ponderous stocks")

Terence makes mention of it in the *Phormio*:

Molendum usque in pistrino, vapulandum habendae compedes ("We must grind for ever in the mill, and be beat, and endure the stocks").

Horace again mentions something about it in his *Epodes*:

Ibericis peruste funibus latus
Et crura dura compede.
("You whose side is chafed with Iberian bonds, and your legs galled by the rough timbers of the stocks.")

And again in the *Epistles*:

... Argentum tollas licet, in manicis et
Compedibus salvo te sub custode tenebo.
("Yes! You may take the money, but I will keep you manacled and in the stocks under a hard taskmaster.")

It was in these sort of stocks that the Blessed Martyrs were cruelly tormented; for (as we see in the passages quoted above) after scourging and scarifying with iron claws, their legs were stretched and forcibly drawn apart even to the fourth or fifth hole of this instrument. Of this Prudentius speaks in one of his Hymns:

In hoc barathrum conjicit
Truculentus hostis martyrem,
Lignoque plantas inserit,
Divaricatis cruribus.
("Into this dungeon the truculent tyrant threw the martyr, and, forcing his legs apart, inserted his feet in the stocks.")

It also seems clear from what Eusebius says that when so set in the stocks, they were necessarily compelled to lie flat on their backs on a wooden board. He writes:

"Some, moreover, after scourging, were set in the stocks and their legs forced one from the other as far as four holes apart, in such a way that they were necessarily compelled to lie on their back on the wood, although they could not do so without great difficulty, since their entire bodies were covered with fresh wounds inflicted by the lash."

The Shackles

These too are mentioned in the lines just quoted from the *Asinaria* of Plautus; and are described this way by Nonius:

"The shackle is a species of wooden contrivance formerly employed for torturing criminals by the ancients, the victim's neck and feet being both inserted therein ..."

That is to say, it was a wooden instrument with round holes, into which the feet and neck of prisoners were inserted, and fixed there in such a way that they could not withdraw them again.

Our own belief, however, is that by the word *shackle* the ancients actually signified **several different sorts of bonds**. We are led to this conclusion by the words of Sextus Pompeius, who speaks of shackles in these terms:

"The shackle is a sort of bond or fastening wherewith four-footed beasts are secured; it is made of a thong or a strip of raw ox-hide, as a general rule."

This so clearly differs from Nonius' account, that, unless we are prepared to maintain that one or both were mistaken, we must conclude the same word to have been applied with two different meanings.

Of Thongs

These are mentioned by Plautus in the *Captivi*:

Nam noctu nervo vinctus custodibitur.

("For at night-time he shall be kept guarded and bound with a thong")

And in the *Curculio*:

Atque ita te nervo torquebo, ibidem ut catapultae solent ("And I will wrench your limbs with a thong, even as the catapults are used to do"); and in other passages as well. Likewise St. Cyprian, in his *Epistles to Clergy and People*, says, speaking of Celerinus: "For nineteen days he was shut up in prison, bound with thongs and iron bands ..."

But Sextus Pompeius adds something more to his description of the thong, saying, "We likewise give this name to an iron fetter for the feet, though Plautus speaks of it as used also for the neck."

From the various sources of information that we have gathered, then, the following definition seems most suitable: "*A thong is a species of bond used for securing the feet or neck.*" Hence the saying of Cato recorded by Aulus Gellius: "Thieves guilty of private thefts pass their days in confinement by thong and fetters, public robbers in purple and gold. "

Of Fetters

Fetters were nooses by which the feet of prisoners or criminals were secured, and called so because they confine the feet, just as manacles, or handcuffs, are so called because they imprison the hands.

Of Manacles

Manacles are bands for the hands; as the Psalm [149.8] declares: "For binding their kings in fetters and their princes in bands of iron."

Plautus again in his *Mostellaria* writes:

Ut cum extemplo vocem

Continuo exiliatis, manicas celeriter connectite

("So that the moment I call, you may instantly spring forth; then quickly fasten the manacles together.")

And in the *Captivi*:

Injicite huic actutum manicas mastigiaie

("Go, put manacles instantly on this scoundrel here").

Also Virgil in the Second *Aeneid*, tells us that:

Ipsē viro primus manicas, atque arcta levari

Vincla jubet Priamus ("King Priam himself is the first to bid release the man from his manacles and constraining bonds.")

And this is not to mention a number of other authors, whom, for the sake of brevity, we must refrain from quoting.

The English heretics at this present moment (1591) are vigorously engaged in pursuing a course of cruelly afflicting Catholics by means of iron *manacles*, or *handcuffs* as they call them.

Using this sort of instrument, a man is hung up and tortured, his two hands being put through an iron ring toothed inside, and violently squeezed. Indeed, so fierce and intense is the pain that unless the back is allowed to lean somewhat against a wall and the tips of the toes to touch the floor, the man will fall helplessly into a dead faint. If you wish to learn more of these atrocities, read Father Sanders' Work on the *Anglican Schism*, in which the author calls this kind of torture the *iron gauntlets*. And now to proceed to other instruments of torture.

Of Neck Collars

These may be described as follows: Neck-collars were a sort of neck-band for condemned criminals, made either of wood or iron, which enclosed their necks firmly, much as the yoke upon oxen.

But there were other sorts of neck-collars as well, differing from those just described, and yet of the same nature, and generally also called *collars*, which Nonius thus defines as follows: "The collar is any sort of bond whereby the neck is constrained." So in Lucilius we find, "That with manacles, leash, and collar, I may fetch home the fugitive." Indeed these neck-collars, as is plainly shown in the *Acts* of St. Balbina and of Pope Alexander, were largely employed among men of earlier days for binding and making fast the necks of prisoners and criminals. So we read:

"Soon, kissing the neck-collars of the most glorious Martyr, Pope Alexander, that Blessed Martyr of Christ, St. Balbina, heard these words pronounced: 'Cease, daughter, to salute these collars, and go seek instead the bonds of my master, St. Peter...'"

Hence it would seem these last were something of the same nature; and indeed when the bonds are examined, which are preserved to this day in the Church of *St. Peter ad Vincula* at Rome, by which that Holy Apostle of Christ was bound, they will be found to include a round iron collar for the securing of the Martyr's neck.

Of Chains

A chain is an iron bond by which slaves or prisoners are made fast to hinder their escaping. Thus Livy the Historian, writing of the first years after the foundation of Rome:

"Turnus, awaking from sleep, found himself surrounded by guards. His slaves were seized, who for love of their master were preparing to resist, swords being produced from all corners of the refuge. There could be no longer any doubt, and Turnus was loaded with chains."

Also Cicero, *In Verrem*, writes that, "The miscreant orders chains to be bound upon unfortunate and innocent men" — apart from other writers who make similar references.

Moreover we read again and again in the *Acts* of the Saints that in the days of persecution the Christians were bound with iron chains. We find reference to this, among others, in the *History* of St. Anastasia, a Roman Martyr, Saint Febronia, Virgin and Martyr, St. Chrysanthus, and many other Saints and Martyrs of either sex.

What is more, if anyone wishes to learn more about the manner in which prisoners were bound with chains in antiquity, he can still find such representations to this day carved and cut on the Arch of the Emperor Constantine. There he will see a number of captives so confined.

Of Prisons or Jails

A prison or jail is a place wherein criminals are kept guarded, and to which they are confined against their own free will. The first prison at Rome was built by King Ancus Martius [circa 640-616 BC], as Livy tells us:

"Likewise the pit or dungeon of the *Quirites* [the citizens of Rome at large]— no insignificant structure as viewed from the more level ground — is the work of King Ancus. The state having largely increased in prosperity, and, as was to be expected with so numerous a population, the distinctions of right and wrong being grown confused and crimes of fraud and stealth becoming frequent, a jail was built to deter the increasing lawlessness, in the midmost of the city, looking over the forum itself."

There were two different methods of guarding prisoners among the ancients, to wit, the *public jail* and the *private house*. Confined to the latter were persons accused prior to their confession or conviction. This was spoken of as *free custody*, when persons were entrusted to the custody of magistrates at their own house, or to that of private noblemen. Thus Livy, speaking of the Judge of the Bacchanalia, writes:

"The Consul begs his father-in-law to clear a part of his house, that Hispala might be lodged there ..." Then, a few lines further on, "The Consuls ordered the *Curule Aediles* [minor patrician magistrates] to seek out all his priests, arrest them, and keep them for future examination in free confinement."

The same thing again is implied in what Sallust says, writing of the Catilinarian conspiracy:

"The Senate decreed that the Magistracy be abolished, and Lentulus and the rest of the confederates be kept in free custody. Accordingly Lentulus was delivered over to Publius Lentulus Spinther, who was Aedile at the time, Cethegus to Quintus Cornificius."

These passages clearly confirm what we say, to wit, that accused persons, prior to the confession of their crimes, had been entrusted by the ancients to what was known as *free custody*, whereas after confession or conviction they were cast into the common jail. This is corroborated by writers on Roman Law, such as Venuleus, who says:

"An accused person who has confessed, pending the pronouncement of his sentence, must be cast into the public prison;"

And Scaevola:

"An accused person who had confessed was, merely on the strength of his confession, thrown into prison."

Christ's faithful followers, then, in times of persecution, were not only shut up in the Tullianum and the Mamertine prisons, but were also often detained under military guard at the houses of private individuals. Evidence of this can be found in the Histories of the Blessed Martyrs, especially by those of Saints Stephen and Alexander, Roman Pontiffs.

Of Other Sorts of Bonds

Among these may be included leashes or lashes, that were employed to bind prisoners. Hence the name *lashers*, often mentioned in Plautus, was applied to those whose duty it was to bind or to beat with lashes any of their fellow-slaves at the direction of their masters. The same title was also often given to the *lictors* and magistrates' officers who attended them when on duty in their provinces, and who bore the fasces before them.

Of the Wooden Horse, or Rack, used by the Heretics upon Catholics; of their Imprisonments and Different Types of Tortures by which Prisoners were Afflicted

The Heretics of this present time (1591) in England (as Sanders' *Origin and Progress of the Anglican Schism*, his *Theatre of Heretic Cruelties*, and a work entitled *On the Anglican Persecution*, amply testify) have tortured a number of priests, including Fathers Campion, a Religious of the Society of Jesus, Sherwin, Briant, Janson, Bosgrave, and others, to the tearing apart of all their limbs, and nearly to death itself, by means of an instrument called by themselves *the wooden horse*, or the *rack*.

This sort of torture, as we have already seen, involves stretching a man out on his back and binding his hands and feet joint by joint, after which the ropes are gradually drawn taut through the use of pulleys or wheels until all his limbs are eventually dislocated. This agonizing and monstrous torment is used by the Heretics of our own day upon Catholics whom they have cast into prison, which we find described in the book, *A Trophy of the English Church*.

They also continue to use other methods for torturing these prisoners, sometimes driving iron pricks and long needles under their finger-nails, or (as is related of a priest in the work quoted just above) tying them feet uppermost to wooden posts and leaving them situated in this way until they are suffocated by the stench of their own excrements. At other times they enclose them in an instrument of iron which squeezes a man together, making him round like a ball, and will leave him confined in this way for hours at a time. Others are forcibly dragged from prison and violently brought before assemblies of heretic ministers, while still others are bound in pairs together with chains (see again Sanders, (*Anglican Schism* and *Theatre of Cruelties*), and marched from one foul and stinking dungeon to another yet more stinking and horrible still. Concerning these imprisonments of Catholics in England, simply consult the work cited above, *On the Anglican Persecution*.

The Tortures and Torments

of the Christian Martyrs

from

De SS. Martyrum Cruciatibus

(A Modern Edition)

Chapter IV

Of Different Instruments Employed for Scourging the Blessed Martyrs

Having discussed bonds and thongs and the nature of the "wooden horse," we must next turn our attention to the various kinds of whips and scourges used in torturing the Martyrs. Indeed, after binding the Christians to the "horse", it was the frequent practice of the Heathen — as we had seen in many instances already quoted from the *History of the Saints*, especially those of St. Crescentianus, St. Regina, virgin and martyr, and Bishop Bassus — to beat them mercilessly with rods, cudgels, whips, and the like; then to flay them with iron "claws" or similar devices; and finally to roast them with torches, burning brands, and red-hot metal plates.

We will now discuss the various instruments used for scourging in this order: first, *whipping instruments*, then, *iron hooks, claws, and currycombs*; and lastly, *torches, brands, and fiery plates*.

As to the first, which were widely used in antiquity we find lashes, scourges, cudgels, rods, scorpions, thongs, and loaded whips.

Of Lashes

Plautus speaks of lashes in the *Epidicus*, as follows:

Ita non omnes ex cruciatu poterunt eximere Epidicum. Periphanem emere lora vidi ...
("So all his friends shall not save Epidicus. I saw Periphanes buying lashes.")

Also Terence, in *Adelphi*:

Nam si molestus pergis esse, jam intro abripiere, atque ibi. Usque ad necem operiere loris.
("For if you are going to be troublesome, you shall be rushed indoors, and there lashed to death.")

And Cicero, as well, in his *Philippics*:

Cum eum jussu Antonii in convivio servi publici loris caeciderunt. ("When the public slaves scourged him with lashes at a feast by Antonius' orders ...")

Similar mention is found repeatedly in the *Acts of the Martyrs*, as, for example, in the account of St. Asterius and his companions in martyrdom, of St. Euphemia, virgin and martyr, and many other witnesses of Christ of both sexes.

These lashes used by the ancients were thongs made of leather, usually employed (as we have seen from the passages quoted from Plautus and Terence) for the correction of slaves. It is no surprise, then, to find consistent examples in the accounts of the martyrdom of Christ's faithful followers being beaten with thongs; for they were always counted by the Heathen as wretches of the lowest condition. These same lashes served not only to *bind* the martyrs and *thrash* them, but even to *tear* them in pieces, as we witness in the *Acts of the Blessed Martyrs* concerning the passion of St. Tyrus:

"His mind (the Governor's) was suddenly filled with great wrath, and he ordered certain stalwart young men of a fierce and savage disposition to pummel the martyr with their fists. Then, after binding him with lashes attached firmly to his hands and feet, they started strenuously pulling in opposite directions, so that all the articulations of his joints were broken, and he was torn limb from limb."

Of Thongs, Also Used for Scourging the Martyrs

The word "thong" or "nerve" (as we explained in the preceding chapter) actually appears to have had several meanings. Sometimes it simply signified a fastening for binding criminals, as we had previously noted; but at other times it appears to take the form of a scourge with which the Christians, fired by love of the only true God, were beaten by the Heathen. It is in this sense that we presently examine it. So understood, it appears to have been an animal's nerve that was used for the purpose; and most generally a bull's. This was the case with those most glorious athletes of Christ, Saints Ananias, Isidore, Benedicta, virgin and martyr, and many others whose names are written in the Book of Life.

Of Cudgels and Scourges

Cudgels and scourges were very often used for thrashing Christ's faithful followers. Scourges are spoken of by Juvenal in his *Satires*, Suetonius in his *Otho*, St. Cyprian, Eusebius, and other ancient writers. They were thinner and finer than cudgels, but thicker than rods. We find evidence of this in the Laws of Theodosius ("Of driving on the public roads, stage-drivers and couriers") the following provision:

"Decreed, that no man use a cudgel for driving, but either a rod, or at most a scourge at the point of which is set a short goad."

This is sufficient to show that scourges were in use among the ancients as we stated above.

Besides Christians, other persons of the more humble class were condemned to be thrashed with these instruments, as Plautus, in his *Amphitryon*, implies; even the Vestal Virgins themselves, if by their neglect the fire impiously consecrated to Vesta, the Romans' false goddess, had been allowed to go out (See Valerius Maximus and Livy the Historian).

However, to return to the Blessed Martyrs of our Lord Jesus Christ, we find that many of them were beaten with scourges and cudgels: with cudgels, Saints Felix and Alexander, Privatus and Bassus, Bishops, Julius, a Senator, and many others; and with scourges, the Blessed Martyrs Neophytus, Julianus, Tryphon, Sabbatius, and countless others, whose names are forgotten. Of these we find the following record in the *Roman Martyrology* under February 20:

"Commemoration of the Blessed Martyrs at Tyre in Phoenicia, the number of whom is known only to God. Under the Emperor Diocletian and by order of Veturius, master of the soldiers, they were slain with many kinds of torments following one after the other. First, their whole bodies were torn with scourges; then they were delivered to various kinds of wild beasts but, by divine goodness, were in no way hurt by them. Finally, given up cruelly to fire and sword, they won the crown of martyrdom."

Here it must be mentioned that the Christians were sometimes beaten so long with cudgels and scourges that they died under the lash. Thus perished those gallant soldiers of Christ, Saints Sebastian; Julius, a Senator; Maxima, virgin and martyr; Eusebius, Sabbatius, and many more of either sex.

Of Cudgeling, Decimation, and other Military Punishments

We often read in the Histories of the Saints how Christians, — especially Christian soldiers — were ignominiously condemned to die, beaten with cudgels and rods, stripped of their military belts, and decimated — all of which were forms of punishment for Roman soldiers guilty of various offenses.

Let us, then, examine each of these penalties, some of which were less and some more severe. While within the City walls, the Portian Law safeguarded Roman citizens against the Magistrates' rods and axes, this was not the case in camps and in the field. Indeed, the Laws drew a distinction between military and civil discipline, between the terror needful to bend an army to

obedience and that required to govern a peaceful people. From the orders of a General in the field there was no appeal.

The lighter penalties inflicted on soldiers were of the nature of disgrace and degradation only, such as:

- being dismissed from the service in ignominy
- being fined or otherwise having their pay diminished
- relinquishing their spears
- change of their quarters
- to winter in the open country
- to eat their rations standing
- to dig a trench
- to be unbelted and disarmed
- to be fed on barley
- and to be blooded by opening a vein.

Graver punishments involved causing bodily harm, such being beaten with rods, sold into slavery, struck with a cudgel or an axe, to be decimated, or to be crucified. We will find all these methods well documented in Sigonius, book 1, *On the Ancient Civil Law of the Romans*.

First as to *dismissal from the service with ignominy*: we find this mentioned and described by the Consul Aulus Hirtius in the following terms:

"Caesar, speaking from the *suggestus* (platform) and addressing the assembled Tribunes and Centurions of all the Legions, said thus, 'Whereas, Caius Avienus, in Italy you have stirred up Roman soldiers against the Commonwealth, and have plundered the provincial towns, I hereby expel you with ignominy from my army.' "

As to *deprivation of pay*, this is clear enough in itself, but I may add that the phrase "broken in pay" was applied (so Nonius states) to those soldiers whose pay, in order to brand them with disgrace, was stopped, that is to say, the sum of money representing their gains for a month, or a year, was confiscated. So Varro, quoted by the same author, speaking of the life and habits of the Roman people, writes:

"What was known as a soldier's pay was the money given him half-yearly or yearly; when his pay was stopped as a mark of disgrace, he was said to be *broken of his pay*." Livy again says: "As a mark of disgrace, it was decreed this legion should receive a half-year's pay in lieu of a whole year's."

Now with regard to other punishments, as that of surrendering the spear, Festus explains the matter this way:

"Penalty of the spear so called was when a soldier was sentenced by way of punishment for a military offence to hand in his spears."

As to *changing quarters in camp*, Polybius tells us that if it was determined that soldiers should be punished with disgrace, they were ordered to pitch outside the camp. Accordingly in Livy, we find the men who had been beaten at Cannae complaining:

"Now are we reduced to a worse condition than returned prisoners of war had to suffer in former days. For only their arms, and their position in the line and the place where they might pitch in camp were changed, all which they could recover by one good achievement for their country's good or one successful battle."

As to *winter quarters*, read Livy (book 26.):

"A further disgrace was inflicted in every case, namely, that they should not winter in a town, nor construct winter quarters within a distance of ten miles of any city." As to *rations*, the same author (book 24.) writes: "The names of all who withdrew from their post during the previous defeat, I shall order to be reported to me, and summoning each before me, shall bind one and all upon oath never, except in case of sickness, to take food or drink otherwise than standing, for as long as they shall remain in the service."

As to *digging*, we may appeal to Plutarch, who says in his *Lucullus* that it was an old form of military disgrace for culprits to be compelled to strip to their shirts and dig a trench, while the rest of the troops looked on.

For the *other penalties* mentioned, see Livy again (book 27.):

"The cohorts which had lost their standards, he ordered to be served with barley; and the Centurions of those maniples [a Roman Army tactical formation] whose standards had been lost, he unbelted and deprived of their swords." Polybius also speaks of barley being served out instead of wheat as a mark of disgrace.

In the way of *letting blood* as a punishment, the historian Aulus Gellius says the following:

"This was another old-fashioned military punishment, to order by way of ignominy: a vein to be opened and the offender blooded."

Concerning other and more severe forms of punishment, the following passages from Livy provide clear evidence. Writing of Scipio's reform of military discipline before Numantia, Livy tells us that:

"Any soldier he caught out of the ranks, he scourged — if he were a Roman citizen: with staves, if a foreigner: with cudgels," and in another place, "Publius Nasica and Decius Brutus, the two Consuls, held a review of the troops, on which occasion a punishment was inflicted that was likely to have an excellent effect on the minds of the recruits, before whom it was carried out. A certain Caius Matienus, who had been accused before the Tribunes of the People of desertion from the army in Spain and condemned to the fork, or pillory, was beaten with rods for a long time, and then sold into slavery for a sesterce." Also Cicero, in his *Philippics*: "The legions deserved cudgeling which deserted the Consul, if he was Consul."

Now, according to Polybius, this punishment of *cudgeling* was inflicted in the following way. First the Tribune took up a cudgel and just touched the condemned man with it; after this, all who were in camp at the time were set upon him, beating the culprit with cudgels, pelting him with stones, and most often killing him inside the camp. Moreover, if any escaped, they were no better off, since they could neither return to their fatherland, nor be harbored at home by their relations.

The most ancient instance of *decimation* is recorded by Livy and was carried out under his Consulship by Appius Claudius, a man of a very stern and harsh disposition. To quote the Historian's words:

"Appius Claudius, the Consul, called a general muster and rebuked the troops as disloyal to military discipline and deserters from the colors — and not without good reason. Turning to individual soldiers whom he saw unarmed, he demanded where their standards and their weapons were, asking a similar question of ensigns who had lost their colors, as well as Centurions and double-pay men who had forsaken the ranks, and finally had them beaten to death with rods. Of the remaining rank and file, each tenth man was chosen out by lot for punishment."

The mode of carrying out such an order is detailed by the same author, who writes concerning Scipio's punishment of his mutinous army at Suero:

"Then was heard the voice of the herald proclaiming the names of those condemned in the council. These were now stripped and dragged forward, while at the same moment all the paraphernalia of punishment were exhibited; they were then lashed to a stake and beaten with rods or struck down with an axe."

Crucifixion as a military punishment is also mentioned by Livy:

"Deserters to the enemy were more severely dealt with than mere runaways. Those with a Latin Name were beheaded, while Roman offenders were crucified."

These, then, were the different sorts of military punishments exercised in the Roman Army. That these continued in use down to the very end of the Republican period, is clear from Suetonius when he says of Augustus:

"Any cohorts which had given ground, he decimated and fed the survivors on barley; Centurions who had deserted their post and likewise Manipulars in the same case he punished with death. For other offenses he inflicted various ignominious penalties — such as to stand all day in front of the Praetorium, or headquarters, in some instances wearing the tunic only and stripped of their belts, others holding a ten-foot pole or even carrying a sod of earth."

Regarding Christian soldiers who won the Crown of Martyrdom at the hands of the Heathen, it is to be noted (as we find in their several *Histories*) how they were sometimes condemned to dig the ground or else were decimated, very frequently beaten with cudgels and rods, or stripped — that is, deprived of their military belts.

As to Christian soldiers being condemned to *dig the ground*, we find the following written in the *History* of St. Marcellus, Pope, concerning them:

"At the date when Maximianus returned from the parts of Africa to the City of Rome, being eager to please Diocletian and further his design of building *Thermae*, or Baths, to be called after his name, he began, out of hatred towards the Christians, to constrain all soldiers of that Faith, whether Romans or foreigners, to forced labor, and in many places condemned them to quarry stone, while others were condemned to dig sand." [for the construction of the *thermae*] The same may also be found recorded in the *Acts* of St. Severa, a Roman Virgin.

Decimation again is attested by the Histories of those most Blessed Martyrs of Christ, St. Maurice and his companions, where we find written, "Let the fatal lot give every tenth man to death," — and what else was decimation but so putting to death every tenth soldier? The Roman Historian Tacitus, reports of this practice as well:

"Every tenth man of the disgraced cohort was chosen by lot and cudgelled to death," and again, "Inasmuch as every tenth man of the beaten army is beaten to death, even brave men are at times chosen out by the lot."

The next punishment, *cudgeling*, was virtually universal for all those martyred Christian soldiers who found it an occasion of joy to be rid of this poor, brief life for Christ's sake.

However, it was not Christian soldiers alone who were beaten with cudgels, but other faithful servants of Christ as well; for the Laws of the Romans decreed that whoever professed themselves to be filled with God's grace should be beaten with cudgels as a penalty.

Finally, further testimony to this effect is to be found in the *Acts* of St. Hesychius, of St. Marcellus a Centurion, of Saints Eudoxius, Zeno, Macarius, and their companions, — one hundred and four in number — and many, many others. This is especially true in the *Acts* of St. Marcellus, just mentioned, where we see that the military belt, so often mentioned, was nothing more nor less than the ordinary soldier's sword-belt, or rather baldric, for in this account we find the following:

"In the city of Tingitana, when Fortunatus was Procurator and Commander of the Troops, the Emperor's birthday came round. So when all were indulging in festivities and offering sacrifices, one Marcellus, a Centurion of the Legion of Trajan, deeming the rejoicings to be profane, threw off his military belt before the standards of the legion which were present, and testified with a loud voice, saying, "I am a soldier of Jesus Christ, the King everlasting." Likewise he cast away his Centurion's staff and his arms, further declaring, "From this day forth I make an end of fighting for your Emperors ..." But the soldiers, astounded to hear such words, seized him and reported the matter to Astasianus Fortunatus, Commander of the Legion, who ordered him to be put in prison.

Presently when the feasting was ended, he took his seat at the council board and ordered Marcellus the Centurion to be brought in; this being done, Astasianus Fortunatus, the

Commander, thus addressed him: "What was your intent when, in defiance of military discipline, you ungirded your belt and threw away your baldric and staff? " Then some lines lower down, "This soldier, in casting off his military belt, has openly proclaimed himself to be a Christian, and publicly before all the people spoke many blasphemies against the gods and against Caesar. We now refer this matter to you, that we may do as you see fit."

These same words were addressed by his jailers, concerning the Blessed Marcellus, to Agricolaus the Judge, to whom he had subsequently been sent to be tried. Now when we read at the beginning of this account how Marcellus cast away his military belt; and again further on, how being charged before the Commander, he casted away his baldric; and yet again, when the soldiers were stating the case against him before Agricolaus, his belt once more — it is abundantly clear that these were one and the same thing. In fact, a baldric, if we may believe the authority of Varro, *On the Latin Tongue*, was a belt of leather decorated with studs or bosses and worn aslant from the right shoulder to the left hip. So Quintilian writes, "That fold which is carried aslant from right shoulder across to the left side, like a baldric, must be neither too chokingly tight nor yet too loose."

One point important to observe is the constancy of Christian soldiers. It was unwavering; and such was their burning desire to suffer for Christ's sake, that there is frequent mention of their having, voluntarily — and in contempt and defiance of the heathen emperors and other great officers — cast off the military belt. Thus we read of St. Hesychnius:

"Now he was a soldier, and having heard read the order of Maximianus to the effect that any which should refuse to make sacrifice to idols, should lay down his military belt, suddenly and of his own volition he unbuckled his own."

We find this again concerning St. Eudoxius and his sainted companions:

"Eudoxius instantly removed his girdle and tossed it in the Commander's face. With this act, seen by his comrades as a direct appeal to them and a call to emulation, the whole number of them that stood around, one hundred and four in all, likewise hurled their belts in his face."

Of Rods and Scorpions

Frequent mention is made of rods with which prisoners were beaten. We find reference to them in different plays of Plautus, by Valerius Maximus, by Cicero, and by Prudentius in the *Hymn* of St. Romanus.

Rods in antiquity were of many sorts — some of elm-wood, as Plautus says in the *Asinaria*:

Ipsos, qui tibi subvectabant rure huc virgas ulmeas ... ("The very fellows that used to bring you your supply of elm-rods from the country.")

And a little further on in the same play:

Mihi tibi que interminatus est, nos futuros ulmeos.
("He threatened you and me; we should presently feel the elm.")

Thus Plautus shows us that people in antiquity routinely corrected their slaves with these rods of elm-wood.

Others again, were made of birch, a tree which Pliny describes as:

"This Gallic tree (the birch, to wit) is of a remarkable glossiness and slenderness, a terrible material for the rods used by magistrates. Its flexibility makes it equally convenient for hoops as well as for the plaited work of baskets."

Yet others again were of oak, ash, or willow. Rods of the first sort are mentioned in the *Acts* of St. Acatius, a Centurion, and of the third, willow, by Prudentius in his Hymn of St. Romanus in these lines:

*Cum puer torqueretur jussu Praesidis,
Impacta quoties corpus attigerat salix,
Tenui rubebant sanguine uda vimina.*
("When the lad was tortured by the Governor's orders, every time the willow struck and wealed his body, the switches grew wet and red with drops of blood")

Moreover, in the *Epidicus* of Plautus we find:

Lictores duo, duo viminei fasces virgarum
("Two *apparitors* and two bundles of willow rods and switches").

Switches, in fact, were made of poplar twigs, elm, red wood, birch, vine, twisted hazel, or willow, the last being best for this purpose.

Of Rods Made of Vine Wood

Rods made of vine wood were used for beating military offenders; in fact, the Centurions' sign of office was a vine staff, which they used to chastise soldiers too slow in obeying. This is shown in Pliny:

"The vine staff in the Centurion's hand is an excellent specific for bringing sluggish troops to the colors, and when used to chastise offences makes even the punishment respectable; "

And Tacitus, as well:

"The Centurion Lucillus was killed in a mutiny — an officer nicknamed in soldiers' slang 'Give us another,' because after breaking his staff over a soldier's back, he would loudly call for another, and then another."

So too Juvenal, writing of Caius Marius in his *Eighth Satire*:

*Nodosam post haec frangebat vertice vitem,
Silentus pigra munires castra dolabra.*

("Then he would strike you over the head with a knotty staff, if you were overly slow in entrenching and sluggish in your spade work.")

Of Rods of Iron and Lead

Although rods for beating offenders withal were generally made of thin twigs of trees, sometimes they were made of iron or lead. This is shown in divers *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs, such as those of Saints Paul and Juliana, Saints Christopher and Callinicus, among others.

Of Prickly Rods, otherwise called Scorpions

Not with smooth rods alone were those of antiquity accustomed to chastise offenders and Christians as well, but also with knotty and prickly rods which they appropriately named "scorpions." Whenever we find record in the accounts of the martyrdom of the saints — that such and such faithful servants of Christ were beaten with thorny, prickly, and knotty rods — it is understood as their having been scourged with "scorpions".

Rods, then, were of two distinct types; they were either smooth or prickly. If they are alluded to as of the first sort, smooth, they were either of twigs or of metal. If of twigs, either of elm, birch, oak, ash, or willow; but if of metal, then either of iron, and this sometimes red-hot, or of lead.

Something more may be added to what has already been said of rods in the *Histories* of Saints Hermillus and Stratonicus, to this effect:

"Greatly angered at these words, Licinus ordered Stratonicus to be stretched face upward and thrashed on the stomach with rods of a three-cornered shape. Now this was a grievous torture, scarcely tolerable by the human frame, for the corners of these rods cruelly cut the flesh like so many swords."

Not only were the martyrs named above — Saints Acatius, Paul, Christopher, Callinicus, Hermillus, and Stratonicus — beaten with *smooth* rods, but many others as well, including Saints Pontianus, Zeno, Theodore, Paula a virgin, Regina, Claudius, and a vast number of others of either sex. But it was under knotty and prickly rods, or *scorpions*, that those glorious soldiers of Christ, Saints Basil, Cyrinus, Bassus a Bishop, Symphorian, Nicostratus, Simplicius, and countless others, were mercilessly beaten.

Even while being beaten with rods was an extremely painful form of punishment, intended to shame the individual as well, it was, notwithstanding, a lighter penalty than some others. The ignominy associated with it is clearly shown in various Roman laws such as the Porcian Law, the

Symphronian, etc., as well as from direct statements of ancient authorities, such as found in Cicero's *Pro Rabirio* and *in Verrem*; it is also found in Josephus' *Jewish War*, where it is spoken of as something extraordinary that Caestius Florus scourged Jews who enjoyed Roman citizenship with rods, and fastened them in the criminals' collar or pillory.

Even now, Catholics are often beaten with rods by the heretics of our own time (1591). This is illustrated by Sanders, in *The Anglican Schism*, where he says:

"Nor should this be left unmentioned, that many of the common people, refusing to attend the churches and profane services of the Protestants, and having no money to pay the fine, are by the judge's orders, long and cruelly dragged through the city of Winchester, stripped naked, and savagely beaten with rods."

The manner in which this is done is declared in the *Theatre of Cruelties* in these words: "The Catholics were tied at the cart's tail, and so whipped through the streets."

Of Loaded Scourges, with which the Martyrs were Beaten

Loaded scourges — as the *Histories* of the Blessed Martyrs indicate, to say nothing of Prudentius, and certain paintings which can be seen here in Rome — were a sort of whipping instrument made of cords or thongs, with little balls of lead fastened to their end. They were liberally used to scourge the loins, back, and neck of condemned persons. We find this mentioned in many accounts of martyrdom, as well as by Prudentius, who writes in his *Hymn of St. Romanus*:

*Tundatus tergum crebris ictibus
Plumboque cervix vertebrata extuberet:
Persona quaequae competenter plectitur,
Magnique refert, vilis sit, an nobilis.*

("Let his back be pounded with quick-falling blows, and his neck scourged with lead till it swell up: each is appropriately punished, and it makes no small difference whether he be a common fellow or a noble.")

The fact nevertheless remains that it was customary in antiquity to punish only persons of the more common sort with loaded scourges. The punishment was still in vogue in the days of the Emperor Honorius, who beat the impious heresiarch Jovinian and his vile associates with loaded whips, before finally banishing them into exile.

While scourging with these loaded whips was not meant to kill criminals — and it was actually forbidden by an enactment of the civil law to beat a prisoner to death, — yet many nevertheless died under the blows of these cruel instruments. This is clear from Ammianus Marcellinus in an *Epistle* of Ambrosius, where he writes:

"What answer shall I make afterward, if it be discovered that, on authority from me, Christians have been killed, whether with the sword, with cudgels, or with loaded whips?"

Among Christians who laid down their lives for Christ under the loaded whip were: Sts. Maximus, Papias, Severa a Roman virgin, with her brothers Marcus and Calendius, also Sts. Gervasius, Januarius, Concordia, Privatus, Severus, Severianus, and countless others, whose names we cannot possibly cover in this volume. Many were the other faithful servants of Christ who were beaten with loaded scourges without losing their lives. These were (to name a few only) Saints Laurence, Artemius, Procopius, Gordian, Erasmus and Theodore Bishops.

Of Other Ways in which Lead was used for Torturing the Holy Martyrs

Lead was also used in antiquity for torturing prisoners in two other ways. First, after stripping them stark naked, they would pour it, in a boiling state, over their bodies — a form of punishment that we will examine more carefully in Chapter IX .

The other way in which lead was used was neither for scourging nor burning, but for straining and dislocating the several joints of persons condemned to this torture. Arms being twisted backward and fastened above their heads, they then had leaden weights hung upon their feet. Such leaden weights are referred to by Ammianus, when he says, "Then are the leaden weights prepared." If the reader would like learn more about this form of torture, he should explore the *Histories* of the Blessed Martyrs, St. Justus and St. Mamans.

Of the Manner in which Prisoners were Beaten in Antiquity

When prisoners were to be scourged in the days of the early Martyrs, they were first stripped of all clothing, and then whipped upon the back, stomach, or other part of the body with rods or other instruments of flagellation. The *apparitors* carried this out in many ways. Sometimes they would tie them to stakes set upright in the ground, or to pillars; sometimes they would stretch them on the earth, or else over sharp spikes a foot high and fixed in the ground; at other times they suspended their victims aloft with their bodies hanging straight down, or else mounted them on another's shoulders as boys do, and lashed their posteriors.

Another convenient method was to fix four pegs in the ground, forcibly stretch their victims out and, binding them hand and foot to these, kindling a fire underneath them to make their torment more bitter still — all the while thrashing them unmercifully. The magistrates of the Roman people always presided at these tortures and would command their *apparitors*, or *lictors* as they were called, first to strip their victims and lay them naked either upon the ground or an instrument of torture as we find in most of the *Acts* of the Holy Martyrs, especially those of Saints Ananias, Secundianus, Clement of Ancyra, St. Barbara Virgin and Martyr, St. Apollinaris Bishop, among others.

Further corroboration and more certain evidence of this may be gathered from many writings of the classical authors themselves, in which we find that the judges and magistrates of the Roman people would order their officers to strip and punish criminals and to employ their rods and axes upon them as they lay naked. Thus Livy writes:

"The Consuls command the man to be stripped, and the axes made ready. 'I appeal', cried Volero, 'to the People; seeing how the Tribunes had rather see a Roman citizen beaten with rods before their eyes than themselves murdered in their beds by you.' But the more furiously he shouted, the more fierce was the *lictor* in tearing off his clothes and stripping him naked."

And in another place, speaking of Papirius Cursor, Livy tells us:

"He bade the *lictor* make ready his axe. At this command the Praenestine stood astounded, but the other only said, 'Now to it, *lictor*, and cut away yonder stump, which is a hindrance to the traffic.'"

Also, Valerius Maximus, relating the same story, says,

"He commanded the rods to be got ready and the man to be stripped,"

Livy once more, in another book of his *History*, writes:

"Then Papirius was roused to fresh anger and ordered the Master of the Horse to be stripped naked, and the rods and axes to be prepared."

So likewise Cicero, in his speech, *In Verrem*:

"Accordingly he commands the man to be seized and stripped naked in the open forum and bound, and the rods to be made ready."

All these passages plainly indicate that prisoners were beaten by the *lictors* only after first being stripped of their clothing.

Now the fact that the Blessed Martyrs were whipped with lashes on the back, stomach, or both, or on any other parts of their bodies, is found very clearly in the *Acts* of the Martyrs Saints Clement of Ancyra and Ananias, mentioned above, as well as of St. Claudius and his companions.

That they were beaten in antiquity by the Heathen, after being tied up by the *lictors* to stakes or pillars, stretched out on the ground, over sharp spikes fixed in the earth, or else securely bound to four pegs, as described above, can also be found many, many, *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs, such as those of Saints Paul and Juliana, Eulampius and Eulampia, brother and sister, Saint Anastasia, a Roman virgin and martyr, and a host of others. One may return again, in this connection, to what we had already discussed in Chapter I concerning stakes, pillars and trees, to which Christians were suspended to be tortured.

Lastly that the Holy Martyrs were beaten as boys are thrashed may be learned from Prudentius' *Hymn* of St. Romanus, where Asclepiades gives orders concerning a boy Barula, whom all unwillingly and unwittingly was about to be consecrated a Blessed Martyr to Christ:

"...pusionem praecipit
Sublime tollant, et manu pulsent nates.
Mox et remota vesta, virgis verberent,
Tenerumque duris ictibus tergum secent,
Plus unde lactis quam cruoris defluat."

("... He bids them lift the boy aloft and beat his buttocks with their hands; then after stripping off his clothes, thrashing him with rods, and rending his tender loins with heavy blows — from which more milk may well flow than blood.")

But it was not only boys, like Vitus and Barula, that were thrashed in the manner of juveniles, being mere lads, but others likewise older in age and of either sex — a practice used, it would appear, in order to maximize the ignominy and disgrace. Thus was St. Thomas, a most reverend Bishop, beaten — as we find written in Victor, *On the Vandal War* — as was also St. Afra.

Of the Officers Whose Duty it was in Antiquity to Beat Prisoners

The officers charged with the duty of beating prisoners by order of the Magistrates were called *Lictors*. These officers were assigned to Consuls, Proconsuls, and other Roman officials; Consul and Proconsul having twelve each, other magistrates six, and the City Praetor only two. The *lictors* walked before each magistrate, bearing bundles of rods tied up with an axe in the midst, and known as *fascēs*, so that whenever ordered, they might unfasten it, and first thrashing the condemned man with their rods, afterwards strike him down with the axe.

This can be readily confirmed from many witnesses among ancient writers. To take Cicero first, he says in his great speech, *In Verres*:

"Six stalwart *lictors* stand round him, men well practiced in beating and thrashing criminals;"

And also Livy,

"Go, *lictor*, bind him to the stake."

The same, too, is proven by the customary formula by which the *lictor* was commanded to inflict this penalty on a traitor, which was:

"Go, *lictor*, bind his hands; cover his head; hang him to the accursed tree."

Thus Livy writes of the Publius Horatius in the matter of the Horatii and Curiatii:

"So the Duumviri condemned him to death; then one of them addressing Publius Horatius, said, 'I pronounce you, Publius Horatius, guilty of high treason. Go, *lictor*, bind his hands';" and a little further on, "This same man,' he went on, 'whom you saw but now, Quirites, walking honored, triumphant and victorious, can you bear to behold standing beneath the gallows, bound and enduring lashes and torments?' And when the eyes of the Albans could scarce endure so hideous a spectacle, 'Go, *lictor*,' he cried, 'bind his hands — those hands which so lately were

armed and winning empire for the Roman People. Go, cover the head of the liberator of this city; hang him to the accursed tree; scourge him, either within the bounds, that is amid yonder spears and spoils of the foe, or else without, that is, amid the tombs of the Curiatii.' "

To complete our account, we may add further what Aulus Gellius left on record concerning *lictors*:

"Moreover the *lictors* had other duties to perform; it was their office not only to bind and beat criminals and strike them with their axe, but also to hang them, if need be; hence the words, 'Go, *lictor*, bind his hands, cover his head, hang him to the accursed tree.'"

In addition to this, it belonged to these same officers to clear people out of the road, on occasion to silence those who spoke too much, and even to strangle criminals, as Plutarch demonstrates in his *Life of Cicero*, writing of Lentulus:

"First the Consul removed Lentulus from the Palatium, and marched him along the Sacred Way and through the midst of the Forum. Then on leaving the Forum and arriving at the jail, he handed his prisoner over to the *lictor*, and ordered him to be strangled."

Still another duty of the *lictors* was to visit the houses of persons wanted in Court and to strike on the doors with a rod to summon them. But enough of *lictors* and their offices.

Of Other Methods by Which the Martyrs were Struck and Beaten by the Heathen

Blows to the face, buffets, and kicks were commonly inflicted on the Blessed Christian Martyrs. Their faces were bruised with stones and their jaws broken, or they themselves were overwhelmed by the stones and so done to death. These afflictions were the fate of those most glorious heralds of our Faith: Saints Marcellinus a priest, Epipodius, Aquilina, Tatiana, Felicitas, Speusippus, Eleusippus, Meleusippus, and lastly Pothenus, or Pothinus, Bishop of Lyons, whose death is described by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*:

"Likewise the Sainted Pothenus, to whom the Bishopric of Lugdunum (Lyons) had been entrusted. He had now exceeded the ninetieth year of his age, and was so exhausted with bodily weakness that he could scarcely breathe freely, so extreme was his infirmity; yet his spirit was greatly refreshed and his mind grown alert by the burning desire he had for martyrdom. So he advanced boldly to the tribunal, and although his body was nearly worn out by the decrepitude of advanced age and the tortures of disease, yet was his soul preserved intact within him to triumph gloriously in its steadfastness for Christ. Led by the soldiers to the bar, the magistrates of the city going with him, and the whole multitude of the people shouting insults at him as a Christian, he exhibited a noble testimony to the Faith. For when he was asked by the Presiding Judge who the God of the Christians was, he answered, 'If thou be worthy to know this thing, thou shalt know it.' He was immediately and roughly dragged from court and received many blows, both from those who were standing nearby, who without respect for his years, struck and kicked him shamefully and insultingly, and likewise from others further away, who threw at him whatever

each had at hand. They did so because each and all would have deemed it a great fault and an act of personal impiety had they failed to punish him, believing that by so doing they were serving the cause of their false gods. Finally, he was cast, barely breathing, into the common jail, where two days later he died."

Thus Eusebius writes concerning the death of St. Pothenus. A similar end was suffered by the Blessed Martyr, St. Fabius.

Of Blows, Buffets, and Slaps

These three words are held by some to be synonymous, but that this is not so is plainly shown by many tokens. Thus in St. Matthew 26 we read:

"Then did they spit in His face and buffet Him: and some smote Him with the palms of their hands;"

And in St. Mark 14:

"And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him ... and the officers received Him with blows of their hands;"

Likewise in St. John 18:

" ... one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand."

From these passages it is plainly evident that the word *buffet* must be understood of a slap struck with the palm or open hand, while a *blow* is one inflicted with the clenched fist. This is further confirmed by the poet Martial in his *Epigrams*:

O quam dignus eras alapis, Mariane, Latini!
("Oh! how well deserving you were, Marianus, of Latinus' slaps!");

And Terence in his play, *Adelphi*:

Ne mora sit, si innuerim, quin pugnus contintuo in mala haereat ("Not a moment's delay, when I give the sign; but batter his face instantly with your fist"); and a little further on in the same play:

Homini misero plus quingentos colaphos infregit mihi ("Wretch that I am, he struck me above five hundred blows with his fist "); and again:

Omnes dentes labefecit mihi;
Praeterea colaphis tuber est totum caput.
("He loosened all my teeth; besides which my head is all swollen from his punches.")

This distinction between fist and palm, punch and slap, is well illustrated by a remark Cicero makes in his treatise entitled *The Orator*:

"Doubling up his fingers and making a fist, Zeno was used to say, 'That's what Dialectic is like;' then loosening his grip and opening his hand, he would add, 'But Eloquence resembles this open hand.'"

He said, in fact, the Rhetorician or Orator was like the open hand; the Dialectician like the fist, because while the former spoke at greater length, the latter argued in a more compressed and forcible manner. Fisticuffs, or punches, then, or blows are dealt with the clenched fist, buffets or slaps with the open palm. But if the reader wishes further information concerning this form of punishment and ignominy — by which women in particular were punished for the Christian faith — let him read what Aulus Gellius says on the subject.

Of Martyrs Who had Their Faces Beaten with Stones, Features Bruised, or their Jaws Broken

Among Christians who were subjected to the above-named methods of are Saints Papias, Maurus, Theodosia, Felix a priest, Apollinaris a Bishop, Felicissima virgin and martyr, beside the forty soldiers which be mentioned in the *Roman Martyrology* under March 9:

"At Sebaste in Armenia, anniversary of the forty sainted Cappadocian soldiers, who in the days of Licinius and under the Governorship of Agricolaus, after enduring bonds and cruel imprisonment, and after their faces had been beaten with stones, were thrown into a frozen pond, where their bodies, stiffened by the frost, were broken in sunder, and they consummated their martyrdom by the fracture of their limbs. And of these, two were of noble birth, Cyrion and Candidus by name. The pre-eminent glory of them all has been renowned in the writings of St. Basil and of others."

Polybius, too, dealing with military punishments, relates how in antiquity soldiers were not only beaten with cudgels, but likewise stoned.

Of Martyrs Who were Stoned, and so Gave Up their Lives

Among the Saints who were stoned to death are numbered such renowned martyrs as St. Stephen the Proto-martyr, St. Demetrius and his companions, Saints Cyriacus, Tranquillinus, Diocletius, and the most glorious Emerentiana and Paula, virgins and martyrs.

Of Great Stones Under which Christians were Pressed and Tormented

Moreover, the Christian servants of Our Lord were tortured by means of great stones and rocks in many different ways. Sometimes we read of their being crushed under great boulders; thus in the *Acts* of the Blessed Martyr St. Theopompus it is written:

"Hereupon the holy man was led forth from his prison and stretched face upward on the ground and bound fast to stakes; then a huge boulder, that eight men could scarce carry, was laid upon his stomach. But the great stone was lifted up from off him by the divine efficacy ..."

Again in the *Acts* of the Martyr St. Victor we find:

"Being brought out of prison after three days, with his foot he kicked over a statue of Jupiter which was presented to him that he might offer incense to it. The offending foot was instantly cut off, and the holy man laid under a millstone, under which he was cruelly ground. Amazingly, after a little while the mill broke in pieces of itself, while yet the Martyr of the Lord was breathing faintly."

And in the *Acts* of the most Blessed Martyr, St. Artemius, we read:

"Hearing these words and being filled with wrath, Julian called stonemasons to him and said, 'Do you see that block of stone?', pointing to one that had broken from the front of the Amphitheatre. 'Divide it for me into two halves. Then, laying the one half flat on the earth, stretch out this criminal upon it, and then let down the other half heavily upon him, so that caught between the two he may have both flesh and bones crushed out of all shape. By this means he shall learn whom he is trying to resist and what help he may expect from his God.' No sooner said than done, the holy man was imprisoned between the two stones, and so great was the weight pressing upon his body that as his bones broke asunder, a sound of splitting and cracking was actually heard by many. All his inwards were torn to pieces and the articulations of his bones crushed while his eyes started out of their sockets. Yet, even though he was reduced to such a pitiable state, he did not neglect to sing to God's praise; for he chanted where he lay between the stones, saying, *'Thou hast exalted and brought me up, for Thou art my hope, and a tower of strength in the face of mine enemy; Thou hast set my feet on a rock and guided my steps aright. Receive therefore my spirit, Thou only beloved Son of God, and deliver me not up into the hands of my foes!'* Finally, after he had remained a day and a night inside the stones, the wicked Julian commanded the two blocks to be separated, thinking that he had surely perished between them and that no vestige of life was yet left him under so grievous and overwhelming a weight. To Julian's utter amazement, no sooner was Artemius freed of the stones, than he came forth walking on his own feet — truly a miracle worthy of all wonder and admiration! A man, naked and unprotected, whose eyes had started out of his head, whose bones had been crushed and all his limbs and flesh squeezed into one mass by the weight of the stone, so that his bowels had miserably gushed out, this man — O, strange and unexampled sight — was walking and talking, and speaking words of rebuke against the tyrant, so that even he was astounded."

Another narrative of a similar martyrdom by means of great stones is found in the *History* of St. Joseph in the following words,

"Then after removing the holy man to some little distance and binding his hands behind him, they dug a pit for him and buried him up to the middle. Then they set round about him the Christians they had arrested, and ordered these to pelt and assail the noble victim with stones.

But when, among the rest, they urged the blessed and holy Isdandul to do this, she replied, 'Never before in the world's history was heard such a thing, that a woman should be compelled to lift her hand against holy men, as now you would have me do. It is not against your enemies you are fighting, but against us, your friends, are you taking arms, and filling with blood and carnage your native land, which was in peace and quietness.'

They then fastened a spike to the end of a long reed and bade her prick the holy man with it. But she cried again, 'Far be it from me to do this thing. Rather would I drive it through my own heart than inflict the smallest scratch on his sainted body.' Thus did she manifest a manly constancy, and showed herself stronger than those murderers had deemed possible.

"But now they proceeded to overwhelm the saint with such a storm of stones that his head alone remained visible, all the rest of him being buried beneath a heap of rocks. When one of the ruffians saw the head still moving, he ordered one of the *lictors* to take a stone as big as he could wield and throw it down on him. When this was done and his head crushed by the weight of the stone, the saint gave up his precious soul to Christ."

Having examined the methods of the torments of the Holy Martyrs in this fourth chapter, we proceed next, with God's blessing, to the fifth chapter.

The Tortures and Torments

of the Christian Martyrs

from

De SS. Martyrum Cruciatibus

(A Modern Edition)

Chapter V

Of Instruments the Heathen used to Tear the Flesh of Christ's Faithful Servants, to wit, Iron Claws, Hooks, and Currycombs

Three separate and quite distinct instruments were employed by the devil-worshippers (as we find in many *Acts of the Martyrs*) for mangling Christians, namely, *iron claws*, *hooks*, and *currycombs*. Of these the first sort are mentioned in many places by Tertullian, particularly in his work *Against the Gnostics*, where he writes:

"Some Christians they proved by fire, others by the sword, others by wild beasts; yet others tasted martyrdom from cudgels and iron claws."

And in his *Apology to the Heathen*:

"You set Christians on crosses and fix them to stakes. Tell me, what deformed likeness will not the clay assume, when set up on cross and stake? On the gallows-tree is the body of your God first dedicated; and with claws you scarify the sides of Christian martyrs."

And again elsewhere,

"Yes! Let claws pierce their flesh and crosses hang their bodies on high."

So too St. Cyprian in the *Epistle to Donatus* says:

"Spear and sword and executioner are ready, and the claw that pricks and pierces," and in another place, "Now would the wooden horse rack them and the iron claw pierce."

Also St. Gregory of Nyssen, in his *Life of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus* describes that:

"The posts were set up whereon the bodies of those who remained firm were stretched, and lacerated with horrible claws."

St. Augustine, in his *Letters*, equally makes reference to them:

"When he has the open confession of such enormous crimes — and this by no racking of the horse or ploughing of the iron claws..."

St. Jerome, in his *Epistle to the Innocents* also testifies that:

"When the bloodstained claw was mangling the livid flesh, and pain was seeking to tear the truth from furrowed sides;" and the same Author a little further on, "Either side doth the executioner plough and furrow," that is with the iron claws.

And Prudentius in his Hymn of St. Romanus speaks of:

Costas bisulcis execandas unguis
("Sides that must be cut open with the cloven claws")

and further on:

Quam si cruenta membra carpant unguis,
("And if the claws rend your bleeding limbs ...");

and still elsewhere:

Ille'virgas, secures, et bisulcas unguis ...
Tormenta, carcer, unguis,
("Rods, axes, and cloven claws ... racks, prison, iron claws.")

Now these **claws** — which can be verified by one preserved to this day in the Church of St. Peter in the Vatican among the relics of the Saints, and which we ourselves have seen, kissed, and venerated — were a sort of iron pincers made as follows:

First, two longer pieces of iron were fastened together, much in the same way as those forming a smith's iron pincers are joined and paired together. The ends were rounded, and toward the extremities slightly hollowed, so that little spears or spikes may be set within them — for the greater convenience of the tormentors mangling those set on the wooden horse, tied to stakes, or hung up aloft, whether ordinary criminals or the Blessed Martyrs.

This is plainly shown by a fragment of one these spikes, half destroyed by heat and blunted, which is to be seen still fixed there. But in the upper parts, that is, beginning from the junction of the two pieces of iron, they were one palm in length and two fingers in width, thin rather than thick, being of a slender and subtle construction. Moreover, six iron points were attached to

them, three on each, and so arranged that in the middle of one of them two points were firmly fixed in the surface of metal, but in the middle of the other only one, facing the other two. When the pincers were closed, the one that stood single in the middle of the one piece, met and interlocked with the two pricks on the other, entering in between them, as it were.

Not only this, but there were other similar sets of points fixed within the instrument's jaws (so to speak), the arrangement of the pricks being the same always. The result was that the flesh of those who were tormented with these pincers or claws was torn and ploughed by the points.

It is no surprise, then, if some of the authorities cited above have spoken of these instruments as *cloven* or two-furrowed, and had described them as cutting furrows, or ploughing the flesh of condemned criminals.

Countless Soldiers of Christ were mangled and torn with this instrument of martyrdom, especially Saints Pappus, Clement of Ancyra, Theophilus and Theodorus, St. Maurice and his companions, Saints Justa, Rufina, Eulalia of Barcina, Saints Erasmus, Callinicus and Pelagius.

Whether the Pincers Preserved in the Church of Saint Peter are More Properly *Scorpions* or *Iron Claws*

Some have held that the sort of iron *pincers* preserved in the Church of the Vatican among the relics of the Saints, as described above, were not *claws* at all, but *scorpions*. But how can we possibly deem these pincers *scorpions* rather than *claws*, when — as shown in the previous chapter — these (scorpions) were included under the name of *rods*, whereas those presently described are a sort of iron toothed pincers? Moreover the former (as the *Acts of the Martyrs* and the passages of Holy Scripture quoted above indicate) were in use among the Ancients only for beating offenders, but the latter for mangling and rending them. This is confirmed by the shape and form of these pincers, for to anyone carefully considering this it will at once be obvious that they were not made for thrashing criminals, but for tearing and torturing them. If, in fact, the executioner took them in his hands with the intention of *beating* an offender, he would need to keep the two pieces of iron pressed together; and it would follow that the points, since they could not torment the victim, must have been set and fixed there for no useful purpose whatever.

We would add further that it is the proper function of *claws* (as St. Augustine and Prudentius make clear in their writings) to rend the flesh of its victims; to tear and plough it. And who can fail to see that these pincers preserved in the Church of St. Peter are perfectly adapted to do this? There can be little or no doubt then that the this instrument belonged to the class of *claws* and no other sort whatever.

Of Different Instruments of Martyrdom Made of Iron

Having established that these claws belonged to the class of iron pincers, we must now attempt to determine exactly what types were used for the tormenting of the Blessed Martyrs; for we know them to have been of many kinds. Some were toothed, and by means of six iron pricks

pierced the victim's skin when closed together, and cruelly rent and tore his limbs. These are of the type that we have just been discussing. Others were specially made for crushing and twisting. These are mentioned by Bishop Synesius, who, when treating in his *Letters* of the savage cruelty of the Governor Andronicus, says:

"... unless with the pincers, an instrument contrived for pulling ears and twisting lips."

Others again were intended for *cutting*, of which sort mention is made in the *Roman Martyrology* on June 26th in these words,

"At Cordova in Spain the anniversary of St. Pelagius, a young man who by reason of his confession of the Faith was ordered by Abdur-Rahman, King of the Saracens, to be cut limb from limb with iron pincers, and so gloriously consummated his martyrdom."

In this same class of instruments of martyrdom may be included the *pincers* or *scissors* by which Christians of either sex — but more especially women — were shorn by the servants of devils to bring them shame. We see this in the *Acts* of St. John the Apostle, the *History* of St. Fausta, virgin and martyr, and of St. Charitina, likewise virgin and martyr. To this day the pincers with which St. John the Evangelist was shorn are preserved in the most holy Church of St. John Lateran — a relic most deserving of visitation and reverence.

Different Ways in Which the Martyrs were Tortured with the Iron Claws

Christians were mangled with the claws in several ways: sometimes bound on the wooden horse, or tied to stakes or pillars, sometimes hung up, at times with the head downward. The first and second of these methods are found in the *Acts* of Saints Nestor, Hilary, Justa and Rufina, Januarius and Pelagius, as well as St. Maurice and his companions. This was commented on in Chapter I on the subject of stakes; the last by the *Histories* of Saints Epimachus, Felix, and others already named. For further information read again what was said in Chapter III concerning the word *Fidiculae*.

Of Iron Hooks as Instruments of Martyrdom

Such hooks are mentioned by Cicero in his *Philippics*:

"A hook was driven into that wretched runaway,"

and in the *Pro Rabirio*:

"From lash and hook and terror of the cross neither our past history, our previous life, nor our honors availed to protect us."

Also Juvenal in his *Satires* writes,

"... *Sejanru ducitur unco*"
("Sejanus is dragged along with the hook of criminals")

Horace, in his *Ode to Fortune* (1. 35) states the following:

*Te semper anteit saeva necessitas,
Clavos trabales, et cuneos manu
Gestans aena, nec severus
Uncus abest liquidumque plumbum.*

("Ever before thee goes harsh necessity, bearing in her brazen hand the spikes and wedges; nor is the cruel hook wanting and the molten lead.")

And Suetonius, in his *Tiberius* tells us that:

"The executioner, as though by the Senate's authority, displayed before him ropes and hooks."

Moreover, Lampridius, in his *Life of Commodus*, says men shouted in scorn of that Emperor, when he was dead:

"He who massacred the Senate, let him be dragged along by the hook; he who massacred all men, let him be dragged along by the hook; he who robbed the temples, let him be dragged along by the hook!"

Similarly, writing of Vitellius, Suetonius tells us that:

"Eventually he was mangled with countless blows at the Gemonian steps and slain, and thence dragged with the hook to the Tiber;"

Ammianus Marcellinus, relates that:

"The wooden horses were stretched, and the executioner was making ready the hooks," and again, "The hooks and bloody tortures."

So, too, Prudentius in one of his *Hymns*:

Stridentibus laniatur uncis
("He is torn to pieces with the sounding hooks").

Also the *Acts* of St. Sebastian, where we read,

"Search in the sewer that is near by the Great Circus, and there will you find my body hanging from a hook."

Further mention is to be found of hooks in the *Histories* of other Martyrs, as Saints Plato, Pontianus, Nicetas, as also of Saints Tatiana, Martina, and Prisca, Roman Virgins and Martyrs.

From all of this it is very clear that the ancients used hooks not only for mangling criminals or dragging them to the place of execution, that is to say the Gemonian steps, but likewise for hanging them up aloft, and finally for dragging the dead bodies of infamous criminals, guilty of many abominations and crimes, to the sewers and receptacles of filth and refuse, or to the Tiber. We need not wonder, then, that St. Sebastian's body, after his death, was dragged with a hook to the Cloaca Maxima, the Great Sewer of Rome, since Christians were esteemed by the Heathen as dishonorable. The hook, then, may be best described and defined thus, "It is a longish stick, or miniature spear, having an iron at one end, curved and bent back upon itself" which was in use among the Romans for hauling condemned criminals to the Gemonian steps and punishing them, and lastly for dragging the dead bodies of evil men into the public sewers.

Methods by Which the Blessed Martyrs were Dragged and Tortured by the Hook

It was precisely in the same fashion that Christians were tortured with the hook as they were with the iron claws mentioned earlier, as we have seen in the *Acts* of Saints Plato and Pontianus.

Of Iron Currycombs as Instruments of Martyrdom

For tearing of the flesh of faithful Christians iron combs were likewise applied. We find evidence of this in the *Acts* of several martyrs, especially of St. Blase, Saints Tatiana, Julitta, and Barbara, virgins and martyrs, and a host of others whose names are known to God alone.

These combs resembled, as their name and use imply — and as shown in some representations in ancient paintings of St. Blase, copied, it is thought, from some very early drawings — those used to comb wool. Attached to these combs was a small spear or staff of a convenient length, as was the case with the claws, for these likewise were used for mangling the martyrs.

Thus we see how three different instruments were framed for rending the flesh of the Blessed Martyrs, to wit, *claws*, *hooks*, and *combs of iron*. The Saints were torn with these combs, and subsequently martyred in precisely the same way as those who suffered under the iron claws.

Of Shards or Fragments of Pottery used for Lacerating the Flesh of the Saints

Sometimes the Christians' flesh was torn and rent by way of greater cruelty still with fragments of pottery, by which not only were their sides lacerated, but their stomachs, thighs, and legs as well. Eusebius, who was an eye-witness of such cruelties, depicted the fury of the tormentors in his *History*:

"Truly, it was in the Thebaid [the epic poem by Statius] that all previously described cruelties were exceeded. For here the tormentors would take shards of pottery instead of claws and with them tear and lacerate the whole body until they scraped the skin off the flesh;" and again in another passage: "It was held to be a common and ordinary matter for a man to be ploughed and

furrowed with the iron claws. But further, when this form of torture was applied to any, not only were his sides (as is usually done to robbers and murderers) pierced and rent, but his abdomen likewise, as well as his thighs and legs. In fact the harrow was made to penetrate to his very marrow."

How the Saints were Stretched to the Fourth and Fifth Hole of the Stocks

Not content with these forms of torture, the devil's ministers daily sought fresh ways of cruelty and new sorts of punishment. And while they indeed discovered many new methods, yet they could never succeed in bending or breaking the divine valor of the Christians. Rather, all these torments simply ended in strengthening them the more. The tyrant's cruelty might indeed torture and mangle their bodies, but not their minds which, fortified with celestial courage and celestial aid, they were in no way able to weaken or overcome. Oh, happy, Oh, blessed times! Oh, fortunate beings! Whose valor and whose virtue were such that even mere young boys in those days did not flinch under torment, however terrible. These gallant athletes of Christ were torn and rent with iron claws and scourges, and while this was done, though they were in the most agonizing pain, not a murmur nor a complaint was ever heard, for with steadfast and silent endurance these brave hearts were patient in adversity.

The Tortures and Torments of the Christian Martyrs

from

De SS. Martyrum Cruciatibus

(A Modern Edition)

Chapter VI

Of Red-Hot Plates, and Torches, and Blazing Brands

While the Heathen subjected Christians of either sex to be racked on the horse and mangled with scourges, iron claws, and the like (as we described in the preceding chapter), and to be stretched in the stocks to the fourth and fifth hole, *still* their savagery and rage remained unabated. In addition to these tortures, they would often have quicklime, molten lead, or boiling oil poured over their fresh wounds; at other times they would order them to be torn open with shards of pottery or violently rubbed and scrubbed with hair cloths, or lastly, to be horribly burned with red-hot plates, torches, and blazing brands.

Of Red-Hot, or Fiery Plates

Fiery Plates are spoke of by Plautus in his *Asinaria* in these words:

Stimulos, laminas, cruceque
("Goads, plates, and crosses");

By Cicero, in his *Contra Verres*:

"What, then, when the red-hot plates and other tortures were brought on the scene?"

By Horace, in his *Epistles*:

*Scilicet ut ventres lamina candente nepotum
Diceret urendos correctus.*

("So far reformed as to direct his grandsons' bellies to be scorched with the white-hot plate!")

Also by St. Cyprian, in his *Praise of Martyrdom*:

"For the Martyr's body is stretched on the rack and hissing to the red-hot plates."

By Prudentius in the *Hymn on the Martyrdom of St. Vincent*:

Stridensque flammis lamina ...
("And the plate hissing with fiery flames ...")

And again in that of St. Romanus:

Nec inusta laminis ardet cutis
("And the flesh burns scorched by the plates");

And lastly, Victor in the *Vandal Persecution*:

"For then did Papinian, the venerable Bishop and Father of our City, have all his body burned with white-hot plates of iron."

The *Acts of the Blessed Martyrs* are filled with instances of this kind of torture, and Eusebius mentions it repeatedly, particularly in his *Ecclesiastical History*. In fact, such burning, when confined to the sides, was counted among common and public punishments.

As a means of torture, a plate in this sense was (as many of the above quoted authorities and numerous *Histories* of the Holy Martyrs appear to imply) a piece of any metal, longer than it was broad, and thicker than a layer or leaf. In fact, a layer or leaf differs from a plate in that the former is thinner and will bend spontaneously, and crackles, whereas a plate is thicker and makes no crackling sound. Armor is made from this type of plate, and when heated red-hot was often used in antiquity for purposes of torture. Such a piece of iron heated in the fire was applied to the bare flesh of the Blessed Martyrs or of criminals, and held there until it had miserably burned the victim. It was with this instrument of martyrdom that those most glorious soldiers of Christ, St. Laurence, St. Bassus Bishop, St. Vincent, and many others were tortured.

Furthermore the *Theatre of Cruelties* shows how, in many cases, the Heretics of our own day have used the same method, and how Catholics even at the present time (1591) have been burned with fiery plates by the Huguenots and Calvinists.

Of the Torches with which the Blessed Martyrs were Burned

Torches are mentioned in many of the *Histories* of the Saints, especially those of St. Saba, an officer of soldiers; of Saints Eulalia of Emerita and Barbara, virgins and martyrs; and of St.

Clement, Bishop of Ancyra.

These torches were of two sorts — some were made of the inner and denser parts of trees which produce resin, such as the pine, pitch-pine, larch, or fir. These types of torches are often spoke of by ancient writers such as Varro, who writes:

"Rome is alive with women; and what rites were done at night-time, even now a pine torch indicates;" and again, "A torch is there, wrapped about with flame."

So also Virgil, in his *First Georgic*:

Ferro faces inspicas acutas

("He sharpens pointed torches with the knife"), where by torches the Commentators understand brands of pine wood.

And we find in his *Seventh Aeneid*:

Et castis reolent altaria tedis

("And the altars are fragrant with consecrated pine torches").

So too, Cicero:

"Rushing to and fro in terror of the Furies' blazing torches;" and in another speech, "Just as on the stage, Conscript Fathers, you see men, driven into crime by constraint of the gods, shudder in terror before the blazing torches of the Furies."

And lastly, by Suetonius in his *Life of Nero*:

"Often, the Emperor confessed, was he terrified by his mother's phantom, the whips of the Furies and their blazing torches."

Torches of the *second* kind were made of twisted coils of rope smeared with wax or pitch. These are mentioned by Virgil, in his *First Aeneid*:

Et noctem flammis funalia vincunt

("And torches disperse the darkness with their flames")

By Cicero, in *De Senectute*:

"His delight was in the torch of wax;" and again in the *De Officiis*, "Statues stood in every street, at which frankincense and torches of wax ...

And by Valerius Maximus, in speaking of Caius Duilius,

"Going to feast by the light of a torch of wax, with a flute-player preceding him."

With this distinction explained, we may add that torches of both these sorts — to wit, pine torches and torches of waxed or pitched rope — were used by the Heathen for scorching Christians to the point of death. The use of pine torches is attested by the *Acts* of St. Barbara, virgin and martyr, cited above (for while some have maintained that the Saint was burned with torches, others have recorded more particularly that it was with pine torches that she was tortured).

In fact both kinds of torches were often used in those days, as the authors we have quoted seem to indicate. But of the two, the pitch-pine is more abundant in resin than the other trees which produce resin as well, and produce a more pleasant flame (as Pliny says) and supply light for sacred functions. Torches, therefore, made of pitch-pine were more in use in antiquity than any others of a similar sort.

This form of torture is also — as we find in the *Theatre of Cruelties* — employed by the heretics of our own day for afflicting Catholics, and particularly by the Huguenots in their hatred of our holy religion, as we read in that work.

Of Blazing Brands, or Flambeaux

Mention was earlier made of *burning brands* — which some mistakenly confuse with torches — in sundry *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs, as of Saints Theophilus, Felix and Fortunatus, Pantaleon, Regina virgin and martyr, Theodore a priest, Alexander a Bishop, Parmenius and his companions, and countless other holy martyrs.

These brands or flambeaux belong — if representations of them carved in *ancient* marble to be seen in Rome are in fact accurate — to the same general class as torches, but were made in the following way: first, certain vessels were narrowed from the top or mouth to a gradually more and more contracted shape, like a pyramid reversed or turned upside down. These vessels were either of earthenware, as is shown by some that are, from time to time, dug up in the ruins of Rome, or else of iron, as Columella states. Afterward, they were enclosed with little staves of wood squared and tied together, and which like the vessels themselves were made finer and smaller from the top downward, and were then filled with fuel which gave off fire and flame. These staves, if we consider the uses to which these flambeaux were put, we must conceive of as being some five or six spans long, more or less.

But that the instruments that we have described from ancient examples were *flambeaux* and not torches, that is torches of pine-wood, or of twisted coils of rope, can be proven in many ways. In the first place it should be noticed in the marble engravings we mentioned before that the flame begins to burn more fiercely where the staves end, from which it follows they were not torches of the first kind, but of the second, to wit, brands or flambeaux; for if they *had* been ordinary torches, the wooden staves, which acted as handles, would necessarily have been consumed by the fire contained in the vessels. Consider, moreover, that we never see wax tapers burning all their length in candlesticks, but only at the end, so that they may the more efficiently burn and be consumed, and therefore giving better light.

Some may perhaps object, and say there is nothing really to show they were not ordinary torches of the first sort, inasmuch as the staves or handles were not burned because they were of iron, and not of wood at all. But this cannot possibly have been the case, for these brands or flambeaux were employed by the ancients for scorching criminals when hoisted on the horse, or suspended aloft, or tied up to pillars or stakes, and must therefore be conceived as having been light rather than heavy, so that the executioners might readily wield them in their hands. This view moreover is confirmed by the example of the iron claws or nippers mentioned earlier; for these, though of no great weight, were yet attached to very light handles for the easier torturing of condemned persons.

It is clear from these and other considerations that these brands or flambeaux were different from the ordinary torches first described; and Virgil confirms this by these verses in his *Ninth Aeneid*:

*Princeps ardentem coniecit lampada Turnus,
Et flammam affixit lateri, quae plurima vento
Corripuit tabulas, et postibus haesit adesis.*

("First Turnus hurled a blazing brand and touched the flank with flame, that fanned to fury by the wind seized on the planks and cleaved to the doorposts, which it began to gnaw away.")

Of the Manner in which the Martyrs were Burned and Scorched with Fiery Brands

In just the same fashion were the Blessed Martyrs burned and scorched with these fiery brands as they were tortured by means of iron claws, currycombs and hooks — as is testified by many of the *Acts* of the Martyrs above quoted and the details we have already provided in Chapter I concerning pillars, trees and stakes as employed in torturing Christ's servants.

Of Torments by which the Martyrs were Tortured after being Taken Down from the Horse

Lastly it must be noted how these same servants of Christ, after being taken down from the wooden horse, were then tortured with the different instruments described above, or else racked and stretched and their legs drawn asunder in the stocks to the fourth or fifth hole (as related in Chapter III), or rolled naked over shards of pottery, or even sometimes drenched with boiling oil or the like. These torments are illustrated in the *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs — in the case of St. Vincent and St. Pelagius, of St. Felix and St. Fortunatus, and others.

The Tortures and Torments

of the Christian Martyrs

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Chapter VII

Of the Brazen Bull, Frying-pan, Pot, Caldron, Gridiron, and Bedstead; of the Chair, Helmet, and Tunic, and other Instruments of Martyrdom of Red-Hot Iron

In the preceding chapter we had discussed some of the instruments of martyrdom by which condemned persons were *burned*; it only remains now to discuss the other instruments through which the same or a similar manner of torture was inflicted. We will begin first with the **Brazen Bull**, one of the most unimaginably cruel devices of punishment used among the ancients. The Brazen Bull, or Bronze Bull, was, in essence, a specially formed container into the which victims to be tortured were cast by an opening, or door, that was located in its side (as we see in the *Acts* of the Martyr St. Eustachius, as well as the Dialogue of Lucian, called *Phalaris*). After the door was shut, a fire was lighted about the bull, causing the victim imprisoned within it to suffer indescribable agonies, and by their screams and cries to imitate the bellowing of a bull. What is more evil still, this brazen device was so cunningly wrought to the likeness of a real bull that (as Lucian attests in the *Dialogue* named) movement and voice alone were lacking to persuade anyone that it was a living animal.

The inventor of this device (as Ovid tells us in the *Tristia*) was an Athenian, an extremely clever man named Perillus. Thinking he would be doing a great favor to Phalaris, the Tyrant of Agrigentum, as one who ever delighted in novel tortures and was accustomed to find his chief pleasure in inflicting cruel punishments, Perillus himself became its first victim. By the Despot's order, from whom he was expecting no small reward, he was thrown himself into the bull to test the working of his own invention. And so we find that Ovid writing the following:

*Et Phalaris tauro violenti membra Perilli Torruit;
infelix imbuit auctor opus.*

("And Phalaris roasted Perillus' limbs in the cruel bull; the ill-starred inventor was the first victim of his own handiwork")

and to the same end, Propertius:

Et gemere in tauro, saeve Perille, tuo.

("And to groan, cruel Perillus, in the bull you invented").

To these passages we may also add what Valerius Maximus had to say of Perillus and his cruel device:

"Then there was that cruel inventor of the brazen bull in which men were shut up and fires kindled underneath, so that they were constrained by the long-drawn, though unseen, torment to utter resounding cries, which took on the form of mere bellowings, so that their wails of agony might not, being expressed in human voice and language, appeal to the pity of the Tyrant Phalaris. Now inasmuch as he was glad to rob the miserable victims of all hope of pity, the artist was the first to be imprisoned in the bull and deservedly to demonstrate the dreadful effects of his own device."

More can be read of this in the *Letters* (Pseudo-letters) of Phalaris, in Cicero's, *Against Piso*, in Pliny, in Ovid's *Tristia*, and especially Lucian in the Dialogue entitled *Phalaris*.

But more still! Not only did *Perillus* become a victim of his own contrivance, but so did *Phalaris* himself. For the time eventually came when his great cruelty and violence could be tolerated no longer and the citizens of Agrigentum seized him, shut him up in the same bull in which he had burned others, and roasted him alive.

Ovid commemorated his fate in these lines:

*Utque ferox Phalaris, lingua prius ense resecta,
More bovis Phario clausus in aere gemas:*

("And like cruel Phalaris, the tongue first cut out with the sword and imprisoned in Egyptian brass, may you groan and bellow like a bull.")

Valerius Maximus, however, would seem to think differently as to the mode of this Tyrant's death, for he writes:

"By his fierce invectives against their cowardice, Zeno so roused the Agrigentines that they set on Phalaris and stoned him."

Cicero, in his, *De Officiis*, appears to agree with him:

"Phalaris was renowned above all mankind for cruelty, who perished not in an ordinary revolt, but by a general uprising against him of the whole population of Agrigentum."

Nevertheless we can reconcile the differing statements of Ovid on the one hand and of Valerius Maximus on the other, if we suppose the Tyrant was first attacked with stones, and *afterwards* cast into the red-hot brazen bull.

Some endured this form of punishment as a result of their profession of their Christian Faith. Indeed, so great was the rage and fury with which the Heathen assailed Christ's faithful servants, that they once again revived the use of many types of excessively cruel, but antiquated, instruments of Martyrdom. Among the Christians who were cast into the brazen bull and there shut up within it to die were Saints Antipas, Saint Eustachius, a Roman patrician, his wife, Theopistes, and his sons Agapius and Theopistus; also St. Pelagia, virgin and martyr, all of whom (as their *Acts* proclaim) sprang lightly and with alacrity into the red-hot monster, and rendering fervent thanks to God; Eustachius along with wife and sons in great joy, while Pelagia, the virgin of Tarsus, sang with great gladness a Hymn of Triumph to God.

Furthermore, we read of still other Christian martyrs who were imprisoned in the brazen bull — but by the Divine grace protecting them, came out of it safely and unharmed. Among these was the soldier, St. Barbarus, and St. Heliodorus, the latter of whom is thus commemorated under December 1:

"Anniversary of the Blessed Martyr Heliodorus of Maghedo, a city of Pamphilia. Aurelian being Emperor of Rome and Aetius Governor in the city of Maghedo in Pamphilia, St. Heliodorus for preaching of Christ in that city was brought before the Governor. When he refused to make sacrifice to idols, he was instantly hung up and thrashed; and when he felt the bitterness of the torment, he cried out, 'Lord Jesus Christ, help me.' And at once he heard a voice from Heaven saying, 'Fear not, I am with thee.' This voice was also heard by those who were holding the torches already lighted to burn him — these and four others present who saw Angels staying the torments, then themselves believed in Christ, and for remonstrating with the Governor, were thrown into the sea and so also received the crown of victory.

The Governor then commanded the brazen bull to be heated and the Martyr to be cast into it; but no sooner was this done than by his prayers, the monster which had been red-hot, grew instantly cold. The Governor was all the more astonished because he heard the man singing psalms inside the brazen bull, now cold. Going to the brazen engine which, at one moment, had been shooting out sparks, and at the next turned suddenly cold again, he reviled the Saint, saying, 'Wicked sinner! Did your magic arts prevail against the fire?' To which the holy man made answer, 'No! My magic arts are Christ! But give me three days' time to think over in my heart what I must do.'

Receiving this respite, the Governor took him secretly to the Temple of the gods, and when Heliodorus had made a prayer to the true God, all the idols suddenly fell down and broke in pieces. When the Governor heard this, he was filled with fury and ordered Heliodorus to be brought before him and then hanged, and nails heated red-hot to be driven into his head.

When the Judge saw that the Martyr remained unconquered, whatever the number and diversity of torments he endured, he sent him away to the city of Atala, where, remaining constant in his profession of the Faith, he was set in a hot frying-pan, where he stood and prayed, continuing all the while unhurt.

Seeing this, all the bystanders believed in the Lord, crying, 'A great God verily is the God of the Christians.' When the Governor saw many people converted to believe in Heliodorus' God, and fearing that they might rescue him from out his hands, he ordered Heliodorus to be carried back again to Maghedo, to which the guards led him praying and singing psalms. Then the Saint was questioned a second time, but only continued the more steadfast in his former confession of Jesus Christ.

The Governor then commanded his tongue to be cut out, and that he should be hung up and scourged in the space of two hours. So after putting a collar on him, they dragged him forth of the city. But the holy man signed to them with his hand, and stood still to preach; and when his sermon was ended, he was cut to pieces."

Of the Brazen Pot as an Instrument of Martyrdom

This is mentioned both in Holy Scripture, in the *Book of the Maccabees*, and by Josephus in his work on the same subject, as well as in the *Acts of the Saints*, especially those of St. Boniface, St. Juliana, and St. Lucy. A pot was a very large vessel made of brass, into the which condemned persons were stripped and thrown, to be boiled or seethed within it.

The persecutors of the early Christians used many different sorts of vessels for the torturing of offenders, particularly Christians. They had frying-pans for lightly roasting or frying their flesh, and caldrons and pots for thoroughly boiling or seething them. These pots were nothing more nor less than ordinary kitchen pots for boiling meat withal, as we find, for instance, in Varro:

"To spin wool, and at the same time keep an eye on the pot, that the pottage be not burned;"

And by Plautus, in his *Amphitryon*:

Optimo jure infringatur olla cineris in caput
("He well deserves a pot of ashes be broken over his head")

Also, Persius in his *Fourth Satire* says:

Caepe et farratam, pueris plaudentibus, ollam
("Bring out, amid the clapping of the lads, onions and the pot of pottage")

These pots, then were simply very large vessels made of brass, in which the martyrs were boiled as a punishment at once terrible and ignominious. They were made (as we see from very ancient artifacts often dug up from the ruins of Rome) in the likeness of the pots we commonly use for cooking food, without rims, but having two handles, which were part square, part round — square from the bottom to the middle, round from the middle upwards to the brim, or else made on the model of a pair of ears. On the other two sides they had two partly hollow projections of iron facing one another, in which rings, also of iron, were fitted, to enable the tormentors to more easily lift and carry them where they would. All this will be found more plainly and particularly shown in the pot which we have had drawn from ancient examples to be seen in Figure XXII.

Different Ways in Which the Servants of God were put into the Pot

Christians sometimes were plunged into a pot head downwards; as we read in the *Acts* of the Martyr St. Boniface:

"The Judge in anger ordered a pot to be brought and filled with boiling pitch, and the holy martyr — St. Boniface — to be cast into it head first. So the blessed martyr of Christ, after signing the Sign of the Cross, was plunged into the pot."

In other cases victims were thrown into the pot so tightly squeezed and doubled up that their heads were made to touch their knees. This is attested to by Josephus in the following:

"He is put by the executioners' hands into the pot — such is the name given to this form of criminal punishment. The press being turned or revolved, his holy head is forced to his knees, and his body being thus reduced in height, the champion of the Faith was squeezed miserably into the aforesaid pot."

We should observe here that by *the press* Josephus denoted some instrument for pressing or squeezing — not, however, the great press or beam by which grapes and olives are crushed and pressed, but rather a smaller device for pressing, such as fullers, paper-makers, and printers chiefly use. Thus Pliny remarks, in speaking of different kinds of paper,

"Then are they squeezed in the presses and dried in the sun, and the several sheets joined together."

Of the Caldron

There was yet another sort of vessel used in antiquity (as the *Histories* of the Martyrs bear witness) for the boiling of Christians: a very large brazen caldron which was filled with boiling oil, pitch, molten lead, or wax, into which the victims were cast. We read of this often in the *Acts* of the Blessed Saints, in particular those of Saints Saba and Zerio, and St. Veneranda, virgin and martyr. We hear of such a caldron again in the *Book of the Maccabees* (Chapter VII) and in Josephus' *History of the Wars of the Maccabees*. As to its shape, this appears to omit other references, sufficiently indicated by the lines in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*:

*Vina dabant animos, et prima pocula pugna,
Missa volant, fragilesque cadi, curvique lebetes.*

("Wine stirs their spirit, and the fight begins with hurling flying cups and fragile jars and rounded caldrons.")

In both these vessels were tortured great numbers of Christ's soldiers — in pots, Saints Boniface, Juliana, Lucy, Erasmus; and in caldrons, St. Zeno, St. Veneranda virgin and martyr, Saints Saba,

Marianus, Pantaleemon, Eulampius and his sister Eulampia, Zenobius and Zenobia, brothers and sisters.

Of the Frying-Pan as an Instrument of Torture

Mention is made of the frying-pan in the Second Book of the Maccabees (Chap. VII) and in many collections of the *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs, such as those of St. Eleutherius the Bishop, Saints Fausta and Justina, virgins and martyrs.

The frying-pan — as the name implies and from what we find in the *Histories* of the Blessed Martyrs — was a wide open dish or plate, which (as we see in the *Acts* of the Martyrs) was filled with oil, pitch, resin or sulfur, and then placed over a fire; when it began to boil and bubble, the Christians of either sex who had persisted steadfastly and boldly in the profession of Christ's faith were then thrown into it, to the end they would be roasted and fried like fishes cast into boiling oil. So in the Hymn of St. Romanus we find Prudentius writing as follows concerning one of the seven Maccabees brothers who was tortured in this way:

Videbat ipsos apparatus funerum

Praesens suorum, nec movebatur parens,

Laetata, quoties aut olivo stridula Sartago frixum torruisset puberem.

("The mother was present, gazing on all the preparations for her dear one's death and showed no sign of grief, rejoicing rather each time the pan, hissing hot above the olive wood, roasted and scorched her child.")

As to its shape, we believe it to have been round since all vessels that we use for seething or frying, or for boiling water, are circular. Nor can it really be doubted that the vessels in use today have been modeled on the types we have found used throughout history. One of these is to be seen to this day in the Church of St. Laurence beyond the Walls, in which that most gallant champion of Christ, St. Laurence, baptized a soldier of the Emperor's guard, by the name of Romanus.

Of the Manner in which Martyrs were Tortured in the Frying-Pan

Christian Martyrs were roasted in frying-pans in two different ways. Sometimes they were cast bodily into it with faces looking heavenward. In these cases, we must conjecture that there was some proportion between the instrument of torture and the man tortured within it, and so we assume that victims of this form of torture were thrown into a frying-pan which was more an oval than one perfectly round. At other times (as we see in the *Acts* of St. Euphemia) they were not set bodily into the pan, but rather, limb by limb. This is expressly described in the account of the holy virgin St. Euphemia, where we read:

"Priscus the Proconsul commanded her to be divided limb from limb with knives, and the severed members to be roasted in a frying-pan ..."

Now in this case it would seem likely that the frying-pan was more of the round variety.

It must be further understood that the Blessed Martyrs, when roasting in the pan, were forced down in it by means of iron forks; for the purpose of the iron framework or gridiron and of the frying-pan seems to have been one and the same, both of them being used for burning Christians to death. So just as martyrs which were broiled on the gridiron were held down on it by the executioners with iron forks (as stated in the *Acts* of St. Laurence), similarly those tortured in the frying-pan may be surely assumed to have been pushed down and held within it in the same way.

Of the Gridiron and the Iron Bed

Having examined the instruments with which the Christian martyrs were *boiled* or *fried*, we now turn our attention to those means by which their flesh was broiled by their heathen tormentors. These were the *gridiron* and the *iron bed*, both of which are frequently mentioned in the various *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs.

Gridirons are spoken of in the *Histories* of numerous Saints, such as Saints Eleutherius, Conon and Dulas, of St. Domna virgin and martyr, and of St. Laurence; *iron beds* also in the *Acts* of St. Eleutherius, as also in those of the most sainted Clement of Ancyra, Plato, and others.

As to the *iron frame* or *gridiron*, its nature is sufficiently indicated both by the name, its description in the *Histories* of the Saints, and by the gridiron itself upon which the most Holy Confessor of Christ, St. Laurence, was broiled, and which is religiously preserved in part at the Church of St. Laurence in Lucina, and in part at Paneperna. It was framed of three iron bars set lengthwise and a span distance one from the other, of one finger thick, two broad, and of a length suitable for its purpose, with seven or more shorter pieces of iron placed crosswise, and likewise separated a span from each other. Of these some were round, and some square; the square ones being the two which were joined to the ends of the longitudinal bars to brace together and strengthen the whole gridiron. There were likewise fixed at each corner and in the middle, supports also of iron, raising the framework a little off the ground and serving as legs.

We do not imagine that all gridirons were made with only three bars lengthwise, but only some; for we read in the *Acts* of St. Laurence how the Emperor commanded an iron framework of three bars to be brought for the burning of the holy man, from which it follows that such were to be found among the ancients both with three and with more bars.

Martyrs Who were Roasted on the Gridiron

The following were tortured on the gridiron, upon which, as we said, they were held down with iron forks, and so roasted upon the fire laid underneath: Saints Laurence, Dulas, Eleutherius, Conon, Dorotheus, Macedonius, Theodulus, Tatian, and Peter. The last we find commemorated on March 12th in these words:

"At Nicomedia the martyrdom of the Blessed Peter. Being Chamberlain to the Emperor Diocletian, he vigorously remonstrated with him concerning the excessive torments the Christian martyrs were made to endure. For this, he was by his master's order, brought before him and hung up and beaten for a very long time with scourges, then rubbed with vinegar and salt, and finally broiled on a gridiron over a slow fire. Thus was he inheritor at once of St. Peter's faith and name."

Still other facts concerning this same holy martyr are to be found in the *Acts* of those most glorious soldiers of Christ, Saints Dorotheus and Gorgonius. These are now in manuscript, but we hope by God's gift soon to edit and print them, together with numberless other *Histories* of Saints of either sex never before published. This task accomplished, we further propose, if life be spared us, to write careful notes upon the several Lives of the Saints thus far published, in which we shall endeavor, so far as lies in us, to distinguish what is true and certain from what is doubtful or found to be definitely untrue.

So much for the gridiron, from which another instrument called the *Iron Bedstead* in the *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs was altogether distinct. For in the *History* of St. Eleutherius, Bishop and Martyr — mentioned earlier — we read how the Tyrant, who was ordering him to be tortured, directed the holy man, after he had been tormented at his command on an *iron bed*, to be removed from it and roasted on an *iron grid* — which shows beyond a doubt the iron bed to have been entirely distinct from the gridiron. To clarify this distinction, let us cite the very words of the account:

"Then Hadrian, boiling with rage, ordered the *brazen bed* to be brought, and commanded the man to be laid thereon and bound legs and arms to the four corners, that his tender limbs might be stretched and racked. This done, fire was set underneath. ... But when an hour had passed, the Emperor, thinking him dead, ordered the bands to be loosed. Then stretching out his hands, St. Eleutherius said to the Romans, 'Great is the Lord of the Christians, whom those most blessed saints, Peter and Paul, preached to us; who performed many signs and wonders in this city and struck down to the earth that notorious Simon Magus, which did glorify and worship the same devils as Hadrian does.' The Emperor then ordered the *gridiron* to be smeared with oil and brought in, and commanded fire to be set underneath. ..."

This is from the *Acts* of St. Eleutherius, from which we clearly gather that the gridiron was a different instrument of torture from the iron bed. It is further confirmed by what is written concerning the same holy man in the *Roman Martyrology* on April 18th, as follows:

"At Messina, anniversary of the Blessed Martyrs, St. Eleutherius, Bishop of Illyricum, and St. Anthia, his mother. Illustrious for the holiness of their life and wonder of their miracles, under Hadrian they overcame the pains of the iron red-hot bedstead, the gridiron and the frying-pan boiling with oil, pitch, and resin ..."

This once again shows that the gridiron was distinct from the *iron bed* which (as we find in the *Acts* of the Martyrs) was made in the likeness of a real bedstead, oblong and raised somewhat from the earth in order to place fire underneath it, with a number of iron bars carried across from side to side to take the place of the usual planks, leaving a space between each.

The following are the names of the most glorious martyrs who were tortured on the iron bed: Saints Eleutherius, Clement of Ancyra, Plato, of whom we have already spoken, as well as Saints Olympiades, Maximus, Pegasius — and many others, whose names and numbers God alone knows.

Of the Chair, Helmet, Tunic, and other Instruments of Iron Heated Red-Hot

Besides these iron frames and bedsteads, the Heathen had still other instruments for tormenting Christians, one of which was the *iron chair* heated red-hot. This is testified to in the *Acts of Saints Paul and Juliana*, by St. Gregory of Nyssa in the *Life* he wrote of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, and likewise by the *History of Saint Blase*, in which we read the following:

"Again the Judge commanded seven seats of brass to be brought in, and commanded the women, seven in number, who during the tormenting of St. Blase had collected the drops of his blood as they fell, to sit upon them, one in each. Then the seats were heated so hot that sparks flew from them as from a furnace heated to the utmost."

The next instrument of torture that we will discuss concerns *red-hot helmets*, that were also used upon the Christians. This method of torture was customary among the Heathen who often covered the heads of their victims on these occasions. We see this in the *History of the martyrdom of St. Clement of Ancyra* and that of St. Justus, a soldier, in which is written on July 14th:

"The day of trial of the Holy Martyr St. Justus, who was of the city of Rome, a soldier serving under the Tribune Claudius. Returning once from a victory over the Barbarians, he saw a cross appearing before him like a crystal, and heard a voice issuing from it. Instructed by it in the mystery of godly piety, upon arriving in Rome he distributed all his goods to the poor, exulting in the faith of Christ. But when this came to the ears of the Tribune, and Christ's martyr would not deny the profession he had made, he sent him to the Governor Magnentius. Questioned by him and found to be constant in his steadfastness to the Christian faith, he was ordered to be scourged with whips of raw hide, and afterward to have his head capped with a fiery helmet, and iron balls, heated red-hot, to be put under his armpits. All these torments and others of a similar kind the Blessed Martyr bore unflinchingly, blessing God all the while, and was finally cast into a furnace, where he finally died, although his sacred body remained whole and unconsumed, not a hair of his head being burnt by the fire into which he was thrown."

No more need be said about the fiery helmet.

We must not, however, think that the fury of the Heathen was satisfied by these many dreadful tortures inflicted on the holy martyrs, or that their cruelty was in any way diminished against Christ's servants. Rather, by the constancy of the Martyrs' and their refusal to disavow Christ in the face of the most grievous pain and certain death, their rage was all the more inflamed and they constantly sought new and still more painful devices yet with which to torment them with fire. To this end were the Martyrs *clothed in the iron burning tunic*, as we read in the case of St.

Erasmus, or their *temples were pierced with red-hot nails*, as in the case of the martyrs, Saints Victoricus and Fulcianus; or they were *burned under the armpits and sides by means of iron spikes heated to a great temperature*, as with St. Taracus and his companions; or else they were *made to wear shoes of red-hot brass*, as is told of St. Antymus, Bishop of Nicomedia, or *compelled to walk shod in iron shoes nailed on with red-hot nails*. Thus we find it written on May 22 concerning the Blessed Martyr, St. Basiliscus:

"Day twenty-second, anniversary of St. Basiliscus, martyred under the Emperor Maximian, from the district of Amasea. Imprisoned on account of his profession of Christ's faith by Agrippa the Governor, he was repeatedly shod with iron shoes nailed on with red-hot nails, and ordered to be driven along the road leading to Comana. And when on the way they had come to a certain place where dwelt a woman named Trojana, they bound the holy man, his hands tied behind his back, to a barren plane-tree, which tree the Saint, by praying to God, made green again, and caused a fountain suddenly to bubble forth from the ground. And seeing these things, the soldiers and the woman all believed in Jesus Christ. Moreover when he reached the City of Comana, and could in no way be induced to make sacrifice, he prayed to God, Who sent down fire from heaven and burned up the Temple and idol of Apollo. At this the Governor was greatly angered, and commanded the Martyr Basiliscus to be cut to pieces and cast into the river. Thus did he win the crown of martyrdom, to the praise and glory of Almighty God."

The Tortures and Torments of the Christian Martyrs

from

De SS. Martyrum Cruciatibus

(A Modern Edition)

Chapter VIII

Of Various other Methods by which Christ's Holy Martyrs were Tortured with Fire

Day by day the Devil, the Prince of Darkness and Father of Lies, was busy leading the idolatrous Emperors and their ministers into new methods through which — *over and above* those already described — they could further torture Christ's servants. Some were forced to walk barefoot over a floor strewn with live coals, among whom were St. Tiburtius, a most noble Roman, and St. Pontianus; while others again were simply thrown into the fire to be burned. In this way the crown of martyrdom was gained by St. Polycarp, Saints Theodora, Euphrosyna, Flavia Domitilla, St. Fructuosus a Bishop, Saints Aubonia and Theophila virgins and martyrs, along with *twenty thousand Christians* mentioned in the Greek *Menology*, on December 28:

"The day of trial of the *twenty thousand saints which were martyred under the Emperor Maximian*, being burned to death at Nicomedia."

Furthermore, at Satan's instigation Christ's faithful followers were sometimes burned entire, and at other times in part, as when their heads were subjected to coals of fire that were put alight into their mouths or ears, or else the holy martyrs would be bound down on iron beds, and molten lead, boiling oil, blazing pitch, wax, sulfur, and similar substances poured over their limbs. We witness these particular types of torments in the *Histories* of a great many noble martyrs, such as Saints Agapitus, Timothy, Apollinaris, Pelagius, Victor a soldier; Felix and Fortunatus, Boniface, Claudius and his companions, and a host of others.

Not content with these torments, the Devil further provoked the tormentors of Christ's martyrs who were subsequently stripped of their clothes and rolled back and forth over sharp shards and burning coals, or else forced to hold live coals placed in their hands along with incense before the altars of idols, so that, if they should chance to toss down the burning embers, they might thus appear to have offered incense to the false gods of the Heathen. The first of these forms of torture is mentioned in the *Acts* of Saints Firmus and Rusticus and Saints Agatha and Macra, virgins and martyrs; the second in the *Histories* of the martyrdom of St. Procopius, as also of St. Cyrilla, virgin, who is commemorated under July 5th in these words:

"Commemoration of the blessed martyr, St. Cyrilla, who lived under the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian and belonged to the city of Cyrene in Libya. She was accused before Dignianus the Governor, and stood for judgment along with Lucia and Roa, two pious women. And when she could not be induced to make offering to idols, live coals were put in her hands and incense, and she was forced to sacrifice. But she cried aloud, 'This enforced act is not to pay sacrifice'. So when her fingers were consumed, she was then hung up and scourged, and presently when she was taken down from the stake, blood flowed from her wounds and milk from her breast like a torrent, and so this blessed Saint and Martyr gave up her spirit to God."

In this respect it is noteworthy that the Emperor Julian, called the Apostate, attempted to persuade Christian soldiers of his army by promising them gifts if they made an offering of incense for the fire on the day of the Imperial distribution of largess. St. Gregory Nazianzen, speaks of this in his first *Invective* against the this Emperor:

"Now the day of the Imperial largess was come, whether the actual birthday (of Julian the Apostate), or so fixed for that date with that Emperor's usual cunning artfulness, and all soldiers were bound to present themselves, to the end that each, according to his proper rank and dignity, might receive a gift. Once more the same scene of sordid greed, the same tale of impiety. Anxious to veil his cruelty under an aspect of good-natured liberality, the Emperor endeavored to entice and allure with gifts of money the foolish pride and avarice of the soldiers — qualities that always play a great part in their lives. So there sat the Prince presiding in state, holding high holiday against goodness and piety, and not a little elated at the cunning of his own devices. You might have deemed him a Melampus or a Proteus, so ready was he to follow any course or take on any shape or form ... There was gold on one hand, incense on the other, while fire was ready close at hand and men standing by to urge compliance. Indeed it was a plausible tale enough — it was the regular custom of the Imperial largess, an old and time-honored ceremonial. What was it? Merely to set the incense alight ... and so earn the wages of death at the Emperor's hand, to accept how small a payment for how great a sacrifice, the loss of their souls and an act of direct impiety against Almighty God!

"A wretched reward truly, so poor a recompense! The whole army was put up for sale with flattery by one and the same vile trick; the soldiers who had conquered the world with their arms were undone for a little fire and gold and a puff of incense smoke, most of them — and this was the most grievous point of all — not even knowing their own ruin. A man came forward, hoping to make a little gain; and for gain he lost his own soul. He kissed the Emperor's hand — and knew not that he was greeting his own executioner. Nor even if they did see this, were they any the better for the fact, seeing that once they were caught in the snare they held their stupid

acquiescence as a law that could in no way be broken. What myriads of Persians, what hosts of bowmen and stingers, what army in panoply of steel, invulnerable on every side, what engines for battering down the walls of cities, could have brought about a result which one hand and one occasion added to evil purpose easily affected?

"At this point I will intersperse a short story, sadder yet and more pitiful still than that above. It is said that some of them who had been caught and persuaded in ignorance, returning after being thus unwittingly involved in disaster, sat down to eat with their comrades in barracks; then, when the meal had come to the customary draught of cold water, just as if nothing serious had happened to alter their condition, they lifted up their eyes, as was their custom, and invoked Christ making the Sign of the Cross. But one of their comrades marveling at this, asked, 'Why, what is this? Do you invoke Christ after abjuring Him?' 'Startled at this question, they exclaimed, 'No! How have we abjured Him? What is this strange thing you say?' But the other answered, 'Why, by offering incense for the fire; what else is this, pray, but denying Christ?' Then without an instant's delay, they sprung up from table, and like madmen, boiling with zeal and indignation, rushed through the Forum shouting, 'Christians, Christians are we at heart! Let all men hear us say so, and most especially God, for Whom we live and are ready to die. The pledge we gave Thee, Christ our Savior, we have not broken; our holy profession we have not abjured. If our hand has offended, our intention never certainly went with it. We have been motivated by the Emperor's trick, not contaminated with gold. We wash our hands of the wickedness, and will purge ourselves with blood.' And afterward going quickly to the Emperor, and boldly and defiantly casting down the gold, they cried out: 'It is not gifts we have received, Emperor, but to death we have been doomed. Not to receive honor were we summoned, as you would have had us believe, but to be branded with infamy. Grant your soldiers this gift: sacrifice us for Christ, and kill us for His sake, whose empire alone we acknowledge. Pay fire with fire, and for the ashes of that sacrifice burn us to ashes. Cut off our hands, those hands we wickedly stretched forth, and our feet that carried to us to an evil deed. Let others have your gifts, who need not be ashamed to take them; for us Christ is enough and more than enough, whom we value above all price.'

"The fervor with which they spoke at the same time aroused their fellow soldiers to realize the deception to which they had been exposed, and to themselves recover from their illusion and seek to appease Christ with their blood. Then the Emperor was greatly angered; yet would he not kill them openly, and so make them martyrs (who were already martyrs inasmuch as the intent was within them), but rather punished them with exile and avenged the slight done him by this penalty. But in doing so he only benefited them the more, by removing of them far from his odious sacrifices and malicious designs."

The most blessed Nazianzen, then, shows us beyond a doubt how these most gallant champions of Christ could neither by the scorn nor the cunning of that most wicked and apostate Emperor be cast down from the height of their piety, but were, instead, all the more steadfast and ready to endure death for Christ's sake. Thus was Julian's cunning all in vain, and his attempt to turn them from the faith of Christ availed him nothing.

Two Other Similar Devices by which the Heathen attempted to Persuade Christians to Renounce their Faith

Eusebius relates in his *Ecclesiastical History* how Christians under the Emperor Diocletian were sometimes, forced to join the number of those sacrificing, so as to *appear* to have made an offering to idols. This is what he says:

"Now of the remainder, each endured some form of torture; one had his body entirely torn with whips, another suffered the racking of all his limbs, and still another was mangled with sharp razors beyond all human endurance. Some barely made an altogether honorable end, and some failed to endure the trial. Some would be violently shoved forward and brought up to perform these foul and abominable rites, and — even though he had never sacrificed at all — would be let go just as if he had made the required offering; another — though he had never been near the Temple or touched anything impure — yet in virtue of his heathen friends testifying that he had made the sacrifice, bore their testimony in silence and so saved himself from the peril. One, rescued half dead and half alive, is cast forth as a dead man; another, prostrated on the earth as if in acquiescence was counted among the number of worshippers, and spared. Some, on the contrary, cried out and announced in a loud voice, that they utterly and entirely disavowed the very ceremony they were taking part in; while others openly confessing the life-giving name of Christ, proclaimed themselves Christians; and yet others emphatically declared they had never offered sacrifice to idols and never would. Nevertheless, even these, struck in the mouth and forced to silence, battered and buffeted on face and cheeks by the rough hands of numerous attendants appointed for the purpose, were at last violently expelled the assembly — but deemed their being reprieved from martyrdom a great good gained, since they appeared *not* to have renounced the Faith even though they were entirely prepared to do so if subjected to duress."

A similar pretense was practiced by these servants of Satan in yet another way, for they used to force the meat offered to idols into the Christians' mouths against their will, and to pour the wine of sacrifice down their throats. So in the *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs, Saints Tharacus, Probus, and Andronicus, we find the following:

"After this, the Governor ordered flesh which had been offered and wine of sacrifice to be brought, and said, 'Pour the wine down his throat and put meat from the altar into his mouth.' And while this was being done, Probus cried, 'May the Lord look down from His seat on high and see the compulsion used, and judge my case justly.' The Governor said, 'Many torments have you endured, unhappy man; and now you have accepted the sacrifice.' Probus replied, 'Little have you effected, by using compulsion; the Lord knows my true heart.' The Governor replied, 'Ah! but you have both eaten and drunk.' Probus answered, 'The Lord knows and has seen the compulsion I am under.'" And again a little further on, the same author, speaking of St. Andronicus tells us: "The Governor said, 'Open his lips, and put in his mouth flesh from the altar, and pour the wine down his throat.' While this was being done, Andronicus exclaimed, 'Lord, Lord! I suffer compulsion.' The Governor asked, 'How long can you endure under torture? There! You have tasted of the sacrifice!' Andronicus made answer, 'All men are sinners which worship idols, you and your Emperors alike.' "

But to return from this digression let us resume our examination of the ways that the Holy Martyrs were subjected to the torture of fire. We find that they were often bound to upright stakes, and a fire kindled around them, or stretched out and tied to four pegs and a blaze made underneath them; at other times they were cast into fiery furnaces, into a flaming pile, or into pits full of live coals, or else thrown into great casks. Sometimes, again, they were enclosed in chambers, shrines, or baths, that were then set on fire, with the martyrs burning inside; at other times they were tied with ropes of flax saturated with oil, their bodies drenched with sulfur and resin, their feet bound about with flax dipped in oil, and then set alight, or else put in boats filled with flax and pitch, and then set aflame to be burned at sea, through which they offered their unpolluted and unstained souls to God, the Maker and Creator of all things.

Evidence of these methods are to be found in various *Acts* of Martyrs: the first — involving their being bound to stakes and burned is to be found in the *Histories* of St. Polycarp and St. Tharacus; the second — being tied to four pegs with a fire kindled beneath, in the *Acts* of St. Anastasia, a Roman virgin and martyr; the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth — respectively being thrown into furnaces, pits, or casks to be burned, in the *Acts* of Saints Emilianus and Paphnutius, of three sisters, Faith, Hope, and Charity, virgins and martyrs, of Saints Agnes, Apollonia, and Dorothy, also virgins and martyrs. In the *History* of St. Dorothy, we read how two sisters, Christe and Caliste, were brought back by her holy care to the fold of the Christian Faith, from the which they had fallen away, in these words:

"The Governor sent a message to Christe and Caliste, bidding them to his presence along with Dorothy; and after taking them aside, he began to ask them whether they had succeeded in changing Dorothy's sentiments. But with one voice they made answer: 'We were mistaken and acted very sinfully, when through fear of punishment and momentary pain we sacrificed to idols, and asked her to do the same; but she led us to repentance, so that we may now win Christ's mercy.' Then Sapritius (the Governor) tore his clothes, and with great fury ordered them to be tied together back to back and so cast into a cask, if they refused to sacrifice. ..."

Of the seventh sort — that of being imprisoned in chambers, shrines, or baths, and there burned or suffocated — we find record in the *Acts* of Saints Domna and Theophila, virgins and martyrs, and of the Roman virgins and holy martyrs, Flavia Domitilla, Theodora, Euphrosyne and Crecilia.

What is to be Understood by Suffocation in an Over-Heated Bath

We read in the *History* of St. Cecilia, that she was shut up and *stifled in a hot bath*. It should be understood therefore that that the Roman Baths were also used as a means of putting criminals, offenders, and Christians to death. To this end, victims were imprisoned in the first or hottest chamber of the baths called the Sweating Room or *Laconicum*, that stifled to death by means of excessive heat. These ancient *Thermae*, or Hot Baths, consisted of four Chambers, the first, used to produce sweat, was aptly called the Sweating Room, or *Laconicum*, or Hottest Room for Copious Sweating; the other three being the Hot, the Tepid, and the Cooling Rooms, respectively.

It was in the first room or the *Laconicum*, that the Blessed Martyrs died. So in the *History* of St. Crecilia we find written:

"Then being extremely angry, Almachius the Judge commanded her to be taken back to her own house, and there consumed by the heat of the Baths. But although she was shut up in the hot air of her bath-house and a great store of wood for the fire placed under it day and night, she yet remained unharmed within it, as if she had been placed only in the Cold Chamber, and was made perfectly safe through God's grace, to such an extent that not the least part of her limbs was wet with so much as the smallest trace of sweat."

Gallenus, in writing of the *Laconicum*, says: "On entering, they stay a while in the hot air", that is in the *Laconicum*; later on, "they go down into a bath of hot water."

We must now consider the remaining methods by which Christians were burned with fire: to wit, the eighth, ninth, and tenth methods — *tied with ropes saturated in oil, feet bound with flax dipped in oil, or bound and sent to sea in boats loaded with tow and pitch and then set on fire*. Of all these we have testimony in different *Acts* of the Saints — of the last named [*bound and sent to sea in boats loaded with tow and pitch and then set on fire*] in the *History* of St. Restituta, virgin and martyr, of the eighth [*tied with ropes saturated in oil*] and ninth [*feet bound with flax dipped in oil*] in the accounts of the passion of St. Amphianus and of St. Ursicius. The following words are recorded in the *Roman Martyrology* on April 2:

"At Caesarea in Palestine, anniversary of St. Amphianus the Martyr, who in the Persecution of Maximin, for having remonstrated with Urbanus the Governor for sacrificing to idols, was cruelly scourged, and most bitterly tortured, his feet being wrapped in flax dipped in oil and then set on fire, and finally thrown into the sea. So passing through fire and water, he was brought at last to blissful consolation."

The other, St. Ursicius, is commemorated in the Greek *Menology* on August 24:

"Commemoration of the Blessed Martyr St. Ursicius, who under the Emperor Maximin was denounced to the Emperor from the city of Sibentum, lying inland from Illyricum, and handed over to the Governor Aristides. When he remained steadfast and unwavering in his profession, he was first violently scourged with a whip made of bulls' penises, then bound round with ropes of flax steeped in oil, and then drenched with sulfur and resin, he was set alight; and last of all, the sentence of death was pronounced, and the Holy St. Ursicius was slain with a drawn sword by the informer Valens. And having so won martyrdom, he was given to the tomb by a pious woman, Simplicia by name."

Of the Deadly Tunic as an Instrument of Martyrdom

These forms of torture, by which the most glorious Martyrs Amphianus and Ursicius died, are very like, if indeed not identical to, a most terrible punishment that the ancients called the *Deadly Tunic*. This was a shirt smeared and saturated with flammable substances (as Seneca records in his *Epistles*), which was then set alight, and the criminals wrapped in it burned in a fearful

conflagration. Both Tertullian and Caelius make mention of this punishment as applied to Christian martyrs.

Tortures of a similar kind were used by the Heretics of our own day, as recorded in the *Theatre of Cruelties*, on Domitius Hurley, Archbishop of Cashel in Ireland, his native country:

"Accused of the offense of having fortified some children with the Holy Sacrament of Confirmation, he was arrested; and inasmuch as he refused to renounce the Catholic faith, he was subjected by the Heretics to the tortures of the kind described immediately above: greaves, or leggings, filled full of oil were placed upon his legs, and once he was tied fast on a wooden seat so that he could not move, he was set before a huge fire, and the leggings being burned by the fierce flame, his shins were consumed along with them, in such way that when the heretics came to draw off the leggings, they tore away the flesh with them up to his knees, leaving only the bare bones. One morning soon after this, about three or four of the clock, his neck was set in a noose of willow rods, that his agony might be the longer, and he was hanged. Thus did he win the noble crown of martyrdom, and his spirit took flight to the skies."

We will close this chapter with a few quotes of similar instances provided by the Holy Fathers or from the *Histories* of their lives. Concerning the Catholics which were tormented by fire under Constantius, this is what St. Athanasius says:

"But these (that is the Arians, enemies of the Catholic Church) they shunned as murderers, malefactors and robbers, for they overthrew Monasteries and set fire to them to burn the Monks, and tore down their dwelling places ..." and again in his *Apology*, "For setting virgins on blazing fires, they strove thus to force them to confess the Arian faith."

Further details of the Catholics similarly persecuted under Valens are found in the *History* of Theodoretus:

"But at Constantinople the Arians loaded a ship with a company of pious priests, and launched it into the deep without sails or tackle. Then embarking several adherents of their own sect in another vessel, they instructed them to set on fire the ship containing the priests. So this being done, the priests, after struggling a while with fire and sea, were plunged into the deep, and so won the crown of martyrdom. "

Similar accounts are to be found in Sozomen and Socrates in their *Ecclesiastical Histories*, as well as in Victor concerning Catholics under the *Vandal Persecution*:

"Some they slew by scourging, some by hanging, others they burned in bonfires," and again, writing of the martyrdom of St. Liberatus and his companions, "This, however, came to the Tyrant's ears, who, intoxicated with fury, ordered them to be subjected to tortures hitherto unheard of and to be laden with heavier chains. Moreover he commanded a ship to be filled with bundles of dry faggots, and all his victims being bound fast therein, to be set alight on the open sea and burned up. ..."

Lastly concerning the Catholics who were martyred under Leo or Constantine Copronymus, the *Roman Martyrology* states the following on August 29,:

"Anniversary of Saints Hypatius and Andrew. These were two priests which for the respect they showed the sacred images were slaughtered by Leo, after their beards had been steeped in pitch and set alight, and the scalp of their heads torn off."

The same is related under November 28 of St. Stephen the Younger, who is said to have endured the same punishment under Constantine Copronymus.

The Tortures and Torments of the Christian Martyrs

from

De SS. Martyrum Cruciatibus

(A Modern Edition)

Chapter IX

Of other Instruments of Torture and Methods Used for the Tormenting of the Christian Martyrs:

- **Schoolboys' Iron Styluses**
- **Nails**
- **Saws**
- **Spears**
- **Swords**
- **Arrows**
- **Tearing out the Inwards**
- **Cutting the Throat**
- **Beheading**
- **Branding and Marking**
- **Pounding with Axes and Clubs**

Ever seeking to prey upon of the souls of men, the Devil never ceases to devise further means and methods by which he may utterly overthrow and drive out the Faith of Christ. Deeming that he had found a means of easily accomplishing his evil purpose through torturing Christ's members, he caused all the great judges of those times to believe that this alone would make them renowned — if they ordered men and women who were champions and heralds of our Religion to be cruelly tortured, tormented and put to death with every agony that could possibly

be devised. Such shallow ingenuity! Such futile designs! Truly, were these wise men made foolish, their cunning devices and evil counsels availing them nothing!

For indeed,— as Eusebius says in his *Ecclesiastical History* —

"The hands of the executioners failed, and although succeeding one another in relays, the men were wearied out, and the edge of their sword blunted. I myself saw the tormentors sit back exhausted, recover strength, regain breath, take fresh swords — and yet the day was not long enough for all the torments to be inflicted! Nevertheless, not one of all the band, not so much as one child of tender years, could be frightened back from confronting death; the one and only thing each dreaded was, that when the hurrying sun ended the short day, he should be left behind, separated from the society of his martyred comrades. Thus did they, one and all, steadfastly and boldly trusting to the Faith, welcome with joy and exultation a present death as the beginning of eternal life. In a word, while the first batches were being slaughtered, the rest would stand singing psalms and hymns to God, each waiting his own turn of martyrdom, that so they might breathe forth their last breath in praises to the Almighty."

How miserable the failure of these servants of Satan, and how great their foolishness! They themselves tumbled into the pit that they had dug for the Saints to fall into! Again and again they condemned — all in vain — their Christian adversaries to be torn limb from limb, to be stabbed to death with countless blows of iron writing Styluses or, what is the same thing, schoolboys' pens, to be pierced over with nails, either their body entire or some special part of it, to be cut in half with saws, to be transfixed with spears, to be pierced with swords, to be shot with arrows; their stomachs to be gashed open and their inwards torn out, their throats to be cut; to be beheaded, to be disfigured with brands and markings; their heads to be pounded with axes or clubs, and dashed to pieces; women's bosoms to be amputated, and their tongues, hands, and feet, as well as men's, to be cut away; their legs to be broken, their teeth pulled out, their skin cruelly flayed from their living bodies, their bodies impaled with a sharp stake; nails, eyes, and face to be tortured with keen-pointed reeds; to be hurled headlong from high places, to be dragged over ground strewn with thorns and thistles and thickly covered with sharp stones by untamed horses or in other ways, to be exposed to wild beasts, to be buried alive in the earth, to be cast into a running river, thrown into a limekiln, stripped naked and led through the public streets. Or, whenever two trees could be found growing near each other, a branch of each being bent down so as to meet, to either of these one of the martyr's feet was tied in such a way that the boughs which had been forcibly drawn together, when released, returned with a bound to their natural position and, tearing the man's body in two which was fastened to them, rent his limbs apart and bore them back with them. Or lastly, these idol worshippers would drive Christians into exile, utterly deprived of every comfort, or sent forth to the quarries to cut blocks of marble, dig sand and carry the same on their own shoulders to their edifices which were then being built, or else to be deported to the mines. With such torments, and others described in previous chapters — and others still, the names for which, given their unspeakable cruelty, Eusebius confesses himself incapable of describing — with all these were Christ's most blessed soldiers tortured. Yet could they never be vanquished by any of them; but guarded by the protection of Heaven, they suffered and endured every anguish bravely and steadfastly. The following is told by St. Ephraem:

"For truly they stood forth in the time of trial most gallant warriors of God, bearing every torment with the utmost readiness in the name of the only-begotten Son of God, our Savior Jesus Christ. How strong were they and what a glory of gallant endurance they acquired, who, seeing all the horrid preparations of torture then before their eyes, not only felt no fear, but contending with all the greater constancy, overcame all suffering by their steadfastness! They looked on the blazing pile, and red-hot pans, and boiling caldrons, which in their fierce boiling shot out afar drops of pitch and melted fat. They gazed upon the wheels, iron-shod and iron-spiked, turning with fierce velocity amid the flames. They beheld the iron claws and glowing plates, the cudgels, the bears and lions, precipices, handspikes, augers, fetters and chains, in a word all the devices the Arch-Enemy of Truth invented against the holy confessors of our Lord and Savior. For every sort of torment was spread by the evil one in sight of the martyrs to make the Saints afraid, that their tongues, struck dumb by the mere sight of such horrors, may not dare to confess the Lord Jesus. But what effect on these faithful and eager warriors of Christ had this exhibition of horrible and unheard of tortures? It served to make them more eager yet, with greater confidence and increased firmness still, unhesitatingly and intrepidly to confess their Savior Christ before the tribunals of Judges and Administrators! Neither crackling flames, nor fiery pans, nor boiling pots, nor hurtling wheels, nor red-hot plates, nor toothed claws and other the like instruments, nor fetters and ponderous chains, nor tyrants' menaces, nor princes' threats, nor all the Devil's and his servants' wiles, availed to terrify Christ's intrepid soldiers, or force them to abjure their faith or withdraw their allegiance to their God and Savior. Rather, imbued with faith, they trod underfoot all the machinations of the Evil One, and consternation had no hold upon them."

"Could you but see the strength of Christ's faithful followers, see the glory of the soldiers of the Savior, and their steadfastness! Could you but glimpse the haste of them that seek the kingdom of Heaven with all their heart, and love Christ their King with all their might! Could you but observe the perfect faith of them that have been truly made perfect! Could you see the charity that burns in the holy bosoms of martyrs, for which they scorned all earthly joys, to hold to their God whom they have chosen? Could you but witness Christ's loving-kindness, by which He raised to Heaven itself those who desire nothing more than to be brought there! Could you only see that triumphant Paradise embrace and cherish Christ's champions which were eager for its bliss, now rejoicing in eternal light and peace! Consider then, and contemplate, the glorious triumphs of the martyrs; behold with the eyes of the heart the abounding faith of these heavenly souls, and the inviolable ardor of their piety! No weight of agony could move these just men's resolution; not even death itself could extinguish the zeal of their undaunted love. Beaten, they welcomed with great joy the blows of the rods as the keenest of delights; with calm and smiling faces they rendered thanks to God, that they had been deemed worthy to suffer for His sake." [see the Acts of the Apostles 5.41]

Let us now continue to examine each of the several sorts of tortures listed at the beginning of this chapter to the end of confirming their authenticity through the *Histories* of the Blessed Martyrs. The first — *martyrs torn limb from limb* — is attested to in the *Acts* of St. Nicephorus, commemorated in the *Roman Martyrology* on February 25th, and of St. James, surnamed *Intercisus* ("cut in pieces"); the second by St. Gregory Nazianzen, Victor, *On the Vandal Persecution*, as likewise the *History* of the martyrdom of St. Cassianus.

Iron Writing Styluses or Boys' Pens — what they are and to what Purposes they were turned

This was an instrument, sometimes of brass, used for writing upon white waxed tablets in antiquity, much as we write nowadays in books. We find this as far back as in chapter 19 of the Book of Job:

"Oh that my words were now written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! that with an iron pen and lead they were graven. ..."

Likewise Plautus says, in his *Bacchides*:

...Affer cito.

Quid? Stylum, ceram, tabellas et linum

Habes tabellas? Vis rogare?

Habeo stylum

("... Bring quickly. What? Your style, wax, tablets and thread," (i.e. the thread with which the tablets were tied together when sent as a letter) — "Have you your tablets? Can you ask? I have my stylus.")

It is precisely with these writing instruments, or Styluses, that those condemned to die were often painfully stabbed to death. This is attested to by many authors, among them, Suetonius, in his *Life of the Emperor Caius*, as follows:

"Wishing the Senator's destruction, he suborned men to attack him as he left the Senate House, and suddenly railing against him as a public enemy, to stab him with their writing pens and pass him on to others to be yet further mangled."

Also Seneca tells us that:

"Erixio, a Roman Knight, was within our own memory stabbed to death by the populace in the Forum with their writing pens, because he had killed his son by flogging."

This is also seen in the *Acts of St. Mark of Arethusa*, where we read:

"From one crowd of boys to another Mark was tossed, swinging to and fro, as they caught that noble body on their sharp pens or styluses;"

Also the *Acts of St. Cassian the Martyr* we find:

"Hereupon the holy man was questioned by the persecutor ... and then stripped of his clothes, and with hands tied behind him, he was made to stand up while his students were called in and given permission to kill him — so they proceeded to batter him with their tablets, or to stab him with their writing Styluses. In this scene of martyrdom the weaker the hands engaged, the heavier was the pain of the victim, since death was the more protracted."

It is important to make a distinction between being tormented with *goads* and to be stabbed with iron *Styluses*. With the former offenders were merely tortured, but with the latter they were both tortured and put to death. The former, moreover, known as goading, was principally used upon slaves that had been guilty of stealing, while the latter was inflicted on prisoners convicted of the gravest crimes. The former mode of punishment is spoken of by Prudentius in his *Hymn of the Martyr St. Hippolytus*:

Ilaque infestis perfodiunt stimulis
("And they stab his sides with painful goads");

We find it no less used, and repeatedly, by Plautus, as for instance in the *Asinaria*:

Utinam nunc mihi stimulus in manu sit,
("Would I had my goad in my hand this minute")

and in his *Menoechmi*:

At ego te pendentem fodiam stimulis triginta dies
("But I will hang you up and dig you with the goads for thirty days");

To this may further be added a line from the same play of the *Menoechmi* in the way of further illustration:

Jam ascendo in currum. Jam lora teneo, jam stimulus in manu est
("Now I mount the chariot, now I grasp the reins, now the goad is in my hands").

All these passages serve to show that the *goad* was a rod or reed with a sharp point such as rustics use to prod oxen, and this is confirmed by the *Acts* of St. Joseph the Martyr, where we find written:

"But tying a point to a long reed, they ordered the Saint to be pricked therewith."

To come now to the third and fourth kinds of torture, in which the Holy Martyrs were pierced with *nails* or *cut in two with iron saws*.

The first kind of torture, involving the use of *nails*, we find in the *Acts* of Saints Paphnutius (*Roman Martyrology*, September 24), and Severus, Bishop (*Roman Martyrology*, November 7), Saints Fausta and Euphemia, virgins and martyrs, and others.

The *second of these punishments* — that of *sawing in half* — is recorded by Suetonius's, in his *Life of the Emperor Caius*, where he speaks of certain persons condemned to this type of death. We will examine this form of torture in greater detail later, a torture which had the effect of stamping the name of the Emperor Caligula (Caius) with a reputation of cruelty for all ages. All this should impress upon us a clearer understanding, a deeper grasp, of the utter ferocity and rage of the Heathen against Christ's soldiers, and how steadfast on the other hand the constancy and valor of Christian men and women, through which they endured, often happily, even eagerly,

suffering and torment of every description.

The ***fifth kind of torture***, in which Christians were pierced with ***nails, augers, or gimlets***, can be found in the *Acts* of the holy Virgins and Martyred Saints, Faith, Hope, and Charity, three sisters already spoken of earlier, and also in the account of St. Fausta, a virgin martyr commemorated in the *Roman Martyrology*, on September 20th:

"At Cyzicus in the Propontis, anniversary of the Blessed Martyrs, Fausta, a virgin, and Eulasius, slain under the Emperor Maximian. Of these two, Fausta was made bald by this same Eulasius, who was priest of the idols, and her head shaven in scorn, then hung up and tortured. Finally when the executioners were ordered to cut her in two, despite their efforts, they could not. Eulasius, witnessing this, was astounded and then believed in Christ. As a consequence, while he in his turn was being violently tortured by the Emperor's orders, Fausta was pierced with an auger in the head, stuck all over with nails, and finally set in a frying-pan over the fire, and so with the other, summoned by a voice from heaven, ascended to the Lord."

The ***sixth kind***, by which Christians were transfixed with ***spears*** or ***swords***, is illustrated in the first instance (by spears) in *Histories* of Saints Marcus and Marcellianus, Saints Benignus and Cyril, and in the latter instance (by swords) a deacon, Saints Fusca, Basilia, Anatholia and Justina, virgins and martyrs, and St. Polycarp.

Moving on to the seventh method of torture, ***the tearing open of the sufferers' abdomen***, we find one example of this in the *History* of St. Cyril, whose martyrdom is recorded in the *Roman Martyrology* on March 26th in these words:

"At Heliopolis in the Lebanon region, anniversary of St. Cyril, deacon and martyr, whose belly was cut open and his liver torn out, which the Heathen then proceeded to eat. This was done under the Emperor Julian, the Apostate."

Another is found in the *Acts* of St. Eucratis or Eugratia, virgin and martyr, inscribed in the *Martyrology* on April 16th:

"At Caesaraugusta (Saragossa) in Spain, anniversary of Saint Eucratis, virgin and martyr, who after her body had been mangled, her breast cut off, and her liver torn out, was shut up still alive in jail until her body rotted away and began to decompose."

Of Other Torments and Tortures to which Christian Virgins were Subjected

It was first under the rule of the Emperor Julian, surnamed the Apostate, that holy virgins were torn open. Then, even while their bellies were yet quivering and heaving, they were stuffed with barley and exposed to be devoured by wild hogs. This is recorded in each and every detail by St. Gregory Nazianzen, who writes:

"For they (the men of Heliopolis) — to relate only one atrocity out of many, but one that may well rouse the horror even of godless Heathens — are said to have taken chaste virgins, superior

to the world's attractions and who had scarcely ever yet so much as had been seen by men, and setting them in a public place, stripped them naked, that they might first shame them by exposing them to the general gaze. Afterward tearing and cutting open their bellies (*Oh, Christ! how imitate Thy patient long-suffering at that time?*), they first chewed their flesh with their own teeth and swallowed it — and in their abominable fury, gorged themselves on their raw livers, and having once tasted such food, made it their common and usual diet; and then, while their inwards were yet quivering, they stuffed in pigs' food, and letting in wild hogs, offered the horrid spectacle for people to see — the girls' flesh being mangled and eaten together with the barley. ..."

All this shows us that these Christian virgins were treated in this horrible way to subject them to the greatest ignominy possible — the same reason for which they were stripped of their clothes, for no greater shame can be inflicted on maidens than to be seen naked by lustful and wanton eyes.

Shame of this sort was inflicted on those Holy Virgins of Christ, Saints Prisca, Agnes, Barbara, Christina, Euphemia of Aquileia and her three sisters, Dorothy, Thecla, and Erasma, and on many, many, other Christian women. But there were also other ways used to expose the holy virgins to shame: their hair, for example, was often shaved off, as we find in the *Histories* of the blessed Saints Fausta, Charitina, Christina, and other virgin martyrs. In order to adequately understand how shameful it was to women to have had their heads shaved, it is necessary to read the *Acts* of the Saints just mentioned, Suetonius' *Life of Caius Caligula*, and most especially what is written in the *Roman Martyrology* concerning St. Fausta, who was humiliated in this way.

What is more, to bring Christian maidens to the greatest shame and violence, and to graphically insult our holy Faith, these virgins were given over to sexual panderers or to wanton youths, or were taken to public brothels to have their maidenhood violated there. Yet did they remain virgins withal before God, and even having been violated offered to Him an unstained sacrifice.

The motivation for these these atrocities perpetrated on virgins dedicated to Christ, lay simply (all prurience aside) in the way of insult and disdain for the Christian religion. It is also likely that another motive was involved: the long-established custom of the Romans (as Suetonius tells us in his *Life of Tiberius*) that held it to be unlawful for a virgin to be violently put to death, unless she had first been deflowered by her executioners or by whore-mongers. I will quote the Historian's actual words, in this regard:

"Unripe girls, inasmuch as by established custom it was forbidden to strangle virgins, were first violated by the hangman and then executed."

However, the goodness and the power of Christ is such that He safeguards His brides even when they are exposed to peril and danger and preserves their virtue intact, reserving and liberating them from the hands of insolent and unruly men. This is what Basil the Great says in his book *On True Virginity*:

"When the fierceness of persecution was at its height, the virgins who were chosen out for their faithful love of the Bridegroom and delivered up to the mockery of impious men, remained

unsullied in their bodies, forasmuch as He for Whose sake they bore these things rendered vain the assaults of sinners upon their flesh, and kept their bodies unsoiled by the miracle of His divine power."

The same violence and the same deliverance is attested to in the *Acts* of the Blessed Saints and Virgins, Agnes, Daria, Seraphia, Theodora, Lucy, Susanna, and many others.

Under the Emperors Constantius (son of Constantine the Great) and Valens, as well as during the savage persecution of Catholics by the Vandals, the holy and virgin Brides of Christ were subjected to the same cruelty, the same shame, the same ignominy. Of such abominations under Constantius we are told by St. Athanasius (*Apology*) the following:

"Now virgins were set in the flames of a blazing pile by that most abandoned of mankind Sebastianus, leader of the troops, to force them to assent to the heretical Arian doctrine. But when he found them steadfast against this torture, he stripped them naked and beat them so fiercely on the face, that for a long time after their friends could scarcely recognize them."

and in another place,

"The Arians whip and scourge the sacred bodies of virgins, and putting rude hands beneath their clothes drag them along, and bare their heads — and when they resisted and would not come, punched and kicked them. However cruel this treatment, more cruelties yet followed — treatment altogether intolerable because of its shameful indecency. For knowing the maidens' susceptibility to shame and their utter innocence of evil words — that they could more readily endure stoning and cudgeling than foul speeches — these men would accompany their violence with the most abominable expressions, and encourage the younger men who were prone to crude laughter to abuse them with similar language. But the holy virgins and other pure-minded women would recoil from such talk as from the bite of serpents. And so these men added to the perpetration of these horrors through their filthy utterances."

and yet again further on,

"Many virgins who, rebuking others for this type of impiety and daring to speak up for the truth, were driven from their houses; others they insulted as they went about their business, had them stripped by wanton and disorderly youths, and gave their own women permission to treat them with whatever indignities they would."

Similar indignities were shown to holy virgins under the same Emperor (Constantius) according to the historian Theodoretus:

"George the Arian compelled virgins which had vowed themselves to lifelong chastity not only to deny the confession of St. Athanasius, but to pronounce accursed the faith of their fathers. His associate and confederate in these cruelties was a certain Sebastian, Prefect of the Troops, who, kindling a pyre in the middle of the city, made the virgins to stand naked beside it, bidding them to abjure their religion. But being so set in the Faith — a sad and a bitter sight for believers and unbelievers alike — they yet held this ignominy as the greatest honor."

Of virgins similarly mocked and scorned under the Emperor Valens, Peter of Alexander writes, (quoted in the *History*, of Theodoretus):

"Palladius and his forces entered the Catholics' Church, and instead of solemn words befitting the holy place, began to sing burlesque litanies to the holy images; instead of reading the divine Scriptures, they uttered unseemly shouts. They did not hesitate to indulge in dissolute words and obscene language and to pour insults upon the virgins of Christ ... nor did they remain content with foul words, sinning only in them, but far surpassed the abomination of their language by the atrocity of their deeds!

These men, vessels of wrath doomed to destruction, continued making loud and wanton noises that burst from their great noses like water, so to speak, from an aqueduct — and began to tear the dresses of Christ's virgins, whose holy life made them an example to godly people, and led them about naked as they were born in triumph up and down the city, and in their wantonness mocked them insolently and indecently, perpetrating deeds that were at once cruel and barbarous. And if anyone was moved to pity and tried either to stay them by force or dissuade them by words from such abominations, they did not escape without wounds.

Alas! Many maidens were forcibly violated, and many struck over the head with clubs, were left lying speechless. Nor was it permitted to commit their bodies to the tomb; indeed in many cases these women were sought for in vain by their parents with much weeping, but never found."

Lastly, concerning virgins who were wantonly and violently handled under the Arian Vandals to the contempt of the true Church of Christ, Victor, Bishop of Utica, also bears witness:

"Then the Tyrant ordered the consecrated virgins to be assembled together, urging the Vandals, with midwives of their own race, to inspect and scrutinize, contrary to the laws of modesty, the shamefaced secrets of their privy parts, when neither their mothers were present nor any of the matrons. Then hanging the girls up cruelly, and cruelly burning them, fastening great weights to their feet, they afterward applied red-hot plates of iron to back, belly, breasts, and sides. Moreover they were asked in the intervals of torture, 'Tell us now how the Bishops lie with you, and your Priests.' And by this cruelty of torment we know that very many were killed there and then, while the others who were left alive were crippled and bent double by the drying up and contraction of the skin."

All this plainly shows us that the *Heretics* of former days (whose evil example more recent Heretics still follow) proved themselves, in venting their hatred of the Catholic religion on the holy virgins, without a doubt more inhuman, more wanton, more merciless, and more cruel than the *Heathen*.

We will now explore the *eighth kind of torture* among those named at the beginning of this chapter. This torment, the *shooting of Christians with arrows*, is attested to by the *Histories* of many martyrs, particularly of the two hundred and sixty, whose names are unknown to us, but who are recorded in the *Roman Martyrology* on March 1st, as having died in this manner; also of St. Martha and her sons, Saints Irenis and Christina, virgins and martyrs, Saints Sebastian,

Christopher and Faustus, of whom record is given in the Greek *Menology*, on July 16th, in the following words:

"Same day, anniversary of the Blessed Martyr, St. Faustus, who under the Emperor Decius, by reason of his confession of the Christian Faith, was arrested, and freely professing himself a servant of Christ, was fixed to a cross and wounded with arrows. After remaining five entire days on the cross without flinching, he at last commended his spirit into the hands of God. Again many Catholics are recorded by Victor in his *Vandal Persecution* to have been shot to death by arrows.

He writes, "On one occasion the Eastertide rites were being celebrated, and our people having met in a place called the Palace to honor Easter Day, and shut and locked the Church upon themselves, the Arians discovered this. Immediately one of the priests, Andiot by name, collecting together a band of armed men, started to attack the company of innocent worshippers. They rushed up with drawn swords, seized other arms, and some of them, climbing on to the roofs, shot showers of arrows through the windows of the Church. Just then, as it happened, God's people were singing, and a reader was standing up in the pulpit intoning the Allelujah versicle. At that moment an arrow caught him in the throat, and the book falling from his hand, he, too, fell down dead. Many others likewise are known to have been killed by arrows and darts in the very middle of the platform of the Altar. ..."

The *ninth mode of torture* — that wherein *the martyrs' throats were cut* — is found in the *History* of St. Philip and his daughter St. Eugenia, a Roman virgin and martyr, and also in the account of the death of Saints Justus and Pastor, two brothers, given in the *Roman Martyrology* on August 13th:

"In Spain, anniversary of the Blessed Martyrs, Saints Justus and Pastor, brothers. When already well advanced in letters, they threw down their writing-tablets in the school, and of their own free impulse ran forth to meet martyrdom. Soon they were ordered by Dacian, the Governor of the Province, to be arrested and beaten with clubs; and after gallantly strengthening one another's constancy with mutual appeals, were led forth from the city, and their throats were cut by the public executioner."

Of the *tenth* sort, through which martyrs were condemned to be *beheaded*, witness is afforded by countless *Histories* of the Blessed Martyrs — notably of Saints Terence, Pompey, and their companions, Saints Palmatius, a Consul, and Simplicius, a Senator and their companions, Saints Anastasia and Basilissa, virgins and martyrs, Saints John and Paul, brothers, and many others. This is also attested to again and again in the Acts of the Blessed Virgins who were martyred at Rome — such as Saints Martina, Tatiana, Prisca, Theodora, Cantianilla and her brothers, Lucy, Flora, Susanna, and a great many others.

It is highly probable that the greater part of the Christian martyrs were generally beheaded with the sword rather than the axe. This may be gathered not only from the several *Histories* of the Saints in manuscript, but also from other accounts in which we read that Christ's warriors were chastised, slain, struck, punished, and so on, *with the sword*, but also from the fact that it was considered more ignominious to be slain with the sword than with the axe. Thus Spartian, in his

Life of Geta, declares how Caracalla was angered because Papinian, the famous Jurist, whom he had ordered to be put to death, was beheaded with an axe and not, a sword. We say the martyrs "were *generally* beheaded with the sword," for it is equally clear from the writers of Ecclesiastical History that some were put to death by the axe as well.

The Method by which the Christian Martyrs were Beheaded

Most generally the Blessed Martyrs were decapitated kneeling on their knees with the body bending forward. We find this, once again, in the *Histories* of the Saints, especially the account of St. Paul the Apostle as it comes to us through Linus, St. Menna, St. Dionysius (St. Denis), St. Flavian, and several others. Here we read:

"Binding his eyes with Plautilla's handkerchief, Paul set both knees to the ground and stretched out his neck. The soldier, lifting his arms aloft, struck him with all his strength and cut off his head."

In the *Acts* of St. Menna we find, correspondingly, the following:

"When he had so said, he knelt down and stretched out his neck, and was instantly beheaded with a sword"

We also find this in the respective Acts of Saints Dionysius, Rusticus, and Eleutherius, where we read:

"Forasmuch therefore as the Blessed Martyrs had, to begin with, been stripped and beaten with rods in sight of all, they were now clad again in their garments and led away to the place fixed for their beheading, and there ordered to fall on their knees ...;"

And further on:

"Kneeling and with out-stretched necks, at one and the same instant, according to the Prince's order, they were beheaded with axes."

And still further on:

"An ineffable light shone round about them all, and the dead body of St. Dionysius sprang upright, and taking in his hand the holy head from the corpse"

Lastly, in the account of the passion of St. Flavian, it is recorded how:

"When the speech was finished, the victim went down to the appointed place, and bound his eyes with the part of the chaplet which Mutanus had asked him to keep two days before, and then kneeling down as though in prayer, he ended his martyrdom and his prayers at one and the same moment."

Martyrdom though beheading with the sword, was often preceded with torture, and accomplished in several ways. Thus Valerius Maximus (not to mention other authors) declares that persons to be beheaded were usually first tied to stakes:

"He ordered them to be beaten with rods, then tied to a stake and beheaded with an axe."

But we also read that St. Stephen, the Pope, was decapitated seated in his chair, while another Christian martyr, St. Alexander, was beheaded standing up. Of the latter we find the following recorded:

"When he had thus addressed the crowds that were assembled, Alexander turned to the executioner and said, 'Stay a little, brother, that I may make another prayer to God.' Then, falling on his knees, he prayed ... Upon hearing a voice, the holy Martyr rose up from the ground, and addressing the soldiers, cried, 'Quick, my brothers, do your duty.' ... And when he had so said, Caelestinus drew his sword, and taking a linen cloth, bound the blessed Alexander's eyes."

From these passages we gather that those to be beheaded with the sword were often first scourged with rods, and then afterward their eyes covered over and veiled with linen cloths or handkerchiefs just prior to being beheaded.

Even now the Heretics of our own day (1591) have condemned Catholics to death by beheading, among whom (see Sanders' *Anglican Schism*) we find especially two shining lights of England, to wit: [St.] John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, and a member of the Most Sacred College of Cardinals, and [St.] Sir Thomas More, a knight and Chancellor of the entire Kingdom.

Now of *the eleventh and twelfth methods of torture* named above, by which the Blessed Martyrs were *branded* with disfiguring marks, or had their heads *beaten with an axe or with clubs*, we find examples in the *Histories* of Saints Bibiana and Aurea, Roman virgins and martyrs, and of Saints Laurence, Eutropius, Getulius, and others.

This last form of punishment, which was especially hideous, inasmuch as a free citizen's face was terribly disfigured by it, mentioned by Suetonius in his *Life of Caius*:

"Many men of honorable rank he first disfigured with marks of branding, and then condemned to the mines and to work on the roads, or to wild beasts."

And again Seneca:

"There are various sorts of bonds, and different kinds of punishments — mangling of the limbs, branding of the brow ..."

This methodical disfigurement of the face, by which the offenders' brows were marked with deeply incised characters that could never be obliterated, was forbidden by the Emperor Constantine — but restored again under the Heretic and Iconoclast Emperor Theophilus. For it was Theophilus who branded the faces of the two Sainted brothers, Theophanes and Theodorus. And here let us quote, for the greater glory of God and the pious profit of the faithful, what

Metaphrastes has preserved concerning these two martyrs from their letter addressed to the Bishop of Cyzicus and the rest of the multitude of Catholic believers,

"So when we stood before the Emperor's face, silent and with downcast eyes, the Prince turning to the Prefect, which stood beside him, spoke to us in an angry and rough voice filled with contempt, and with a menacing face he said, 'Take these men away, and inscribe and engrave on their faces the verses composed for this purpose, and deliver them over to two Saracens, that they may carry them away to their own country'" and further on, [We responded] "For it would be easier for heaven and earth to be turned upside down, than to seduce us from our religion. He then commanded our faces to be engraved; and still filled with pain from the fiery lashes we had received from the scourges, we were stretched on benches, and our faces stamped with words. And they went on pricking and pricking till darkness came on, when the sun set. ... Truly, we shall be known of Christ by these signs, and these letters shall be known and read of the heavenly hosts. For the Lord Himself said, 'Whatsoever ye have done unto the least of these, ye have done unto Me.' "

The Tortures and Torments of the Christian Martyrs

from

De SS. Martyrum Cruciatibus

(A Modern Edition)

Chapter X

Of yet other Instruments and Methods of Torture for Afflicting Christian Martyrs — such as:

- **Amputating Women's Bosoms**
- **Cutting out the Tongue**
- **Lopping off Hands and Feet**
- **Pulling out the Teeth**
- **Flaying Alive**
- **Transfixing**
- **Exposing to Wild Beasts**

In this chapter we will consider still further methods of torture under which the Catholic Martyrs suffered, beginning with the deliberate amputation of women's breasts. This cruelty is found again and again in the *Acts* of many female martyrs — we find it, for example, in the *Acts* of St. Euphemia, of Saints Dorothy, Thecla, and Erasma, three sisters, of twelve Holy Matrons whose names are now forgotten, of St. Agatha and others, and lastly of St. Helconis, whose sufferings are recorded in the Greek *Menology* on May 28th, in these words:

"The anniversary of the Blessed Martyr Helconis. She lived under the Emperor Gordian, and came from the city Thessalia. Arrested and brought before Perennius, the Governor of Corinth, she refused to sacrifice to idols, but preaching Christ and none other, she was first bound by the feet to an ox yoke, and laid in molten lead and boiling pitch, but escaped unharmed. She was

then shaven and her whole body drenched in fire. Remaining unharmed once again, she went into the temple of idols, and by her prayers threw down to the earth the images of Pallas, Jupiter, and Aesculapius. But when Justinus succeeded Perennius as Proconsul, her bosoms were cut off, and being brought before the new Governor, she was cast into a furnace of blazing fire, but the flames did not so much as touch her, although they burned up and consumed many of the soldiers. Afterward she was stretched out on a brass bedstead heated red-hot, but suddenly a company of Angels stood round her, and saved the holy martyr from all harm. Next she was exposed to wild beasts, which, while they did her no harm, yet slew several of their keepers. Finally the Governor pronounced sentence, which she most gratefully received; and so she was beheaded and took her departure to heaven."

We now proceed to the other methods of torture mentioned at the beginning of this chapter — those, specifically, through which the martyrs' teeth were pulled out, or their tongues cut off, or their hands or feet, or both, amputated, or lastly their legs broken.

Of Martyrs whose Teeth were pulled out

This form of torture, which needs, no further explanation, is found in the *Acts* of the Holy Saints and Virgins, Apollonia, Anastasia, and Febronia.

Of Martyrs whose Tongue was Cut Out

Christians who were subjected to this kind of punishment are named in the *Acts* of many Martyrs of either sex — as of Saints Terentianus, Florentius, and Hilary, and Saints Basilissa, Anastasia, and Agathoclia. The last named is commemorated in the *Menology* on October 1st:

"Anniversary of the Blessed Martyr Agathoclia, a slavewoman. She was the servant of ... a certain [pagan mistress] Paulina who seeing that Agathoclia was a Christian and feared God, she was for ever striking her on the head with sharp stones, and forced her to walk forth barefoot to gather sticks in winter and frost, and for those entire eight years strove to persuade Agathoclia to adore idols. But this she utterly refused to do; so she was scourged, her tongue cut out, and she cast into prison and there starved. Finally fire was poured down her throat, and she exchanged this life for a better one."

The other two martyrs, Saints Basilissa and Anastasia, are commemorated on April 15th as follows:

"Anniversary of Saints Basilissa and Anastasia. These were natives of Rome, the capital, ladies distinguished by birth and wealth, and disciples of the Holy Apostles, and when these latter [the Apostles] were crowned with martyrdom, they had their holy relics collected and moved by night. For this they were denounced to the Emperor Nero, and were accordingly thrown into prison, and presently, when they remained steadfast in their profession of Christ, were brought

forth again, and hung up, then after breasts, hands, feet, and tongues had been cut away, were finally beheaded."

Of Martyrs Whose Hands and Feet were Lopped Off or their Legs Broken

These three methods of torture employed upon Christians are witnessed to in the *Acts* of St. Quirinus and thirty-seven other martyrs, of Saints Severus and Memnon, of St. Charitina, virgin and martyr, of St. Galatio and his wife, St. Hadrian and his companions, and of of forty Roman soldiers whose holy martyrdom is recorded in the *Martyrology* on March 9th.

Of the Different Ways in which the Blessed Martyrs Teeth were Pulled Out and their Tongues and Breasts Cut Way

By the operation of the divine power and goodness it sometimes came about that the martyrs, after their tongue was cut out, yet uttered speech and spoke eloquently. This is attested to in various *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs; in those cited above and in the records of the martyrdom of St. Anastasia. As a rule the Holy Martyrs had tongues and breasts cut away, and teeth pulled out, after they had first been bound to stakes set upright in the ground. We learn this from the *Acts* of St. Febronia, virgin and martyr, also mentioned earlier.

How the Blessed Martyrs had their Feet Cut Off and their Legs Broken

The Christian martyrs' hands and feet were amputated (as we find in the *Acts* of St. Febronia, of St. Oceanus and his companions) in the following way: first, the limb to be removed was placed on a block of timber or a stand of wood; then the executioner would lift up his arm holding the axe, and bringing this down with a crash, would strike away and lop off the part to be dismembered.

Leg-breaking was effected as follows: an anvil was prepared together with an iron bar; then the Christians condemned to death for their fidelity to Christ, were ordered to put their shins upon the anvil, which the inhuman executioner then smashed with heavy blows of the iron crowbar. This is all described in the *History* of the martyrdom of St. Hadrian, mentioned above.

This punishment, as likewise that of breaking of the loins, is spoken of among ancient writers, such as Plautus in his *Poenulus*, where he says:

Ex syncrasto scrurifragium fecit

("The wretch was a mere aggregation of mangled humanity before, and now he had his legs broken into the bargain").

Also by Apuleius in his *Golden Ass*:

"Then the noble wife, praying to avert this dreadful doom and thinking with horror of his legs being broken, hides away her husband, who is shuddering and deathly pale with terror."

The False Opinion held by Some Concerning the Punishment of Leg-Breaking

Some hold that the penalty of leg-breaking was identical with that of breaking the legs of a criminal after he was nailed to the cross. This, however, is mistaken, for the practice of breaking the legs of persons crucified so that they may die the more quickly, was in use only among the Jews, and was not a practice followed by the Gentiles. The latter simply left the bodies of crucified criminals hanging on the cross until they rotted away. This is implied by Plautus, who in his *Miles Gloriosus* has a slave say:

Noli minitari; scio crucem futuram mihi; sepulcrum

("Don't keep on threatening; I know well enough the cross will be my tomb at last")

And by Horace in his *Epistles*:

Non hominem occidi; non pasces in cruce corvos

("I have not killed a man; you shall not feed the crows with my flesh on the cross").

From this it is clear that the Gentiles did not, like the Jews, remove from the gallows the bodies of those they had crucified, but rather left them there to rot.

We now move on to discuss the remaining forms of torture — first those wherein sharp-pointed reeds were stuck under the finger-nails, between these and the flesh of the fingers, or the martyrs flayed alive, or impaled on a sharpened stake.

These tortures are described in several accounts of the deaths of the Saints — most notably in that of St. Bartholomew the Apostle, as well as of St. Glyceria, a Roman virgin and martyr, of Saints Gregory the Armenian, Galatio, Boniface, Benjamin the Deacon, and many others.

Of Martyrs Pierced with Spits

Moreover the Blessed Christian Martyrs were not only impaled with a sharpened stake, as just described, but were sometimes transfixed with iron spits. This is stated distinctly both in the *History of the Martyrdom of St. Quirinus*, and especially by Sozomen, in his *Ecclesiastical History*:

"At Gaza the populace, under the Emperor Julian the Apostate, virulently persecuted Eusebius, Nestabus, and Zeno, who were Christians. They were arrested when hiding in their houses, thrown into jail and beaten with scourges. Soon all the people began to gather at the theatre and cried out angrily against them, declaring that they had profaned their holy images and had earlier conspired to destroy and insult the religion of the Heathen. So by dint of shouting and mutually

exciting one another, they were lashed up into passionate anger and the fierce desire to shed blood.

Thus egging each other on, as is the way of the people when once roused into turbulence, they rushed to the prison, and hauling them forth, dragged them along, face down, face up, as it might happen. Presently dashing them on the ground, and beating them with sticks and stones and whatever weapons chance put in their hands, they cruelly put them to death. I have heard, too, that the women, coming out of the weaving sheds, stabbed them with their pointed spindles, and the cooks in the market-place snatched caldrons of boiling water from their fires and dashed the contents over them, while others pierced them with their spits. Then when they had mangled their bodies and so broken their heads that the brains poured out on the ground, they convey them to a spot outside the city where dead carrion was wont to be thrown away."

More than enough has now been said of the impaling of the martyrs with sharpened stakes, transfixing them with spits, and similar horrors.

We must now address — to finish the list of tortures enumerated at the beginning of Chapter 9 — the ways in which the Martyrs were flayed alive, and then concerning the Catholic sufferers of our own day, under whose fingernails needles are stuck by their Heretic persecutors.

Martyrs, in full possession of their consciousness and all their senses, often had the skin of their whole body flayed off, or sometimes that of some part only: the back, the face, or head — to which lighted coals were then sometimes applied.

Now concerning the torture of Catholic believers by Heretics by means of needles driven under the finger-nails, the author of the *Anglican Controversy*, thus writes of the case of Alexander Briant:

"When Briant had spent two days in the Tower, he was summoned before them by the Governor of the Fortress and Doctors Hammond and Norton, who cross-examined him in their customary fashion, proposing an oath to him to compel him to answer all the charges brought against him. And when he would not reveal those who supported him, or where he had performed the Mass, or whose confessions he had heard, they ordered needles to be stuck under his finger-nails. Despite this cruelty, he cheerfully repeated the Psalm, *Miserere mei, Deus* (Have mercy upon me, O God), and earnestly asked God to pardon his tormentors."

But to proceed now to yet other methods of torture, by which, as we have said already, martyrs were thrown down headlong from high places. That they were so treated, is amply attested to in many of the *Acts* of martyrs, as, for instance, we find in the *Acts* of St. Clement of Ancyra and of St. Felicitas and her sons. Tacitus, the Historian, writes how one Lucius Pithuanus, a magician, was cast down from the Tarpeian rock, while Apuleius, in the Discourse by which he defends himself against the charge of sorcery, says:

"A wondrous fabrication, a cunning falsehood deserving of the jail and the dungeon."

Now the Dungeon and the Tarpeian Rock were both of them names of the place [the Capitoline Hill] at Rome from which criminals were hurled down a steep cliff to their death. Since it is plain that magicians or sorcerers were thrown down from this cliff, there is little doubt that Christians — also believed to be sorcerers by the Heathen — were subjected to the same form of punishment, and so won for themselves the blessed crown of martyrdom.

Of Martyrs Who were Torn in Different Ways or Exposed to Wild Beasts of Different Kinds

Witness to this form of torture and execution of Christ's most blessed martyrs is extensively provided in the *Histories* of many Saints, as for instance in those of Saints Philemon and Apollonius, St. Thyrsus and his companions, St. Mark the Evangelist (*Roman Martyrology*, on April 25th), and St. Onesiphorus, a disciple of the Holy Apostles, St. Martiana, virgin and martyr, and an host of Saints and Martyrs who won their crown under the Emperor Nero.

The Manner in which the Martyrs were Dragged Around and Torn

Sometimes Martyrs were dragged over rough and stony places, or ground sown with brambles and thistles, tied to the necks or tails of wild horses by ropes looped and fastened round their ankles. In our own day, Catholics were pitifully dragged through cities by the Heretics, as we find in the *Theatre of Heretic Cruelties*, Sanders' *Anglican Schism*, and in the work already cited *On the Anglican Persecution*. In the *Theatre of Cruelties*, for example, you will read how a venerable Catholic widow, sixty years of age, at the city of Embrun, was, because of her Faith, bound by the hair of her head to a log of wood, and cruelly dragged through the streets.

Of Martyrs Condemned to the Wild Beasts

Furthermore, it was customary in antiquity to condemn criminals — and later, Christians — to the wild beasts. This punishment is mentioned by Asinius Pollio, Aulus Gellius, Apuleius, Athenreus, and Josephus, as well as in many other *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs. It is also described in Suetonius' *Life of Domitian*, where he explains that the martyrs were exposed, not only to lions, but sometimes to dogs as well, although lions were more commonly used. We learn of this not only from the story of Androcles related by Aelian, and the *History* of the Holy Martyr, St. Ignatius, as it occurs in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and in St. Jerome, but also from the common cry that the Roman population used to raise against the Christians. Tertullian again and again affirms how the Roman mob was forever crying,

"The Christians to the lions, the Christians to the lions!" "If the Tiber," he writes, "overflows the walls, if the Nile does not overflow the fields, if the sky has stood still, or the earth trembled, if famine or pestilence has befallen, instantly is the cry raised, 'The Christians to the lions!' " And in another place: "For fear there be none left to shout, 'The Christians to the wild beasts!' "

That Christians were often cast to these kinds of animals as well as to others to be devoured and torn in pieces is shown in their own *Histories*, and not only by Tertullian. This is not surprising, for we find in Roman law that this punishment was deemed proper for slaves. Since it was usually inflicted only upon slaves and those esteemed less than slaves, it would then be considered a suitable punishment for Christ's faithful servants who were deemed no better than slaves, and worse still among the Heathen. It is, then, no cause for wonder if they were frequently found exposed to beasts.

As we have seen in virtually every other form of torture that we have examined thus far, this being exposed to wild beasts was not always accomplished in one and the same way. Sometimes the martyrs were stripped naked and shut up in the midst of theatres or other places where they were imprisoned; sometimes were they bound to stakes, wrapped in nets, or clothed in the skins of beasts, and so given to the lions; sometimes their feet were fixed in hollowed stones by means of molten lead, and they were enclosed in a confined space and delivered over to be savaged by dogs. We find the following in the *Acts* of the Holy Martyr, St. Benignus:

"Angered by these words, the most wicked Emperor commanded him to be shut up in prison, and a great stone with a hole through it to be brought, into which his feet were fixed with molten lead. Red-hot awls were then stuck lengthwise into his fingers under the nails, and for six days he was allowed neither food nor drink. What is more, twelve very savage dogs were imprisoned along with him, maddened with hunger and thirst, to the end that they might tear him in pieces — and a little further on, "Oh! wondrous goodness of God, Oh! fatherly love of Jesus Christ for His own! Behold! An Angel gave him aid, and the dogs grew gentle, so that they touched not so much as a hair of his head nor a thread of his clothing ..."

Eusebius, also speaking of Christians exposed to wild beasts, tells us:

"The day for fighting with the beasts having been expressly fixed for the torture of those of our Faith, Maturus, Sanctus, Blandina, and Attalus, were led out to the wild beasts, that they might afford the Heathen a public and open spectacle full of inhumanity and cruelty. Then Maturus and Sanctus were again exposed to every sort of torture in the amphitheatre ... and these holy men endured the savage tearing of beasts, and every other form of torment. ... But Blandina, bound aloft to a beam of wood, was offered a prey to the beasts that rushed in. Being so seen suspended as on a cross, and praying fervently, she instilled great zeal and alacrity in the minds of her fellow-sufferers; for in their martyred sister, thus hanging on the cross before them, they seemed in a way to see Christ Himself, which was crucified for us, with their bodily eyes. ... However, when not one of the wild beasts would so much as touch her flesh, she was soon taken down from the beam, and thrust back again into prison."

Further down in the same chapter Eusebius continues, writing of the martyr, St. Alexander, a physician:

"The mob now began to cry out against Alexander. When the Governor cross-questioned him, asking him who he was, he answered, 'I am a Christian.' Upon hearing this, the Governor was provoked and condemned him to the beasts. So the next day Alexander joined the same band for

fighting the beast with Attalus — for the Governor, to please the people, condemned Attalus a second time to this punishment."

And a little further on again,

"Last of all, Saint Blandina, although a noble and well-born matron, after encouraging her children to their own martyrdom and sending them forward victoriously to Christ the King, now herself ran the same race of torments, going gladly to rejoin them, and exulting with a great joy in her own death, she was hastening not as though to be cruelly cast forth to the beasts, but as one happily invited to the marriage feast of the bridegroom. So after scourging and mangling by beasts and roasting in a frying-pan, she was finally rolled in a net and exposed to be tossed by bulls. After she had been mangled and thrown about for a long time by these animals, but had no feeling whatever of the tortures so far applied to her, partly because of the hope by which she trusted in God's promises, and partly through the conversations she held between herself and Christ, she was eventually slain by a sword-cut in the throat."

To quote Eusebius once more:

"... some won glory in Palestine by their patient endurance of torments, and others acquired great renown at Tyre in Phoenicia. And who has not marveled above measure at these men, upon beholding the countless scourgings they endured, their fighting with wild beasts, and their endurance against the attacks of leopards, huge bears, savage boars, and bulls roused to madness by fire and steel, and the wondrous fortitude of these noble-hearted martyrs against the assault of each and every beast? ... we were present ourselves, and noted how the divine power of our Savior, Jesus Christ Himself, to whom they were giving noble witness in their tortures, gave a very present help at that time to His martyrs and manifestly showed itself to them.

"For a long time those ravaging beasts did not dare touch the bodies of the Saints or so much as approach them, even as they were ready to rush upon the unbelievers, who, standing outside the barriers, one here and another there, incited and provoked them to attack the victims. And although the blessed soldiers of God stood there naked in the midst, and provoked the animals with gestures, trying to bring them to assail them (for they had been expressly commanded to do so), yet they were the only ones the creatures would not touch. Indeed, several times when they rushed out upon them, they were repelled, as though by some heavenly power or influence, and leapt back again quicker than they had come. And when this was seen to happen over and over again, it caused no little wonder among the heathen who saw it, so much so that when one beast made a vain attack, they would loose a second, and then a third, at one and the same martyr.

"At the same time, the spectator would be lost in wonder and astonishment to see not only the manly and intrepid temper of these Holy Men, but no less the firm and inflexible constancy exhibited by those of quite tender years. For you would behold a mere stripling not twenty years old yet, constrained by no bonds, standing firm, his arms extended on each side to form a cross, and with gallant and lofty determination pouring forth prayers to God, his attention never wavering, not moving a whit to one side or the other from the spot where he stood — while bears and leopards were breathing rage and death upon him, and actually trying to tear his flesh

with their teeth. But their mouths, by some divine and mysterious power, were stopped, I know not how, and the creatures hastily fled back again of their own accord."

One last quotation from Eusebius on this subject, who speaks repeatedly of Christ's faithful servants being exposed to wild beasts;

"Others again you might see — for there were five of them in all — offered to the horns of a huge wild bull. This monster tossed in the air several of the unbelievers who came near, and mangled them miserably, leaving them half dead to be dragged away by the hands of their companions; but to the holy martyrs, although the bull strove to rush at them, burning with rage and fury, yet it could not so much as come near them. And although it sprang back and forth with rushing feet and waving horns, and goaded on with the application of branding irons, breathed terror and destruction against them, yet was it held back and forced to withdraw by some interposition of the divine will, until at last, seeing it could do them no harm, other beasts were loosed against them instead. At long last, after many different attacks and assaults of these animals, the martyrs were slain with a sword and committed to the waves of the sea by way of burial."

Apart from Christian witnesses, Cornelius Tacitus, the Roman Historian and writer on morals, is also very clear that the martyrs, clad in the hides of beasts, were delivered by the Heathen to be torn by dogs, for he states in the *Annals*:

"So to stifle this rumor (that he [Nero] had set Rome on fire himself), he brought to trial and subjected to the most exquisite torments those whom the common folk, to express their contempt and hatred of them, called Christians. The originator of this title was one Christ, who, under the Emperor Tiberius, was punished by the Procurator Pontius Pilate. The mischievous superstition was suppressed for the time being, but presently broke out again, not only throughout Judea, the original seat of the evil, but even in the Capital itself, to which everything abominable and disgraceful collects from every quarter, and multiplies.

Accordingly, those who confessed themselves Christians were first arrested, and at their denunciation a vast multitude of others; these were proved guilty not so much of having actually set fire to the city as of general malevolence to mankind at large. Moreover mockery was added to the death penalty in their case; clad in the skins of beasts, they were exposed to be torn to death by dogs, or were nailed to crosses, or were set up to be burned, and after daylight failed, used as torches to give light."

See likewise the *Roman Martyrology* on June 24th, where an almost identical account is given of these Saints' deaths, and which speaks generally of many Christians who won the crown of martyrdom under Nero.

We read, moreover, in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* as well as in the *Acts* of different Blessed Martyrs — and especially in those of Pope Marcellus — how Bishops of the Church, under the Emperor Maxentius, were, for their greater degradation, assigned to look after beasts of burden. So in the *History* of Marcellus, Bishop of Rome, we find:

"He was imprisoned and attacked because he was for setting the Church in order, and was arrested by Maxentius, who demanded him to deny that he was a Bishop and to demean himself by making sacrifice to demons. But consistently despising and deriding Maxentius' orders, he was condemned to the stable-yard, that is the stalls or stable of the beasts of burden; in other words to feed (as Eusebius explains in another passage) the Emperor's horses and camels, which were used for the public service in carrying loads."

In Theodoretus' *Ecclesiastical History* we read of the Persian martyr, St. Hormisdas:

"There was a certain Hormisdas, of the first nobility among the Persians, sprung of the race of the Achaemenidae, and whose father had been Governor of a Province. Learning that this man was a Christian, Goraranes, son of Isdigerdis, King of the Persians, ordered him to be summoned before him and to abjure God his Savior. But Hormisdas cried, 'What you command, O, King, is neither just nor expedient, for whosoever has learned readily to despise God, Who is the ruler of all men, and to deny Him, will be so much the more ready to despise his King, since the latter is but a man and a participator in human weakness.

But the King of Persia, which should have admired his wise speech, robbed God's noble champion of his wealth and honors, and ordered him to strip off all his garments except only a breech-cloth, and lead the camels that were in his army. After many days had past, the King, looking down from his raised seat, and seeing that excellent nobleman scorched by the sun's rays and all covered with dust, called to mind his former rank and splendor, and ordered Hormisdas to be brought to him, and a linen shift to be thrown about him. Then, presuming a change of mind through the hardships he endured, or in light of the kindness now shown him, he appealed to him, saying, 'Come, now, put away your obstinacy, and deny the carpenter's son.' But Hormisdas, fired with divine zeal, tore the shift in two and, tossing it in the King's face, rebuked him, saying, 'If you think I shall desert my faith for this thing's sake, take back your gift and your impious thought with it. ..."

A punishment of the same kind is recorded by Victor, in his work on *The Vandal Persecution*, in which, speaking of Armagastus, a most noble martyr of Christ, he tells us:

"Then Theodoric condemned him to exile in the Province of Byzacium, and there to be employed in digging of ditches. Afterward, as if to further disgrace and dishonor him, he ordered him to work as a cow-tender not far from Carthage, where all men might see him."

Of Christian Martyrs given to be Nibbled Upon by Mice or to be Trodden Underfoot by Horses

Christians were also given to mice by Goraranes, the most cruel of the Persian Kings, as Theodoretus relates in his *History*:

"Moreover they dig pits, put them (the Christians) very carefully into them, and poured upon them a vast number of shrew-mice. Finally, after binding their hands and feet to hinder them from driving off the little creatures, they offered them as food to the mice, which under the stress

of hunger gradually ate away the flesh of the imprisoned saints, thus torturing them horribly day after day. ..."

Similar, but more cruel still, was a form of torture by which the Heretics of our own time (1591) — as described in the *Theatre of Heretic Cruelties* — tormented recalcitrant Catholics in an effort to make them abjure their Faith. Laying them on their backs and binding them securely, they placed on their bare stomachs inverted basins with live rodents trapped inside them — and proceeded to light a fire over the basins, so that the rodents, attempting to escape the heat, gnawed through their bellies and buried themselves in their inwards. Other Catholics of our present time — like the Christians who suffered under Nero — have been sewn up in the hides of beasts and exposed to the bites of mad dogs at the orders of Elizabeth, Queen of England, because they refused fulfill her wicked commands that they renounce the true Catholic Faith.

Some of the early Christian martyrs, especially the Bishops, were often thrown to the ground by the orders of impious persecutors, to be trampled and mangled by horses. Victor speaks of this in his *Vandal Persecution*:

"After these cruel edicts so full of noxious poison, he ordered all the Bishops, who had been assembled at Carthage, and whose churches, houses and belongings whatsoever had been plundered, to be driven forth out of the city walls, with not so much as an animal or a slave, or a single change of clothing being left them, and further ordered that anyone who offered any of them hospitality or gave them food, or should even attempt to do so out of pity, would be burnt up with fire, he and his house with him.

But the expelled Bishops act very wisely; for they adopted the state of mendicants and did not quit the city at all, knowing full well that if they did withdraw, they would only be recalled again and forcibly brought back — and moreover that their enemies would lie, as they had lied before, and declare they had run away because they were afraid to face the persecution, and last but not least that, if they did so return, they would find no place of refuge open to them, their Churches, their houses and their goods having been seized.

"So as they were lying groaning round about the circuit of the walls and exposed to the weather, it came about that the King went forth to the baths. They all then crowded eagerly around him, saying, 'Why are we so afflicted? For what faults unwittingly committed do we suffer this treatment? If we were called together to hold a disputation, why have we been plundered? Why are we driven out, and put off? Why, deprived of our Churches and our houses, are we made to bear hunger and nakedness, and left wallowing in the mire?' But looking at them with lowering eyes, even before he had heard their appeal, he ordered horses with riders on their backs to be driven over them, that they would not merely be bruised and hurt by this violence, but actually killed. And indeed many were trodden to death, especially the older and weaker among their number."

Imitating these examples, the Heretics of our own day and in the same way treated a certain friar, John, a venerable member of the Order of St. Francis, and lately appointed Bishop of Daventry. After savagely wounding him and punishing and insulting him in many other ways, they simply had him trod under foot, and left him lying in the streets like a foul and abject corpse. We read of

the same being done under the Emperor Diocletian to three Blessed Saints of Christ, Maxima, Secunda and Donatilla, virgins and martyrs.

The remainder of the many tortures enumerated at the beginning of Chapter IX will be found in the following chapter.

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from

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(A Modern Edition)

Chapter XI

Of Other Tortures and Means of Martyrdom:

- **Burying alive**
- **Throwing into Rivers, Wells, or Lime-kilns**
- **Cutting open the Stomach, and the like**

The tortures outlined above, in which the martyrs were cast into deep ditches and buried with earth, hurled into a running stream or into wells, or else into a lime-kiln, are found in many *Histories* of Martyrdom, particularly those of Saints Castullus, Vitalis, Marcellus, Philemon and his companions, Saints Paulina and Daria, Roman virgins and martyrs, Saints Calistus and Carisius, Saints Alexandra, Claudia, and Euphrasia, matrons, Julitta, virgin and martyr, Saints Florus and Laurus, and many others. The two last named are commemorated in the *Menology* on August 17th in these words:

"Anniversary of the Blessed Martyrs, Saints Florus and Laurus. These holy men were twin brothers, and hewers of stone, an art they had learned from Proclus and Maximus. But after their masters had suffered martyrdom for Christ's sake, they left Byzantium (Constantinople) and retired into the district of Illyricum, to the city of Ulpiani, where, working in the quarries under Lido the Governor, they worthily followed their trade. Finally, after enduring many tortures and being cast by Licio into a deep well, they gave up their souls to God."

The blessed martyrs were also thrown sometimes into a lime-kiln, much as we find in the *Acts* of St. Clement, Bishop of Ancyra, and also by the account of *three hundred martyrs* given in the *Roman Martyrology*, on August 24th:

"At Carthage, anniversary of three hundred Holy Martyrs in the time of Valerian and Gallienus. Among other punishments, after the Governor commanded a lime-kiln to be lighted and in his presence live coals and incense to be brought forward, he said to the three hundred, 'Choose one of two things — either burn incense to Jupiter on these coals, or be plunged into the quicklime.' Then, armed with faith and confessing Christ the Son of God, they threw themselves with a quick dash into the fire, and amid the vapors of the quicklime were instantly reduced to powder. It is for this very reason that the white-clad host of Saints well earned the title of the White Band."

How the Blessed Martyrs were Buried Alive

Before we proceed to other points, it is important to note that Christians tortured in this manner were not always cast bodily into pits to be buried entirely under earth and stones, although this was generally the case. We read, for example, in the *Acts* just cited, of Saints Philemon and Marcellus, that these martyrs for the faith were buried only up to their loins. We suggest that you read their *History* for more on this point.

Of the Different Ways that Christian Martyrs were Cast into the Sea or into Rivers

As we mentioned above, it was not always in one and the same, way that the martyrs were tormented ... but in many. Many of the Blessed Martyrs are recorded as having been thrown into the waters. Sometimes this was done after great stones, or lead weights, had been fastened to their neck or feet or right hand, as was the case with Saints Sabinus, Agapius, Florian, Alexandra, Claudia, Euphrasia, matrons, Julitta, virgin, and others. At other times they were cast into the waters with both hands and feet tied, wrapped in a net, shut in leaden boxes, or sewn up in a bag. These methods are to be found in the accounts of the martyrdoms of Saints Faustinus and Jovita, as well as Saints Hermillus, Ulpian, Stratonicus, Nicostratus, and others.

It is also noteworthy in this respect that *the bag* was a very ancient form of punishment indeed. Plautus [254-184 B.C.] makes mention of it in his *Vidularia*:

Iube hunc insui culeo, atque in altum deportari, si vis annonam bonam
("Order the man to be sewn up in a bag, and cast into the deep, if you would have a good harvest").

Now the bag he speaks of was a skin, or sack made of leather, in which murderers were sewn up, often together with a dog, a cock, a snake, an ape, or some other creature, and thrown headlong, in accordance with Roman law, into the sea or river. From ancient times a law of this sort seems to have existed in the case of parricides; and so Cicero states:

"If any man has killed his parents or beaten them, and is found guilty and condemned on that count, his head is to be wrapped in a wolf's skin, wooden shoes (that is, fetters) are to be put upon his feet, and he is to be led to prison, and there to stay a little while the bag is being made ready into which he must be placed and so cast into the water."

In fact, this law was passed by the Romans to terrify and so discourage others from following the example of Lucius Hostius, who was the first of mankind, after the War with Hannibal, to kill his own father, and was intended to dissuade others from taking their own parents' lives with the sword or otherwise. Accordingly, when during the Cimbrian War (113-101 BC) Poblucius Malleolus murdered his mother, he was punished in this fashion. His fate is mentioned by Livy in these words:

"Poblucius Malleolus, for the murder of his mother, was the first ever sewn up in a bag and thrown into the sea"

And in another place:

"Malleolus was condemned for his mother's murder. After sentencing, his head was immediately muffled in a wolf's skin, while the bag was getting ready, into which he was to be put and thrown into the water."

At a later date Pompey the Great [106-48 BC], when Consul, passed a law further amending the ancient ordinance, extending the degree of relationship within which murder involved this form of punishment, and detailing the creatures to be enclosed in the bag' along with the culprit — namely, a dog, a cock, a viper, and an ape. The same law of Pompey's is again recited, with identical provisions, by Justinian in the *Institutes*. True, this law fell into practical disuse in later Roman times by reason of the cruelty of its provisions; but it was revived for the benefit of the Christians, several of whom won their crown of martyrdom in this strange fashion.

Of Catholics cast by heretics into the Sea and Rivers, or Buried in the Ground

Victor, Bishop of Utica, in his *Vandal Persecution* describes how the Catholics were embarked by their Heretic persecutors on board derelict ships, without sails or oars, and so committed to the vast sea to confront certain shipwreck. Nor is it only from the heretics that we learn of casting away Catholics on the waters, but those of more modern times as well. We see this in the *Theatre of Cruelties*:

"When the city of Oudenarde in Flanders had been occupied by the host of the Gueux, these insurgents captured all the priests of that province who were noted for their piety and learning and carried them off to the castle. Amongst these was one, Master Peter, a venerable old man and

the oldest of all the company. After heaping insults and doing violence upon him, they stripped him of his clothes, bound his hands and feet together behind his back, and threw him headlong through the castle windows into the river, the good man crying out as he fell with alert and undaunted spirit, "Thy will be done, O, Lord." In the same way, the venerable John Paul and the rest of the divines were cast into the river, of whom Master James, the eldest and weakest among them, unable to swim, was carried by the waters some way thence, taken out, and his life saved."

Again, somewhat further down:

"Ursula, a Nun in the Beguinage at Haarlem, (after her aged father, the acting magistrate in that city, and several other well-reputed and well-born Catholics with him, had been hanged) was herself led under the gallows, and asked whether she would forsake her Faith and the Catholic Religion, and marry a certain soldier. And when she steadfastly refused to do so, she was at once cast into the water, and drowned."

And yet again:

"The heretics of the city of Nimes in Languedoc, after slaughtering a great multitude of Catholics with their daggers, threw them, some dead, some still half alive, into a well in the city, which was both wide and deep, and filled it twice over to the brim."

All this is to be found in the book, *The Theatre of Heretic Cruelties*, in which we also find the following concerning Catholics who were buried in the earth:

"The Huguenots buried alive a priest named Peter, of the parish of Beaulieu, leaving only his head above ground. At a place in Belgium not far from the Ypres, other clergy as well were thus covered with earth and stones, and the Heugenots, setting up marks a short way from their exposed heads, rolled bowls of stone or iron at them in the way of sport."

We will now continue to explore still other sorts of tortures and torments to which our forebears in Christ were exposed, first in the way of those martyrs who were publicly stripped and led naked through the streets of cities; secondly of those who were shut up in dungeons strewn with broken glass or shards of pottery or even iron caltrops [triangular spikes], so that their bare bodies would be lacerated and punctured by their sharp points, and last, those who were tied to the branches of two trees and wrenched apart. After this we will discuss (in Chapter XII) martyrs driven into banishment, and those condemned to hard labor and to the mines.

The first and second kinds are attested by the *Acts* of the Blessed Martyrs, Saints Alexander and Vincent, Peter and Marcellinus, Victor and Corona, as in the *Menology* where, on September 9th, it is recorded:

"Anniversary of the Blessed Martyr Strato, who, being bound to two cedar trees and so rent asunder in two parts for the faith of Christ, was made one with the celestial host."

Of other faithful servants of Christ which were subjected to the same torture, Eusebius and Nicephorus both bear witness, as well as the *History* of the martyrdom of the above-named Saints Victor and Corona.

Of Catholics — particularly Monks and Priests — who had their Stomachs Ripped Open by heretics within this Present Century

Not only by the idolaters of antiquity and heretics of former days have Christian martyrs been torn apart and disemboweled in different ways (as we have already seen), but no less by the heretics of our own day. Let us quote what is said concerning this in the *Theatre of Cruelties*, and elsewhere:

"The Huguenots at the Church of St. Macarius in Vasconia ripped the bellies of many priests, and gradually drew out their bowels by winding them around sticks which they turned around and around. In the city of Mancina, having seized a priest of an advanced age, they proceeded to cut off his privates, and after roasting them over a fire, crammed them into his mouth. Then to see how he would digest them — for he was still alive — they ripped open his stomach, consummating his martyrdom. In the case of another priest, they imitated the tyranny and cruelty of the Emperor Julian, by cutting open his belly with a sword, while he was yet alive, and stuffing the cavity full of oats, gave him to their horses to feed upon."

This torturing of Christ's priests was not confined to any particular place or time. We learn of others, equally horrible and cruel, to which they were indiscriminately subjected:

"In the parish of Cassenville, near Engolisma, the Huguenots seized upon a priest named Lewis, who by all accounts lived an excellent and exemplary life, and plunged his hands so often and so long in a vessel full of boiling oil that the flesh was stripped and fell off from the bones. Not content with this cruelty, they poured the same boiling liquid into his mouth. Seeing him not yet dead, they slew him by shooting at him with leaden bullets from iron barrels.

Another priest, Colin by name, was also seized and castrated. After shutting him in a cask with a hole in the top, they poured upon him such a quantity of boiling oil that he died under such torments.

In the parish of Rivieres, they laid hands on yet another priest, whose tongue they tore out while he was still alive by piercing his chin, afterwards killing him. Another, named John, they murdered by cutting his throat, after first burning all the skin of his feet with a red-hot iron.

Francois Raboteau, Vicar of the parish of Foucquebrun, was seized by the Huguenots and tied to oxen dragging a wagon, and was so savagely goaded and lashed that he finally died of the pain and torment.

At the time when Prince Auriac occupied Ruremond, a city of Guelderland which he had seized, his soldiers violently assaulted the Carthusian monastery there, shouting '*Geld!*', meaning that they wanted money. At the entrance gate three lay brothers were slain, Albert, John, and

Stephen of Ruremond. Rushing into the Church, the soldiers disrupted the venerable Prior Joachim at prayers with the rest of the Brethren. Him They wounded him in several places and dragged him out, while four monks were killed on the spot, the rest being left grievously wounded.

In the city of Engolsheim, Friar John Auril of the Order of St. Francis, an old man of eighty, had his head split open with an axe, and his body thrown into the privies.

By the same ministers of Satan, in various other places, many priests serving God had noses and ears cut off, and eyes forced out. Indeed so audacious was the insolence of one Huguenot and so monstrous his barbarity, that he made himself a necklace of priests' ears that had been cut away, and boasted of it before his leaders as a mark of bravery and diligence.

In England, the Calvinist heretics violently seized Catholic priests performing the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and clad as they were in their sacred vestments, set them on horseback in the midday and with burning torches carried in front, lead them about the streets in mockery. They also pierced their ears with a red-hot iron, exposing them on a stage to public scorn, fixed their heads in the pillory while nailing their ears at the same time to its wooden framework — and all this was done for no other reason than the priests' sympathizing and speaking well of the innocence of the martyrs and other Catholics who be tortured for their holy Catholic Faith."

All these atrocities, we must bear in mind, were committed by the heretics of the present day in England, Ireland, France and Belgium.

The Tortures and Torments of the Christian Martyrs

from

De SS. Martyrum Cruciatibus

(A Modern Edition)

Chapter XII

Of Martyrs driven into Exile, and condemned to Hard Labor or the Mines

Returning once again to the discussion and evidence of the remaining methods of punishment used in antiquity for the torment of the Christian Martyrs, (enumerated in Chapter 9), we find that the last methods to be examined pertain either to banishment, or condemning to hard labor or to the mines.

The first of these — banishment — is found in the works of many reliable authors, including Tertullian, Cyprian, Jerome (in speaking of the Holy Apostle St. John), as well as by a great number of *Histories* of the Blessed Martyrs, in particular of Pope Clement, Flavia Domitilla, and Saints Bibiana, Demetria, and Severa, virgins and martyrs.

Concerning Christians condemned to hard labor, such as digging, carrying sand and stones, and the like, we can appeal to the *Histories* of many Saints, such as Pope Clement, and St. Severa, mentioned just above, as well as to those of Saints Papias, and Maurus, Roman soldiers.

Of Martyrs sent to the mines, we have ample evidence in Tertullian and Cyprian, in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, and in numerous *Acts* of the Saints, as, for instance, those of St. Silvanus, Bishop, and thirty-nine comrades in affliction, and of Saints Paphnutius and Nemesianus. The last are commemorated in the *Martyrology* on September 10 in these words:

"In Africa, anniversary of the Sainted Bishops, Nemesianus, Felix, Lucius, likewise of another Felix, Victor, Dativus, and others, who, under Valerian and Gallienus when the rage of

persecution was at its height, were, upon their first steadfast profession of Christ, heavily beaten with clubs, then bound in fetters and sent off to dig in the mines, and so fulfilled the struggle of a glorious martyrdom."

Likewise of St. Paphnutius, on September 2nd:

"In Egypt, anniversary of St. Paphnutius, Bishop and one of those Confessors who, under the Emperor Maximian, were condemned to the mines after their right eyes had been put out and left legs hamstrung. Later, under Constantine the Great, St. Paphnutius strove earnestly against the Arians on behalf of the Catholic Faith; and at last died in peace, glorified with many crowns."

So again of St. Spiridion, on December 14th:

"In the island of Cyprus, anniversary of St. Spiridion, Bishop, one of the Confessors whom Maximian, after putting out their right eyes and maiming their left legs, condemned to the mines. He was renowned for his gift of prophecy and the glory of the signs granted him, and in the Council of Nicaea he overcame the philosopher Ethnicus, who disparaged the Christian Religion, and brought him to the True Faith."

Athanasius writes:

"But as many as the Arian persecutors could lay hands on, they banished to that part of Egypt called the Great Oasis. And the bodies of those who died they at first refused to surrender to their friends, but kept them secretly unburied to satisfy their capricious spite, thinking their cruelty might so remain undiscovered. In doing so, however, they made a great error; for the friends and relations of the murdered men, rejoicing in their confession of the truth, yet mourning the concealing of their dead bodies, and loudly proclaiming the cruelty of what was done, caused the tragedy of their enemies' atrocities to be more and more known abroad. Both in Egypt and in Africa they drove many Bishops and priests into exile ... whom they hurried away with such violence that some died on the way, others perished in banishment, with more than thirty Bishops of the Church in all being exiled."

And again in another place,

"Under the Emperor Constantius, who was ever ready to assist the Arians, they succeeded in effecting the banishment from Alexandria to Armenia of two priests and three deacons. Arius moreover and Asterius, the Bishops respectively of Petra in Palestine and Petra in Arabia, were exiled to upper Africa. Lucius too, Bishop of Adrianople, who had boldly opposed them and rebuked their wickedness, was once more bound hand and head as they had done to him before, and bore him away into exile, where he died."

A short extract now from Theodoretus' *History* describing the driving into exile of Catholics under the Emperor Valens, must, for our present purposes, suffice, after which we will leave this part of our subject:

"Sentence was delivered on the holy men by Magnus, Count of the Provincial Treasury, to this effect, that they were to be expelled from Alexandria and sent away to dwell in exile at Heliopolis, a city in Phoenicia, in which no inhabitant would endure to hear the name of Christ, for they were one and all idol worshippers. Accordingly he ordered them to immediately embark on a ship, he himself standing on the shore and brandishing a drawn sword at them, thinking to strike terror into the souls of men who had again and again wounded hostile demons with the two-edged sword of the Spirit. Then he gave a final command to set sail without any provisions having been loaded in the ship or anything whatever given them to sustain them in the cruelty of exile."

A similar barbarity fills the heart of Elizabeth, Queen of England, in our own day, who is now torturing her Catholic subjects with every sort of bitter torment and innumerable afflictions and penalties, sometimes (see Sanders, *Anglican Schism*) driving them into banishment as a token and proof of her pretended clemency. But of her own impiety and that of her father, Henry VIII, we have spoken elsewhere at greater length.

Of Martyrs Condemned to Hard Labor, Building or Cleaning Sewers, or Working on the Roads and Streets

This sort of punishment is mentioned by Suetonius, who states in his *Life of Nero*:

"He began the artificial lake between Misenum and Avernus and the canal from Avernus to Ostia, and with a view to finishing these works, ordered all prisoners that were anywhere confined in jail to be conveyed to Italy, and convicted persons to be condemned in every case to hard labor."

And again in *Caligula*:

"Many respectable people were first disfigured by branding marks, and then he condemned them to the mines, to work on the roads, and to wild beasts."

Pliny (*Letters*), speaking of the Emperor Trajan, tells us that:

"Any older offenders that are discovered and who were sentenced ten years ago, will be assigned to various tasks not far removed from hard labor; for men of this sort are commonly taken away for cleaning the sewers and working on the highroads and public streets."

Further particulars concerning these punishments may be found in the *History*, of Pope Marcellinus as follows:

"When Maximianus returned from the African province to Rome — and eager to please Diocletian Augustus, who was determined to build *Therma* named after himself (hence, the *Diocletian's Baths*) — he first set about by persecuting Christians soldiers of that faith, forcing all, whether Romans or foreigners, to the degradation of forced labor, and in different places condemned them to quarrying stone or digging sand. At this time lived a certain Christian,

Thrason by name, a man of importance, and wealth and faithful in his life; seeing his fellow-Christians worn out with weariness and hard labor, he would of his abundance supply food and nourishment to the holy martyrs ..."

And further on:

"Maximian commanded that Cyriacus, Largus, Smaragdus, and Sisinnius, should dig sand, and carry it on their own shoulders to the spot where the *Thermae* were being built. Among the rest was an old man, Saturninus by name, who was now sadly broken by age, and they began to help him carry his load. But when the guards saw this, how Sisinnius and Cyriacus were bearing both their own and others' burdens ..."

The same, or very similar, accounts are given in the records of the passion of St. Cyriacus and his companions, and of St. Severa, virgin and martyr.

St. Athanasius also makes mention of the same form of punishment:

"The Arians drove the old Bishops into exile, disposing of some in the stone-quarries [Footnote: Stone quarries (lapidicinae), places whence stone is extracted, called in Greek *latumiae*. Hence prisons are called *latumia*, either because criminals were sent there to quarry stone, or because the Tyrants of Syracuse had near that city great stone quarries excavated in the rock like a jail, from which the stones had been hewn for building the city originally, and made use of these as prisons. It will be remembered how the unhappy survivors of the disastrous Athenian expedition, under Lamachus (B.C. 415), against Syracuse, perished in these *latumiae*.], and hounding others to death."

Victor mentions this even more frequently in his *Vandal Persecution*, where he writes in one place:

"When the tyrant failed to break down the wall of their constancy, he devised a plan of allowing no men of our Religion that held office in his Court to touch the usual allowances and pay, further endeavoring to wear them out in manual labor. He ordered well-born and delicately nurtured men to the plain of Utica to cut the field crops under the blaze of the burning sun, where all then went rejoicing in the Lord."

It is unquestionable, then, that it was customary with the ancients to send offenders and Christians to hard labor in the way of inflicting the greatest possible injury and insult upon them, and particularly on those who were ennobled by military service. Properly speaking, it was only persons of the viler sort that were usually assigned to public works; and if soldiers were so treated, this was directly contrary to the laws, which forbade a soldier to be condemned to the mines or to be tortured, and under no circumstances to be forced to labor at building operations or perform the daily tasks of slaves.

One building that was constructed by the sweat and toil of Christian soldiers and Christian martyrs is that enormous pile which to this day we call (as we had mentioned above) *The Baths of Diocletian*. The circumstances of its building cannot but make us assign it to the special favor

of Almighty God, that in later years, when Pope Pius IV was seated on the Papal throne, the most important part of this building, which remained intact, was changed to serve as a Church, and solemnly and duly consecrated to Mary the Mother of God and the Holy Angels (Church of *Santa Maria degli Angeli* at Rome).

Of Martyrs Condemned to the Mines

Many were the sufferings and indignities we are told of as endured by persons condemned to the mines. To begin with they were disfigured with marks and brandings, and deprived of all their goods and of the Roman citizenship, if they possessed it; then they were beaten with cudgels, and loaded with fetters; compelled to lie on the bare earth, if they wanted to rest their weary limbs; tormented with filthy, stinking surroundings and by periods of fasting. Moreover the crown of the head was shaven; and lastly in the case of the holy martyrs condemned to this punishment under the Emperors Maximian, Diocletian and Galerius, the right eye was plucked out and the left leg hamstrung.

That those sent to the mines were degraded by marking and branding is also seen in a passage already quoted from Suetonius' *Life of Caligula*:

"Many persons of respectable condition, after first disfiguring them by branding marks, he condemned to the mines."

Constantine, on the other hand, writing to Eumelius in a rescript dated from March 21, states:

"If any man has been condemned to penal imprisonment or to the mines in punishment for the crimes he has been convicted of, no writing is to be made on his face, albeit on hands or ankles the sentence of his condemnation may be set in one, and one only, branding. The human face, which was formed in the likeness of the divine beauty, should never be spoiled and degraded."

Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, then clearly shows us by his words that up to his own day the practice had continued of branding the faces of those condemned to the mines with black marks that could never be obliterated and deep-cut letters.

As to confiscation of property and deprivation of citizenship, many pertinent statutes can be found in Roman laws enacted before Constantine the Great.

It is necessary for us to understand that those condemned to the mines were reduced to the condition of slaves — which is again proven by reference to Roman law, from which it followed necessarily that each article of their goods became public property upon their condemnation.

"A man condemned to the mine becomes a slave in virtue of his punishment, and accordingly those upon whom this sentence has been pronounced have their goods confiscated to the benefit of the treasury. For this reason, any property possessed by the person whom you declare to have been subsequently released by our clemency, belongs rather to the public revenue than to himself."

Further, that the Blessed Martyrs condemned to the mines were beaten with cudgels, bound with fetters, had the one half of their heads shaven, were tortured with hunger, filth and foul stench, and the like, is clear from one of St. Cyprian's Letters, addressed to Nemesianus and the other martyrs, his companions, then imprisoned in the mines:

"But that you should have been so badly beaten with cudgels and tormented — and by these pains making a first beginning and initiation of your confession of faith in Christ — is indeed a thing to stir one's indignation. Yet has no Christian ever shuddered at the cudgels, seeing that his hope is all in another instrument of wood, the Cross. Christ's servant has known the sacrament of his salvation; by the Cross of wood has he been redeemed to eternal life; by the Cross advanced to the crown of blessedness. What wonder is it, I ask you, if, vessels of gold and silver, you have been sent to the mine, which is the true home of gold and silver, except only that now is the nature of the mines changed, and the places which were heretofore used to supply gold and silver, begin to receive the same?

They have set fetters moreover on your feet and bound your holy limbs, those temples of God, with degrading chains — as if the spirit could be bound fast with the body, or your gold be soiled with the contact of iron. To such as are dedicated to God's service and testify His faith by their religious life, these things are weapons, not bonds; it is not to shame they fetter the legs of Christian men, but to the glory and brightness of perfection. Oh! feet happily fettered, that shall not be released by the smith, but by God Himself! Oh! feet happily fettered, which are started on the blessed road to Paradise! Oh! feet tied and bound now for a brief space, that they may be free forever hereafter! Oh! feet that stumble for a while shackled with chains and cross-bars, but will soon run in the glorious path that leads to Christ!

What matter if envious and ill-conditioned cruelty hold you in its chains and bonds, when you will so soon be leaving this earth and these pains for the kingdoms of the sky? True, in the mines the body is not pampered with beds and bedding, but it is comforted with the refreshment and consolation of Christ. Your toil-wearied carcasses lie on the bare ground, but it is surely no punishment to lie with Christ. Your limbs are always squalid with scurf and foulness for lack of baths; but you are washed internally in the Spirit. Your bread is scanty and unclean; but man does not live by bread alone, but by the word of God. You shiver, and have naught to cover you; but he who puts on Christ is clad and warmed abundantly. Your heads are half shorn, and the hair rough and ragged; but when Christ is your head, how beautiful must that head be, which is called after the name of the Lord. All this deformity that is hateful and abominable in the eyes of the Heathen, what splendor shall be accounted worthy of it?"

Similar are the words of the following letter sent back to him by the sufferers to whom St. Cyprian wrote:

"Our fellow-prisoners give many thanks to you, under God, most beloved Cyprian, for you have refreshed their laboring breast with your letter, healed their limbs bruised by the cudgels, loosed their feet bound in the stocks, made complete again the hair of their half-shaven heads, enlightened the gloom of the dungeon, leveled the mountainous places of the mine, have even set fragrant flowers before their noses and shut out the choking smell of smoke. Moreover your assistance, and that of our most beloved Quirinus, has been received, and the provisions sent to

be distributed by Herennianus the Sub-deacon and Lucanus, Maximus and Amantius, the acolytes, applied to make up whatever was lacking to our bodily sustenance."

Lastly, we know from the *Roman Martyrology* and from Eusebius that martyrs condemned to the mines often had their right eyes torn out and the sinews of their left legs cut. Eusebius writes:

"When Diocletian and Maximian were wearied with the excess of the sufferings inflicted on us and tired of their slaughter of human beings; when they were now sated and over-sated with bloodshed, and had come to feel such clemency and mercy as was to be expected of them, to avoid the appearance of exercising any special cruelty upon us for the future — for they professed that it was not seemly to contaminate States with domestic bloodshed, nor to stain their Empire with the blot of inhumanity (an empire which all held, of course, to be so clement and full of pity), but rather that all mankind should enjoy the blessings of a genuine and merciful royal rule, and that no one, henceforth, should be punished with death, and that this kind of penalty be remitted and relaxed towards us — these benignant Princes directed merely that our eyes be torn out, and one leg broken! For, in their view, these were mild tortures and very gentle punishments for us to endure. Accordingly it is impossible to tell the number of those who, in deference to their horrid gentleness, have had their right eyes dug out with daggers (and the sockets they were torn from seared with a hot iron), their left legs mutilated at the articulation of the joints, and themselves afterward condemned to the copper mines in various provinces, not so much to take advantage of their labor as to torture and torment them."

Further, St. Clement implies that Christians condemned to the mines used to be guarded by soldiers; and the law dealing with the subject informs us that they were regularly coerced with such lashes as are given to slaves.

Eutropius tells us that Tarquinius Superbus was the first Roman to devise this punishment of the mines; but he certainly was not the first to discover it, for Diodorus Siculus and Suidas both state in so many words that Semiramis, the Queen of Assyria, worked the mines, and did so by the help of prisoners of war. Women as well as men were sometimes condemned to labor in them.

Of Insults and Indignities Practiced by both Heathens and by Heretics upon the Dead Bodies of the Blessed Martyrs

We have already seen from St. Athanasius, in a passage quoted above regarding exiled Catholics, how the enemies of the Christian Faith not only exercised their cruelty upon the Blessed Martyrs while they were yet still alive, but also upon their dead corpses, such that their inhumanity and savagery extended even toward the bodies of martyrs when lacking life and feeling. To begin with, Eusebius, in the *Ecclesiastical History*, provides many examples of these horrors, of which we will quote only one or two. In one place he writes:

"Caesar, having answered by letter, ordered that all who confessed the Faith of Christ be put to torture. The Governor, determined to make a spectacle of the Christians to the mob, commanded the Blessed Martyrs to be brought forward into the judgment-hall. There he once more examined

them, and pronounced sentence that any who were Roman citizens would be beheaded, while the remainder were to be delivered over to the beasts."

Then after these Saints had victoriously won the crown of martyrdom, the Historian adds:

"But even so their rage and cruelty against the Saints were not satisfied, for these savage, barbarous people were stirred up by a savage and furious beast: the Devil. Scarcely, if at all, did their rage slacken. Rather, they began to exercise their insults, cruelty, and malevolence anew on the dead bodies of their victims. Even though they had been overcome by the martyrs' constancy, being devoid of all human feeling, their madness was not a whit diminished nor repressed; rather, the bitter spite both of governor and people grew greater still.

The dead bodies of those whom the pestiferous stench of the prison had choked, or who had died under torture, were exposed to be mangled by dogs, and were, moreover, carefully watched day and night, to prevent any of the faithful from committing them to a tomb.

Finally, the limbs of the martyrs slain in the amphitheatre — any that is, which had not yet been devoured by beasts or consumed by fire — were either rent into small pieces or burned up like coal. What is more, the heads of those who had been decapitated were collected and laid with the trunks, and for several days guarded by pickets, to make sure of their being left unburied.

Meantime many people came to mock these poor remains, and to cry, 'Where is their God now? What has their religion profited them, which they preferred to their own lives?' ... Neither by taking advantage of concealment by night, nor by offering substantial bribes, could the bodies be recovered by their friends; but were always carefully watched, the Heathen appearing to deem it a great thing gained, for them to be left lying unburied.

Last of all, after the martyrs' remains had lain six whole nights and days under the open sky and subject to every ignominy, they were first burned at the hands of vile and abandoned wretches and reduced to ashes, then thrown broadcast into the Rhone, which flows nearby, to the end that no trace of them should be left anywhere upon the earth."

And again:

"The remainder of the Christian band were bound with chains, and driven by the officers on board boats, which were then launched out into the deep sea and stormy waves. Some of these servants of the Great King who had, after their death, been decently and properly committed to the earth in burial, were formally ordered by the Emperors to be dug up again and cast into the sea, lest if they were deposited in tombs and commemorated by monuments, people should deem them gods and honor them with religious veneration."

And in another place still:

"But this monster of cruelty (the Tribune Maxys), proceeding to yet further extremities of inhumanity, and every day increasing his almost bestial rage against men of piety, altogether

transcended the laws of nature, going so far as to insolently deny burial to the lifeless bodies of the Saints; and to this end ordered their corpses, left out under the open sky for beasts to mangle, to be carefully watched night and day. Accordingly a great number of men might for many days be seen fulfilling this harsh and barbarous duty, while others again kept a careful look-out from a watch tower or high place to see that no corpse was taken away. So wild beasts, dogs, and birds of prey tore their limbs and scattered their remains hither and thither; until the whole city was strewn everywhere with the entrails and bones of men.

In the end, even those who had hitherto been hostile to us declared they had never known anything more atrocious and dreadful, commiserating not so much the misfortune of the individuals so terribly treated as the insult to their own self-respect and the claims of nature, the common parent of all mankind. For the spectacle of human flesh, not merely being devoured in one spot, but lying torn and mangled everywhere (surpassing the power of pen to describe or tragedy to represent), was offered to the eyes of all at every gate of the city, while some even declared they had seen separate limbs or even whole corpses, to say nothing of fragments of human entrails, actually inside the gates.

But now hear a great marvel! During several days when these things were being done, a miracle was to be seen. Though the weather was perfectly fine, the sun shining brightly, the air clear, and the whole sky calm and beautiful, suddenly the pillars throughout the city supporting the colonnades both of public and private buildings began to exude copious drops, as it were of tears. The Forum too and the streets, though no vestige of rain fell, grew wet in some mysterious way as though drenched with water; so that the word passed everywhere from mouth to mouth that mother earth could not longer tolerate the wickedness and impiety of the atrocities then committed, but was in some inexplicable fashion shedding floods of tears, the very stones and all inanimate nature weeping these odious crimes and justly rebuking the iron hard-heartedness of men and their nature that was so cruel and so lacking in proper pity."

All this is on the authority of Eusebius, who is further confirmed in what he states by Theodoretus and by Sozomen in their *Ecclesiastical Histories*, the former speaking of the Emperor Valens, the latter of Julian the Apostate. Theodoretus writes:

"After Palladius, a man greatly given to superstition, finished torturing the tender bodies of Catholic boys, some of these, when their martyrdom was consummated, were left lying, defrauded of due burial. So their parents, brethren, kinsmen, and I may say the whole city, claimed this one boon, this last solace, might be granted them. But Oh! for the pitiless harshness of their judge, or rather their executioner! — they who fought so gallantly for their religion, they meet the same fate as murderers, and their corpses are left unburied; they who wrestled so stoutly for the Faith, are exposed to be devoured by birds and beasts. But even more! Any who took pity on the fathers of these martyrs slain for conscience' sake, are themselves beheaded as though guilty of an odious crime."

Lastly, Sozomen offers us the following passage:

"But when as they had torn their bodies in pieces (to wit, Saints Eusebius, Nestabus and Zeno) and so broken their heads that the brains ran out on the ground, they conveyed them to a place

outside the city where the carcasses of dead animals were thrown. Then lighting a pile, they burned their bodies, and the bones left over which the fire had not entirely consumed, they mixed up with camels' or asses' bones that were lying thereabout — in such a way as to make it extremely difficult to find the blessed martyrs' relics amid so many bones. Yet did they not remain for long so hidden away."

These, then, were the tortures and torments, thus far described by me, by which the Christian martyrs of either sex were afflicted, and through which, in times of persecution, they won their way to the glorious crown of martyrdom.

These, O, Gallant soldiers of God ... these, you unconquered champions of Christ — these tortures and torments, I say, are the bright insignia of your victory, the manifest signs of your faith and fortitude, these the marks of your triumph! Death, which you sought so eagerly, you glorious warriors of God's army, has earned you an everlasting life of gladness. You, you alone are truly happy! Who will not proclaim your blessedness complete, for holding wealth and this world's pleasures of no account for Christ's sake, you have desired above all things else to pour out the last breath of life amid the most dreadful torments! In time of persecution, when the anguish of your sufferings grew more and more, fixing the eyes of your soul on the celestial guerdon, you spoke thus to God in your hearts without movement of the lips: "Here on earth, most gracious Lord God, let the torments of the body be multiplied a hundredfold, that there in Paradise gladness and peace may be increased. Oh, breasts burning with the flame of love divine! Oh, Hearts kindled with the ardor of the Holy Spirit!"

It is not to be marveled at, if these most gallant athletes of God, abiding in the midst of storms, were deterred by no perils, but made only the more eager and determined by suffering, craved that every hour ever new tortures, the most bitter and most agonizing, might be wrought on them, as though they could never have enough of pain.

But, wretches that we are! Oh! Unhappy sinners! What excuse, what excuse, I ask, shall we find before the Lord in the terrible day of His judgment, we who with no horrors of persecution to endure, no torments to confront, have held God's grace and our own salvation of so small account as to choose to pass all our life in a mere torpor of indolent sleep? What excuse shall we plead, when the very pillars of the heavens shall tremble — when all the nations of the earth shall cry aloud — when the most noble army of Christ's blessed martyrs, standing up before the throne of glory in great joy and confidence, shall display the scars of their wounds shining out upon their bodies and surpassing the sun's splendor with their brightness? What shall we then have to show? — What merits to bring forward? What plea shall we have to make? — God's grace and word inviolable? Renunciation of all earthly joys, alms, fasting, and mortification of the flesh? Pity, patience, and gentle compunction? Peace of heart, holy, calm, and prayerful watchfulness? Blessed indeed they, and thrice happy, which shall possess such shields to guard them! They shall be made companions of the Holy Martyrs, and sharers and partakers in their glory!

So we beg and beseech you, and entreat you earnestly with endless prayer, Oh! Martyrs most blessed, who for God's sake and by His holy grace, endured torments willingly and with a cheerfully, and for that cause are now made one with Him in sweet accord and loving

blessedness, we entreat you to plead with God for us miserable sinners, weighed down under the most grievous offences and degraded by the most sordid sins of negligence — that loving Him with all our heart and all our strength in this vale of tears, we may hereafter be found worthy on that dreadful day when all secrets shall be made manifest, to obtain mercy and salvation everlasting.

And above all, I beseech you, most glorious soldiers of Almighty God, forget not me, the author of this book, who am the most abject of sinners. It is by your intercession, and that only, I hope and aspire, with all the unction and eager desire of my heart, to win everlasting felicity, and with you to be fulfilled of the abundant waters of God's bliss, and intoxicated with the unspeakable riches of the mansions of His house.

END

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM
De SS. Martyrum Cruciatibus

FOLLOW:

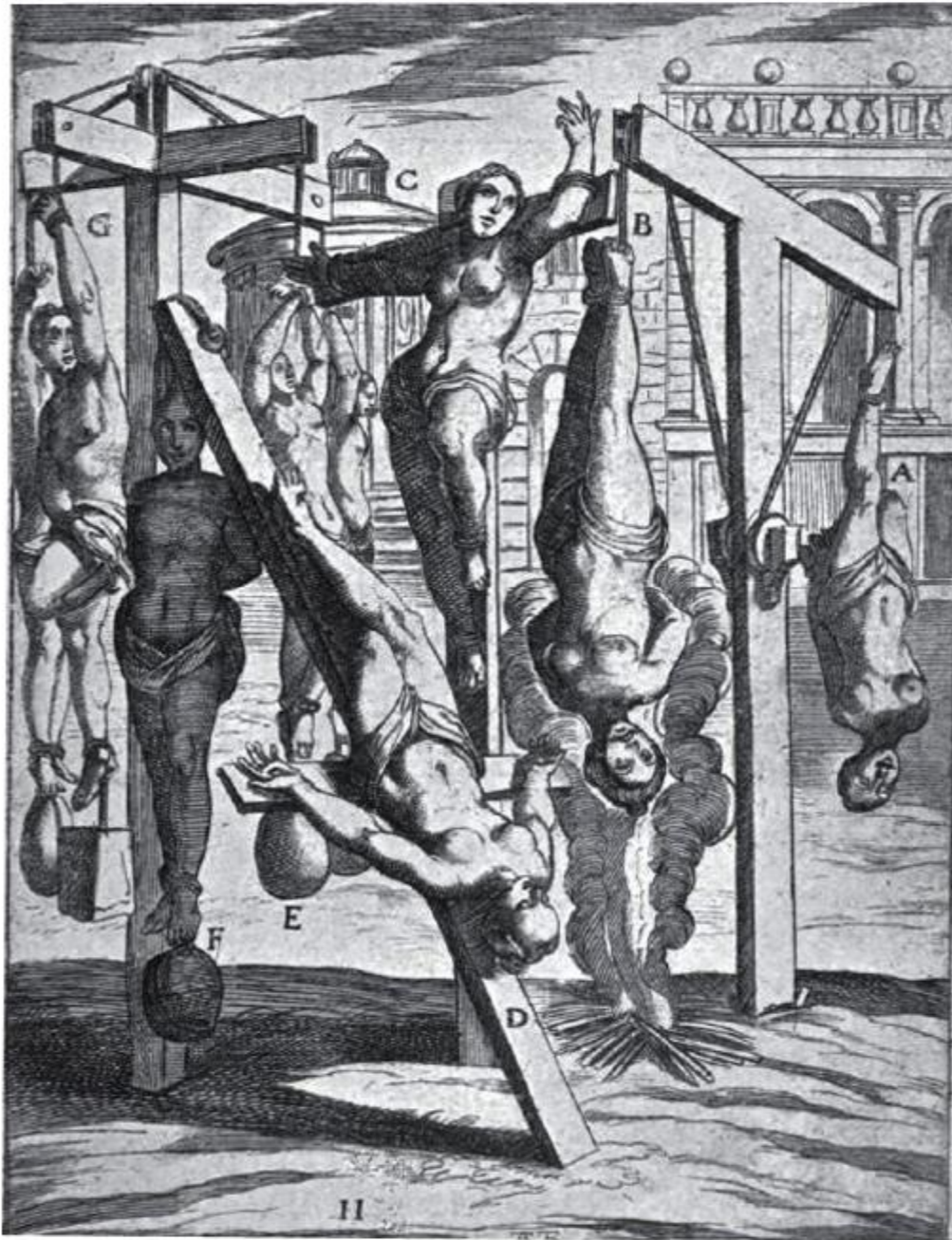


FIG. I.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>A. Martyrs suspended by one foot.
 B. Suspended by both feet.
 C. Raised on the cross, head uppermost.
 D. Nailed to the cross, head downwards. :</p> | <p>E. Hung up by both arms, heavy weights being attached to the feet.
 F. Christian women suspended by the hair.
 G. Martyrs hung up by one arm only, ponderous stones being fastened to their feet.</p> |
|--|--|

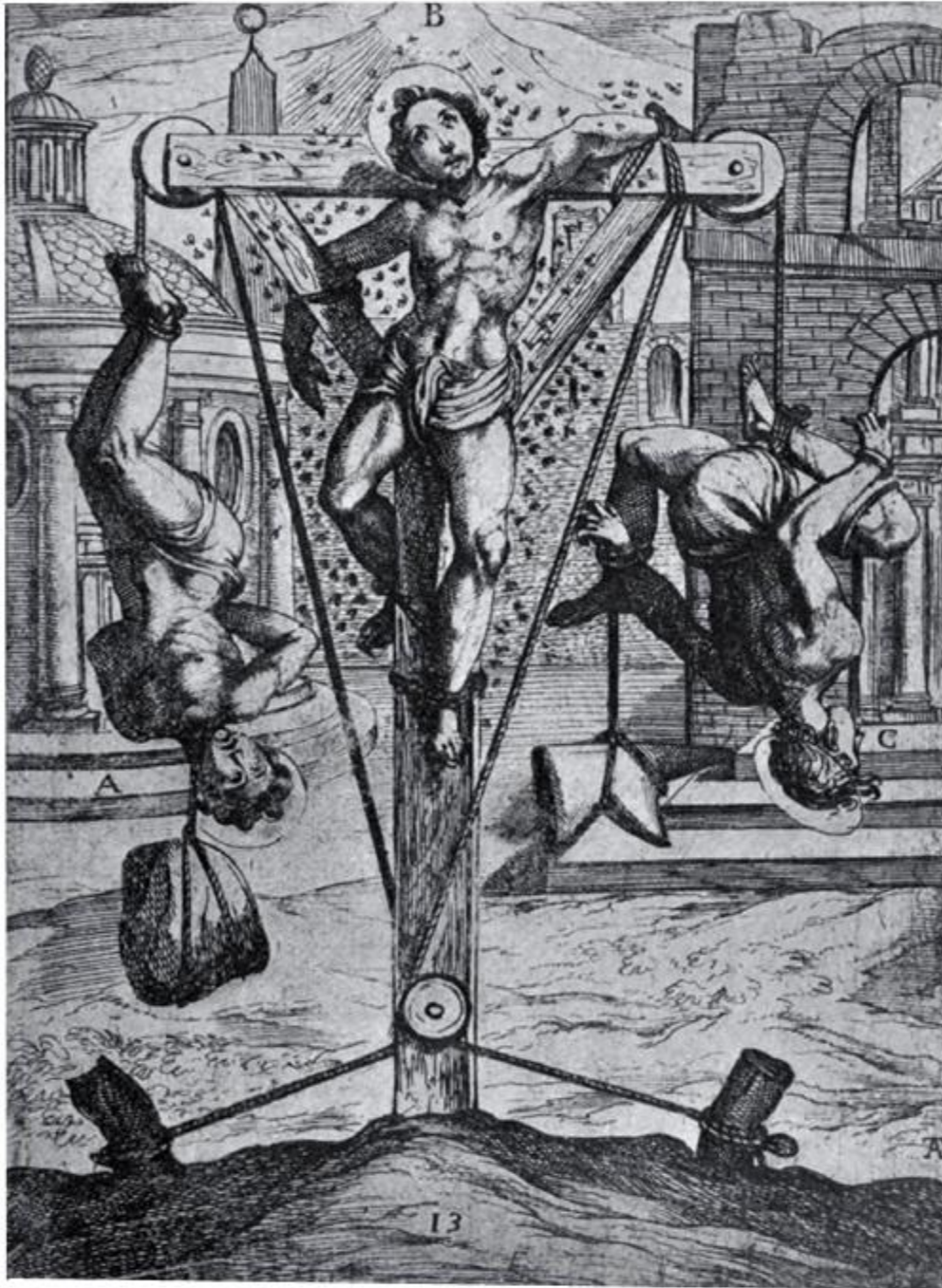


FIG. II.

- A. Martyr suspended by both feet, and a great stone fastened to his neck.
- B. Sometimes the Blessed Martyrs, after being smeared with honey, were bound to stakes fixed in the ground, and so exposed to the rays of the sun, to be tortured by the stings of flies and bees.
- C. Martyr suspended by one foot; one leg is bent at the knee, which is constricted by means of an iron ring, the other being weighted with a heavy mass of iron.



FIG. III.

A. Martyr suspended by his thumbs, heavy stones being attached to his feet.

B. Christians hung up, and a slow fire kindled underneath, so as to suffocate them with the smoke; the victims being scourged meantime with rods.



FIG. IV.

A. Martyr suspended by the feet, and his head at the same time pounded with hammers.

B. Martyr suspended by the hands, which are tied behind his back, heavy weights being fastened to his feet and round his neck.

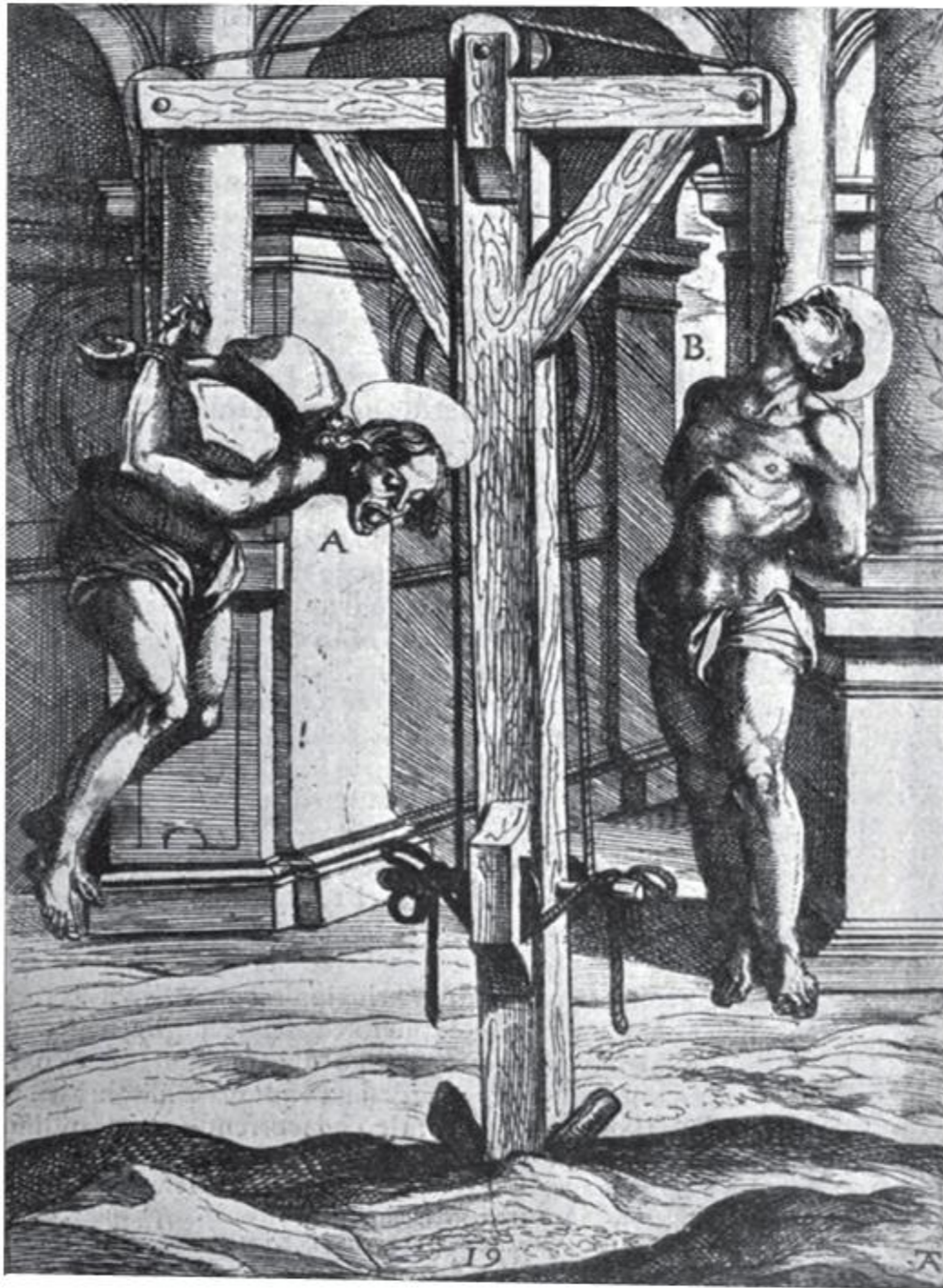


FIG. V.

- A. Martyr suspended by the hands, which are bound behind his back, and having the shoulders weighted with lumps of salt, a wooden gag being also forced into his mouth.
- B. Martyr suspended by a hook.

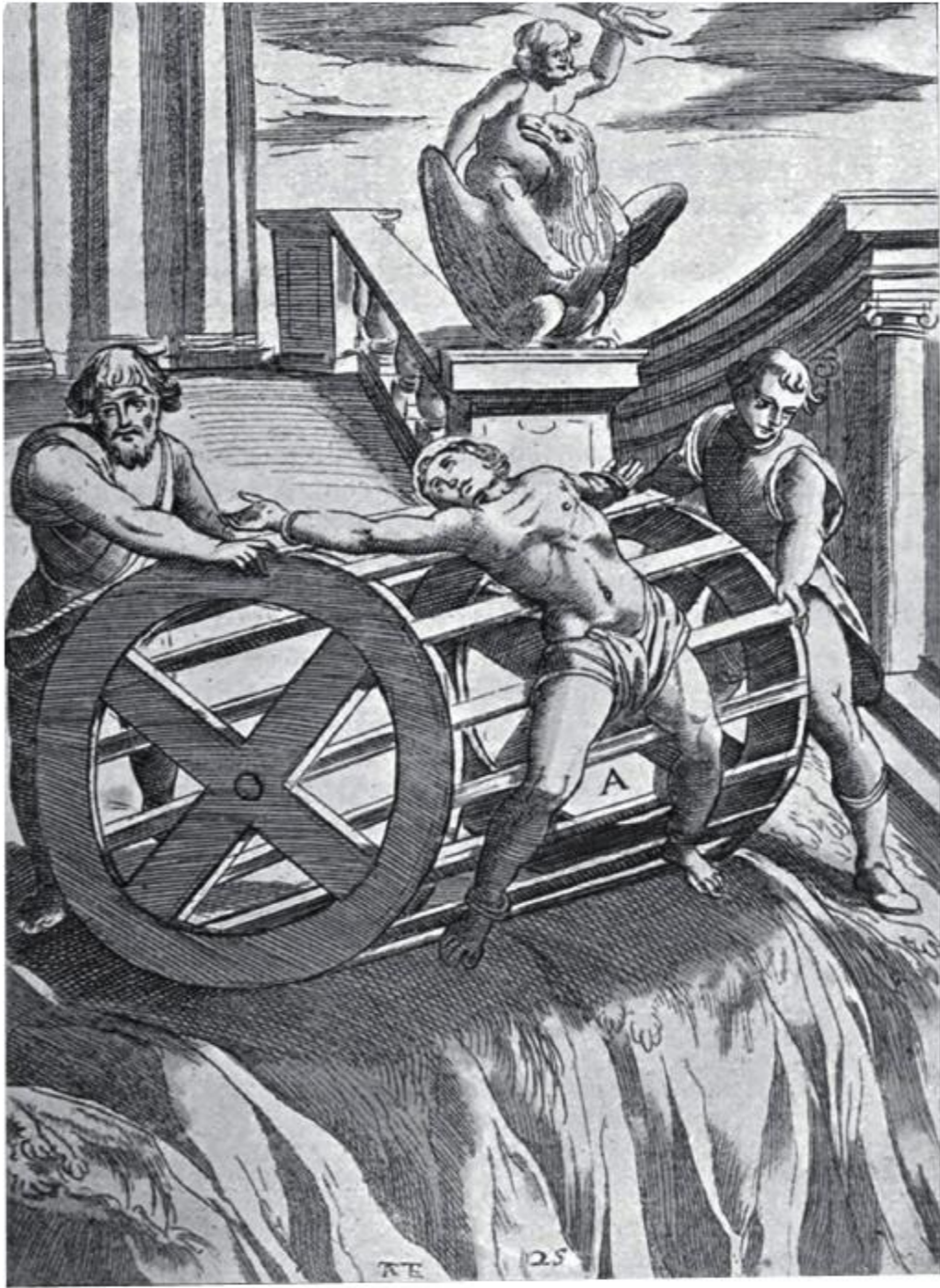


FIG. VI.

A. Sometimes Martyrs were bound to the circumference of great wheels, and so hurried from a height over stony places.



FIG. VII.

A. Martyr whose limbs are interwoven in the spokes of a wheel, on which he is left exposed for days, till he dies.

B. Martyr bound to a narrow wheel, which is revolved, so that his body is horribly mangled on iron spikes fixed underneath.



FIG. VIII.

A. Martyr bound naked to a wheel, which is revolved over iron spikes.

B. Bound to the circumference of a wheel, which is revolved over a fire kindled underneath.

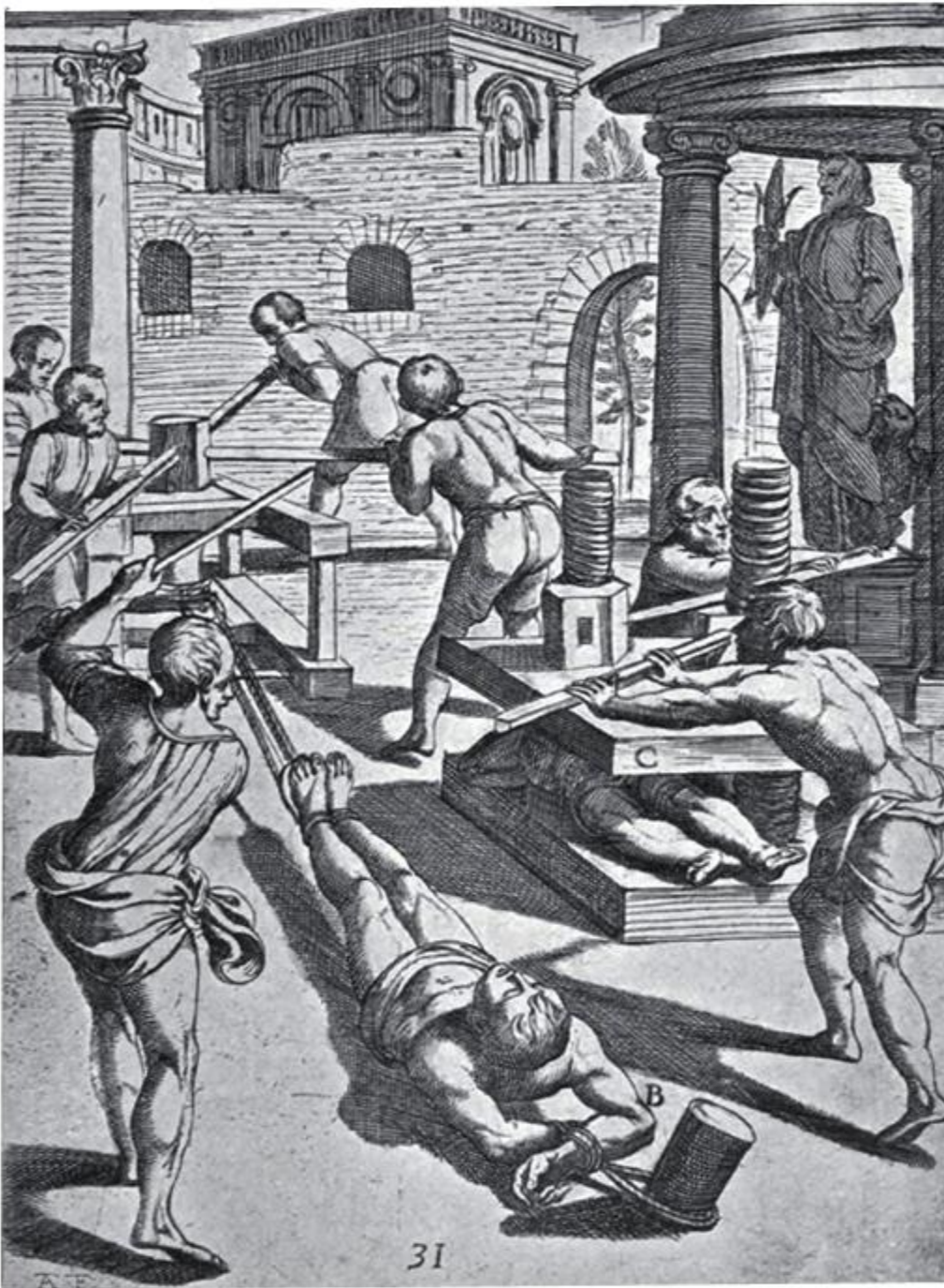


FIG. IX.

A. A pulley.

B. Martyrs racked at the pulleys.

C. Crushed in the press, just as grapes and olives are pressed in making wine and oil.

D. Capstan or windlass.



FIG. X.

A. Martyr, with hands tied behind his back, hoisted in the air by a rope.
B. Pulley.

C. Spikes, or sometimes sharp flints, on to which the Martyr was let fall.



FIG. XI.

A. Martyr on the wooden horse.
 B. Martyr hanging from the horse.
 C. The wooden horse.

D. Consular fasces.
 E. Platform or scaffold whereon the wooden horse was fixed.



FIG. XII.

A Martyr, bound firmly with thongs or lashes attached to his hands and feet, is violently dragged in all directions, and so torn limb from limb.

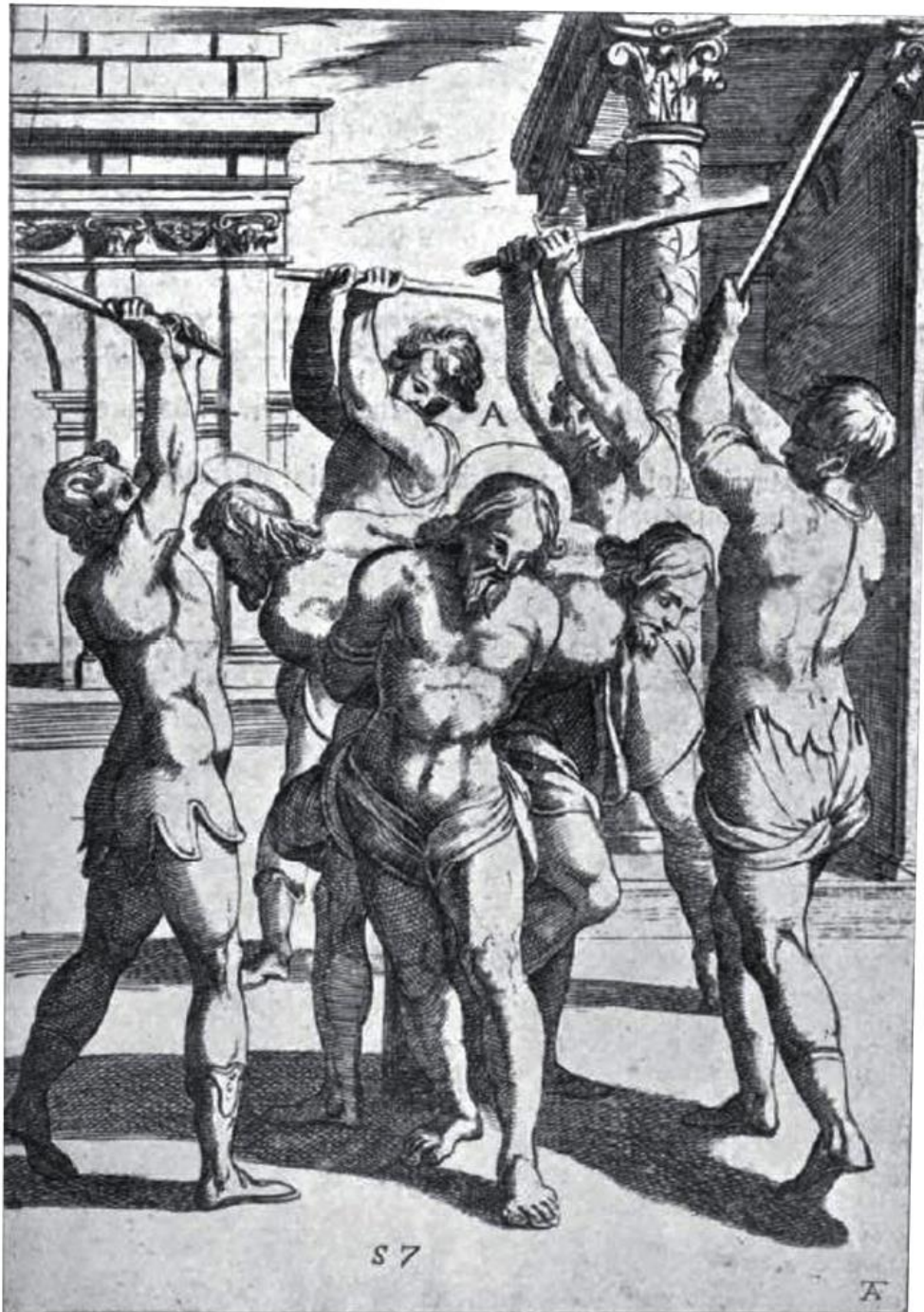


FIG. XIII.

Martyrs tied to a post set upright in the ground, to a stake or pillar, and persistently beaten with cudgels till they died.

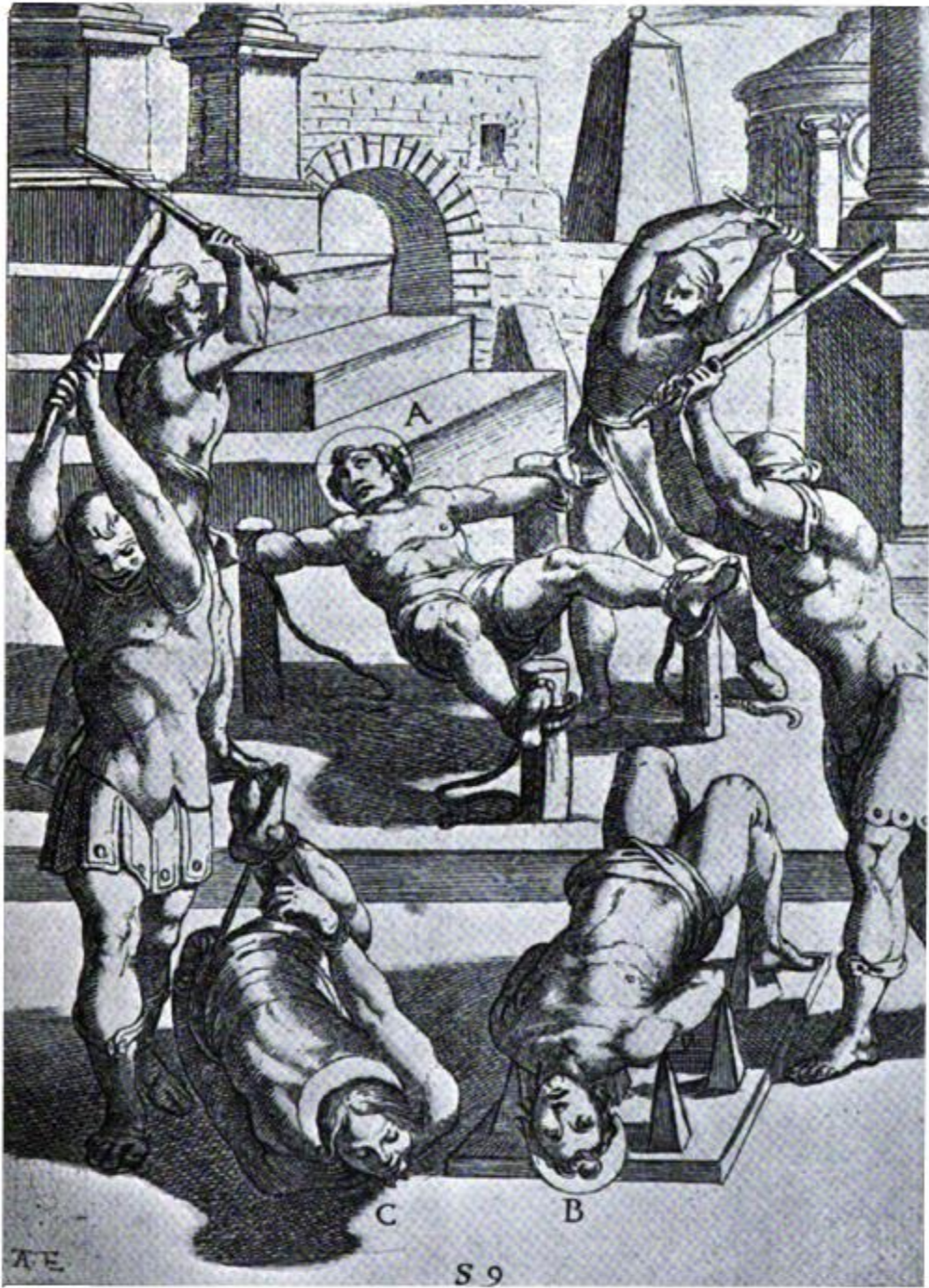


FIG. XIV.

A. Martyr bound to four stakes and beaten with cudgels.
B. Martyr laid naked on iron spikes and violently beaten with a cudgel.

C. Martyr bound hand and foot and similarly beaten with a cudgel.



FIG. XV.

A. Martyr buffeted, kicked, and pounded with the fists.
B. Martyr being stoned.

C. Martyr whose face and jaws are bruised and broken
with a stone.
D. Martyr crushed under a huge stone

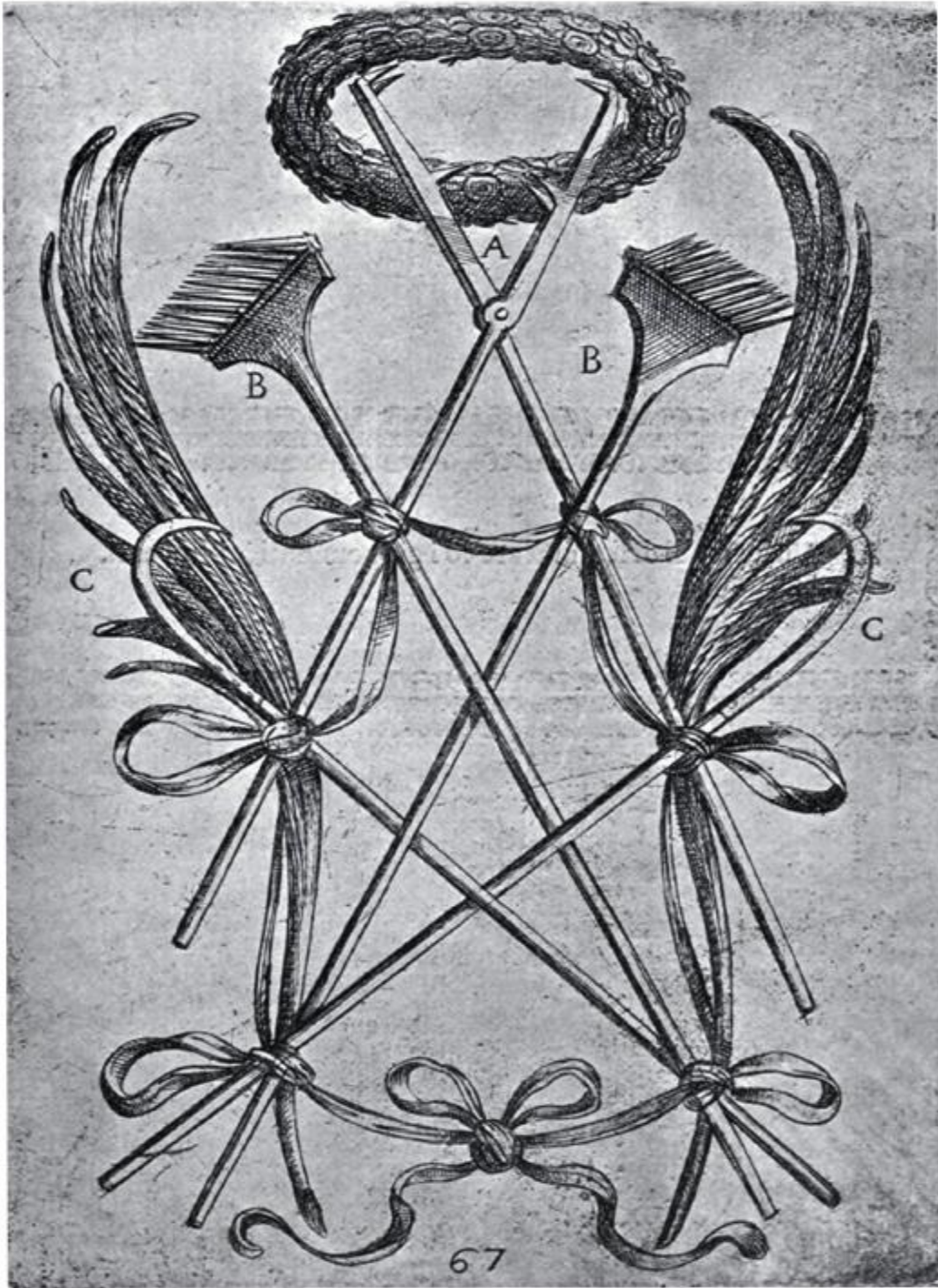


FIG. XVI.

A. Iron claws.

|

B. Currycombs, or heckles.

|

C. Hooks.



FIG. XVII.

A. Martyr tortured by means of the iron claws or pincers.
B. Torn with the hooks.

C. Mangled with the iron currycombs.

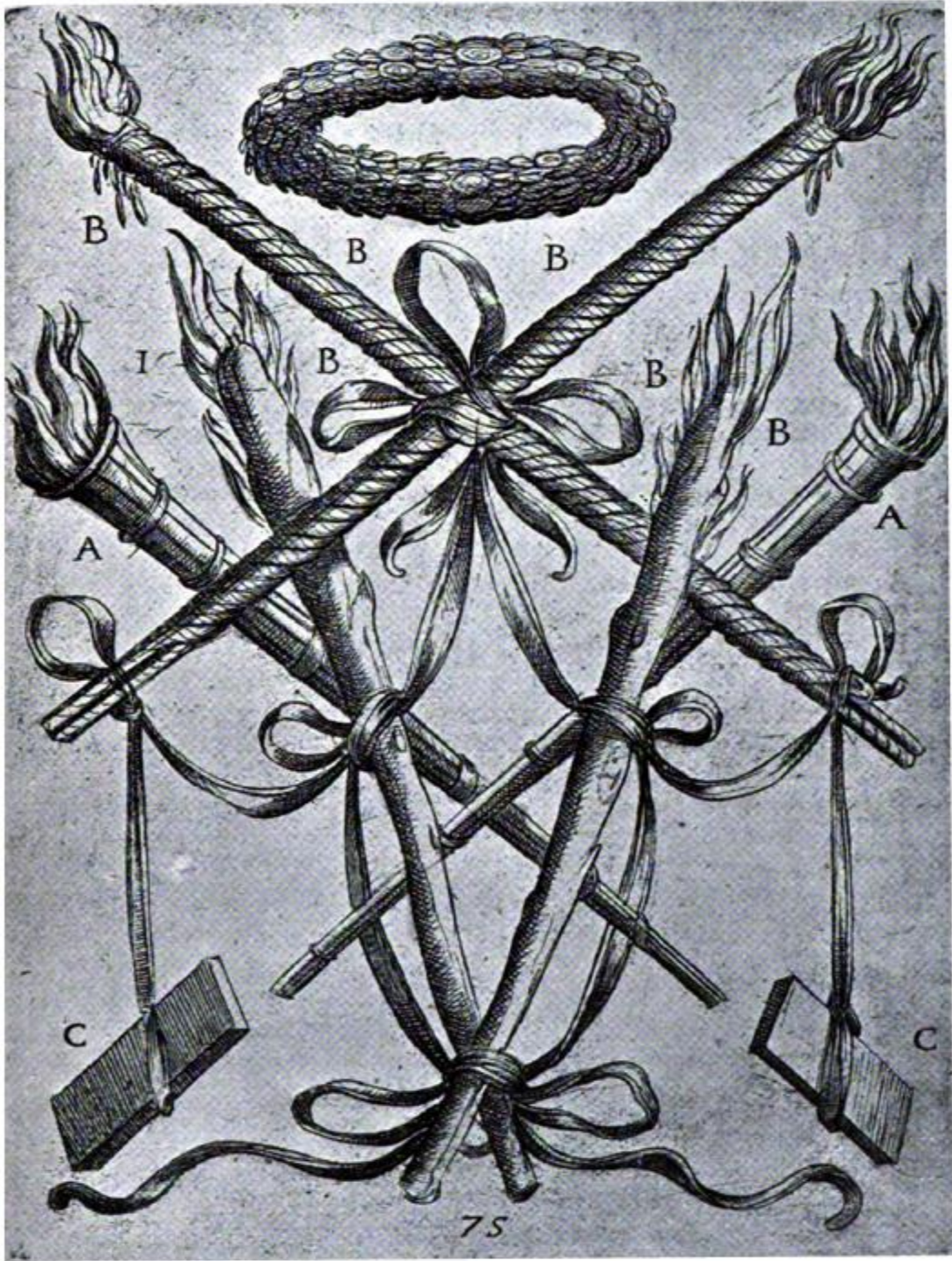


FIG. XVIII.

A. Blazing brands or flambeaux.
B. Pine-wood and other torches.

C. Red-hot plates of metal.

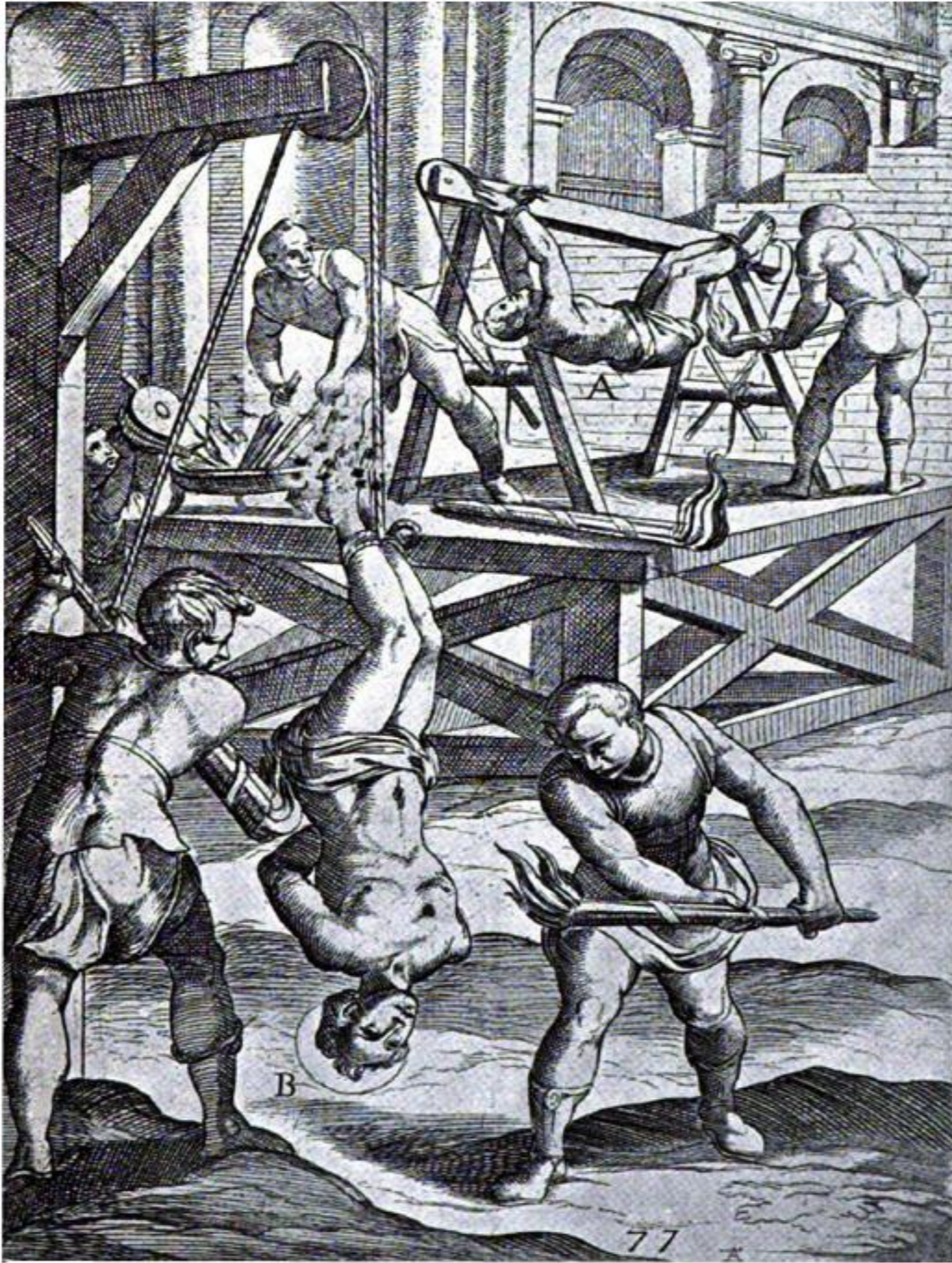


FIG. XIX

A. Martyr hung from the wooden horse and scorched with the flame of torches.

B. Martyr suspended by the feet from a pulley and tortured in a like fashion.

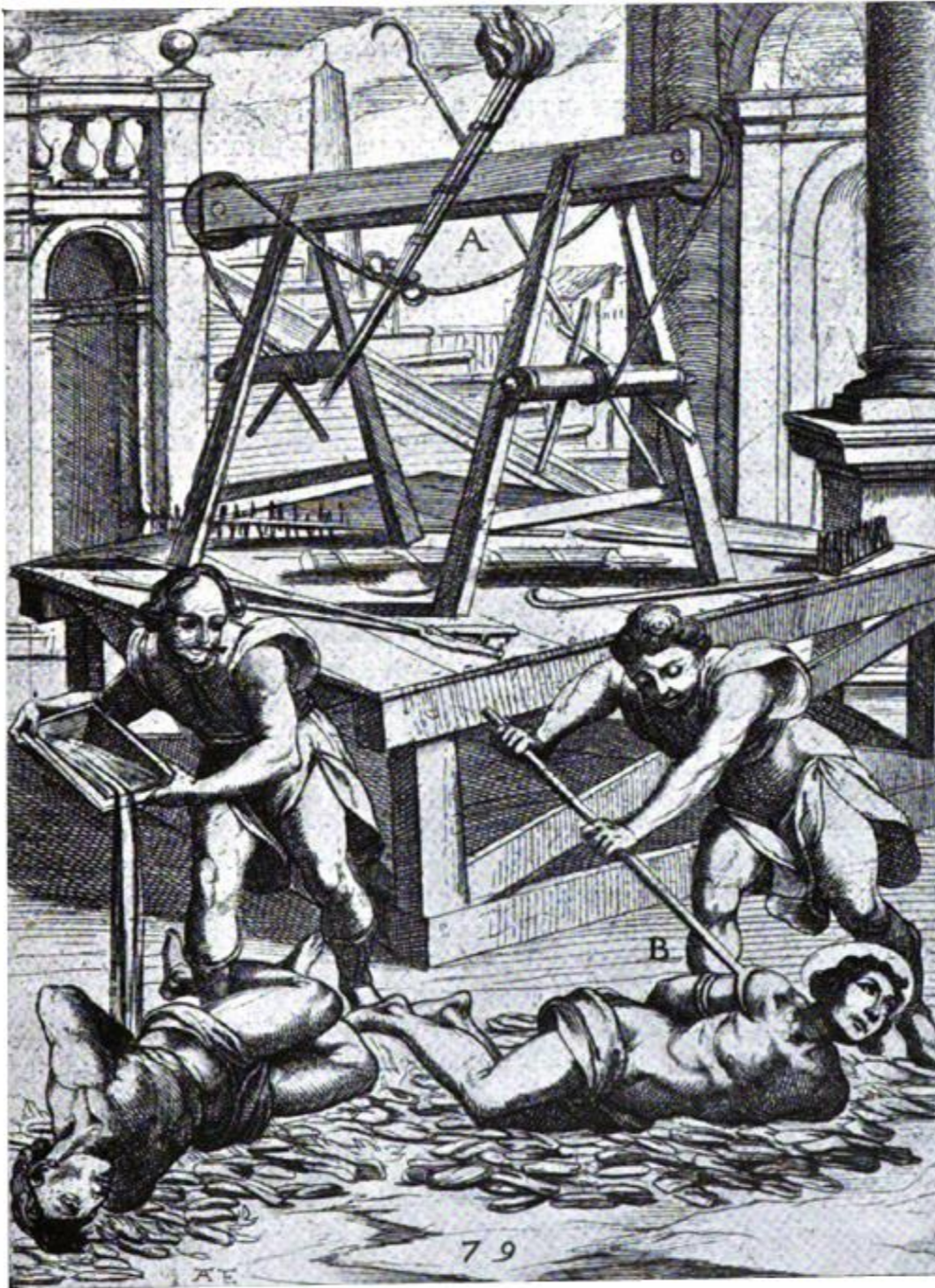


FIG. XX.

A. Wooden horse.

B. Martyr taken down from the horse and being rolled about over shards of pottery.

C. Having quicklime, boiling oil and the like, poured over him.



FIG. XXI.

A. Martyr roasting on the iron framework or gridiron.

B. Iron shovel for stirring the fire of coals.



FIG. XXII.

A. Martyr thrown head-first into a caldron full of molten lead or boiling oil.

B. Martyr in a hot frying-pan.

C. Martyr plunged into a boiling pot.

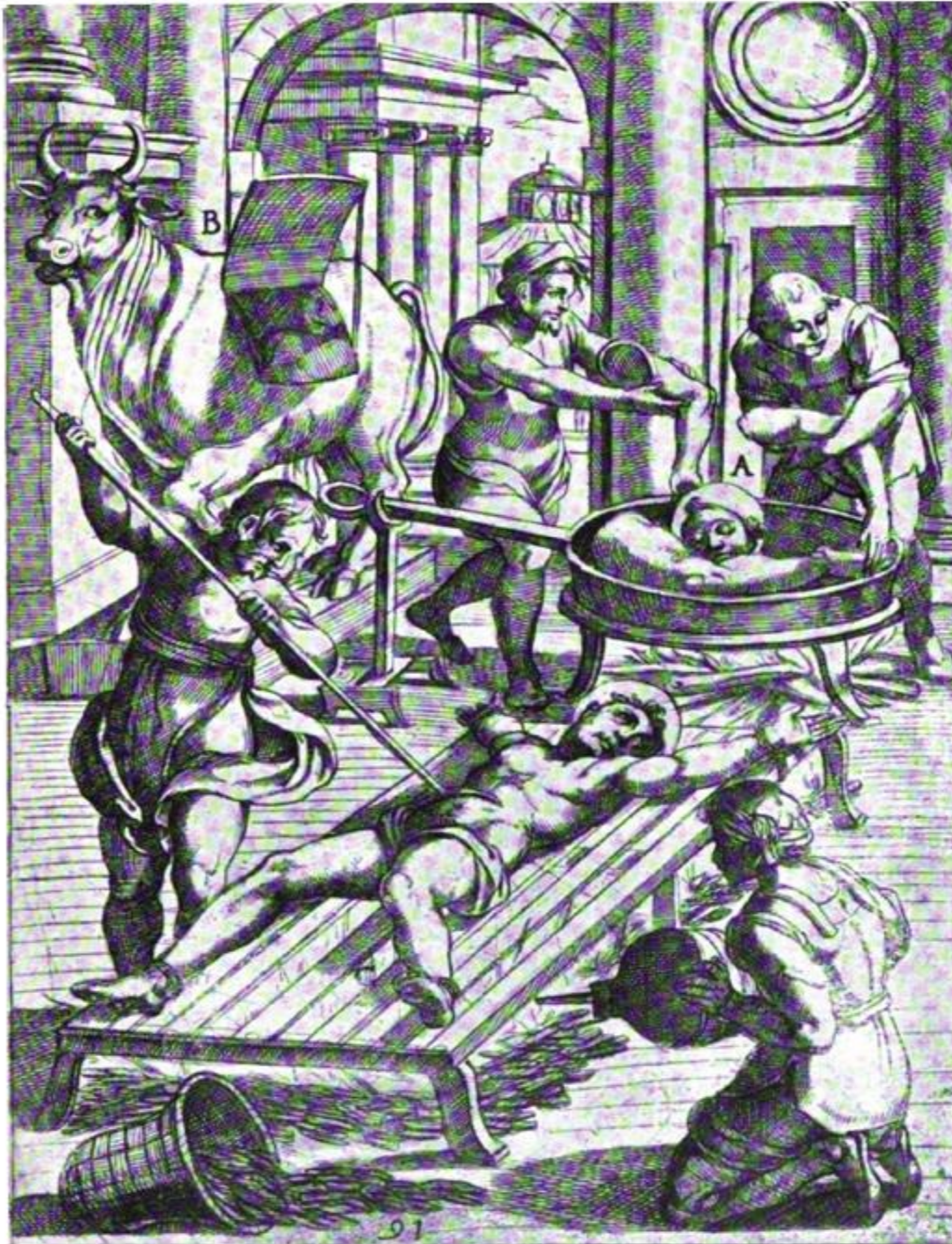


FIG. XXIII.

A. Martyr's dismembered limbs put in a frying-pan.
B. Martyr in the brazen bull,

C. Laid on the iron bed and broiled.



FIG. XXIV.

- A Martyr whose hand is filled with incense mingled with live coals, and who being constrained by the pain to scatter the incense, is said to have made sacrifice to the idol.
- B. Martyr clad in the iron tunic and shod with the red-hot shoes, which consume the flesh from off his bones.

- C. Martyr seated in the iron chair, while a red-hot helmet, or morion, is set on his head.
- D. Martyr whose eyes are burned out with a lighted brand.



FIG. XXV.

A. Martyr tortured by means of red-hot iron: under the armpit.
B. Roasted on live coals.

C. Martyr over whom boiling pitch is being poured, or the like substances.

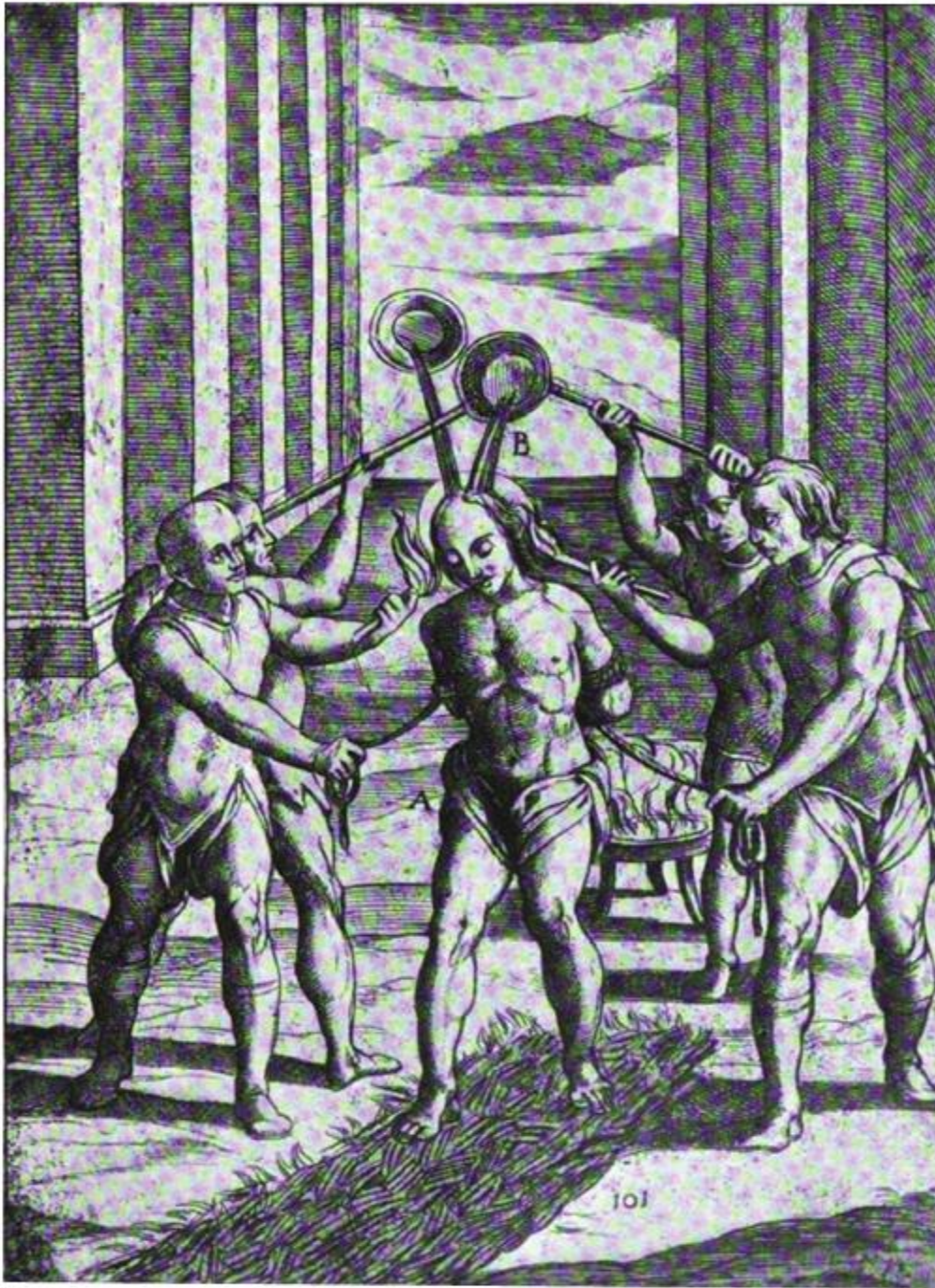


FIG. XXVI.

Martyr compelled to walk over burning coals, while molten lead, boiling pitch, or the like substances, are poured over his head.



FIG. XXVII.

Martyrs sent to sea in a ship filled with combustibles and set on fire.



FIG. XXVIII.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>A. Martyr cast into a burning fiery furnace.</p> <p>B. Martyrs set in a tun, or cask, and burned therein.</p> <p>C. Martyr burned in a room, or chamber, that hath been set on fire.</p> <p>D. Bound hand and foot and set on a blazing pile.</p> | <p>E. Bound to four pegs fixed in the ground, with a fire burning underneath.</p> <p>F. Bound with ropes drenched in oil and consumed by a fire lighted under him.</p> <p>G. Thrown into a pit full of live coals.</p> <p>H. Iron shovel for stirring and rousing the fire.</p> |
|--|---|



FIG. XXIX.

A. Martyr stabbed to death by boys with their writing styles.

B. Martyr whose limbs are amputated one by one.



FIG. XXX.

- A. Martyr stabbed in the throat with a dagger.
- B. Shot to death with arrows.
- C. Beaten over the head with an axe.

- D. Beheaded with a sword.
- E. Transfixed with a spear.



FIG. XXXI.

A. Martyr tortured with an auger.
B. Stabbed with a dagger.

C. Pierced with nails.



FIG. XXXII.

A. Martyr struck with a club or cudgel.
B. Sawed in two with an iron saw.

C. Hands and feet cut off.



FIG. XXXIII.

A. Martyr whose tongue is being cut out.
B. Whose teeth are being drawn.

C. Whose breasts are being amputated.

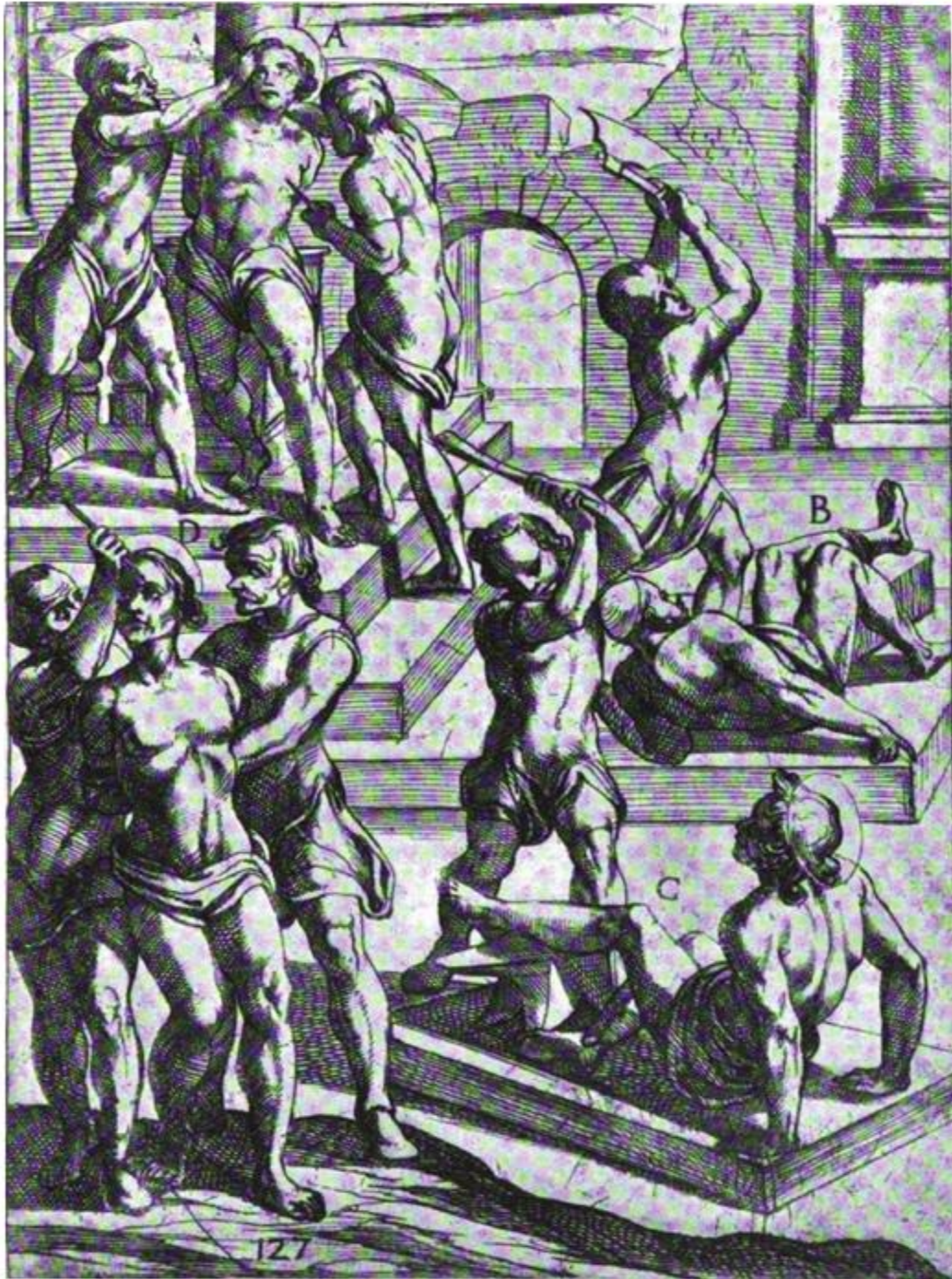


FIG. XXXIV.

A. Martyr, the skin of whose face is being flayed off.
B. Whose feet are being amputated.

C. Whose legs are being broken.
D. Whose forehead is being branded.



FIG. XXXV.

Martyrs being flayed alive.



FIG. XXXVI.

- A. Martyr pierced through with a sharp-pointed stake.
- B. Martyr whose belly has been cut open and the liver torn out, which the heathen used sometimes to eat.



FIG. XXXVII.

- A. Martyr bound by either leg to the tops of two neighbouring trees, which have been bent down and forcibly drawn together, and will presently be suddenly let go again.
- B. Martyr tortured by having sharp reeds stuck under his finger and toe nails.



FIG. XXXVIII.

A. Martyr imprisoned in a net, and so exposed to be tossed by a savage bull.
 B. Thrown down naked to be devoured by wild beasts.

C. Wrapped in a wild bear's hide, and so left to be torn by animals.
 D. His feet fixed in a great stone, and with red-hot bradawls stuck under his finger-nails, the martyr is given over to be worried by starving dogs.

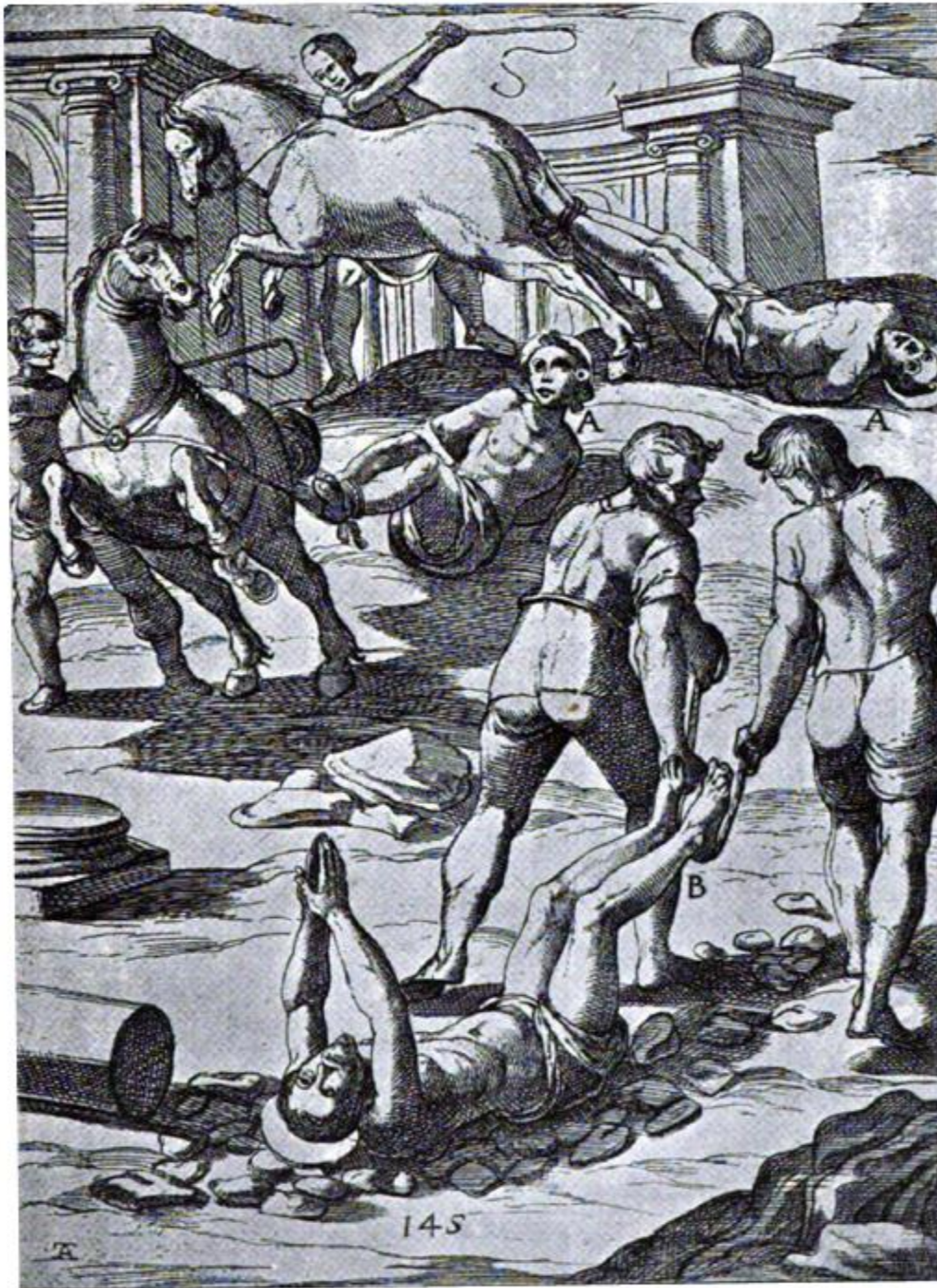


FIG. XXXIX.

A.A. Martyrs bound to the neck or tail of wild horses and cruelly dragged about.

B. Drawn through the streets or over stony places by means of ropes attached to their feet.



FIG. XL.

A.A. Martyrs cast into deep pits and buried up to the neck with earth and stones.

B. Martyrs half buried, with arms tied behind them, and so left to perish.

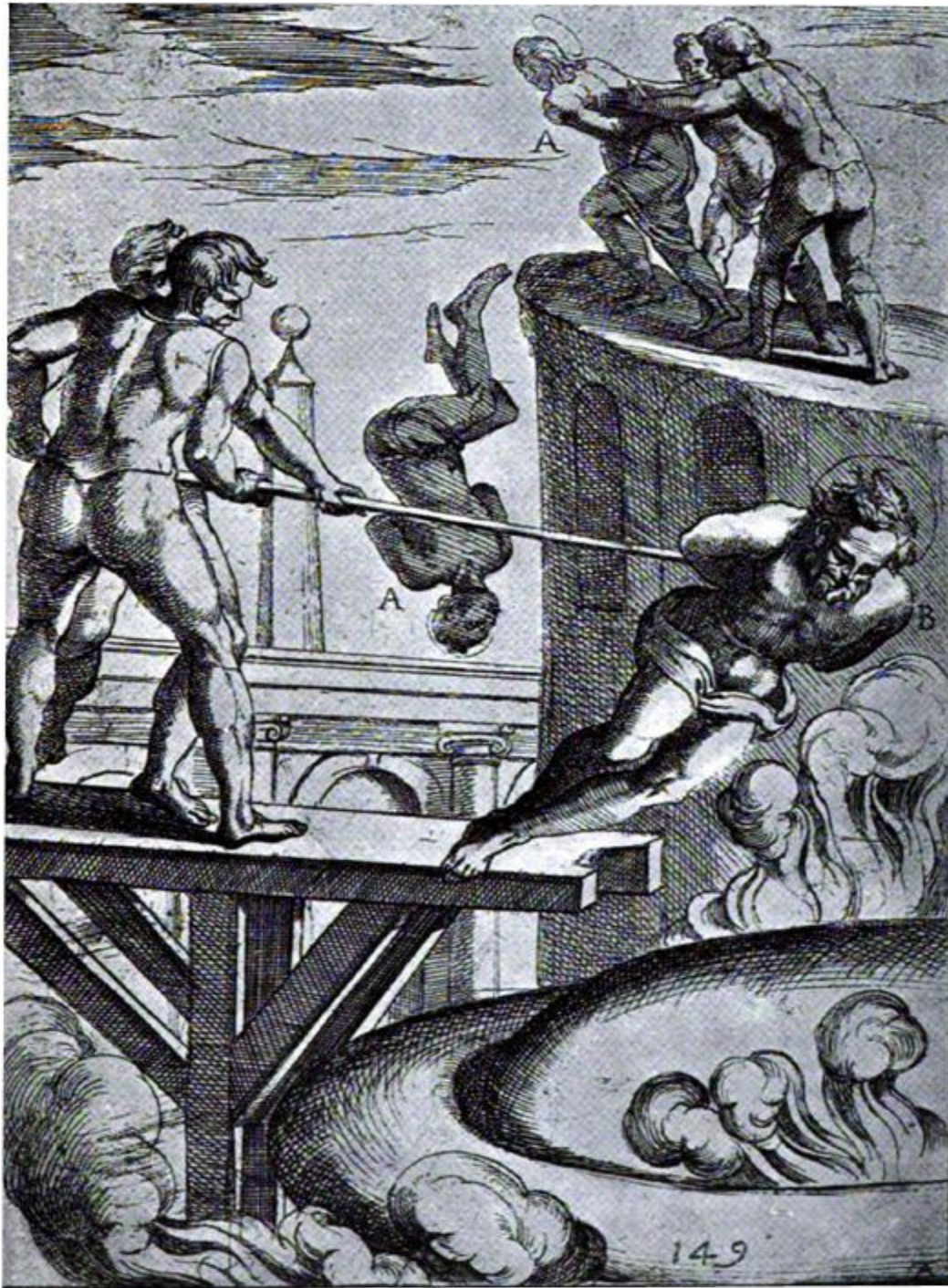


FIG. XLI.

A.A. Martyrs cast down headlong from a height.

B. Thrown into a lime-kiln.



FIG. XLII.

A. Martyr thrown into a watercourse, with a heavy stone attached to his feet.
 B. Thrown into a river enclosed in a net.

C. Thrown into a neighbouring stream, with a stone tied to his arm.
 D. With a leaden weight fastened round his neck.
 E. Cast head-first into a well.

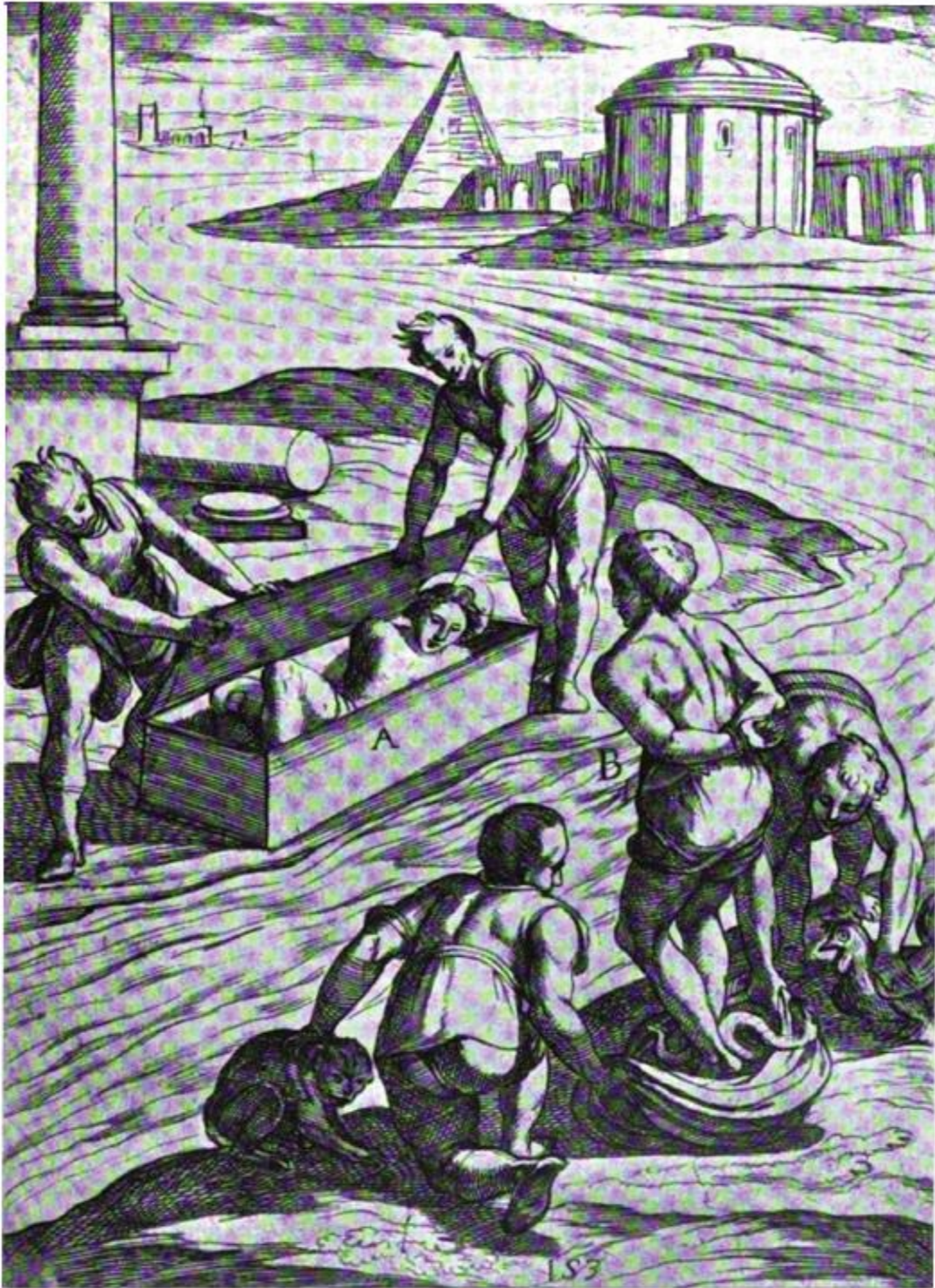


FIG. XLIII.

A. Martyr shut up in a leaden box and drowned in a river.

B. Sewn up in a bag, together with a cock, a viper, an ape, and a dog, and thrown into the nearest sea or stream.



FIG. XLIV.

A. Martyr haled through the thoroughfares of a city by means of an iron collar fixed round his neck.
B. Stripped naked and rolled over sharp iron caltrops.



FIG. XLV.

A. A. Martyrs condemned to work at the erection of public edifices.

B. C. Martyrs condemned to the labour of cutting and hewing marble blocks for building purposes.

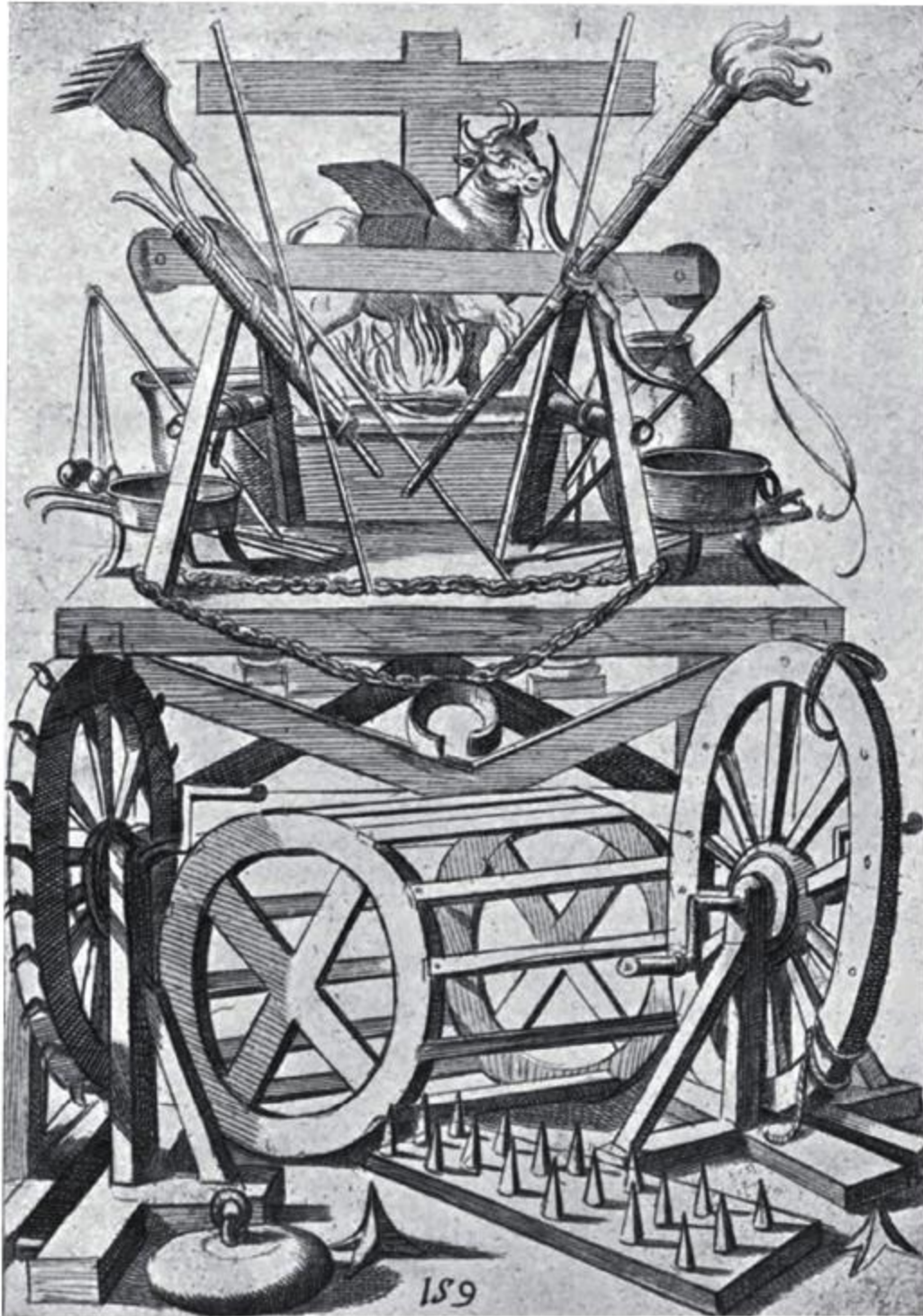


FIG. XLVI.

Trophy composed of well-nigh all the divers sorts of instruments used for torturing the Blessed Martyrs.

