VIRGIN SAINTS AND MARTYRS

S. Baring-Gould

Virgin Saints and Martyrs

Virgin Saints and Martyrs
I BLANDINA THE SLAVE
II S. CÆCILIA
III S. AGNES
IV FEBRONIA OF SIBAPTE
V THE DAUGHTER OF CONSTANTINE
VI. THE SISTER OF S. BASIL
VII GENEVIÈVE OF PARIS
VIII THE SISTER OF S. BENEDICT
IX S. BRIDGET
X THE DAUGHTERS OF BRIDGET
XI S. ITHA
XII S. HILDA
XIII S. ELFLEDA
XIV S. WERBURGA
XV A PROPHETESS
XVI S. CLARA
XVII S. THERESA
XVIII SISTER DORA.
FOOTNOTES
Copyright

Virgin Saints and Martyrs

S. Baring-Gould

I BLANDINA THE SLAVE

In the second century Lyons was the Rome of Gaul as it is now the second Paris of France. It was crowded with temples and public monuments. It was moreover the Athens of the West, a resort of scholars. Seated at the confluence of two great rivers, the Rhône and the Sâone, it was a centre of trade. It is a stately city now. It was more so in the second century when it did not bristle with the chimneys of factories pouring forth their volumes of black smoke, which the atmosphere, moist from the mountains, carries down so as to envelop everything in soot.

In the great palace, now represented by the hospital, the imbecile Claudius and the madman Caligula were born. To the east and south far away stand Mont Blanc and the snowy range on the Dauphiné Alps.

Lyons is a city that has at all times summed in it the finest as well as the worst characteristic of the Gallic people. The rabble of Lyons were ferocious in 177, and ferocious again in 1793; but at each epoch, during the Pagan terror and the Democratic terror, it produced heroes of faith and endurance.

The Emperor Marcus Aurelius was a philosopher full of good intentions, and a sentimental lover of virtue. But he fondly conceived that virtue could only be found in philosophy, and that Christianity, which was a doctrine and not a speculation, must be wrong; and as its chief adherents belonged to the slave and needy classes, that therefore it was beneath his dignity to inquire into it. He was a stickler for the keeping up of old Roman institutions, and the maintenance of such rites as were sanctioned by

antiquity; and because the Christians refused to give homage to the gods and to swear by the genius of the emperor, he ordered that they should be persecuted to the death.

He had been a pretty, curly-haired boy, and a good-looking young man. He had kept himself respectable, and looked on himself with smug self-satisfaction accordingly. Had he stooped to inquire what were the tenets, and what the lives, of those whom he condemned to death, he would have shrunk with horror from the guilt of proclaiming a general persecution.

In Lyons, as elsewhere, when his edict arrived the magistrates were bound to seek out and sentence such as believed in Christ.

A touching letter exists, addressed by the Church of Lyons to those of Asia and Phrygia giving an account of what it suffered; and as the historian Eusebius embodied it in his history, it happily has been preserved from the fingering, and rewriting, and heightening with impossible marvels which fell to the lot of so many of the Acts of the Martyrs, when the public taste no longer relished the simple food of the unadorned narratives that were extant.

“The grace of God,” said the writers, “contended for us, rescuing the weak, and strengthening the strong. These latter endured every species of reproach and torture. First they sustained bravely all the insults heaped on them by the rabble—blows and abuse, plundering of their goods, stoning and imprisonment. Afterwards they were led into the forum and were questioned by the tribune and by the town authorities before all the people, and then sent to prison to await the coming of the governor. Vetius Epagathus, one of the brethren, abounding in love to God and man, offered to speak in their defence; whereupon those round the tribunal shouted out at him, as he was a man of good position. The governor did not pay attention to his request, but merely asked whether he, too, were a

Christian. When he confessed that he was, he also was transferred to the number of the martyrs."

What the numbers were we are not told. The most prominent among them were Pothinus, the bishop, a man in his ninetieth year, Sanctus, the deacon of the Church of Vienne, Maturus, a recent convert, Attalus, a native of Pergamus, Blandina, a slave girl, and her mistress, another woman named Biblis, and Vetius, above referred to.

Among those arrested were ten who when tortured gave way: one of these was Biblis; but, although they yielded, yet they would not leave the place of trial, and remained to witness the sufferings of such as stood firm; and some—among these was Biblis—plucking up courage, presented themselves before the judge and made amends for their apostasy by shedding their blood for Christ.

The slaves belonging to the Christians of rank had been seized and were interrogated; and they, in their terror lest they should be put to torture, confessed anything the governor desired—that the Christians ate little children and "committed such crimes as are neither lawful for us to speak of nor think about; and which we really believe no men ever did commit."

The defection of the ten caused dismay among the faithful, for they feared lest it should be the prelude to the surrender of others.

The governor, the proconsul, arrived at the time of the annual fair, when Lyons was crowded; and he deemed this a good opportunity for striking terror into the hearts of the Christians.

Those who stood firm were brought out of prison, and, as they would not do sacrifice to the gods, were subjected to torture.

Blandina was a peculiarly delicately framed young woman, and not strong. Her mistress, who was one of the martyrs, was apprehensive for her; but Blandina in the end witnessed the most splendid confession of all. She was

frightfully tortured with iron hooks and hot plates applied to her flesh from morning till night, till the executioners hardly knew what more to do; “her entire body being torn and pierced.”

Brass plates, red hot, were also applied to the most tender parts of the body of the deacon, Sanctus, but he continued unsubdued, firm in his confession. At last he was thrown down on the sand, a mass of wounds, so mangled and burnt that he seemed hardly to retain the human shape. He and Blandina were conveyed back to prison.

Next day “the tormentors tortured Sanctus again, supposing that whilst his wounds were swollen and inflamed, if they continued to rend them when so sensitive as not to bear the touch of the hand, they must break his spirit”—but it was again in vain.

Then it was that Biblis, the woman who had done sacrifice, came forward “like one waking out of a deep sleep,” and upbraided the torturers; whereupon she was dragged before the chief magistrate, confessed Christ, and was numbered among the martyrs.

The proconsul ordered all to be taken back to prison, and they were thrust into a black and noisome hole, and fastened in the stocks, their feet distended to the fifth hole —that is to say, stretched apart as far as was possible without dislocation—and so, covered with sores, wounds and blisters, unable to sleep in this attitude, they were left for the night. The suffocation of the crowded den was too much for some, and in the morning certain of those who had been crowded into it were drawn forth dead.

Next day the aged bishop Pothinus was led before the magistrate. He was questioned, and asked who was the God of the Christians.

“If thou art worthy,” answered he, “thou shalt know.”

He was then stripped and scourged, and beaten about the head. The crowd outside the barriers now took up whatever was at hand, stones, brickbats, dirt, and flung them at him,

howling curses and blasphemies. The old man fell gasping, and in a state hardly conscious was dragged to the prison.
And now, on the great day of the fair, when the shows were to be given to the people, the proconsul for their delectation threw open the amphitheatre. This was a vast oval, capable of holding forty thousand spectators. It was packed. On one side, above the arena, was the seat of the chief magistrate, and near him those reserved for the city magnates. At the one end, a series of arches, now closed with gates of stout bars and cross-bars, hinged above and raised on these hinges by a chain, opened from the dens in which the wild beasts were kept. The beasts had not been fed for three days, that they might be ravenous.
It was the beginning of June—doubtless a bright summer day, and an awning kept off the sun from the proconsul. Those on one side of the amphitheatre, the slaves on the highest row, could see, vaporous and blue on the horizon, above the crowded tiers opposite, the chain of the Alps, their crests white with eternal snows.
“No sooner was the chief magistrate seated, to the blare of trumpets, than the martyrs were introduced. Sanctus had to be supported; he could hardly walk, he was such a mass of wounds. All were now stripped of their garments and were scourged. Blandina was attached to a post in the centre of the arena. She had been forced every day to attend and witness the sufferings of the rest.”
But even now they were not to be despatched at once. Maturus and Sanctus were placed on iron chairs, and fires were lighted under them so that the fumes of their roasted flesh rose up and were dissipated by the light summer air over the arena, and the sickening savour was inhaled by the thousands of cruel and savage spectators.
Then they were cast off to be despatched with the sword. The dens were opened. Lions, tigers, leopards bounded forth on the sand roaring. By a strange accident Blandina escaped. The hungry beasts paced round the arena, but

would not touch her.
Then a Greek physician, called Alexander, who was looking on, unable to restrain his enthusiasm, by signs gave encouragement to the martyrs. So at least it would seem, for all at once we learn that the mob roared for Alexander, as one who urged on the Christians to obstinacy. The governor sent for him, asked who he was, and when he confessed that he was a Christian, sent him to prison.
Attalus was now led forth, with a tablet on his breast on which was written in Latin, “This is Attalus, the Christian.” As he was about to be delivered to the tormentors, some one whispered to the proconsul that the man was a Roman. He hesitated, and sent him back to prison.
Then a number of other Christians who had Roman citizenship were produced, and had their heads struck off. Others who had not this privilege were delivered over to the beasts. And now some of those who had recanted came forward and offered themselves to death.
Next day the proconsul was again in his place in the amphitheatre. He had satisfied himself that Attalus could not substantiate his claim to citizenship, so he ordered him to torture and death. He also was placed in the iron chair; after which he and Alexander were given up to be devoured by the beasts.
This was the last day of the shows, and to crown all, Blandina was now produced, together with a boy of fifteen, called Ponticus. He, like Blandina, had been compelled daily to witness the torments to which the rest had been subjected.
And now the same hideous round of tortures began, and Blandina in the midst of her agony continued to encourage the brave boy till he died. Blandina had been roasted in the iron chair and scourged.
As a variety she was placed in a net. Then the gate of one of the larger dens was raised, and forth rushed a bull, pawed the sand, tossed his head, looked round, and seeing

the net, plunged forward with bowed head. Next moment Blandina was thrown into the air, fell, was thrown again, then gored—but was happily now unconscious. Thus she died, and “even the Gentiles confessed that no woman among them had ever endured sufferings as many and great.” But not even then was their madness and cruelty to the saints satisfied, for “… those who were suffocating in prison were drawn forth and cast to the dogs; and they watched night and day over the remains left by beasts and fire, however mangled they might be, to prevent us from burying them. The bodies, after exposure and abuse in every possible way during six days, were finally cast into the Rhône. These things they did as if they were able to resist God and prevent their resurrection.”

The dungeons in which S. Pothinus, S. Blandina, and the rest of the martyrs were kept through so many days, are shown beneath the abbey church of Ainay at Lyons. It is possible enough that Christian tradition may have preserved the remembrance of the site. They are gloomy cells, without light or air, below the level of the river. The apertures by which they are entered are so low that the visitor is obliged to creep into them on his hands and knees. Traces of Roman work remain. Adjoining is a crypt that was used as a chapel till the Revolution, when it was desecrated. It is, however, again restored, the floor has been inlaid with mosaics, and the walls are covered with modern frescoes, representing the passion of the martyrs. What makes it difficult to believe that these are the dungeons is that the abbey above them is constructed on the site of the Athenæum founded by Caligula, a great school of debate and composition, and it is most improbable that the town prisons should have been under the university buildings. In all likelihood in the early Middle Ages these vaults were found and supposed to have been the prisons of the martyrs, and supposition very rapidly became assurance that they were so. The prison in which

the martyrs were enclosed was the *lignum* or *robur* , which was certainly not below the level of the river.

The question arises, when one reads stories of such inhuman cruelties done, did the victims suffer as acutely as we suppose? I venture to think not *at the time* . There can be no question, as it is a thing repeatedly attested, that in a moment of great excitement the nerves are not very sensitive. The pain of wounds received in battle is not felt till after the battle is over. Moreover, it may be questioned whether the human system can endure pain above a certain grade—whether, in fact, beyond a limit, insensibility does not set in.

I attended once a poor lady who was frightfully burnt. A paraffin lamp set fire to a gauze or lace wrap she had about her neck. All her throat and the lower portion of her face were frightfully burnt. I was repeatedly with her, but she was unconscious or as in a sleep; there was no expression of anguish in her face. She quietly sank through exhaustion. I have questioned those who have met with shocking accidents, and have always been assured that the pain began when nature commenced its labour of repair. Pain, excruciating pain, can be endured, and for a long period; but I think that when carried beyond a fixed limit it ceases to be appreciable, as insensibility sets in.

This is a matter for investigation, and it were well if those who read these lines were to endeavour to collect evidence to substantiate or overthrow what is, with me, only an opinion.

S. CÆCILIA.

II S. CÆCILIA

In 1876, when I was writing the November volume of my “Lives of the Saints,” and had to deal with the Acts of S. Cæcilia, I saw at once that they were eminently untrustworthy—they were, in fact, a religious romance, very similar to others of the like nature; and my mistrust was deepened when I found that the name of Cæcilia did not appear in either the Roman Kalendar of the fourth century, nor in the Carthagenian of the fifth.

The Acts were in Greek, and it was not till the time of Pope Gelasius (496) that her name appeared at all prominently; then he introduced it into his Sacramentary.

The Acts as we have them cannot be older than the fifth century, and contain gross anachronisms. They make her suffer when Urban was Pope, under an apocryphal prefect, Turcius Almachius; but the date of Pope Urban was in the reign of Alexander Severus, who did not persecute the Church at all—who, in fact, favoured the Christians.

But although there is so much to make one suspicious as to the very existence of S. Cæcilia, a good many facts have been brought to light which are sufficient to show that it was the stupidity of the composer of the apocryphal Acts which has thrown such doubt over the Virgin Martyr.

If we eliminate what is obviously due to the romantic imagination of the author of the Acts in the fifth century, the story reduces itself to this.

Cæcilia was a maiden of noble family, and her parents were of senatorial rank. From her earliest youth she was brought

up as a Christian, but that her father was one is doubtful, as he destined his daughter to become the wife of an honourable young patrician named Valerian, who was, however, a pagan.

Cæcilia would not hear of the marriage on this account; and Valerian, who loved her dearly, by her advice went to Urban the Pope, who was living in concealment in the Catacomb in the Appian Way, to learn something about the Faith. Valerian took with him his brother, Tiburtius; they were both convinced, were baptised, and, as they confessed Christ, suffered martyrdom; and the officer who arrested them, named Maximus, also believed and underwent the same fate. All three were laid in the Catacomb of Prætextatus.

Cæcilia, in the meantime, had remained unmolested in her father's house in Rome.

The Prefect resolved to have her put to death privately, as she belonged to an illustrious family, perhaps also in consideration for her father, still a heathen.

He gave orders that the underground passages for heating the winter apartments should be piled with wood, and an intense fire made, and that the room in which Cæcilia was should be closed, so that she should die of suffocation. This was done, but she survived the attempt. This is by no means unlikely. The walls were heated by pipes through which the hot air passed, and there was a thick pavement of concrete and mosaic between the fires and the room. Everything depended on the chamber being shut up, and there being no air admitted; but it is precisely this latter requisite that could not be assured. In her own house, where the slaves were warmly attached to her, nothing would be easier than to withdraw the cover of the opening in the ceiling, by means of which ventilation was secured. By some means or other air was admitted, and although, doubtless, Cæcilia suffered discomfort from the great heat, yet she was not suffocated.

The chamber was the *Calidarium* , or hot-air bath attached to the palace, and in the church of S. Cæcilia in Trastevere a portion of this is still visible.

As the attempt had failed, the Prefect sent an executioner to kill her with the sword.

Her beauty, youth, and grace, so affected the man that, although he smote thrice at her throat, he did not kill her. It was against the law to strike more than thrice, so he left her prostrate on the mosaic floor bathed in her blood.

No sooner was the executioner gone than from all sides poured in her relatives, the slaves, and the faithful to see her, and to receive the last sigh of the Martyr. They found her lying on the marble pavement, half conscious only, and they dipped their kerchiefs in her blood, and endeavoured to staunch the wounds in her throat.

She lingered two days and nights in the same condition, and without moving, hanging between life and death; and then—so say the Acts—Pope Urban arrived, braving the risk, from his hiding-place, to say farewell to his dear daughter in the Faith. Thereupon she turned to him, commended to him the care of the poor, entreated her father to surrender his house to the Church, and expired.

In the Acts she addresses the Pope as “Your Beatitude,” an expression used in the fifth century, and certainly not in the third.

She died, as she had lain, her face to the ground, her hands and arms declining on the right, as she rested on that side.

The same night her body was enclosed in a cypress chest, and was conveyed to the cemetery of S. Callixtus, where Urban laid it in a chamber “near that in which reposed his brother prelates and martyrs.”

So far the legend. Now let us see whether it is possible to reconcile it with history.

In the first place, it is to be observed that the whole of the difficulty lies with Urban being Pope. If we suppose that in the original Acts the name was simply “Urban the Bishop,”

and that the remodeller of the Acts took the liberty of transforming him into Pope Urban, the difficulty vanishes at once. He may have been some regionary bishop in hiding. He may not have been a bishop at all, but a priest; and the writer, ignorant of history, and knowing only of the Urbans as Popes, may have given rise to all this difficulty by transforming him into a Pope.

Now, in the Acts, the Prefect does not speak of the Emperor, but of “Domini nostri invictissimi principes” (our Lords the unconquered Princes). The Emperor, therefore, cannot have been Alexander. Now, Ado the martyrologist, in or about 850, must have referred to other Acts than those we possess, for he enters S. Cæcilia as having suffered under Marcus Aurelius and Commodus—that is to say, in 177. This explains the Prefect referring to the orders of the Princes.

If we take this as the date, and Urban as being a priest or bishop of the time, the anachronisms are at an end.

That the Acts should have been in Greek is no proof that they were not drawn up in Rome, for Greek was the language of the Church there, and indeed the majority of the most ancient inscriptions in the Catacombs are in that language.

So much for the main difficulties. Now let us see what positive evidences we have to substantiate the story.

The excavation of the Cemetery of S. Callixtus, which was begun in 1854, and was carried on with great care by De Rossi, led to the clearing out of a crypt in which the early Bishops of Rome had been laid. The bodies had been removed when Paschal I. conveyed so many of those of the saints and martyrs into Rome, on account of the ruin into which the Catacombs had fallen, but their epitaphs remained, all of the third century, and in Greek; among these, that of Urbanus, 230; and it was perhaps precisely this fact which led the recomposer of the Acts to confound the Urban of S. Cæcilia’s time with the Pope. The first Pope

known to have been laid there was Zephyrinus, in 218. Here also was found an inscription set up by Damasus I., recording how that the bodies of bishops and priests, virgins and confessors lay in that place.

Now by a narrow, irregular opening in the rock, entrance is obtained to a further chamber, about twenty feet square, lighted by a *luminare* in the top, or an opening to the upper air cut in the tufa. This, there can be no manner of doubt, is the crypt in which reposed the body of S. Cæcilia.

In the Acts it was said to adjoin that in which were laid the Bishops of Rome; though, as these bishops were of later date than Cæcilia, if we take her death to have been in 177, their crypt must have been dug out or employed for the purpose of receiving their bodies at a later period.

Again, it is an interesting fact, that here a number of the tombstones that have been discovered bear the Cæcilian name, showing that this cemetery must have belonged to that *gens* or clan. Not only so, but one is inscribed with that of Septimus Prætextatus Cæcilianus, a servant of God during thirty years. It will be remembered that Prætextatus was the name of the brother of Valerian, who was betrothed to Cæcilia, and it leads one to suspect that the families of Valerian and of Cæcilia were akin.

The chapel or crypt contains frescoes. In the *luminare* is painted a female figure with the hands raised in prayer. Beneath this a cross with a lamb on each side. Below are three male figures with the names Sebastianus, Curinus (Quirinus), and Polycamus. Sebastian is doubtless the martyr of that name whose basilica is not far off. Quirinus, who has the *corona* of a priest, is the bishop and martyr of Siscia, whose body was brought in 420 to Rome. Of Polycamus nothing is known, save that his relics were translated in the ninth century to S. Prassede.

Against the wall lower down is a seventh-century representation of S. Cæcilia, richly clothed with necklace and bracelets; below a head of Christ of Byzantine type,

and a representation of S. Urban. But these paintings, which are late, have been applied over earlier decoration; behind the figure of S. Cæcilia is mosaic, and that of Christ is painted on the old porphyry panelling. There are in this crypt recesses for the reception of bodies, and near the entrance an arched place low enough to receive a sarcophagus; and there are traces as though the face had at one time been walled up.

The walls are covered with *graffiti* , or scribbles made by pilgrims. An inscription also remains, to state that this was the sepulchre of S. Cæcilia the Martyr, but this inscription is not earlier than the ninth or tenth century.

In 817 Paschal I. was Pope, and in the following year he removed enormous numbers of the remains of martyrs from the Catacombs into the churches of Rome, because the condition into which these subterranean cemeteries were falling was one of ruin. They had been exposed to the depredations of the Lombards, and then to decay. Some had fallen in, and were choked.

Precisely this Catacomb had been plundered by the Lombard king, Astulf, and it was not known whether he had carried off the body of S. Cæcilia or not. All those of the former popes Paschal removed.

In 844, however, Paschal pretended that he had seen S. Cæcilia in a dream, who had informed him that she still lay in her crypt in the Catacomb of S. Callixtus. No reliance can be placed on the word of a man so unprincipled as Paschal. At this very time two men of the highest rank, who were supporters of Louis the Pious, the Emperor, had been seized, dragged to the Lateran Palace, their eyes plucked out, and then beheaded. The Pope was openly accused of this barbarous act. The Emperor sent envoys to examine into it, but Paschal threw all sorts of difficulties in their way. He refused to produce the murderers; he asserted that they were guilty of no crime in killing these unfortunate men, and he secured the assassins by investing them with a

half-sacred character as servants of the Church of S. Peter. Himself he exculpated from all participation in the deed by a solemn, expurgatorial oath. Such was the man who pretended to visions of the saints. His dream was an afterthought. In the clearing out of the crypt of S. Cæcilia, the wall that had closed the grave was broken through, and the cypress chest was disclosed. Whereupon Paschal promptly declared he had dreamt that so it would be found. The body was found in the coffin, incorrupt, and at its feet were napkins rolled together and stained with blood.

This discovery, which seems wholly improbable, is yet not impossible. If the *arcosolium* had been hermetically sealed up, the body need not have fallen to dust; and, as a fact, De Rossi did discover, along with Marchi, in 1853, a body in the Via Appia, without the smallest trace of alteration and decay in the bones. [1]

Paschal himself relates that he lined the chest with fringed silk, and covered the body with a silk veil. It was then enclosed in a sarcophagus of white marble, and laid under the high altar of the Church of S. Cæcilia in Trastevere. This church has been made out of the old house of S. Cæcilia, and to this day, notwithstanding rebuildings, it bears traces of its origin.

Nearly eight hundred years after this translation, Sfondrati, cardinal of S. Cæcilia, being about to carry on material alterations in the basilica, came on the sarcophagus lying in a vault under the altar. It was not alone—another was with it.

In the presence of witnesses one of these was opened. It contained a coffin or chest of cypress wood. The Cardinal himself removed the cover. First was seen the costly lining and the silken veil, with which nearly eight centuries before Paschal had covered the body. It was faded, but not decayed, and through the almost transparent texture could be seen the glimmer of the gold of the garments in which the martyr was clad. After a pause of a few minutes, the

Cardinal lifted the veil, and revealed the form of the maiden martyr lying in the same position in which she had died on the floor of her father's hall. Neither Urban nor Paschal had ventured to alter that. She lay there, clothed in a garment woven with gold thread, on which were the stains of blood; and at her feet were the rolls of linen mentioned by Paschal, as found with the body. She was lying on her right side, the arms sunk from the body, her face turned to the ground; the knees slightly bent and drawn together. The attitude was that of one in a deep sleep. On the throat were the marks of the wounds dealt by the clumsy executioner.

Thus she had lain, preserved from decay through thirteen centuries.

When this discovery was made, Pope Clement VIII. was lying ill at Frascati, but he empowered Cardinal Baronius and Bosio, the explorer of the Catacombs, to examine into the matter; and both of these have left an account of the condition in which the body was found. For five weeks all Rome streamed to the church to see the body; and it was not until S. Cæcilia's Day that it was again sealed up in its coffin and marble sarcophagus.

Cardinal Sfondrati gave a commission to the sculptor Maderna to reproduce the figure of the Virgin Martyr in marble in the attitude in which found, and beneath this is the inscription:—"So I show to you in marble the representation of the most holy Virgin Cæcilia, in the same position in which I myself saw her incorrupt lying in her sepulchre."

A woodcut was published at the time of the discovery figuring it, but this is now extremely scarce.

In the second sarcophagus were found the bones of three men; two, of the same age and size, had evidently died by decapitation. The third had its skull broken, and the abundant hair was clotted with blood, as though the martyr had been beaten to death and his skull fractured with the

plumbatæ or leaded scourges.

The Acts of S. Cæcilia expressly say that this was the manner of death of Maximus. The other two bodies were doubtless those of Valerian and Tiburtius.

Of the statue by Maderna, Sir Charles Bell says: “The body lies on its side, the limbs a little drawn up; the hands are delicate and fine—they are not locked, but crossed at the wrists; the arms are stretched out. The drapery is beautifully modelled, and modestly covers the limbs.... It is the statue of a lady, perfect in form, and affecting from the resemblance to reality in the drapery of the white marble, and the unspotted appearance of the statue altogether. It lies as no living body could lie, and yet correctly, as the dead when left to expire—I mean in the gravitation of the limbs.”

S. Cæcilia is associated with music: she is regarded as the patroness of the organ. This is entirely due to the highly imaginative Acts of the Fifth and Sixth Century.

“Orpheus could lead the savage race;
And trees uprooted left their place,
Sequacious of the lyre:
But bright Cæcilia rais’d the wonder higher:
When to her organ vocal breath was given,
An angel heard, and straight appear’d,
Mistaking earth for heaven.”

So sang Dryden. Chaucer has given the Legend of S. Cæcilia as the Second Nun’s Tale in the Canterbury Pilgrimage.

There is a marvellous collection of ancient statues in Rome, in the Torlonia Gallery. It was made by the late Prince Torlonia. Unhappily, he kept three sculptors in constant employ over these ancient statues, touching them up, adding, mending, altering. It is a vast collection, and now the Torlonia family desire to sell it; but no one will buy, for no one can trust any single statue therein; no one knows what is ancient and what is new. The finest old works are of