

THE STORY OF PERPETUA

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AND as Paul was being led away to be beheaded at a place about three miles from the city, he was in irons. And there were three soldiers guarding him who were of a great family. And when they had gone out of the gate about the length of a bow-shot, there met them a God-fearing woman; and she, seeing Paul dragged along in irons, had compassion on him, and wept bitterly. And the name of the woman was called Perpetua; and she was one-eyed. And Paul, seeing her weeping, says to her: Give me thy handkerchief, and when I turn back I shall give it to thee. And she, having taken the handkerchief, gave it to him willingly. And the

soldiers laughed, and said to the woman: Why dost thou wish, woman, to lose thy handkerchief? Knowest thou not that he is going away to be beheaded? And Perpetua said to them: I adjure you by the health of Caesar to bind his eyes with this handkerchief when you cut off his head. Which also was done. And they beheaded him at the place called Aquae Salviae, near the pine tree. And as God had willed, before the soldiers came back, the handkerchief, having on it drops of blood, was restored to the woman. And as she was carrying it, straightway and immediately her eye was opened.

CONTINUATION OF THE STORY OF PERPETUA.

And the three soldiers who had cut off the head of Saint Paul, when after three hours they came on the same day with the BULLA bringing it to Nero, having met Perpetua, they said to her: What is it, woman? Behold, by thy confidence thou hast lost thy handkerchief. But she said to them: I have both got my handkerchief, and my eye has recovered its sight. And as the Lord, the God of Paul, liveth, I also have entreated him that I may be deemed worthy to become the slave of his Lord. Then the soldiers who had the BULLA, recognising the handkerchief, and seeing that her eye had been opened, cried out with a loud voice, as if from one mouth, and said: We too are the slaves of Paul's master. Perpetua therefore having gone away, reported in the palace of the Emperor Nero that the soldiers who had beheaded Paul said: We shall no longer go into the city, for we believe in Christ whom Paul preached, and we are Christians. Then Nero, filled with rage, ordered Perpetua, who had informed him of the soldiers, to be kept fast in irons; and as to the soldiers, he ordered one to be beheaded outside of the gate about one mile from the city, another to be cut in two, and the third to be stoned. And Perpetua was in the prison; and in this prison there was kept Potentiana, a noble maiden, because she had said: I forsake my parents and all the substance of my father, and I wish to become a Christian. She therefore joined herself to Perpetua, and ascertained from her everything about Paul, and was in much anxiety about the faith in Christ. And the wife of Nero was Potentiana's sister; and she secretly informed her about Christ, that those who believe in Him see everlasting joy, and that everything here is temporary, but there eternal: so that also she fled out of the palace, and some of the senators' wives with her. Then Nero, having inflicted many tortures upon Perpetua, at last tied a great stone to her neck, and ordered her to be throw over a precipice. And her remains lie at the Momentan(1) gate. And Potentiana also underwent many torments; and at last, having made a furnace one day, they burned her.