

its most touching associations arises from the circumstance that it was the spot where Ignatius of Antioch and multitudes of the early Christian martyrs were thrown to wild beasts. Majestic as its ruins now are, it is said but about two thirds of the original pile remain. It endured the devastating changes of a fortress in the middle ages, and served as a quarry for several palaces, till about a century since, with a view to its preservation, it was solemnly consecrated by Benedict XIV. to the memory of the Christian martyrs who had perished there. The arena is now ornamented with rude representations of the Savior's passion, a pulpit in which a monk occasionally preaches, and a cross in the centre, for each kiss of which an indulgence is promised for two hundred days.

I never felt more vividly the fitness of the midnight hour for lone contemplation. Above were but the moonlit sky and the silent stars; and around, frowning more grimly in the gloom of midnight, like deserted piles in the city of the dead, were some of earth's proudest monuments. How eloquent was that stillness! The watch-dog had forgotten to bay "beyond the Tiber." Not an echo died upon the breeze that whispered plaintively amid the leaves of the ivy and the ilex, and the crumbling arches on the Palatine Hill. The owl had ceased her wail in the buried mansions of Augustus, and the damp vaults of the "golden house" in which Nero had once reigned. Where cohorts in shining armor had gathered, with their eagles proudly waving, and music, and the shouts of assembled nations had rent the air at the elevation of the triumphal arches of Titus and Constantine, was now not a human voice nor a habitable dwelling.

If with the waving of a hand the spirits of the mighty dead could have been summoned from their graves to gaze upon the little that remained of what had been once their pride, what a lesson would it have been upon the vanity of human ambition! Yet who can estimate the sum of mortal agony which these few relics had cost!

The busy fancy conjured up strange phantoms. It needed little effort to fill again the empty seats of the deserted Coliseum with a multitude, rising like a forest on a mountain-side—to picture the tyrant emperor, the Roman guards, the vestal virgins, and the senators in the sumptuous seats, nearest the arena, and the various ranks in their costumes, receding away to the slaves far above—the hush of suspense—the advance of a bearded, tottering old man, just torn from the parting embrace of a venerable matron, and a trembling maiden, and toward whom every eye is directed—the glaring eyes and roar of the hungry beast—the moving of the lips, and the upward look of that meek face, as if in faith he saw the martyr's crown—the terrific bound—the victim quivering beneath the jaws of the furious beast on the sand—the spouting gore, staining the white locks—the demon gaze of the multitude mingled here and there with a compassionate face, in tears, and the cruel, drowning shouts of thousands of heathen voices. It was but an idle dream. The dimness of night and the silence of desolation were again around me. I heard but my breath and the beating of my own excited heart.

Both my imagination and my feet had traveled a good distance for so late or early an hour, and I naturally began to think of returning. Walking round to the side of the Coliseum, toward the Arch of Constantine, and casually looking homeward, I perceived a real human being, that was no optical illusion, making directly toward me, in the shape of a tall figure that, with a little feeding, would have done for the English horse-guards. He wore a cloak and slouched hat, fit for a representation of Guy Fawkes, or the picture of an assassin, and was dressed inferiorly in white (a discovery for painters), which with advancing steps, by moonlight, was particularly effective. I then recollected the porter's warning, and determined to sound his intentions by taking a little circuit. He closely followed. Just as I began to think seriously of showing my defenses, and demanding explanations, unexpectedly I stumbled upon one of the pope's sentries, whom I succeeded in puzzling with bad Italian till my interesting, and possibly harmless, follower had passed. Presently day began to break, and I returned to my hotel.

Let us retrace the route by day, and notice some of the objects a little more leisurely. The Column of Trajan stands in an ex-

cavated square, amid the bases of the broken columns of the Forum of Trajan; and in the series of delicately-sculptured figures, winding spirally from the bottom to the top, and, in general appearance, somewhat resembles the bronze imitation in honor of Napoleon in the place Vendôme. Originally it sustained a colossal statue of Trajan, bearing his ashes in a ball, to the height of about one hundred and thirty feet. It was built by the celebrated Apollodorus, of white marble, at the commencement of the second century. Perhaps, on the whole, no monument of the kind in the world is more interesting or beautiful. In exquisite and wonderfully-preserved bas-relief, it exhibits more than two thousand figures of persons, the costume of various conditions, houses, armor, fortifications, and other devices illustrative of ancient manners and customs, and embodying an epitome of the life of the hero. First is the crossing of the Danube upon a bride of boats, then follow the battles, storming of fortresses, the emperor addressing his troops, the reception of supplicating ambassadors, and leading incidents of the Dacian

Then, as you advance toward the Coliseum, partially wedged in between the Palatine and Capitoline hills, is the site of the Roman Forum, with these solitary upright Corinthian pillars, relics of the Temple of Saturn, the adjacent Arch of Septimius Severus, and the eight granite columns remaining of the Temple of Vespasian. Presently you are abreast of the Palatine, covered with irregular mounds, with here and there broken arches and masses of brickwork peering through the turf and vines, in the excavations beneath which the visitor is still shown damp vaults, and dark mouldering chambers, the remains of the luxurious baths and sumptuous halls of the Palace of the Cæsars.

Hard by is the finest of the triumphal arches—that erected in honor of Titus, and commemorative of the conquest of Jerusalem. As directly corroborating Holy Writ, it is deeply interesting. Beneath the arch, on one side, is still seen a procession in bas-relief, bearing the seven-branched candlestick, the golden table, the silver trumpets, and the spoils of the Temple, corresponding exactly with the description of Josephus, and forming the only authentic representation of these sacred utensils now remaining.

Nearer the Coliseum, and more imposing in size than the others, is the Arch of Constantine, exhibiting evidences of the plunder of a monument to Trajan, and the greatly-degenerated sculpture of two centuries later.

Happening to be exploring in this direction one morning just after sunrise, I went on past the Coliseum to see the Santa Scala or Holy Stairs. They consist of a flight of some twenty-eight marble steps, the same, according to the Catholic tradition, upon which the Savior descended from the judgment seat of Pilate. So reverently are they regarded, that they are preserved with great care in a fine porch close to the Church of St. John Lutheran, and none are allowed to ascend them but penitents on their knees. To protect the stone from being worn away by the multitudes who seek to undergo this penance it has been necessary, it is said, to cover the steps some three times with consecrated wood.

Three or four devotees made the ascent during the few minutes of my early visit. I shall never forget the appearance of one of their number, a pale, sickly-looking monk. More earnestly than the rest he seemed to linger with his lips in the dust, and kiss fervently, one by one, every step till he slowly crawled to the top. His face had a haggard, wild expression of enthusiasm, such as one might almost fancy in a pilgrim of the Ganges, and his frame appeared wasted to a skeleton, as if by night watching and self-imposed suffering. I looked on, with the natural incredulosity of one of another faith; but I felt no disposition to ridicule. There seemed more cause to pity than to ridicule. The Searcher of hearts only knows how many of the misguided are sincere. I frankly confess there is to me something solemn and touching in every seeming attempt of erring humanity to propitiate its God that compels me to treat it with decent respect. The pains which the distracted spirit may even blindly inflict upon its fleshy element, in its yearnings for a happier world, are at least signs of the instinct of its own immortality.