

A most interesting account of this horrible transaction is given by Piso, who, having been allowed, as a Roman, to retire from the city, surveyed the spectacle of destruction from one of the neighbouring heights.

"After one day of preparation and one of assault, the city has fallen, and Aurelian again enters in triumph—this time in the spirit of revenge and retaliation. It is evident, as we look on, horror-struck, that no quarter is given, but that a general massacre has been ordered, both of soldier and citizen. We can behold whole herds of the defenceless populace escaping from the gates or over the walls, only to be pursued, hunted, and slaughtered by the remorseless soldiers. And thousands upon thousands have we seen driven over the walls, or hurled from the battlements of the lofty towers to perish, dashed upon the rocks below.

"No sooner had the evening of the fatal day set in, than a new scene of terrific sublimity opened before us, as we beheld flames beginning to ascend from every part of the city. They grew and spread, till they presently appeared to wrap all objects alike in a vast sheet of fire. Towers, pinnacles, and domes, after glittering awhile in the fierce blaze, one after another fell and disappeared in the general ruin. The Temple of the Sun stood long untouched, shining almost with the brightness of the sun itself, its polished shafts and sides reflecting the surrounding fire with an intense brilliancy. We hoped that it might escape, and were certain that it would, unless fired from within—as, from its insulated position, the flames from the neighbouring buildings could not reach it. But we watched not long, ere, from its western extremity, the fire broke forth, and warned us that that peerless monument of human genius, like all else, would soon crumble to the ground. To our amazement, however, and joy, the flames after having made great progress, were suddenly arrested, and by some cause extinguished—and the vast pile stood towering in the centre of desolation, of double size, as it seemed, from the fall and disappearance of so many of the surrounding structures.

"On the third day after the capture of the city, and the massacre of the inhabitants, the army of the conquer and destroyer withdrew from the scene of its glory, and again disappeared beyond the desert. I sought not the presence of Aurelian while before the city, for I cared not to meet him drenched in the blood of women and children. But as soon as he and his legions were departed, we turned toward the city, as children to visit the dead body of a parent.

"No language which I can use, my Curtius, can give you any just conception of the horrors which met our view on the way to the walls and in the city itself. For more than a mile before we reached the gates, the roads, and the fields on either side, were strewn with bodies of those who, in their attempts to escape, had been overtaken by the enemy and slain. Many a group of bodies did we notice, evidently those of a family, the parents and the children, who, hoping to reach in company some place of security, had all—and without resistance, apparently—fallen a sacrifice to the relentless fury of their pursuers. Immediately in the vicinity of the walls, and under them, the earth was con-

cealed from the eye by the multitudes of the slain, and all objects were stained with the one hue of blood. Upon passing the gates, and entering within those walls which I had been accustomed to regard as embracing in their wide and graceful sweep, the most beautiful city of the world, my eye met nought but black and smoking ruins, fallen houses and temples, the streets choked with piles of still blazing timbers, and the half-burned bodies of the dead. As I penetrated farther into the heart of the city, and to its better built and more spacious quarters, I found the destruction to be less—that the principal streets were standing, and many of the more distinguished structures. But every where—in the streets—upon the porticos of private and public buildings—upon the steps, and within the very walls of the temples of every faith—in all places, the most sacred as well as the most common, lay the mangled carcasses of the wretched inhabitants. None, apparently, had been spared. The aged were there, with their bald or silvered heads—little children and infants—women, the young, the beautiful, the good—all were there slaughtered in every imaginable way, and presenting to the eye spectacles of horror and of grief enough to break the heart and craze the brain. For one could not but go back to the day and the hour when they died, and suffer with these innocent thousands a part of what they suffered, when, the gates of the city giving way, the infuriated soldiery poured in, and with death written in their faces and clamouring on their tongues, their quiet houses were invaded, and, resisting or unresisting, they all fell together, beneath the murderous knives of the savage foe. What shrieks then rent and filled the air—what prayers of agony went up to the gods for life to those whose ears on mercy's side were adders—what piercing supplications that life might be taken and honour spared!

"The silence of death and ruin rests over this once and but so lately populous city. As I stood upon a high point which overlooked a large extent of it, I could discern no signs of life, except here and there a detachment of the Roman guard dragging forth the bodies of the slaughtered citizens, and bearing them to be burned or buried. This whole people is extinct. In a single day these hundred thousands have found a common grave. Not one remains to bewail or bury the dead. Where are the anxious crowds, who, when their dwellings have been burned, eagerly rush in as the flames have spent themselves, to sorrow over their smoking altars, and pry with busy search among the hot ashes, as if perchance they may yet rescue some lamented treasure, or bear away at least the bones of a parent or child, buried beneath the ruins? They are not here. It is broad day, and the sun shines bright, but not a living form is seen lingering about these desolated streets and squares. Birds of prey are already hovering round, and alighting without apprehension of disturbance wherever the banquet invites them; and soon as the shadows of evening shall fall, the hyæna of the desert will be here to gorge himself upon what they have left, having scented afar off upon the tainted breeze the fumes of the rich feast here spread for