

## The Coliseum at Rome

ROME is a city of ruins. Everywhere one goes he comes upon piles of stone, brick and mortar and other remains of what were once magnificent and stately buildings. By viewing these relics of departed greatness one can form some idea of what Rome was "in all her glory," when she ruled the world. The most complete and certainly the most interesting of all the ruins of the Eternal City may be found in the Coliseum which for so many years was the pride of the Roman. It is a splendid structure, and enough of it remains to give a fair idea of its original size and greatness. The Coliseum is indeed wonderfully preserved, considering the fact that it was completed more than seventeen hundred years ago. On one side the huge stones are breaking away to some extent, but a strong brick wall has been built to prevent further decay. What builders those old Romans were! Here are walls from four to six feet thick, many of them as solid as they were when built, although exposed to the elements of so many centuries.

in ten minutes, so numerous were the exits. What a sight it must have been to have seen this great circular building packed with people! An attempt has recently been made to "restore" Ancient Rome by preparing a series of pictures showing as nearly as possible how her palaces, temples, and other notable edifices really appeared when the city was in the height of its magnificence. These are not altogether imaginative, but have been sketched with the greatest attention to correct detail, by a careful study of the ruins. While in Rome a few months ago I procured one of this series which gives some idea of what the Coliseum probably looked like when filled with people on a gala day. It is here reproduced.

Underneath the rows of seats are immense dens for wild beasts which were kept in large numbers. It is said that no less than 5,000 of these were brought out into the amphitheatre in one day in the time of Vespasian. These beasts fought together, or fought against gladiators, to make a Roman holiday, and terrible scenes of slaughter were often



THE COLISEUM AT ROME, IN ITS COMPLETE FORM  
Taken from "Rome Restored" pictures.

The Coliseum was built by the Emperor Vespasian on the site of Nero's Golden House, and took about ten years to finish. Originally it was 157 feet high and 1900 feet in circumference, built of great blocks of travertine stone, fastened together by iron clamps. During the middle ages holes were made in the stone for the purpose of obtaining the iron clamps, and for a long time the Coliseum was regarded as a quarry from which several of the palaces of Rome were built. Considering this, it is remarkable that so much of the structure has been preserved. The immense labor involved in the erection of so huge a building was secured by making use of thousands of captive Jews who had no labor unions and who never struck for shorter hours or higher wages. It is said that the ground in the vicinity was literally strewn with their corpses.

What the great amphitheatre originally cost can probably never be known, but it is estimated that the materials still existing would be worth about three million dollars.

For nearly five hundred years the Coliseum was the popular amusement resort of the Romans where all sorts of games and spectacles were produced. The immense amphitheatre, it is said, would seat 50,000 people, and it could be emptied

witnessed. The people were essentially cruel in their nature and demanded scenes of bloodshed. The more sanguinary the contests were the better the populace seemed to be pleased.

The Coliseum contained one hundred and sixty stair-cases, which with their passages were contrived with such skill, that visitors, whether of the senatorial, equestrian or plebeian order, proceeded without confusion to their appointed seats. The vast concave of the interior contained sixty or eighty rows of marble seats, placed one above another in the form of stairs, going round the whole of the building, and rising from the podium, or gallery, to its summit. The arena was surrounded by a wall, sixteen feet high and eleven feet thick, surmounted with rails of iron armed with spikes, and also strong rollers, which turned vertically, to prevent the escape of the hunted animals. On this wall a gallery was formed, in which the senators, magistrates and vestals sat; and from the middle of the gallery projected a balcony, from which the spectacles were viewed by the emperors.

Over the heads of the spectators was extended the velarium, or awning, to screen them from the sun, and in some degree from the rain. That light might be admitted, the arena was left uncovered. Nothing seems to have been omitted that