

**Soldier and Martyr.**

**LIFE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS.**

(Continued.)

Carinus interrupted the senator, "Compassion was always honored by the ancients, for it once saved Rome from final destruction. Ought you not to be ashamed of the sentiments that you and I will have in the final glory of Carinus?" "May the gods grant that you and I may be able to remember the man who was your mother."

After a brief pause, and in the midst of the emotion that filled all present, Carinus began to speak. "The last days of autumn had come, the sun had set, a thick fog covered the whole valley, and father was in camp. Mother, motionless, almost unbearably helpless, looking me to help her, then, looking at me with infinite tenderness, she made on my forehead my mouth, and on breast a certain sign, and then seemed to fall asleep. On the following day my military career began. My sixteenth year I took part in the first battle, in the vicinity of Lyons in Gaul, and in the war against the peoples who had rebelled against Gallienus. Afterwards we were sent to very distant regions beyond the Danube. It was during that expedition against the barbarians that I lost my father, at Sirmo."

"Why," said Sextus, impulsively, "do you not add that you covered yourself with glory there and that you were first decurion?"

"Sextus," replied Carinus, "how can I remember gladly the day on which I became an orphan? I think I have told you all I have to tell you. I have been your youth, and I believe I shall be a soldier. Life in camp is full of attractions for me, and to die fighting the enemies of my country is my supreme desire."

"Blessed such thoughts!" exclaimed the senator. "And may the fates grant you a long and happy life!"

"Listen, Carinus," added Sextus, "we will think of death later. Just now I am thinking of the grand spectacle that will be produced at the circus in a few days, and I am sure you will not refuse me the honor of taking you there."

A few slaves entered now with the confections and with amphoras of Falernian wine. The guests were filled and handed round to the guests, who all drank three times in honor of the Graces, and once more to the health of the new commander of the imperial guard.

It was late night when Carinus entered the Palace barracks; he was very preoccupied with the sweet remembrance of his visit.

**III.—BREAD AND GLADIATORS.**

The Colosseum was the largest and most magnificent of the Roman amphitheatres. It could easily hold ninety thousand spectators. The construction of this gigantic monument was begun under Vespasian, after the conquest of Jerusalem, and was finished by Titus ninety years after the birth of Christ. The Roman people had acquired possession of the world their chief desire in time of peace was to obtain, as far as possible, from their rulers, a generous provision of public games, and hence their motto, "panem et circenses" (bread and gladiators). They demanded gladiators because combat, at the risk of life, had always been the pastime which gave them the most pleasure.

Following the example of his predecessors, and as if to prove the satisfaction given him, Diocletian commanded that a series of great spectacles should be produced in the Colosseum, and that the best of them should especially those which were most desired by the public. The series was to occupy at least a week, and the programme which described them was expected to the most distant provinces. The immense throngs that came to the amphitheater during the festival were only what had been foreseen.

The first day of the spectacles had come, and Sextus went for Carinus. He found him waiting for him at the Forum, and together they went directly to the Colosseum.

The four rows of arcades, which opened on the interior of the amphitheater, one above the other, were already densely crowded with people. At the center of the arena, the Emperor came, and was greeted with the customary cry, "Health and happiness to divine Diocletian!" Suddenly the trumpets sounded a strain, and from the different parts of the arena, African lions, different species of tigers, and twenty bears from the North came walking or trotting into the arena.

The scene was truly grand, and was a revelation to Carinus. Little by little that enormous crowd of men, women and children of every age and condition began to feel as if transported to the solitudes of the desert, and, looking at those wild beasts, it seemed to be fascinated by what is most terrible in animate nature—the force. Below, in the bottom of a vast cavern, the animals, having just come from the black darkness of their subterranean stalls, were dazzled by the sun and were standing still, looking at one another, stupidly, and in an astonished manner. The quiet was very brief, however. Suddenly, as if at a preconcerted signal, they rushed furiously at one another, separated, fled, then divided themselves into groups, which instantly attacked one another with the most ferocious fury, tearing one another's bodies hideously with teeth and claws; sometimes lions fought with lions, tigers threw themselves upon tigers, lions and tigers upon bears, two to two, four to four, and then ten to two, four to four, and all filling the air with the most frightful growls and howls. The first to fall was a royal Bengal tiger. His mother, who was defending herself against two lionesses, and three enormous bears was near him and began to attack his enemies with the most ferocious desperation. In a few seconds the gravel under them was soaked with blood, shreds of smoking

fresh flew in all directions, and the atmosphere was soon heavy with blood. Up to this time the people had followed the changes of this strange combat without giving any strong signs of satisfaction, but now the whole stuporous crowd was shouting the most vociferous applause. More than half of the fierce beasts were lying stretched on the ground, strangled to death or dying. The changes of this strange combat were wonderful round the arena, tired, exhausted, looking at one another with frightfully grim eyes, as if waiting only for more strength with which to renew the fight.

Again the trumpets sounded and the actors entered. Ten archers on horse, fully armed at every point, had come to cope with the ferocious strength of these animals. Promptly ten darts whistled through the air at once, and the struggle had already begun. For an hour or longer men, horses, and wild beasts were battling in barbarous confusion as they swayed from point to point of the arena. At last, when the struggle could only subsist, victory was proclaimed to the human hero, but at what a cost! Four of them lay dead and lacerated; four young soldiers who only a few days previously had come all the way from distant Numidia, where they had been snatched from their families, now fell in the arena, but merely to be immolated in the circus.

The applause that was now thundering through the amphitheater showed how deep was the satisfaction of the audience. The sight of human blood and intoxicated people and suddenly there was heard the unanimous cry, "Bring out the gladiators!"

Among all the plays of the Circus the combat of the gladiators was the one that pleased the public most. They desired the name which did not include the gladiators.

Two hundred years before Diocletian's reign, on the occasion of the celebration of the triumph of Trajan, over the Persians, ten thousand gladiators were sacrificed in the Circus during one hundred and twenty-three days of continued saturnalia. Such monstrous evils would be impossible in our day.

Another class of the trumpets, and the soldiers, and the archers, left the arena by one gate, a file of slaves entered by another. The latter, having quickly gathered the bodies of the dead and dying men and animals that lay widely scattered, sprinkled new sand and gravel over the arena.

The thing then began. One hundred pairs of the most vigorous athletes garbed like gymnasts and guided by a leader who was called starator, came and stood before the imperial balcony and exclaimed with one voice, "Ave, Caesar, mori tibi parati sumus." ("We, Caesar, who are about to die salute you.") Soon thereafter the half of these athletes began a combat called the battle with the nets. This combat required that one of every two combatants who took part in a show should have a sword and a net, with three points, called the trident, in his left hand, and in his right a net which, when skillfully thrown over his adversary's head, would cover and blind him and render him helpless. And thereafter, who wore a helmet and carried a shield and sword, sought, with equal skill, to avoid being caught by the net. If the first of these gladiators succeeded in his design, his adversary would find himself lying on the sand, firmly and helplessly entangled in the net, on his body the foot of the victor, who would turn towards the spectators and wait to receive from them the command to kill him or to spare his life. If the spectators, waving their togas or mantles, turned their thumbs upward, the vanquished man was permitted to live, but if they turned their thumbs downward they signified their desire that he perish, and the victor immediately killed him with the trident.

However, never were these sacrifices. They were not spared in consequence of any disgust or repugnance the populace might feel at the carnage which had preceded this bout. That vast horde of barbarians, know that the other half of the arena were to be shed, and that a moment of respite conceded to their vile instincts would be largely compensated later by events that would fill them with a much stronger and vibrant emotion. It was only upon a civilization that had reached the height of refinement of cruelty. The first array of gladiators having exhausted themselves, the second half now entered the arena. These, unlike their companions, were armed with a sword and a sliding loop with which they sought to strangle his adversary, and were called "samitii." They were placed pair to pair and face to face, and began a combat that soon became so desperate that in less than an hour the arena was covered with a pool of blood. Of the fifty who fell and, with howling cries, appealed to the Roman people for mercy, not one was spared!

Execrable! "fama Christiana et bestia!" Such was the way in which the programme announced the last scene of the day. This was reserved for the afternoon, and through it Diocletian wished to witness a resolve to persecute the Christians.

It was only with the greatest reluctance that Carinus consented to return with Sextus to the Colosseum that afternoon. They found the arena crowded as usual for the morning. That detestable Christian family consisted of Crescentia, a noble matron; Honoratus, her son, and Flavius and Tiberia, her daughters, both flowers of beauty and innocence, and a servant named Capus, and that the father of the family had died in the recent campaign in Egypt.

Hardly had these gentle persons, who were accused of nothing other than being Christians, taken their seats in the arena, when all directions came the cry, "Ad bestias! Ad Bestias!" ("Give them to the beasts; give them to the beasts!") And immediately, from the subterranean stalls, for the first time, a lioness came into the light. Crescentia kissed her dear ones, one after another, gave Honoratus to the old

servant, and, making the sign of the cross on each one's forehead, she knelt down, raised her eyes to heaven and awaited death. Flavia knelt beside her. Tiberia took refuge in the arms of Honoratus. The lions held fast for a moment, but only for a moment, and then, dashed together upon those pious victims, striking down the faithful old servant first and rending his furrowed face with their claws. Flavia was still in death. And in the midst of a hurricane of howls, whistles and curses which came from that monstrous horde of spectators, five new martyrs ascended to heaven to pray for the conversion of the whole world.

"I must say Sextus," said Carinus to his companion as they were leaving the circus, "that such public spectacles were never invented for my pleasure."

"But you forget," replied Sextus, "that another magnificent spectacle is promised for to-morrow! You will see the arena covered with water and peopled with crocodiles and hippopotami chasing slaves."

"I repeat, I can find no pleasure in such things," said Carinus. "I have never seen at the Colosseum again nor any other circus." Still, we can remain friends, can we not?"

"Indeed, yes; but I must confess I do not understand you."

Another friend parted to return home, each absorbed in his own thoughts.

**IV.—GOOD HEARTS.**

One evening not long after Carinus visited Senator Basso again. They were sitting in the colonnade, Sextus and Sabine being with them. When a man very much mistaken, Carinus, or public exhibitions do not please you; I heard you have not been at the Colosseum since the first day of the present festival."

"I," replied Carinus, "and there is a reason for it. You know that I am half barbarian and that life in the city has not yet had an opportunity to blunt my angles, and that I am slow to acquire the tastes of the Roman people. I am a soldier, and find it difficult to grasp your civilization. War is a very cruel thing, and just as horrible; still, he who kills and is killed stands on the field in defence of his country and for his honor, and you can only wish to assert that war is a pastime. Now, what do you go to see in the Colosseum if it be not the bloody destruction of poor victims who perish for the pleasures of the exhibition, and who are frequently, too, by women, girls, and boys, in whom their quick instincts still more ferocious than those of the wild beasts themselves?"

"Carinus," said Basso, "up to a certain point I approve of the sentiments you have just expressed, but your whole argument is erroneous, because you do not take the things in question for what they really are. Our passionate enjoyment of the Circus, of the gladiators, we Romans inherit from our forefathers, who were manifestly brave and honorable people. The memory of the spectacles you mention always quickens our remembrance of the good deeds of our ancestors. And that is a fact that will always be of prime importance."

"As you will, Senator," was Carinus' response, "and those spectacles will be and remain Roman, but they seem to me to be able to approve either those who project them or those who enjoy them. How often I am ashamed of having been in that multitude which shouted with such indecent enthusiasm at the death of blood and that poor Christian family, what had it done that it should be given as food to those famished wild animals? And those young

athletes, how could anyone wish to see them killed in any way, at any cost?"

"The Christians are the enemies of the State and are malefactors," exclaimed the senator; "and those young athletes were the property of the man who was charged with the arrangements of the festival."

A brief silence intervened, and, looking toward Sabine, Carinus saw two large tears rolling down her cheeks, and construed them as a sign of her

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, Green on a red speculum, the day to-day, and all our yesterday have lighted fools. The way to the Colosseum is the way to the Colosseum."

Prostitution is the thief of health as well as the thief of time. There are few things in which prostitution is so much indulged as in the matter of writing. I mean to write, but to-morrow creep to bed, and to-morrow neglect it. This is bad enough when the correspondence is of a social or business in its character, but when it concerns the vital issue of health it is infinitely worse.

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(To be Continued.)

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