

VIVIA PERPETUA

Already ere the morning light was full,
The din of preparation, and the hum
Of voices gathering in the upper tiers ;
Yet had we seen so often in our thoughts
The picture of this strange and cruel death,
Its festal horror, and its bloody pomp,
The nearness scarcely moved us, and our hands
Met in a steadfast and unshaken clasp.

The day is over. Ah, my friend, how long
With its wild sounds and bloody sights it seemed !
Night comes, and I am still alive—even I,
The least and last—with other two, reserved
To grace to-morrow's second day. The rest
Have suffered and with holy rapture passed
Into their glory. Saturus and the men
Were given to bears and leopards, but the crowd
Feasted their eyes upon no cowering shape,
Nor hue of fear, nor painful cry. They died
Like armed men, face foremost to the beasts,
With prayers and sacred songs upon their lips.
Perpetua and the frail Felicitas
Were seized before our eyes and roughly stripped,
And shrinking and entreating, not for fear,
Nor hurt, but bitter shame, were borne away
Into the vast arena, and hung up