

girt around with sheltering hills, on the borders of a vast plain of abounding fertility, the centre of intercourse and trade for the towns and villages in the glens and mountain slopes, and for the tribes of wandering Bedouins scattered in thousands through the inland valleys, Damascus is assured of an existence and an importance to the very end of time.

The present population of the city is about one hundred and fifty thousand, of whom one hundred thousand are Moslems, some six thousand Jews, and the rest Christians, mostly of the Greek Church. The Moslems are intensely fanatical, and bitter, and fear of the vengeance of Christian nations alone prevent a repetition of the awful massacres of 1860, when the Christian quarter of the city was devastated, the streets ran with blood, and thousands of defenceless people were barbarously murdered.

The story, too long for me to tell in detail, reads like some hideous bit of ancient history rather than an event of the later years of the nineteenth century. The churches and convents, filled with refugees were put to the flames, the thoroughfares were choked with corpses. Women were outraged; girls snatched from their homes and sent off to worse than slavery; men, from the old and decrepit to the little boys, barbarously put to the sword with unimaginable atrocities. The fanatical mob, reinforced by wild hordes from the environs of the city, pillaged, and slew for hours and hours; and these unspeakable brutalities were connived at, if not assisted and led on to, by the soldiers of an empire only kept in existence by Christian bayonets! Six thousand inoffensive people murdered, twenty thousand homes devastated and plundered, the whole Christian quarter laid in ashes; and at least £2,000,000 sterling worth of property destroyed, such were some of the results of the Damascus massacre of 1860.

But for the arrival of the British and French fleets at Beyrout, and the prompt intervention of the Christian powers, every Christian in Syria might have been put to the sword. As it was, punishment prompt, indeed, but not so full as deserved, fell upon the ring-leaders. The governor of the city, three Turkish officers and a hundred and seventeen others were shot, fifty-six of the citizens were hanged, several others banished, and four hundred of the lower orders condemned to imprisonment and exile. The punishment, though inadequate to the frightful crime, has proved a salutary lesson, and no fresh outbreak of fanatic zeal has led to a repetition of the terrible tragedy. But the fire smoulders, and nothing but the influx of a purer faith and the establishment of a better government will ever quench it wholly, or prevent the danger of it bursting forth anew.