

thirst for more. Perhaps the frequenters of these horrid exhibitions grew weary of the continued howl of the ferocious and mangled animals. The satiated appetite required a more stimulating food and more exciting displays; and the gladiatorial combats became more numerous, because more popular. When Trajan turned out to mutual carnage the 11000 wild beasts of which I have spoken, he exhibited also no less than 10.000 gladiators at the same time.

Of those who sometimes contended in these bloody duels, some were foreigners, who sold themselves for pay, and deserved the death which they purchased. Some baser still, and more despicable, were free citizens of Rome, and some even of noble birth—degenerate descendants of those whose names they disgraced. Must we go yet lower in this scale of degradation—yes; for authentic historians have recorded the fact, which called forth the just indignation and scorn of the Roman satirist; that women—even those of high birth and illustrious rank—lost to all sense of shame, and forgetful of their station and their sex, armed and fought in public as gladiators. Tacitus with characteristic force and brevity, notices this shameful exhibition of the higher orders of both sexes which prevailed in the time of Nero. “*Fœminarum illustrium Senatorumque plures in arenam fœdatæ sunt.*”

The practice continued down to a later age; when it would seem by its frequency to have at length awakened the public disgust—and the Emperor Severus prohibited it by a formal edict. The greater part, however, of those who fought there, were condemned criminals, or slaves and captives, driven to the slaughter, like beasts to the shambles. The bold Ligurian, the fierce Dacian, the swordsman from Spain or Thrace, some perhaps from our own sea-girt island were there compelled to display the unavailing proofs of their skill and courage, and to fall, it might chance, by the hands of their own friends or countrymen.

When the Emperor Claudius, previous to his attempt to drain the lake Fucinus, exhibited on it his great sea fight, which was conducted with all the fierceness and bloodshed of a real battle; the wretched combatants before they engaged, thus addressed him, “*Ave Imperator, morituri te salutant*”—“Hail Emperor, those about to die, bid you farewell!”—to which he coldly answered, “*Avete vos*”—“Farewell to you”—as they were unwillingly forced into this cruel death-play. The same scene may not have been actually repeated, with its touching salutation and the unfeeling imperial reply, when the devoted gladiators engaged in the amphitheatre; yet what sight could be more sad than to see these brave men as they descended to their death, stopping before the Emperor’s seat, and making their last obeisance to him, whose mandate compelled them to gratify with his murderous sport his own taste for blood, and that of the many thousands who partook of it. How intently was the combat watched by the excited spectators; with outstretched neck and straining eyes they followed every step and motion—shouting at each successful thrust or stroke, as the blood of the wretched victim followed it. “*Habet, habet*”—“He has it—He is hit”—for they selected their favorites, staking their money on them, just as men now do at a horse race. But see, one at length is struck down: on bended knee, as life is fast ebbing through his wound, he looks around imploringly from noble to plebeian. The vanquished there seldom found compassion. The upturned thumbs of the people pronounced his doom—the sword of the victor was plunged into his prostrate foe, and with limbs yet quivering, he was dragged from the arena by a hook, like the carcase of a dead beast at a bull fight.

Nor were these contests confined to the more equally matched gladiators. Man was often compelled to enter the death struggle with savage wild beasts: and more horrid still if possible, in this celebrated amphitheatre, the victims of cruelty