

church has a method of its own. There is a strong family likeness, however, between them all. Certain prayers in the vernacular tongue, the Litany of the Virgin, hymns, and the Benediction, together with sundry pieces of the vocal music,—these elements commonly make up the office. A sermon is also often introduced. Then, the walls of the church where the function is to be performed are invariably hung with *partii*, or silk hangings (pink, white, blue, and yellow,) fringed with gold. The effect of this is tawdry, and very much indeed the reverse of solemn; but it evidently delights the people. Some chandeliers are also hung about, and a profusion of candles are lighted above the altar.

I can recall two such services very distinctly. One was at the Church of St. Maria Della Pace. At 5 p.m. there was the Litany of the Saints, and by 6.30 all was ended. The church was small and dark, and densely crowded with persons of a very humble class, presenting an affecting spectacle; for though the devotions were partly in Latin, the poor people responded freely. At 7.30 began a second service (for men only,) consisting of the Litany of the Virgin and a *Proceda*. There was some lively music, of course. A *Triduo* at St. Andrea della Fratta was a more considerable affair,—as brilliant, in fact, as eighteen cut-glass chandeliers and some hundreds of candles could make it. After a sermon by a friar, which lasted an hour (a panegyric on St. Francisco de Paolo,) eight or nine persons in a temporary orchestra performed some pieces of vocal music, an organ and a species of horn accompanying. These sounded like airs out of an opera, but the words were, of course, meant to be solemn. One of the men had such a ridiculous falsetto, that all the congregation began to laugh. Then came some prayers, followed by the *Te Deum*. What was striking and beautiful, at the petition "We therefore pray Thee help Thy servants," &c., the whole congregation suddenly *knelt*. The church was full, and the people were for the most part, very attentive; but there was very little real solemnity in the thing, of course. It was clear that the dense assembly present regarded the whole affair in the light of a musical entertainment, combined with a certain amount of religious ceremonial, which happily reconciled the often contending claims of duty and pleasure.

Another devotional exercise which is highly popular with the people is the *Via Crucis*. Our Lord is feigned to have either halted with His Cross, or to have sunk beneath the burthen of it, fourteen times before He reached Calvary. These are called the "stations" of the Cross. Accordingly, to move from one station to another with the priest and his attendants, and to join in the prayers which are offered up at each, or to listen to the short exhortation which is often delivered at the same time,—constitutes a distinct *funzione*, or office. What need to say that it is written in the vernacular tongue, and is altogether a modern invention? Here is a short and not unfair specimen:—"Stazione IV. *Gesù incontra la sua SS. Madre. O Divin Figlio de Maria! O Santissima Madre del mio Gesù! eccomi a' vostri santissimi piedi umiliato o compunto. son' io quel traditore, che fabbricai, peccando, il coltello di dolore, che trappasso i vostri tenerissimi cuori.*" The "Via Crucis" is practised in the highest perfection in the Coliseum, which has been consecrated, and around the area of which, large stations are set up. Every Friday the "Via Crucis" is to be seen there, about two hours before Ave Maria; * but on the afternoon of Good Friday the exhibition is altogether of a remark-

able character. This year the impassioned friar, apostrophising the bleeding wounds of his huge *Crocifisso*, melted the crowd, or country people, to tears. A motley crowd attended the procession round the vast oval of the Coliseum, much excited as well as much affected. It was described to me as a truly extraordinary spectacle.

I was not able to be present; but it is not difficult to picture the scene from what one has witnessed on other occasions. There is something exceedingly striking in the contrast between that awful ruin, standing up in severe massive grandeur, and any short-lived modern pageant which is transacted within it. On the evening when I saw the "Via Crucis" in the Coliseum, twelve members of a confraternity (their faces concealed,) together with about as many ladies in black (one of the foremost bearing a cross,) entered; a Capuchin preceding, attended by two persons carrying lighted lamps. A few score of piously disposed people brought up the rear. After a short predica, the visit of the stations commenced. Meanwhile, the soft sunlight fell in a flood on the mighty ruin, making it look exceedingly grand. More than half was in the shadow. The wild flowers were all in bloom, and the birds were singing as in England; a colony of rooks in particular kept up a continual cawing,—a sound which one seemed to understand. The exhibition was not the less striking because it was so unostentatious, and as it were private.

This "esercizilo" (the "Via Crucis") is sometimes performed with considerable variety. At the Caravita, on the evening of Good Friday, for example, there is a scenic representation, with lively tunes played on a barrel-organ, and short hymns sung. On other great days, as the Invention of the Cross, it is preceded by a procession—I will continue this subject in my next.

J. W. B.

Houghton Conquest, Aug. 21, 1860.

THE MASSACRES IN SYRIA.

According to advices from Beyrout, Faud Pasha, after having consulted with General Beaufort d'Hautpoul, had called together the chiefs of the Metunlis, and prohibited their giving any refuge to the Druses. It was said that military operations would commence after the hot weather. It was asserted that Faud Pasha had prevented the outbreak of an insurrection at Nablous.

The trade of Beyrout is certainly reviving, and purchasers for goods are coming in from the interior. Notwithstanding the shock we have lately experienced, there will be very little ultimate loss in the place. The French troops expect to make a move very shortly into the interior, with a view, I believe of bringing some of the Druse shrieks to punishment. As regards Damascus, Faud Pasha has sent into Beyrout a large number of men forced to become conscripts for the army; but these view their new position as anything but a punishment, and openly declare that a day will come when they as soldiers will be able to shed Christian blood. A very large body of them passed through Beyrout, the other day singing one of the refrains of the Druse war-song, "How sweet it is to shed the blood of Christians!" but the next batch, which arrived three nights ago, were escorted to the barracks by a detachment of French hussars, who have rather different notions about the propriety of prisoners' behaviour than have the Turkish regular troops.

May God grant I may never again see such a sight as I witnessed three days ago at Dier-el-Kamar! and such would be the prayer of any man who has been in that town since the mass-

acre. Although the place was under the special government of the Sultan, no effort whatever has been made to bury the dead, even at this date of two months and a half after the tragedy. What has been done to hasten the disappearance of human bodies has been effected by the dogs, and wolves, and jackals of the surrounding districts. It was a fearful scene. Here stood, 90 days ago a thriving town of 8,000 souls and upwards; and when the troubles in Lebanon broke out, nearly 2,000 Christians had sought refuge from various parts in the place. Where are now those images of God? Where are the comfortable homes, the thriving trades, the rich silk crops, the produce of grapes and of olives, the hundreds of working silk-ooms, that this population possessed? Where are the wives and daughters of these traders and landowners,—where the happy children, the hearty welcome which all strangers received, the wealth in dress and jewels with which the matrons were adorned? The men of the place—ay, and some of the women too, for I counted no less than a dozen in one spot—the men are here; these corrupting masses of putrid skulls are all that remain of them; their houses are all burnt or pulled down; their property all plundered or destroyed; their women beggars in the streets of Beyrout; their male children hacked to pieces by the knives of the Druses. Amongst so many horrors it was difficult to select one place more fearful than another, but the Maronite Church and the Turkish Governor's divan, or receiving room, exceeded all I could have believed possible. The former is surrounded by a small courtyard, the door of which was shut. When we opened it the stench was something hardly to be conceived. On the pavement in front of the church, to which a large portion of the inhabitants had evidently fled for shelter, the dead bodies lay literally heaped in dozens one upon another, as they had been murdered and flung down. The steps up to the church are white, and down them was a broad purple mark of twenty or thirty feet long, from the interior of the altar rails out far beyond the door, which told but too plainly the tale of murder. The body of the church is about the size of the Lock Chapel in the Harrow-road, the courtyard is broader, but about half its length. But in no part of that church, on no much of that court, could any man, put his steps ever so nicely, walk without putting his foot on some part or other of a dead man's body. The skeletons are, with few exceptions, perfectly naked, for every survivor of the massacre that I have questioned—and more than a hundred have related the same tale to parties in Beyrout—says so cold-blooded were the Druses with their murderous work, that, before butchering a man whose clothes were at all good, they made him undress himself, and then hacked him to pieces with their long knives, thus preserving his garments uncut and unstained with blood. For some reason or other, they appear not to have taken the Maronite priests' clothes, as I observed many of the corpses still clad in the black coarse gown of the monks. The church and courtyard were all strewn with torn church books and broken church ornaments, but here, as everywhere else, all that could be turned to the slightest use, even the wooden lintels of the doors and the frames of the windows, had been taken away by the marauding hordes of murderers. But even more than by sight of the Maronite church was I astonished and sickened on going into the Turkish Governor's room, in the far interior of the Sernai. Here the great slaughter seems to have taken place. Here, two and a-half months after these murders, the ground of the room was discolored and fat with human blood. Here still lay about fragments of torn dresses and clothing, bearing witness to many fearful deeds of blood. And

* Gibbon relates that while witnessing it, the idea of writing *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* first entered his mind.