

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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## Poetry.

### PRAYER.

Lord, what a change within us one short hour  
Spent in thy presence can avail to make!  
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take!  
What parched grounds refresh as with a shower!  
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;  
We rise, and all the distant and the near  
Stand forth in sunny outline brave and clear.  
We kneel, how weak! we rise, how full of power!  
Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong!  
Or others, that we are not always strong—  
That we are ever borne with care—  
That we should ever weak or heartless be,  
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,  
And joy and strength and courage are with thee!  
—Dean Trench.

## Religious.

### The Roman Coliseum.

Second Article.

#### HUMAN VICTIMS. THE GLADIATORS.

Wild beasts tearing each other to pieces might, one would think, satisfy any taste for horror; but the spectators needed even nobler game to be set before their favorite monsters—men were brought forward to confront them. Some of these were, at first, in full armor, and fought hard, generally with success; and there was a revolving machine, something like a squirrel's cage, in which the bear was always climbing after his enemy, and then rolling over by his own weight. Or hunters came, almost unarmed, and gained the victory by swiftness and dexterity, throwing a piece of cloth over a lion's head, or disconcerting him by putting their fist down his throat. But it was not only skill, but death, that the Romans loved to see; and condemned criminals and deserters were reserved to feast the lions, and to entertain the populace with their various kinds of death. Among those condemned was many a Christian martyr, who witnessed a good confession before the savage-eyed multitude around the arena, and "met the lion's gory mane" with a calm resolution and hopeful joy that the lookers-on could not understand. To see a Christian die, with upward gaze and hymns of joy on his tongue, was the most strange and unaccountable sight the Coliseum could offer, and it was therefore the choicest, and reserved for the last of the spectacles in which the brute creation had a part.

The carcasses were dragged off with hooks, the blood-stained sand was covered with a fresh clean layer, the perfume was wafted in stronger clouds, and a procession came forward—tall, well-made men, in the prime of their strength. Some carried a sword and a lasso, others a trident and a net; some were in light armor, others in the full heavy equipment of soldier; some on horseback, some in chariots, some on foot. They marched in, and made their obeisance to the Emperor; and with one voice their greeting sounded through the building, *Ave, Caesar, morituri te salutant!* "Hail, Caesar, those about to die salute thee!"

They were the gladiators—the swordsmen trained to fight to the death to amuse the populace. They were usually slaves placed in schools of arms under the care of a master; but sometimes persons would voluntarily hire themselves out to fight by way of a profession: and both these and such slave-gladiators as did not die in the arena, would sometimes retire, and spend an old age of quiet; but there was little hope of this, for the Romans were not apt to have mercy on the fallen.

Fights of all sorts took place—the light-armed soldier and the netsman—the lasso and the javelin—the two heavy-armed warriors—all combinations of single combat, and sometimes a general *melee*. When a gladiator wounded his adversary, he shouted to the spectators, *Hic habet!* "He has it!" and looked up to know whether he should kill or spare. If the people held up their thumbs, the conquered was left to recover, if he could; if they turned them down, he was to die; and if he showed any reluctance to present his throat for the death blow, there was a scoldish shout, *Recipe ferrum!* "Receive the steel!" Many of us must have seen casts of that most touching statue of the wounded

man, that called forth the noble lines of indignant pity which, though so often repeated, can not be passed over here:

"I see before me the Gladiator lie;  
He leans upon his hand—his manly brow  
Consents to death, but conquers agony,  
And his dropped head sinks gradually low,  
And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow  
From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one,  
Like the first of a thunder-shower; and now  
The arena swarms around him—he is gone  
Ere ceased the inhuman shout which hailed the  
wretch who won.

"He heard it, but he heeded not—his eyes  
Were with his heart, and that was far away.  
He recked not of the life he lost, nor prize,  
But where his rude hut by the Danube lay,  
There were his young barbarians all at play,  
There was their Dacian mother—he their sire,  
Butchered to make a Roman holiday.  
All this rushed with his blood—shall he expire,  
And unavenged? Arise, ye Goths, and glut your ire."

Sacred vestals, tender mothers, fat, good-humored senators, all thought it fair play, and were equally pitiless in the strange frenzy for exciting scenes to which they gave themselves up, when they mounted the stone stairs of the Coliseum. Privileged persons would even descend into the arena, examine the death agonies, and taste the blood of some specially brave victim ere the corpse was drawn forth at the death-gate, that the frightful game might continue undisturbed and unencumbered. Gladiator shows were the great passion of Rome, and popular favor could hardly be gained except by ministering to it. Even when the barbarians were beginning to close in on the Empire, hosts of brave men were still kept for this slavish mimic warfare—sport to the beholders, but sad earnest to the actors.

#### CHRISTIANS PUT TO DEATH.

Christianity worked its way upwards, and at last was professed by the Emperor on his throne. Persecution came to an end, and no more martyrs fed the beasts in the Coliseum. The Christian Emperors endeavored to prevent any more shows where cruelty and death formed the chief interest, and no truly religious person could endure the spectacle; but custom and love of excitement prevailed even against the Emperor. Mere tricks of beasts, horse and chariot races, or bloodless contests, were tame and dull, according to the diseased taste of Rome; it was thought weak and sentimental to object to looking on a death-scene; the Emperors were generally absent at Constantinople, and no one could get elected to any office unless he treated the citizens to such a show as they best liked, with a little bloodshed and death to stir their feelings; thus it went on for full a hundred years after Rome had, in name, become a christian city, and the same customs prevailed wherever there was an amphitheatre and pleasure loving people.

#### THE LAST FIGHT.

Meantime the enemies of Rome were coming nearer and nearer, and Alaric, the great chief of the Goths, led his forces into Italy, and threatened the city itself. Honorius, the Emperor, was a cowardly, almost idiotical, boy; but his brave general, Stilicho, assembled his forces, met the Goths at Pollentia (about twenty five miles from where Turin now stands), and gave them a complete defeat on Easter-day of the year 403. He pursued into the mountains, and for that time saved Rome. In the joy of the victory, the Roman senate invited the conqueror and his ward, Honorius to enter the city in triumph, at the opening of the new year with the white steeds, purple robes, and vermilion cheeks with which, of old, victorious generals were welcomed at Rome. The churches were visited instead of the Temple of Jupiter, and there was no murder of the captives; but Roman blood-thirstiness was not yet allayed, and after all the procession had been completed, the Coliseum shows commenced, innocently at first, with races on foot, on horseback, and in chariots, then followed a grand hunting of beasts carried loose in the arena, and next a sword-dance. But after the sword-dance came the arraying of swordsmen, with no blunted weapons, but with sharp spears and swords—a gladiator combat in full earnest. The people, enchanted, applauded with shouts of ecstasy this justification of their savage tastes. Suddenly, however, there was an interruption. A rude, roughly-robed man, bareheaded and barefooted, had sprung into the arena, and, fixing back the gladiators, began to call aloud upon the people to cease

from the shedding of innocent blood, and not to requite God's mercy in turning away the sword of the enemy by encouraging murder. Shouts, howls, cries, broke in upon his words; this was no place for preachings—the old customs of Rome should be observed—"Back, old man!"—"On, gladiators!" The gladiators thrust aside the meddler, rushed to the attack. He still stood between, holding them apart, striving in vain to be heard. "Sedition! sedition!" "Down with him!" was the cry; and the man in authority, Alypius, the prefect, himself added his voice. The gladiators, enraged at interference with their vocation, cut him down. Stones or whatever came to hand, rained down upon him from the furious people, and he perished in the midst of the arena! He lay dead, and then came the feeling of what had been done.

His dress showed that he was one of the hermits who vowed themselves to a holy life of prayer and self-denial, and who were greatly revered, even by the most thoughtless. The few who had previously seen him, told that he had come from the wilds of Asia on pilgrimage, to visit the shrines and keep his Christmas at Rome—they knew he was a holy man—no more, and it is not even certain whether his name was Alypius or Telemachus. His spirit had been stirred by the sight of thousands flocking to see men slaughter one another, and in his simple-hearted zeal he had resolved to stop the cruelty or die. He had died, but not in vain. His work was done. The shock of such a death before their eyes turned the hearts of the people; they saw the wickedness and cruelty to which they had blindly surrendered themselves; and from the day when the hermit died in the Coliseum there was never another fight of gladiators. Not merely at Rome, but in every province of the Empire, the custom was utterly abolished; and one habitual crime at least was wiped from the earth by the self-devotion of one humble, obscure, almost nameless man.—*Book of Golden Deeds.*

#### "What will you have?"

After a day's work of calculation and copying, I was under the necessity of waiting an hour in the tap room of a tavern to secure the services of a mailguard to carry a parcel for my employers. Amidst the smoke, the spitting, and the clatter of a crowd of inn-hunters, I could not but find some subject for reflection.

The presiding genius of the bar was a bloated, whiskered young man, whom I had long known as the abandoned son of a deacon's friend. I sighed and was silent.

Ever and anon, as one after another, or squads of two and three approached his shrine to receive and empty his glasses, and deposit their sixpences, I heard the short peremptory formula of the Bacchanal minister, "What will you have?" And the victims severally made their bids for a smaller, a cocktail, a sting, or a julep, as the case might be. The constant repetition of the "form" in that case made and provided, set me upon a drowsy meditation on the pregnant question, "What will you have?" "Mathinks I can answer the question," said I to myself, as I cast a glance around the murky department. And first to the young shoemaker, who, with a pair of newly finished boots is asking for "grog." "What will you have? Young man, you will soon have an empty pocket."

There is a trembling, ragged man, with livid spots under the barbell. He is a machine maker, and he has lodgings in the house. "What will you have?" Ah! the barkeeper knows without an answer; he takes gin and water. Poor man! I also know what you will have. Already you have been twice at death's door; and the gin will not drive off that chill. You will have typhus fever and death.

The glasses are washed out and cleaned in the stop-tub under the barbell. Now a fresh bevy comes up, ogar in hand. "Gentlemen what will you have?" I supply the answer for myself. The baker there will have an apoplexy or a sudden fall in his shop. That tailor in green glasses will have consumption; and I fear the three idlers in their train will have the next epidemic that shall sweep off our refuse drunkards.

"Sorry, indeed, I am to see in this place

Mr. Scantling, the cooper. Not to speak of himself, I have reason to believe that both his grown sons are beginning to drink. He looks about him suspiciously. Now he has plucked up courage. He takes whiskey. You will have a pair of drunken sons.

That young fellow in the green frock-coat and colored neckcloth is a musician, a man of reading, and the husband of a lovely English woman. He takes his glass with the air of a Greek drinking hemlock. You will have a heart-broken wife.

What! is that lad of fifteen going to the bar? He is: and tosses off his Cognac with an air. You will have an early death.

The old man that tottered out of the door has doubtless come hither to drown his grief. His last son has died in prison from the effects of a brawl in the theatre. Wretched old man! You will have the halter of a suicide.

I must take the rest in mass, for it is Saturday night, and the throng increases. The barkeeper has an assistant in the person of a pale, sorrowful girl. Two voices now reiterate the challenge—"What will you have?" Misguided friends! I am greatly afraid you will all have a death-bed without hope.

My man has arrived. As I walked home across the common, I thought thus:

"And what will he have, who, day after day, and year after year, dealt out the devil's bounty to his recruits, and received his sixpences, as if it were over the coffins of his victims? You, hardened tempter! (if memory live hereafter,) will have the recollection of your triumphs and the vision of their eternal results. You will have a terrible judgment, and an eternity of sure retribution as befits your life."—*J. B. Alexander.*

#### Almost a Baptist.

Many eminent men, who have united with other denominations, would have become Baptists, if they had followed their early convictions and the suggestions of the Holy Spirit. Among this number was John Angell James, the patriarch of Birmingham, Eng. When he was converted, he had an intimate friend, named Tilley, a humble, pious and devoted Christian. They spent together many hours of delightful Christian intercourse, and labored together in the Sunday school and in little meetings for social prayer. By a careful study of the Bible, Mr. Tilley was led to embrace Baptist sentiments, and as there was no Baptist church in Poole, where they were living, he concluded to go to Wimbourne, six miles distant, and be baptized.

His young friend, James, was also convinced of the duty of immersion as taught by the command and example of Jesus, and on the Sabbath morning when Tilley walked to Wimbourne to receive the ordinance, James accompanied him a part of the way, and as they separated, regretted that he was not going with him to obey their common Master. But he was then an apprentice, and his master would not give his consent, and he subsequently united with the Independent church. He makes the following allusion to the event in his autobiography: "Little events determine the future destination of men. Had I been at that time my own master in all respects, it is every way probable I should have become a Baptist, and thus the whole course of my life would have been naturally changed."

The number of Baptists would be greatly multiplied, if all converts obeyed the dictates of their own consciences, when tender and impressive, and enlightened only by the teachings of the Word and of the Holy Spirit. When the freshness of the early feelings has passed away, they persuade themselves that something else than simple obedience will answer, and the light which had shone on their path shades into darkness.—*National Baptist.*

"A SOFT ANSWER TURNETH AWAY WRATH."—A speck falling on a sheet of white paper may be blown away by a breath and leave no stain; brush it off roughly, and it will be engraved into the paper.

"There is nothing terrible in death, and what our sins have made so; and even now death has no terrors of which faith in Christ cannot strip it."