

on the frantic man. He struggled in their grasp as Laocoon with the serpent, but equally in vain; and at length, when he saw Lydia torn from him, he fell exhausted and senseless, like a man whose fit has passed off into the officers' arms. He was thus mercifully spared from hearing the sentence of the judge, which condemned that fair form, on which he had doted almost to idolatry, to the dread penalty of the arena.

There were many sad faces went home from the prefect's hall that day, for immediately after he had pronounced sentence on Lydia, that functionary adjourned the court, feeling incapacitated for further business. A general gloom settled on all. Pity for Lydia was universal. The spectators knew that the edict of the emperor was not to be broken, for how could one professing the new and accursed faith, however beautiful she might be, escape the common punishment without injury to the general good.

"And poor Caius," said the prefect, as he walked out with a senator, "I pity him almost as much as her. I knew his father well, they are of the old race of Romans. His reason is doubtless shaken by this event: if I thought otherwise it would be impossible for me to overlook his contempt of the court."

CHAPTER IV.

At the termination of the Sacra Via there stood, at the period of our story, the favorite amphitheatre of Rome. Centuries have passed since then, yet still the Colosseum stands, lifting its gray, gigantic walls to heaven, though now shattered by the slow decay of time and the earthquakes of nearly twenty centuries. It has seen more vicissitudes than a history as voluminous as that of Guicciardini could reveal. It has been an amphitheatre, a fortress, a hospital, a bazar, and a Christian church; and its enormous ruins formed the mine out of which materials were dug for half the palaces of the modern town. It stood there when Constantine bore the Labarum into Rome; it heard the revellers of the Gothic king when they feasted in the Palatine; it looked down on the hosts of the Crusaders; it beheld the crowning of patriarchs; it saw the sack of Bourbon; and there it stands yet, with its stern and furrowed face, contemplating the polished races who come to wonder at it, and who, at its feet, were still the rude savages described by Tacitus. You cannot visit that rugged old edifice, especially when by moonlight its walls appear to swell into immensity, without experiencing that unutterable awe which overpowered you when in childhood you speculated on the boundlessness of the horizon.

The cloudless sun of an Italian sky shone down on the Colosseum sixteen centuries ago as it shines today; but the now desolate expanse was then filled with countless multitudes, rising backward from the arena, bench piled above bench, until the uppermost spectators seemed, when viewed from the sands below, to have dwindled into pigmies. Every eye in this vast concourse was turned anxiously on the plain below, as if momentarily expecting the appearance of a new victim; men, and even women, leaned forward from their seats; but the most profound silence brooded over the vast mass, except when a long drawn breath, evincing the absorbing interest of the spectators, rose up from the thousands present, or the sudden howl of a lion was heard at intervals, breaking startling from the recesses under the amphitheatre, where the beasts were confined.

It was one of the great festivals with which the Roman emperors were accustomed to buy popularity from the mob, and since early sunrise the crowd had been entertained by gladiatorial fights of every description. There had been boxing matches; contests where the opponents fought, naked or in armor, with the sword; a battle between the retiarius and his usual opponent; one or two other combats, and a show in which a gladiator had combated successfully with a tiger. But now the most deeply interesting portion of the day was at hand. The Christians, condemned a few days before, were to be cast to the lions, and the suspense grew intolerable.

At length the signal was given, and each spectator, bending eagerly forward, saw a tall, dignified man, somewhat advanced in years, led into the arena. His usual garments had been denied him, and he wore no raiment except a cinchere around his loins. The long silvery hair, the massive brow, and the mild aspect of the victim, surrounded him with an interest not usually obtained by persons condemned to the amphitheatre, for the Roman populace, long accustomed to the ferocities of the circus, looked on the murders perpetrated there much as a Spaniard now regards a bull-fight. But the dignified air of the sufferer, on the present occasion, increased the general interest which was felt in the approaching tragedy; and when, having advanced a space into the arena, he cast his eyes proudly around the benches, his look, which seemed to challenge all to behold how a Christian could die, comforted the rabble in the belief that they should have sport for the delay that had occurred.

After a calm and steady survey of the vast assembly, the Christian martyr sank to his knees, and, burying his face on his hands, prayed audibly; but the sounds, though distinguishable on the low benches, were lost before reaching the populace above. Then he rose to his feet, and fixed his gaze on the cage, near the centre of the arena, where a tiger was confined. There was no blanching of the cheek nor quivering of the eye as he regarded it. A glorious smile lit up his countenance, and he turned his face involuntarily upward, as some thought to take a last look at the sunlight but such was not his object, his thoughts

were indeed heavenward, but fixed on the God he served. While thus gazing, with arms folded on his breast, a cry was heard, and the enraged and famished beast, loosened from his cage, sprung through the air, passing, at one bound, half the distance between his den and the victim. The Christian martyr well knew the meaning of that savage cry, which made every heart but his own in that vast assembly beat more quickly, and bending his head devoutly he awaited the final blow. With another wild howl and a rushing sound it came. They saw the creature throw itself on its haunches for the spring; they saw it darting through the air, like an arrow shot from a bow; and, even as they looked, the martyr lay prostrate on the sands of the arena, whilst the amished beast stood over him its paw on his neck. A single blow had broken the spine. The Christian was with his God.

This tragic scene being over, and the arena sprinkled with fresh sand, a second pause fell on the assembly, preparatory to the introduction of another victim.

"Who is to feed the lion?" said one senator to another, as he lounged back in his seat like a modern dandy at the opera. "I believe that comes next."

"Have you not heard?—ah! you have been from home during the past week. A Scioite girl, of a noble Greek family, I am told, who has turned Christian, and was condemned the same day with the atheist who has just suffered. The others, reserved from the mob, are to be tried when the emperor returns. She is said to be beautiful, but I know little of her except that she was betrothed to Caius Rufinus, whom I believe you know."

"To Caius?" said the other, in undisguised astonishment; "Per Hercle! But where is he, where are her friends—was no effort made to save her?"

"Yes! but the prefect dared not listen to a petition, for you know," here the speaker's voice sunk to a whisper, "that he is a little out of favor with the emperor, and the rescript is positive that all who confess themselves Christians are to be put to death. I happened to present at the trial, and, by the gods! she carried herself like a Juno. He made every effort to persuade her to recant, but in vain; and just as he was about to sentence her, Caius burst frantically into the hall, and besought her, in moving accents, to sacrifice. It was quite a romance, indeed. But she was immovable, and so there was nothing left but to condemn her, though I would have given my estate at Baice that she might be saved."

"But Caius—has he done nothing for her? He is rich, and money will do much, you know."

"Alas! there is the worst of it. Poor Caius was borne insensible from the hall, and revived only to become a maniac. The gods have struck him! Three days ago he escaped from his relations, and yesterday," and the speaker's voice sunk to a deeper melancholy, "a body was found on the shores of the Tiber, swollen and disfigured, but which has been recognized as that of the unfortunate youth, and is to be burned with due obsequies to day."

The speaker sighed, and both relapsed into silence. But their quiet was not of long duration, for almost immediately the signal was given, and the next victim was ushered into the arena. The two senators looked up and beheld, kneeling on the sands, like a sculptured figure on a monument, a female attired in white. They knew instinctively that she was Lydia. Fragments of her story had got abroad in the crowd, distorted it is true in many of the facts, but still substantially correct, and the result had been that a feeling of compassion very unlike that usually entertained for persons in her situation, had become general. During the delay that preceded her appearance her beauty, her orphanage, her demeanor at the trial, and the melancholy fate of her lover, had formed themes for conversation, so that all were predisposed to pity her; and now when she entered, the glimpse caught of her sweet, sad face, as she looked a moment timidly at the crowd ere she sank to her knees a few paces from the benches, had a visible effect in her favor. Men shook their heads, and women clasped their hands; and the audience, as its different members strove to catch a sight of her, moved restlessly to and fro, as when the wind runs in waves over a field of summer corn.

But what, meantime, were the thoughts of the victim? We know not whether to say that her ignorance of her lover's fate was blissful or not, for on the one hand she would have mourned his death, and on the other her uncertainty was torturing. That something had happened to him she felt assured, for she knew that neither bars nor jailers could have kept him from her presence, if he had been able to visit her. She had only a faint remembrance of the closing events of her trial, but it seemed to her as if in a dream, that Caius had been carried senseless from the hall. Since then she had hourly expected to hear from him, and her suspense, from day to day, grew more intolerable at his absence. Perhaps she would have sunk under it, had it not been for the sympathy and prayers of the aged minister, with whom she had been mercifully allowed to spend much of her time. Often she almost gave way to despair. Then a heavenly calm would take possession of her. But amid these fluctuations she gradually rose superior to earthly sorrows, each day that brought her nearer to her fate making her more resigned and even rejoicing, so that when, scarcely half an hour before, she had parted with her last earthly friend, ere he was led out to suffer, it seemed as if all mundane ties were thenceforth broken. Since then, and until the officers appeared to summon her, she had been engaged in prayer. Mechanically she had followed

to the arena. But when she cast her eyes on the vast circle of faces rising around her, as if crowding the sides of a whirlpool in whose vortex she was placed, the suddenly increased beating of her heart, and the rush of the crimson over her cheek and even neck, revealed to her that a spark of earthly feeling yet remained which had not been rooted out. She saw herself the centre of observation to what seemed to her all Rome, with not a solitary friend in the whole vast assembly. A sensation of utter loneliness crushed her heart within her. All the old sweet recollections of love and happiness with Caius—the moonlit bay where first they became acquainted, the groves where they had been wont to worship, the fountain where beneath the stars he had first breathed his vows—these, and many other tender memories rushed across her mind, and, for a moment, the Christian was lost in the woman. She raised her face beseechingly to the crowd, and none who then saw that sad, sweet countenance, ever forgot it.

But, with the murmur of pity that woke and died along the immense living mass, like the mysterious sounds that come and go in the pine-woods on a mountain side, there rushed across her mind the consciousness of her momentary weakness, and, trembling even at that solitary regret over earthly things when eternity was so near, she sank to her knees, and bowing her head in the dust, prayed inwardly for strength from on high. It was a sight to touch peculiarly the sympathies of audience. The long white dress in which she had been allowed to attire herself falling in graceful folds around her person, gave her the beauty of marble statue, and heightened the interest in her favor; while her meek demeanor on entering, and her pleading though momentary look subdued even those who had refused to join in the murmur of compassion.

At this instant the lion, provided for her sacrifice, uttered a sudden howl. It thrilled the hearers with electric suddenness. A shudder ran through the assembly. The judge who presided at the games, perceiving the emotions of the crowd, and humanely wishing to have the ceremony ever as speedily as possible, gave the signal for the beast to be unloosed, and the keeper sprang into the arena and advanced for that purpose.

The excitement in the spectators had now risen to an ungovernable pitch. For the moment every other emotion but that of pity had passed from their breasts, and they gazed breathlessly on the arena, though shuddering as they gazed. Large numbers, however, turned sick at the sight; while, as the keeper placed his hand on the door bolt and paused an instant to look at the kneeling figure of the maiden, every eye followed his own, and a groan of horror thrilled through the mighty mass. Audible sobs, and even shrieks, were heard from the benches appropriated to the women; many covered their faces with their hands; and, from the bustle in various spots, it was evident that others were fainting.

But suddenly a low murmur was heard from the benches near the entrance, the words indeed undistinguishable to those higher in the theatre, but seemingly of strange import, for the sound, at first not louder than the whisperings of a summer breeze among light leaves, rose, and rose, and rose, swelling high and spreading wide, until it roared through the countless thousands like a whirlwind in a forest. The keeper paused with his hand on the bolt. The senators turned quickly toward the entrance. The more distant spectators rose, with a rushing sound, from their seats, to see the cause of the interruption, for though they had heard the murmur, they could not yet make out its words. All eyes soon rested on the figure of a man, advanced on one of the foremost benches, who stood holding an open roll in his hand, while the judge of the games was visible at his side. A deep hush instantaneously fell over the breathless audience, so that a feather might have been heard to fall.

"Save her!" were the first words of the stranger, and they thrilled, like the blast of a trumpet at night, through the vast assembly, "I bear the respite of the emperor."

He would have proceeded, but suddenly a shout arose, which, starting from a senator by the priest's side, was taken up from bench to bench, until it encircled the amphitheatre, and rolling upward simultaneously to the spectator on the highest seat, swelled into a huzza that startled the distant boatmen on the Tiber, and dying at length away, rose and rose again until the gigantic walls of the circus reeled, and the very heavens above seemed tremulous. Never before or since has such a shout arisen in those walls. The voices of eighty thousand human beings in exultation are a sound for a god to hear!

Not until the voice of the stranger was heard had Lydia looked up. But at the first echo of his accents she started from her kneeling posture, fixed her straining eyes on his form, and wildly clasped her hands. She apparently comprehended nothing, save that it was her lover she beheld, and uttering the name of "Caius!" in a tone of thrilling joy, she sunk senseless in the sands. And even as the first murmur of that mighty shout arose, her lover had sprung into the arena, clasped her form in his arms and borne her toward the nearest benches. The sight fired still higher the wild rejoicings of the lookers on, and shout after shout pealed out until long after the principal actors had disappeared from the scene.

When the uproar of the excitement had subsided, the inquiry began to arise how he who was thought to be dead had thus opportunely arrived. The judge himself gave the explanation. We shall rehearse his tale, and with it the facts that subsequently came out. The story of the senator had, in the main, been true, at least up to the period when Caius had escaped from his friends. The young man was

sensible of nothing until he woke sane, on the ensuing morning, in the fields several miles from Rome. The late events seemed to him, at first, like those of a dream, but gradually he became assured of their terrible reality. The thought instantly struck him to go to the emperor, who was about this time expected at Milan, and throwing himself at the feet of Aurelius never to rise until he obtained the pardon of Lydia. His father and the emperor had once served together, and a friendship had thus grown up between the two which only death had severed. He calculated the time it would take him to go and return, and found he had half a day to spare before the hour when Lydia would probably be led out to her doom. Providentially he found Aurelius at Milan, and, after almost giving up to despair, succeeded in winning a respite from the emperor, with a promise of a final pardon if the populace did not rise in a tumult at being disappointed of their prey; for the Roman emperors well knew, and none better than the second Antonine, that, though they might do with the aristocracy as they wished, to tamper with the prejudices of the people was a venture not safely to be made. With this promise, and the emperor's letter commanding a respite, Caius set forth, but he had been delayed so long in his suit, that, although he urged his way night and day with desperate haste, he reached the Circus, as we have seen, only at the last extremity. The body found on the shores of the Tiber, bearing a general resemblance to his person, was, in its mutilated state, easily mistaken for his own.

A few months later saw Lydia and Caius sitting side by side on one of those beautiful hills that overlook the shores of Italy. A noble mansion behind them, which they had for the moment deserted for the arbor where they sat, betokened that they had fixed their habitation in this secluded and delightful region. The sun had just set, and twilight was stealing across the blue sea beneath them, while the evening star, hanging in lustrous beauty half way down the western firmament, trailed a long line of delicately pencilled light on the top of the mimic billows that the night breeze raised. The low ripple of these billows on the beach far down came soothingly to the ear. The air was filled with fragrance. It was an hour and a spot for lovers; and there sat Lydia at the feet of Caius, with her hand clasped in his, and her soft eye gazing up into his face. Silence seemed best to become their feelings, and so, for a long time, neither spoke.

"Are we not happy?" at length murmured Lydia softly, as if fearful of breaking the spell by words.

"And it is all thy work," fondly whispered Caius, "oh! Lydia, but for thee I would never have been a Christian."

"Nay! nay! my husband," she responded, "didst thou not save my life? Would we be here were it not for thy favour with the emperor? Happiness! thy love has given me earthly happiness indeed—and for heavenly felicity! wilt thou not share it with me above?"

Her husband looked earnestly in her face a minute and replied.

"We have each aided the other, and, that we might do this, God taught us to love. I see now that the trials of this life are sent to enlarge our sympathies; and they who here suffer the most, rightly grow thereby best fitted for heaven. Hand in hand then let us go through life, each plucking the thorns from the other's pathway; thus will we grow into that perfect love for which we were intended hereafter."

From Arthur's Magazine.

THE TRUSTY GUARDIAN.

A LITTLE STORY FOR LITTLE FOLK.

BY FANNY GRAY.

HARRY! that was wrong. How could you strike old Rover?"

"Because he stepped on my kite with his big heavy foot, and like to made a hole in it," replied the boy, a lad of ten years old; who had been reproved by his mother for striking a faithful old house dog.

"But Rover did n't do it on purpose. He did n't mean to break your kite."

"I do n't suppose he did. But he had no business to tread on my kite; he's big enough to know better, I should think—and old enough too."

"He's old enough to be a very wise dog, Harry; and so I think he is—much wiser as a dog, than you are as a boy. If he had been as foolish and passionate a dog as you are a boy, he would have turned round and bit you, instead of walking off as he did with a look of grief at your bad treatment. I am sorry that you should treat Rover unkindly—you of all others."

"Why me of all others, mother?"

"Have I never told you how Rover saved your life?"

"No! how was it, mother? When did he save my life? Tell me."

"Are you not sorry that you struck the faithful old dog?"

"Yes, I am; I was a naughty boy. But tell me how he saved my life, mother."

"You were once a very little boy, just like your dear brother Willy. It was in the summer time, just as it is now, and you used to run about in the garden, and gather the flowers and pick fruit, and sometimes lie down and fall asleep upon the grass. Rover was younger then; and a fine, large, active dog. He was very fond of you, and when you were out alone at play he would always keep with you, so if he were afraid you might get into danger."

"One day you went into the garden with your little basket, and gathered it full of flowers. Rover was asleep on the other side of the house, and did not see you go out. I was looking from the window, and all at once