

Thessalonica

A Roman Story

By Charles Brockden Brown

Thessalonica, in consequence of its commercial situation, was populous and rich. Its fortifications and numerous garrisons had preserved it from injury during the late commotions,¹ and the number of inhabitants was greatly increased, at the expense of the defenceless districts and cities. Its place, with relation to Dalmatia, the Peloponnesus, and the Danube, was nearly central. Its security had been uninterrupted for ages, and no city in the empire of Theodosius exhibited so many monuments of its ancient prosperity. It had been, for many years, the residence of the prince, and had thence become the object of a kind of filial affection. He had laboured to render it impregnable, by erecting bulwarks, and guarding it with the bravest of his troops; he had endowed the citizens with new revenues and privileges, had enhanced the frequency of their shows, and the magnificence of their halls and avenues, and made it the seat of government of Illyria and Greece.

Its defence was intrusted to Botheric, whom he had selected for his valour, fidelity, and moderation; and he commended, with equal zeal to this officer, the defence of the city from external enemies, and the maintenance of justice and order within its walls.

The temper of Botheric was generous and impetuous. He was unacquainted with civil forms, and refrained, as much as possible, from encroaching on the functions of the magistrate. His education and genius were military, and he conceived that his commission required from him nothing but unwearied attention to his soldiers. His vigilance was bent to maintain order and obedience among them, and to prevent or to stifle dissensions between them and the citizens. For this end he multiplied their duties and exercises, so as to leave no room for intercourse with the people. Their time was constantly occupied with attendance at their stations, or performance of some personal duty in their quarters.

By these means, the empire of order was, for some time, maintained; but no diligence or moderation can fully restrain the passions of the multitude. Quarrels sometimes arose between the spectators at the theatre and circus, and the centinels who were planted in the avenues. The General was always present at the public shows; clamour and riot instantly attracted his attention, and if a soldier was a party in the fray, he hastened to terminate the contest, by examination and punishment.

You need not be told, that the populace of Roman cities are actuated by a boundless passion for public shows. The bounty of the prince cannot be more acceptably exerted than in pecuniary donations for this purpose, and by making exhibitions more frequent and magnificent. The gratitude of this people is proportioned, not to the efficacy of edicts to restrain crimes, alleviate cares, or diminish the price of provisions; but to the commodiousness and cheapness of seats in a theatre, or to the number and beauty of the horses which are provided for the circus.

The prince had manifested his attachment to this city in the usual manner. The finest horses were procured, at his expense, from Africa and Spain; new embellishments were added to the chariots, and a third set of characters, distinguished by a crimson uniform, was added to the former. Once a month, the people were amused by races, at the expense of their sovereign.

¹ At the conclusion of the Gothic war, A.D. 390.

At one of these exhibitions, a citizen, by name Macro, attempted, to enter a gate by which the Senators passed to their seats. Order had long since established distinctions in this respect, and every class of the people enjoyed their peculiar seats and entrances. Macro was therefore denied admission, by two soldiers stationed in the passage. He persisted in his efforts to enter, and the soldiers persisted in their opposition, till, at length, a scuffle ensued, in which the citizen was slightly wounded.

The games not having begun, many from within and without were attracted to the spot. The crowd insensibly increased, and the spectators seemed willing to discountenance the claims of Macro. The sight of his blood, however, changed the tide in his favour. The soldiers were believed to have proceeded to this extremity without necessity, and to have exercised their power wantonly.

Clamours of disapprobation were succeeded by attempts to disarm the centinels, and conduct them before the tribunal of their General. This was usually held in an upper porch of the edifice. Botheric was momentarily expected, and the persons who urged the seizure of the culprits, were governed by pacific intentions. The soldiers were supposed to have transgressed their duty, and redress was sought in a lawful manner. Botheric was the only judge of their conduct, and confidence was placed in the equity of his decision.

The soldiers maintained the rectitude of their proceeding, and refused to resign their arms, or leave the post. Some endeavoured to gain their end by expostulation and remonstrance. The greater number were enraged, and their menaces being ineffectual, were quickly succeeded by violence. The interior passages were wide, but the entrance was narrow, and the soldiers profited by their situation, to repel the assaults that were made upon them. The wounds which they inflicted in their own defence augmented the fury of their assailants. They fought with desperate resolution, and were not overpowered till they had killed five of the citizens.

At length the soldiers sought their safety in flight. The mob poured into the passages. One of the fugitives was overtaken in a moment. The pursuers were unarmed, but the victim was dashed against the pavement, and his limbs were torn from each other by the furious hands that were fastened upon him. While his lifeless and bleeding trunk was dragged along the ground, and thrown to and fro by some, others were engaged in searching for him that escaped.

While roaming from place to place, they met a soldier whom his officer had dispatched upon some message. They staid not to inquire whether this was he of whom they were in search, but seizing him, they dragged him to the midst of the square, and dispatched him with a thousand blows.

The tumult was by no means appeased by these executions. Numbers flocked to the scene. The sight of the dead bodies of the citizens, imperfect and exaggerated rumours of the cruelty of the centinels, the execrations and example of those who had been leaders in the tumult, conspired to engage them in the same outrages.

The pursuit of the fugitive soldier did not slacken. The galleries and vaults were secured, and every place resounded with uproar and menace. Meanwhile, the seats of the Senators were filled with a promiscuous crowd, who gladly seized this opportunity of engrossing places more convenient than any other.

At this moment, Botheric and his officers arrived. The entrance was inaccessible, by reason of the crowd stationed without, and the numbers that were struggling in the passages to gain the senatorial benches. In this contest, the weaker were overpowered, and scores were trodden to death or suffocated. The General and his officers were no sooner known to be arrived, than they were greeted on all hands, by threatening gestures and insolent clamours. The heads of the

slaughtered soldiers were placed upon pikes. Botheric was compelled to gaze upon their gory visages, and listen to the outcries for vengeance which ascended from a thousand mouths.

This unwonted spectacle, and the confusion which surrounded him, threw him into temporary panic. It was requisite to ascertain the causes of this tumult, to prevent its progress, and to punish its authors; but his own safety was to be, in the first place, consulted. How far that was endangered by the fury of the populace it was impossible to foresee.

His retinue consisted of twenty officers, who were armed, as usual, with daggers. Recovering from their first astonishment, they involuntarily drew their weapons, and crowded round their General. This movement seemed by no means to intimidate the populace, whose outcries and menaces became more vehement than ever. As their numbers and fury increased, they pressed more closely and audaciously upon this slender band, whose weapons pointed at the bosoms of those who were nearest, and who could scarcely preserve themselves from being overwhelmed.

Botheric's surprize quickly yielded to a just view of the perils that surrounded him. The cause of this tumult was unknown; but it was evident that the temper of the people was revengeful and sanguinary. The slightest incident was sufficient to set them free from restraint. The first blood that should be shed would be the signal for outrage, and neither he nor his officers could hope to escape with their lives.

His first care, therefore, was to inculcate forbearance on his officers. This, indeed, would avail them but little, since the foremost of the crowd would be irresistibly impelled by those who were behind, and whose numbers incessantly increased. In a moment they would be pressed together; their arms would be useless; and secret enemies, by whom he vaguely suspected that this tumult had been excited, would seize that opportunity for wreaking their vengeance.

To escape to the neighbouring portico was an obvious expedient; but the galleries, above and below, were already filled with a clamorous multitude, whose outcries and gesticulations prompted those below to the commission of violence. His troops were either dispersed in their quarters, or stationed on the walls. The few whose duty required their attendance at the circus could afford no protection. Those at a distance could not be seasonably apprized of the danger of their leader; and if they were apprized, would be at a loss, in the absence of their officers, in what manner to act. To endeavour to restore tranquillity by persuasion or remonstrance was chimerical. No single voice could be heard amidst the uproar.

In this part of the square there had formerly been erected an equestrian statue of Constantius. It had been overthrown and broken to pieces in a popular sedition. The pedestal still remained. The advantage of a lofty station, for the sake either of defence or of being heard, was apparent. Botheric, and two of his officers, leaped upon it, and stretched forth their hands in an attitude commanding silence.

This station, by rendering the person of Botheric distinguishable at a distance, only enhanced his danger. A soldier, by name Eustace, who had, a few days before, been punished for some infraction of discipline, by stripes and ignominious dismissal from the service, chanced to be one of those who were gazing at the scene from the upper portico. The treatment he had suffered could not fail to excite resentment, but the means of vengeance were undigested and impracticable. His cowardice and narrow understanding equally conspired to render his malice impotent. He intended, the next day, to set out for his native country, Syria, and, meanwhile, mixed with the rabble which infested the circus.

Botheric had extorted, by his equity and firmness, the esteem of the magistrates and better class of the people. The vile populace were influenced by no sentiment but fear. Botheric had done nothing to excite their hatred; and his person would probably have been uninjured till the

alarm had reached the citadel, and the troops had hastened to his rescue, had not Eustace unhappily espied him, as he stood upon the pedestal.

The soldier had an heavy stone in his hand, with which he had armed himself, from a general propensity to mischief, and a vague conception that it might be useful to his own defence. The person of his enemy was no sooner distinctly seen, than a sudden impulse to seize this opportunity for the gratification of his vengeance was felt by him. He threw the stone towards the spot where the General stood.

Botheric was exerting his voice to obtain audience, when the stone struck upon his breast. The blood gushed from his mouth and nostrils, his speech and strength failed, and he sunk upon the ground.

This outrage was observed with grief, rage and consternation by his retinue. Their own safety required the most desperate exertions. Two of them lifted the General in their arms, while the rest, with one accord, brandished their weapons, and rushed upon the crowd. They determined to open a way by killing all that opposed them.

Men, crowded together in a narrow space, are bereft of all power over their own motions. Their exertions contribute merely to destroy their weaker neighbours, without extricating themselves. Those whom chance exposed to the swords of the officers were unable to fly. Their condition was no less desperate; and the blood that flowed around them insensibly converted their terror into rage.

The contest was unequal, and a dreadful carnage ensued before the weapons were wrested from their owners. A thousand hands were eager to partake in the work of vengeance. The father had seen the death of his son, and the son had witnessed the agonies of his father. The execution appeared to be needless and wanton; and the swords, after being stained with the blood of their kinsmen, were aimed at their own breasts. This was no time to speculate upon causes and consequences. All around them was anarchy and uproar, and passion was triumphant in all hearts.

Botheric and his train were thrown to the ground, mangled by numberless wounds, or trampled into pieces. The assassins contended for the possession of the dismembered bodies, and threw the limbs, yet palpitating, into the air, which was filled with shouts and imprecations.

All this passed in a few minutes. Few were acquainted with the cause of the tumult. Still fewer were acquainted with the deplorable issue to which it had led. The immediate actors and witnesses were fully occupied. The distant crowd, whose numbers were increased by the arrival of those who, from all quarters, were hastening to the circus, could only indulge their wonder and panic, and make fruitless inquiries of their neighbours.

In this state of things a rumour was hatched, and propagated with infinite rapidity, that the soldiers had received orders to massacre the people, and that the execution had already begun. All was commotion and flight. The crowd melted away in a moment. The avenues were crowded with the fugitives, who overturned those whom they met, or communicated to them their belief and their terror. Every one fled to his house, and imparted to his family the dreadful tidings. Distraction and lamentation seized upon the women and domestics. They barred their doors, and prepared to avoid or resist the fate which impended over them.

Meanwhile, those who had rushed through the unguarded passages, and occupied the senatorial seats, were alarmed, and prompted to return, by the continuance of the uproar without. In their haste to issue forth they incumbered and impeded each other, and the passage was choaked. Some one appeared in an upper gallery, and called upon the people to provide for their safety, for that Botheric had directed a general massacre.

This intelligence operated more destructively than a thousand swords. In the universal eagerness to escape, the avenues were made impassable, and numbers were overthrown and trampled to death.

The magistrates had taken their places when the tumult began. Some were infected with the general panic, and made ineffectual efforts to escape. My duty, as chief magistrate, required me to apply all my endeavours to the checking of the evil. I waited, in anxious suspense, for information as to the nature and extent of the mischief. In my present situation nothing could reach me but a disjointed and mutilated tale. I heard outcries, and witnessed the commotion, but was wholly at a loss as to their cause or tendency.

After a time the tumult began to subside. The passages were gradually cleared by the suffocation of the weaker, and the multitude rushed over the bodies of their fellow citizens into the square. The timorous hastened to their homes, and spread the alarm to the most distant quarters of the city. Others, more courageous or inquisitive, lingered on the spot, gazed upon the mangled and disfigured bodies, which were strewn around the pedestal, and listened to the complaints of the wounded, and the relations of those who had been active in the fray.

Those whose passions had not been previously excited, no sooner recognized the visages of Botheric and some of his retinue among the slain, than terrors of a new kind were awakened. The murder of one of the most illustrious men in the empire, and one who possessed, beyond all others, the affections of the prince, was an event pregnant with disastrous consequences. That his death would call down some signal punishment, in which themselves, though innocent, might be involved, was justly to be dreaded. That the resentment of the soldiery would stimulate them to some sudden outrage was no less probable. There was imminent peril in being found near the spot. The spectators gradually withdrew, and solitude and silence succeeded. The uproar was hushed, the circus was deserted, and a panic stillness seemed to hover over the city.

As soon as obstructions were removed, in my character as prefect of the city, and attended by civil officers, I ascended a tribunal in an hall near the circus. Some of my attendants were immediately dispatched to examine the scene of the conflict, to arrest all who should be found near it, and collect all the information that offered.

Those charged with this commission speedily returned, leading two men, whose wounds did not disable them from walking when supported by others. These persons were questioned as to their knowledge of this disaster. One of them related that when the officers were encompassed by the mob, it was his ill fortune to be placed near them. He was a stranger to the cause of the tumult, and endeavoured, with his utmost strength, to extricate himself from his perilous situation. The populace were loud in their clamours, the officers seemed resolute in their own defence, and he dreaded that the scene would terminate in bloodshed. His temper was pacific and timid, and he desired nothing more than to remove to a safe distance.

While making efforts for this purpose, the officers assailed the crowd, and he was the first to fall by their swords. His senses deserted him, and he did not revive till the mob was entirely dispersed. His companion told a tale nearly similar, and the attendants informed the magistrate that Botheric and his tribunes had perished, their scattered remains being found upon the spot.

I was startled and confounded by this incident. To what excesses the soldiers might be suddenly transported when freed from the restraints of discipline, it was easy to foresee. No other expedient suggested itself, than to summon the municipal body, and request their counsel in this urgent danger.

The members of the senate were preparing to go to the circus. This was commonly done with equipage and pompous train. The hour of assembling was arrived, and they were preparing to set

out, when rumours of sedition and massacre assailed them. Messengers were by some dispatched to obtain more distinct information, some of whom returned with the tidings gleaned from the fugitives whom they encountered in the way. Others, more intrepid, ventured to approach the circus, and examine objects with their own eyes. They brought back the tidings that Botheric and his officers were slain by the people.

The most courageous were deeply apprehensive of the consequences which would grow out of his untimely death. They were alternately perplexed with wonder respecting the cause of so memorable a catastrophe, and with dread of the vengeance which it would excite in the bosom, not only of the soldiers, but of the prince. They were recalled from their mournful reveries, by loud signals at their gate, and the entrance of an herald, who, in the name of the prefect, summoned them to council. The summons was gladly obeyed.

Some time had now elapsed. The citizens, immured in their houses, darted fearful glances from their balconies and windows, anxious to hear tidings. The passing Senators were recognized, and their progress attended with importunate inquiries into the nature of the threatened evil, and with supplications that their zeal should be exerted to preclude it.

Many, encouraged by the presence of their magistrates, joined the cavalcade, and the Senate house was quickly surrounded by an immense, but trembling multitude. The Senate being, at length, convened, I laid before them all the intelligence which I had been able to procure respecting the late tumult. I expatiated on the enormity of the deed that had been perpetrated in the murder of Botheric and his officers, and enumerated its probable effects on the minds of the soldiers, and of the prince. I pointed out the necessity of ascertaining the genuine circumstances of the case, of detecting and punishing the criminals, and of appeasing the resentment of the sovereign and the troops.

While engaged in consultation, the wrath which we so justly dreaded, was already excited in the soldiers. Affrighted at the fate of their companions, the centinels posted in the circus fled with precipitation to the military quarter. The rumour was at first indistinct, and as affrays of this kind were not uncommon, the soldiers trusted to the equity of their leader for the vindication of their wrongs. Presently a messenger arrived, informing them that their General was surrounded and likely to be slain by the populace.

At this news, many ran together, and intreated the subaltern officers to lead them to the rescue of their General. As no orders were transmitted from their superiors, the Centurions hesitated to comply. Their reluctance to interpose was increased by the incredibility of the danger. The clamours of the soldiers, however, who threatened to march without permission, conquered this reluctance, and five hundred men were called out.

The general consternation which they witnessed on their march, excited their fears. The few persons who remained in the square, vanished at their approach, and they were left to learn the fate of their officers from the view of their lifeless remains.

The soldiers of Botheric were his friends, countrymen, and family. They had devoted themselves to his honour, and followed his standard, in the service of Theodosius, with invincible fidelity. Many of them had bound themselves by oaths to die with him.

The mangled and dishonoured corpse of this adored leader now presented itself to their eyes. Every sentiment was absorbed, for a time, in astonishment and grief. They inquired of each other, if the spectacle which they beheld was real; if these, indeed, were the members and features of their beloved chief. They held up his remains to view, bathed his disfigured face with their tears, and burst, at length, into a cry of universal lamentation.

Many, in pursuance of their vow not to survive their leader, stabbed themselves, and died upon the spot. Others exclaimed that their vows to that effect, should be performed only when the funeral honours and the vengeance due to their chief, were fully paid. They collected his remains, and wrapping them in his mantle, set out on their return to the citadel, in a solemn procession. On their way they sung wild and melancholy dirges, in the fashion of their country, and mingled with their music fits of passionate weeping. In the streets which they passed, every one fled before them, and all around was lonely and desolate.

Intelligence of their approach was quickly received by their comrades at the citadel, who came out in great numbers, and joined the procession. Indignation and fury appeared to be suspended in a superior passion.

Meanwhile, the subaltern officers were no sooner fully apprized of the havoc which had taken place, than they assembled in a kind of counsel. They were aware of the necessity of subordination, and they did not mean that their vengeance should be less sure because it was delayed. One of their number, by name Walimer, an hoary veteran, was unanimously chosen their leader.

Walimer concealed, under a savage aspect, all the qualities of a judicious commander. His grief for the fate of Botheric was tempered by prudence and foresight. As soon as the choice was known, he leaped into the midst of the assembly, and devoted himself, with solemn imprecations, to the task of avenging their late chief. At the same time, he enlarged upon the benefits of circumspection and delay. The first measure he proposed was to dispatch a messenger to Theodosius, with an account of this transaction. He questioned not that the Emperor would authorize a signal retribution to be inflicted on the guilty city, and that they would be appointed the ministers of his justice. It was easy to convince his hearers of the advantage of proceeding in the business of revenge with the sanction or connivance of the government. If the Emperor should refuse justice, it would then be time enough to extort it. The arms and fortifications were still in their possession, and these it would be wise to guard with the utmost vigilance. In this counsel the new tribunes readily concurred, and suitable remonstrances convinced the soldiers of the propriety of the choice that had been made, and the proceedings adopted. Three horsemen, charged with the delivery of a message to the Emperor, were immediately dispatched to *Mediolanum*.

To communicate information of these events to the monarch, to deprecate his anger, and convince him of the innocence of the magistrates and the greater part of the people, were likewise suggested to the Senate by one of its members. The wisdom of this counsel was obvious. I was authorized, as prefect, to draw up a statement of the truth, from such information as I had already received, or should speedily obtain. This was to be done with all possible expedition, in order to prevent the propagation of rumours.

Meanwhile, a deputation was appointed to visit the citadel, to declare to the soldiers the sincere regret of the Senate for the unhappy event that had befallen, to exhort them to moderation and peace, and assure them that the most strenuous exertions should be made to detect the authors of the tumult, on whom the most signal punishment should be inflicted.

The deputies were astonished to observe the order which reigned in the soldiers' quarters. No clamours or menaces were heard. They were conducted to the hall, where Walimer and his officers were seated, and their exhortations and pleas were listened to with sullen and mournful silence.

Walimer, in answer to their message, informed them of the choice which the soldiers had made of a new chief, declared his implicit reliance on the justice of the Emperor, to whose decrees he

and his troops were determined to conform, and admonished them to execute, without delay, the justice which they promised. He told them that discipline should be as rigidly maintained as formerly, and that things should remain in their present state till the will of their common sovereign was known. The Senate waited, in eager suspense, the return of their deputies. The pacific deportment and professions of Walimer being communicated to them, they retired, with their fears considerably allayed, to their houses.

Heralds were dispatched to all quarters to acquaint the people with the result of this conference, and to exhort them to observe a cautious and peaceable behaviour; punishments were denounced against any who should be detected in any riotous act, and all persons were enjoined to repair to the tribunal of the chief magistrate, and give what information they possessed relative to this transaction.

The ensuing night was passed by the prefect in receiving and comparing depositions of real or pretended witnesses. Macro was traced to his home. He was, by trade, an armourer, and lived with his family, in an obscure corner. His wounds were of no great moment, and the officers of justice found him at supper, in his hovel. He was hurried to the tribunal, followed by his wife and immediate kindred, who trembled for his safety.

As he was the author of this tumult, he could expect little mercy from his audience. Those whose relations or friends had fallen were deeply exasperated at him whose folly and rashness had given birth to the evil. Others, who reflected on future calamities, likely to flow from the same source, pursued him with the utmost rancour.

In spite of proclamations and menaces, curiosity and fear attracted great numbers to the hall of justice. Their panic stillness was succeeded by commotion and rage. The steps of Macro were accompanied by hootings and execrations, and they clamoured loudly for his punishment.

I was sensible of the danger that attended this unlawful meeting. I showed myself to the people from a balcony, and endeavoured to harangue them into moderation and patience. I pointed out the enormous evils which their turbulent concourse had already produced, and urged every topic likely to influence their fears, to induce them to disperse.

The effects of these remonstrances were partial and temporary. My promises that the culprits should not escape the most condign punishment, gratified their sanguinary appetites, and their murmurs were hushed.

The threats of torment extorted from Macro a confession of his offences. It seems that when he came to the circus, he was intoxicated with wine, and had mistaken one entrance for another. In the confusion of his intellects, he neither listened to, nor understood the objections of the centinels, and he persisted in claiming a privilege which he regarded as justly his due. The consequences have been already related, and afford a memorable proof from what slight causes the most disastrous and extensive effects may flow.

Macro's offence was venial and slight; but it was considered that, even if he were innocent, his life was a necessary sacrifice. Neither the soldiers nor the people, whose judgments were always fettered by prejudice and passion, would consent to dismiss him in safety. Neither would they be satisfied by the infliction of a slight or tardy penalty. Macro, besides, was a depraved and worthless individual, whose life or death was, in the eyes of his judges, of the most trivial moment. Influenced by these considerations, the magistrates, with some reluctance, condemned Macro to have his arms and legs cut off, and afterwards to be beheaded on the spot where Botheric had fallen, and which was dyed with the blood of those who owed their untimely fate to his temerity.

This sentence was heard by the friends of the criminal with groans of despair, and by the rest of the audience, with shouts of applause. The criminal was loaded with chains, and led away to prison. Being aware that the fury of the people might betray them into some outrage, I addressed them anew from the balcony, and admonished them to retire.

Some symptoms of compliance appeared in part of the assembly, who began to separate. A multitude, however, crowded round Macro, as he came forth from the hall, and greeted him with insults and curses.

This unhappy man was not destitute of courage; but he was willing to avoid that lingering and dreadful death to which he was doomed. He was, besides, penetrated with indignation at the injustice of his sentence. He, therefore, retorted the curses that were heaped upon him, both because he conceived them to be unmerited, and because he wished to exasperate the mob to inflict a speedy death.

Those who followed him were the vilest of the vile; base, sanguinary and impetuous, delighting in tumult, prone to violence, and stimulated by revenge for those who had been stifled in the press, or slain by the tribunes. Macro had not gone many steps before the officers who guarded him were driven to a distance. The mob, enraged by his taunts, took the work of justice into their own hands, and Macro received from their pikes and clubs that death which he sought.

The magistrates were quickly informed of this event. They had been accustomed, on similar cases, to vindicate their authority by the aid of the soldiers. This expedient was now impracticable or hazardous, and they sat in powerless inactivity, consoling themselves with the hope that the popular indignation would be appeased by this victim.

Relieved from the dread of military execution, multitudes, though the night was somewhat advanced, resorted from the senate house, and hall of justice, to the circus. The kindred and friends of the dead hastened to ascertain their true condition, and to bestow upon them funeral rites.

The circus and its avenues quickly overflowed with inquisitive or anxious spectators. Innumerable torches were borne to and fro; women hung over the bodies of their husbands, fathers and sons, and filled the air with outcries and wailings: some explored the courts and passages, in search of those who were missing, while others, lifting corpses in their arms, bent homeward their steps, in tumultuous procession, and with far-heard laments.

Meanwhile, several witnesses informed the magistrates of the stone which had been thrown at Botheric, and at length the name, and character, and guilt of Eustace were detected. Eustace was justly regarded as the immediate author of this calamity. He was likewise a soldier, and his detection and punishment might be expected eminently to gratify the military. It would transfer, in some degree, the guilt of this sedition from the people to their own order.

Officers were quickly dispersed, throughout the city, in search of the fugitive. Eustace had seen his enemy fall. Momentary exultation was followed by terror, and he made haste to shroud himself from inquiry and suspicion in an obscure habitation near the port.

He had secured his passage in a barque, which designed to set sail, next morning, for Ptolemais, in Syria. He meant to go on board at the dawn of day, and hoped, meanwhile, to be unthought of and unknown.

It was peculiarly unfortunate for this wretch, that a mariner belonging to this vessel happened to be stationed at his elbow when the stone was thrown. The mariner had been present when Eustace had contracted for his passage with the master of the barque; hence arose his knowledge of Eustace. He was a way-farer; had been attracted, by a natural curiosity, to the circus; had

gazed, with wandering eyes and beating heart, upon the tumult; and, in the fluctuations of the mob, had undesignedly been placed by the side of the assassin.

He had afterwards listened to the voice of the herald, summoning before the magistrate all who possessed any knowledge of the author and circumstances of the insurrection. His timidity, the child of inexperience, deterred him from disclosing his knowledge, till he himself became, by a concurrence of events not necessary to be mentioned, the object of suspicion, and was dragged by public officers to the tribunal of the prefect. He then explained his knowledge of Eustace, and pointed him out as the only agent.

This tale, though insufficient to rescue the mariner from danger, occasioned diligent search to be made for Eustace. The master of the barque was acquainted with the past condition and present views of the soldier, and his evidence suggested to the magistrate the expedient of placing officers on board the vessel, who, if the assassin should not be previously detected, might seize him as he entered the ship, in pursuance of his contract with the captain.

This expedient was successful. Eustace ventured from his recess in the dusk of morning, proceeded unmolested to the port, and put himself on board the vessel, which was anchored at some distance from the quays. At the moment when he began to exult in his escape, he was seized, pinioned, and conducted, without delay, to the presence of the judge. The testimony of the mariner, and his own confession, extorted by the fear of torment, established his guilt. The prefect lost no time in informing Walimer and his tribunes of the measures which had been adopted; and offered to deliver Eustace into their hands, to be treated in what manner they thought proper. The offer was readily, though ungraciously accepted.

Eustace had been detained in the hall, the magistrate fearing that the same outrage would be perpetrated by the people, on this criminal, if he were placed within their reach, of which Macro had already been the victim. A band of soldiers from the citadel received him at the door of the hall, and surrounding him with sullen visages and drawn swords, returned, in hostile array, to their quarters. The windows and galleries that overlooked their march, were filled with silent and astonished gazers.

The succeeding day passed in a state of general suspense. Men had leisure to ruminate upon the consequences that impended, and to wonder at the change that had so abruptly taken place in their condition. Fear and hope struggled in their bosoms. All customary occupations and pursuits were laid aside. Neighbours assembled to communicate to each other the story of what themselves had witnessed or endured, to recount their imminent danger in the press, and their hair-breadth escapes, to expatiate on the movements of the soldiery, and propagate their terrors of the future.

Upwards of three hundred citizens perished on this occasion. The cemeteries were opened, and funeral processions were every where seen. Though the streets were crowded, and the whole city was in motion, appearances exhibited a powerful contrast to the impetuosities and clamours of the preceding day. The pavements were beaten by numberless feet; but every movement was grave and slow. Discourse was busy, but was carried on in whispers, and, instead of horrid uproar, nothing but murmurs, indistinct and doubtful, assailed the ear. The very children partook of the general consternation and awe.

At noon-day, a messenger from the citadel demanded admission to the prefect, whom he acquainted with the intention of the soldiers to celebrate, on the ensuing evening, and at the spot where they fell, the obsequies of Botheric and his officers. This intention, however hazardous or inconvenient to the city, could not be thwarted or changed. This ceremony was likely to exasperate the grief of the soldiers, all of whom would be present and partake in it. Some fatal

impulse of indignation, some inauspicious rumour or groundless alarm, might unseasonably start into birth. The night would lend its cloak to purposes of cruelty, and, before a new day, the city might be wrapt in flames, and ten thousand victims might be offered to the shade of Botheric.

In this emergency the Senate were once more convened, and their counsel required. They deputed one of their members to the citadel, in order to gain from Walimer, a clear explanation of his purposes. This officer maintained a stately reserve and ambiguous silence. His demeanour plunged them deeper into uncertainty. Many put the blackest construction on his words, and forboded, that the coming night would be signalized by indiscriminate massacre and havoc.

How to avert this evil was a subject of fruitless deliberation. One measure was obviously prudent. The people were informed of the ceremony that was about to take place, were exhorted to stay in their houses, and assured, that nothing was intended by the soldiers, but honour to their chiefs. The danger of tumultuous concourse, or panic apprehensions, at such a time, was evident.

The Senators, however, were destitute of that confidence which they endeavoured to instil into the people. Some, at the approach of night, secretly withdrew from the city. The guards, posted at the gates, suffered all to pass without question or hindrance. Others, more irresolute, or less timorous, remained; but they armed their domestics, and closed their doors, or made preparation to fly or conceal themselves on the first alarm. Spies were directed to hover round the circus, or were posted on the turrets of the houses, to watch the first glimmering of torches, or the remotest sound of footsteps.

The people were sufficiently aware of the danger of crowding to a spectacle like this. The assurance of the magistrates suppressed all but nameless and indefinable terrors. They withdrew to their homes, when several trumpets from the ramparts announced, at the appointed hour, that the military procession was begun.

By various avenues which led to the circus, the army repaired thither, and forming a circle round the pile, on which the remains of the officers were laid, they silently beheld them consumed. Eustace was stabbed by the hands of Walimer; and many of the soldiers could not be restrained from pouring out their blood at this altar. The flames that ascended from this pile were seen to a great distance. It was watched, with unspeakable solicitude, by those that remained in the city. Those at a distance were left in uncertainty whether it was from a funeral pile, or indicated the commencement of a general conflagration.

The flame and the light attendant on it gradually disappeared. An interval of ominous repose succeeded. The troops peaceably returned to their quarters. Those only who dwelt in the streets through which their march lay, were conscious of their movements. The rest of the city was hushed in profound and uninterrupted repose.

Next day, the tumult of consternation and suspense somewhat subsided. Still, however, all classes were penetrated with dread. The sentence of the prince was yet unknown. To what measures his indignation would hurry him, was a topic of foreboding.

In pursuance of the directions of the Senate, the prefect had dispatched, early in the morning, a messenger to *Mediolanum*. A faithful narrative of this transaction had been drawn up, in which the partial, abrupt, and unpremeditated nature of the tumult was copiously displayed. The messenger was charged to deliver this statement to Acilius, one of the Imperial ministers, of whom the prefect was a kinsman, and on whose good offices with the prince there was the utmost reason to rely.

The horsemen whom Walimer had sent upon the same errand, were better mounted, pursued their journey with more diligence, and had set out several hours sooner than the herald of the

Senate. In fifteen days they arrived at the capital, and hastened to communicate their tidings to Rufinus, a minister who had long enjoyed the highest place in the Emperor's favour.

Rufinus and Botheric had contracted a political alliance, the purpose of which was, to secure to the former the civil administration, and to the latter the highest military authority in the empire. This unexpected catastrophe blasted the hopes of Rufinus. His efforts had been directed to remove and destroy all his competitors in favour, and to place the whole Power of the state in the hands of himself and of his creatures. Theodosius regarded Botheric with singular and almost paternal affection. Rufinus had married the sister of the chief, and embarked his fortunes in the same cause.

The messengers had delivered their message to Rufinus in a secret audience; but his wife recognizing her countrymen, and the soldiers of her brother, took measures to obtain from them the substance of their tidings. Her grief gave place to revenge, and she used the most powerful means to stimulate the zeal of her husband in what she deemed the cause of justice. Rufinus was sufficiently disposed to avenge the blood of her kinsman, in that of the rebellious city.

The monarch was sitting at a banquet when his minister rushed into his presence, and, with every symptom of grief, communicated the fatal news, that Botheric, his faithful soldier, the support of his throne, and the guardian of his children, had been murdered, with every circumstance of wanton cruelty, by the people of Thessalonica.

The Emperor, starting from his seat, expressed, at the same time, his incredulity and horror at this news. The former sentiment was overpowered by the arts of the minister, who produced the letter that had just been received, and the men who had brought it. The horsemen, on being interrogated, gave a minute, though exaggerated and fallacious picture of the tumult. The messengers were unacquainted with its true causes, and the most accurate statement which it was in their power to make, would have left the hearers in astonishment at the savage ferocity of the Thessalonians.

Incredulity at length gave place to rage. In the first transport of his fury he vowed to obliterate the offending city from the face of the earth. The choleric temper of Theodosius was capable of transporting him to the wildest excesses. These excesses, when reason resumed its power, were beheld in their genuine deformity, and were productive of exquisite remorse. Rufinus, therefore, was eager to improve the opportunity, and before the paroxysm of passion should subside, to extort from him a sanguinary edict.

It was not possible, indeed, for malice to contrive an higher provocation than this. There was little danger that his passion should subside, if it were not assailed by the lenient counsels and remonstrances of others. This, however, would certainly happen as soon as the disaster was publicly known, and was, therefore, to be prevented by dispatch.

Rufinus assumed the specious office of assuaging his masters resentment. He perceived the folly of demolishing towers, and walls, and habitations, on account of an offence committed by those who resided within them. It was just to punish the guilty people; but to slay them on the very stage of their crimes was all that equity demanded.

The punishment could not follow too soon upon the heel of the offence, and the soldiers of Botheric were the suitable ministers of vengeance. There was no danger that their hands would be tied up by scruples or commiseration. The death of the people was, indeed, claimed by the justice of the soldiers as well as of the prince, and should that justice be refused by the monarch, the troops would not fail, being in possession of fortifications and arms, to execute it of their own accord. The punishment could not be prevented, and if his sanction should be refused, their

deed would constitute them rebels to his authority, and the fairest city in his empire would thus be torn from his possession.

These motives were artfully, though needlessly insinuated. The Emperor eagerly affixed his seal and his signature to the warrant which condemned the people of the most illustrious and populous of Roman cities to military execution.

Rufinus knew, that to the complete execution of this sentence, it was necessary that the preliminary measures should be secret. A knowledge of their fate would impel numbers to flight, and others, urged by despair, would rush into rebellion, and oppose force by force. There was likewise but one method in which justice could be fully executed. By assembling the whole body of the people in the circus, the task imposed on their assassins would be with more facility executed, and the theatre of their offences would be made, as justice required, the scene of their punishment.

With these views, the horsemen, a few hours after their arrival, set out on their return, with secret directions to Walimer, under the Emperor's own seal, to collect the people in the circus, under pretence of an equestrian exhibition, and slay them to a man.

The number of the people did not fall short of three hundred thousand. Rufinus laid claim to the praise of clemency, in withstanding the fury of his master, whose revenge reluctantly consented to spare one. The criminals were naturally supposed chiefly to consist of males of mature age, and justice was thought to be satisfied with the destruction of one third of this number. The circus usually contained between twenty and thirty thousand spectators.

These messengers were, likewise, charged with letters to Julius Malchus, the prefect, in which he was informed, that the prince had received the tidings of what had lately happened. Much regret was expressed for the fate of Botheric, and the magistrate was charged to execute speedy and condign justice on the authors of the tumult. To show, however, that Theodosius confided in the zeal of the civil magistrates, that he discriminated between the innocent and guilty, and that, notwithstanding these outrages, he had not withdrawn his affection from this people, he authorized the magistrates to publish his forgiveness, and in testimony of his sincerity, to invite them to a splendid exhibition of the public games.

A tedious interval elapsed between the departure and return of Walimer's messengers. This interval was big with anxiety and suspense. The popular disquiet and impatience increased as the day approached which was to decide their fate. Antioch, which three years before had committed a less atrocious offence, and which had escaped with the utmost difficulty, a sentence of extermination, was universally remembered, and was the parent of rueful prognostics.

The attention which regular pursuits and sober duties required, was swallowed up by this growing fear. Ears were open to nothing but rumours and conjectures, and the popular mind was alternately agonized with terror, and elated with hope. Sleep was harassed with terrific dreams, and, in many, even the appetite for food was suspended by their mournful presages.

If there be any proportion between evils inflicted and suffered, the death of Botheric was retributed, a thousand fold, in a single day after its occurrence; but twenty-eight days elapsed, and each hour added to the weight of apprehension which oppressed the last.

The distance by land, and round the head of the Hadriatic, from Thessalonica to the Imperial residence, was eight hundred and seventy five miles. The journey, therefore, though pursued with little intermission, by means of post horses, and covered litters, could not be effected in less than fourteen days. One day would be consumed in deliberation, and an equal period of fourteen days would elapse, before letters could be received from Mediolanum by the public carriers.

The messengers, dispatched by Malchus, were outstripped, on expedition, by those of Walimer, and the Emperors letters were delivered to the prefect one day sooner than was expected by him. He dreaded to unclosethe packets perceiving, that the information received by the ministers had gone through the hands of the soldiers, by whom the truth would unavoidably be perverted. The Senate was convened, and the dispatches laid before them.

Intimations of this event reached the people. A Senatorial meeting, at an uncustomary hour, was prolific of conjecture and alarm. Multitudes hastened to the Senate house, and the members of that body forced their way, with difficulty, through the crowd which besieged the entrances. The tumult and clamour became so great, that the prefect was obliged to postpone the opening of the packets till a Senator had exhorted the multitude to order and forbearance, and explained the purport of the meeting, promising to return as soon as the decision of the Emperor was known, and impart to them the tidings.

This assurance was followed by a general pause. Every murmur was hushed. Every eye was fixed, in anxious gaze, upon the door through which the Speaker had withdrawn from their sight, and at which he was momentarily expected to reappear. The uproar of a troubled sea was succeeded by portentous calm, and the silence of death.

At length the magistrate came forth. The joy, indicated by his countenance, did not escape the general observation. Their hopes were elated, and exultation spoke forth from every mouth, as soon as the forgiveness and gracious condescension of the prince were made known. He was heard, distinctly, by few; but the rapturous exclamations of those conveyed the import of the speech to the most distant spectators.

The joyous tidings were diffused with unspeakable celerity. Pleasure was proportioned to the dread that had lately prevailed. Fire and the sword were ready to involve them in a common ruin; but these evils were averted, and not only their pristine security returned, but their darling sports, with new embellishments, were to be renewed. The exhibitions of the circus were ordered to take place on the next day.

The streets resounded with mutual congratulations. Laughter and song, and dance, and feasting, and magnificent illuminations, and processions to the churches, to pour forth the praises of God and of Theodosius, the father of his people, and the darling of mankind, occupied the people during the succeeding night.

The Senators, after the first emotions of their joy had subsided, began to look upon this circumstance with eyes of some suspicion. The choleric and impetuous temper of Theodosius was well known. A much more trivial offence, in the inhabitants of Antioch, had excited his wrath, and prompted him to decree the destruction of the guilty city.

The crime of Thessalonica had been reported by the soldiers. No deprecation had been used. The cause of the tumult and the punishment of its authors, were unknown at the time when Walimer dismissed his messengers. Time for the interposition of beneficent counsellors, or for rage to be displaced by equanimity, had not been allowed.

It was, indeed, remembered that Antioch had fewer claims upon the affection of Theodosius, that the dictates of his hasty indignation, with regard to that city, had been to himself a topic of humiliation and regret, and that he might now be guarded against the impulse of choler. It was likewise known that the genuine intentions of the monarch had not, at any time, been concealed from the Antiochians; and no motives could be imagined by which the prince might be induced to conceal his anger, or counterfeit forgiveness.

These opposite considerations were anxiously revolved by the prefect Malchus. He was unable to divest his mind wholly of inquietude and doubt. The acquiescence of the soldiers, in a

sentence like this, was incredible. Macro and Eustace had not dipped their hands in the blood of Botheric and his retinue. Search was made for those who had been active in the bloody fray; but the evidence obtained was doubtful and contradictory, and the populace began to view their deportment as justified by necessity and self-defence. The officers were known by all to be, with regard to the crowd surrounding them, the first assailants.

The secret, if any secret existed, was repositied with Walimer. A careful observation of his conduct might detect the truth. For this purpose an interview was necessary. To invite him and his tribunes to a banquet was an obvious expedient to detect the truth, if his purposes were hostile, or to confirm his intentions, if they were amicable and pacific.

The senators and officers were therefore invited to a feast. Malchus selected the most sagacious of his servants, and directed them to treat the military followers in a cordial and bounteous manner, and to watch their looks and discourse. Some unguarded expression, it was thought, would escape them in the midst of their carousals, betraying their designs.

This scheme was partly frustrated by the precaution of Walimer, who at once testified his confidence in Malchus, and precluded the hazard of impetuosity or babbling in his soldiers, by coming to the palace of the prefect unattended except by his tribunes. The carousals were prolonged till midnight, and every proof of a sincere reconciliation was given by the guests.

The next day was ushered in as a solemn and joyous festival. It happened that this day was sacred to Demetrius, the saint or tutelary genius of the city, and to whose divine influence the people fondly ascribed the clemency of Theodosius.

It was usual for centinels to be posted at the avenues of the hippodrome. This was a customary duty, and, to omit it on this occasion, would have bred suspicion. No alarm, therefore, was excited by the march, at noon-day, of a detachment from the citadel for this purpose.

On the preceding night, Malchus had imparted his doubts and apprehensions to some of the senators. A secret consultation had been held. No measures sufficiently conducive to their safety could be adopted. Whatever evil was meditated by the soldiers, it was impossible to avert or elude it. The towers and gates were in their hands. Circumspection or disguise would avail nothing. If the danger had assumed any known form, suitable precautions could scarcely be discovered; but now, when all was uncertain and inscrutable, a frank and fearless deportment was most proper.

The presence of the senate and magistrates was necessary at the public shows. My mind was actuated by inexplicable fears, and I would willingly have forborne to attend; but reflection convinced me that my life was equally in the power of the soldiers, in the recesses of my palace, and in the courts of the citadel.

Noon arrived, thousands hurried to the hippodrome; the concourse was uncommonly large, as numbers from the neighbouring villages and districts flocked to the spectacle; all benches were quickly filled and galleries crowded; I proceeded thither at the head of the senatorial order, and was received with low obeisance by the guards, and with loud acclamations by the people. The games only waited the arrival of the general and tribunes to begin.

His approach was quickly announced by the sound of military music. At that moment a civil officer, whose face was pale with affright, thrust himself amidst the crowd, and whispered something in the ear of a senator who sat near me. The senator was observed to start; and inquiry being made into the cause of his alarm, he replied, that Walimer was followed, not by the usual retinue, but by a formidable brigade, who surrounded the circus and seemed to meditate violence.

Walimer and his officers now entered and placed themselves on an elevated platform assigned for his use, and which was ascended by a narrow staircase. His entrance was greeted by grateful acclamations, and he was observed to bow his head in token of his satisfaction. In a moment after, the trumpet, whose note was a signal for the chariots to start from their goal, was sounded.

Before the signal was obeyed, a dart, thrown by an unknown hand and with inconceivable force, struck the breast of a charioteer, who fell headlong from his seat. His horses were alarmed, and swerving from their true direction, threw all into disorder. This event was noticed by the people with amazement.

Their attention was speedily recalled from this object by troops of soldiers rushing through the various passages, and brandishing their swords. No time was allowed to question their purpose or elude it. They fell upon those who were nearest and hewed them to pieces.

Every avenue poured forth a destroying band. Few, therefore, were allowed to be mere spectators of the danger. Every one witnessed the butchery of his neighbour, and shrunk from the swords, which, in a few moments, would be steeped in his own blood.

The multitude rose, with one consent, from their seats. The extent of the evil that threatened them was fully apprehended by none. They were far from imagining that this havoc was directed or sanctioned by the prince. They did not conceive that the soldiers had acted by the orders of Walimer; but that a conspiracy was formed against them by the military order was apparent.

Those who were near the station of Walimer, stretched their hands towards him in supplication, and uttered the most piercing cries of distress. His sullen and immovable air convinced them that he was an accomplice in their fate.

Some vainly flattered themselves that the sword would be weary of its task before it reached them. They sheltered themselves behind their neighbours, and in their eagerness to put themselves in the midst of the crowd, were bereaved of breath, or trampled under foot.

Those whose situation exposed them to the first assault, struggled to gain the passages. Such as escaped the edge of the sabre and passed into the square, were transfixed by darts. The soldiers were drawn up in firm array, and extending themselves on all sides, rendered escape impossible.

To expatiate on the scene that followed, and which did not terminate till midnight; to count up the victims, to describe the various circumstances of their death, is a task to which I am unequal. Language sinks under the enormity and complication of these ills. I was a witness and partaker; the images exist in my imagination as vividly as when they were presented to my senses; my blood is still chilled, my dreams are still agonized by dire remembrance; but my eloquence is too feeble to impart to others the conceptions of my own mind.

The woes of my country are not past. Hundreds who escaped the bounds of this devoted city, are, like me, in the full fruition of melancholy or despair. The images of wife and offspring, of friends and neighbours, mangled by the sword, or perishing by lingering torments, pursue them to their retreats, and deny them a momentary respite. Some have lost their terror only by the extinction of their reason; and the phantoms of the past have disappeared in the confusion of insanity. Others, whose heroic or fortunate efforts set them beyond the reach of the soldiers, were no sooner at liberty to review the past, and contemplate their condition, than they inflicted on themselves that death which had been, with so much difficulty avoided, when menaced by others. Their misery was too abrupt, and too enormous, to be forgotten or endured.

I envy the lot of such, but it will quickly be my lot. The period of forgetfulness, or of tranquil existence in another scene, is hastening to console me. Meanwhile, my task shall be, to deliver to you, and to posterity, a faithful narrative. The horrors of this scene are only portions of the evil that has overspread the Roman world, which has been inflicted by the cavalry of Scythia, and

which will end only in the destruction of the empire, and the return of the human species to their original barbarity.