'Well, that tends to confirm my own ideas,' said Franz, 'that the countess's suspicions were destitute alike of sense and reason. Did he speak in your hearing? and did you catch any of his words?'

'I did; but they were uttered in the Romaic dialect. I knew that from the mixture of Greek words. I don't know whether I ever told you that when I was at college I was rather—rather strong in Greek.'

'He spoke the Romaic language, did he?'

'I think so.'

'That settles it,' murmured Franz. ''Tis he, past all doubt.'

'What do you say?'

'Nothing, nothing. But tell me, what were you thinking about when I came in?'

'Oh, I was arranging a little surprise for you.'

'Indeed. Of what nature?'

'Why, you know it is quite impossible to procure a carriage.'

'Certainly; and I also know that we have done all that human means afforded to endeavour to get one.'

'Now, then, in this difficulty a bright idea has flashed across my brain.'

Franz looked at Albert as though he had not much confidence in the suggestions of his imagination.

'I tell you what, M. Franz,' cried Albert, 'you deserve to be called out for such a misgiving and incredulous glance as that you were pleased to bestow on me just now.'

'And I promise to give you the satisfaction of a gentleman if your scheme turns out as ingenious as you assert.'

'Well, then, hearken to me.'

'I listen.'

'You agree, do you not, that obtaining a carriage is out of the question?'

'I do.'

'Neither can we procure horses?'

'True; we have offered any sum, but have failed.'

'Well, now, what do you say to a cart? I dare say such a thing might be had.'

'Very possibly.'

'And a pair of oxen?'

'As easily found as the cart.'

'Then you see, my good fellow, with a cart and a couple of oxen our business can be managed. The cart must be tastefully ornamented; and if you and I dress ourselves as Neapolitan reapers, we may get up a striking tableau, after the manner of that splendid picture by Léopold Robert. It would add greatly to the effect if the countess would join us in the costume of a peasant from Puzzoli or Sorrento. Our group would then be quite complete, more especially as the countess is quite beautiful enough to represent a Madonna.'

'Well,' said Franz, 'this time, M. Albert, I am bound to give you credit for having hit upon a most capital idea.'

'And quite a national one, too,' replied Albert with gratified pride. 'A mere masque borrowed from our own festivities. Ha, ha, ye Romans! you thought to make us, unhappy strangers, trot at the heels of your processions, like so many lazzaroni, because no carriages or horses are to be had in your beggarly city. But you don't know us; when we can't have one thing we invent another.'

'And have you communicated your triumphant idea to anybody?'

'Only to our host. Upon my return home I sent for him, and I then explained to him what I wished to procure. He assured me that nothing would be easier than to furnish all I desired. One thing I was sorry for; when I bade him have the horns of the oxen gilded, he told me there would not be time, as it would require three days to do that; so you see we must do without this little superfluity.'

'And where is he now?'

'Who?'

'Our host.'

'Gone out in search of our equipage, by tomorrow it might be too late.'

'Then he will be able to give us an answer tonight.'

'Oh, I expect him every minute.'

At this instant the door opened, and the head of Signor Pastrini appeared. '*Permesso*?' inquired he.

'Certainly—certainly,' cried Franz. 'Come in, my host.'

'Now, then,' asked Albert eagerly, 'have you found the desired cart and oxen?'

'Better than that!' replied Signor Pastrini, with the air of a man perfectly well satisfied with himself.

'Take care, my worthy host,' said Albert, '*better* is a sure enemy to *well*.'

'Let your excellencies only leave the matter to me,' returned Signor Pastrini in a tone indicative of unbounded self-confidence.

'But what *have* you done?' asked Franz. 'Speak out, there's a worthy fellow.'

'Your excellencies are aware,' responded the landlord, swelling with importance, 'that the Count of Monte Cristo is living on the same floor with yourselves!'

'I should think we did know it,' exclaimed Albert, 'since it is owing to that circumstance that we are packed into these small rooms, like two poor students in the back streets of Paris.'

'When, then, the Count of Monte Cristo, hearing of the dilemma in which you are placed, has sent to offer you seats in his carriage and two places at his windows in the Palazzo Rospoli.' The friends looked at each other with unutterable surprise.

'But do you think,' asked Albert, 'that we ought to accept such offers from a perfect stranger?'

'What sort of person is this Count of Monte Cristo?' asked Franz of his host.

'A very great nobleman, but whether Maltese or Sicilian I cannot exactly say; but this I know, that he is noble as a Borghese and rich as a gold mine.'

'It seems to me,' said Franz, speaking in an undertone to Albert, 'that if this person merited the high panegyrics of our landlord, he would have conveyed his invitation through another channel, and not permitted it to be brought to us in this unceremonious way. He would have written—or— '

At this instant someone knocked at the door.

'Come in,' said Franz.

A servant, wearing a livery of considerable style and richness, appeared at the threshold, and, placing two cards in the landlord's hands, who forthwith presented them to the two young men, he said:

'Please to deliver these, from the Count of Monte Cristo to Vicomte Albert de Morcerf and M. Franz d'Épinay. The Count of Monte Cristo,' continued the servant, 'begs these gentlemen's permission to wait upon them as their neighbour, and he will be honoured by an intimation of what time they will please to receive him.'

So saying, the countess quitted Franz, leaving him unable to decide whether she were merely amusing herself at his expense, or whether her fears and agitations were genuine.

Upon his return to the hotel, Franz found Albert in his dressing-gown and slippers, listlessly extended on a sofa, smoking a cigar.

'My dear fellow!' cried he, springing up, 'is it really you? Why, I did not expect to see you before tomorrow.'

'My dear Albert,' replied Franz, 'I am glad of this opportunity to tell you, once and forever, that you entertain a most erroneous notion concerning Italian women. I should have thought the continual failures you have met with in all your own love affairs might have taught you better by this time.'

'Upon my soul, these women would puzzle the very Devil to read them aright. Why, here—they give you their hand—they press yours in return—they keep up a whispering conversation—permit you to accompany them home. Why, if a Parisian were to indulge in a quarter of these marks of flattering attention, her reputation would be gone forever.'

'And the very reason why the women of this fine country, "where sounds the *si*," as Dante writes, put so little restraint on their words and actions, is because they live so much in public, and have really nothing to conceal. Besides, you must have perceived that the countess was really alarmed.'

'At what? At the sight of that respectable gentleman sitting opposite to us in the same box with the lovely Greek girl? Now, for my part, I met them in the lobby after the conclusion of the piece; and hang me, if I can guess where you took your notions of the other world from. I can assure you that this hobgoblin of yours is a deuced fine-looking fellow—admirably dressed. Indeed, I feel quite sure, from the cut of his clothes, they are made by a first-rate Paris tailor—probably Blin or Humann. He was rather too pale, certainly; but then, you know, paleness is always looked upon as a strong proof of aristocratic descent and distinguished breeding.'

Franz smiled; for he well remembered that Albert particularly prided himself on the entire absence of colour in his own complexion.

could not resist a feeling of superstitious dread—so much the stronger in him, as it arose from a variety of corroborative recollections, while the terror of the countess sprang from an instinctive belief, originally created in her mind by the wild tales she had listened to till she believed them truths. Franz could even feel her arm tremble as he assisted her into the carriage. Upon arriving at her hotel, Franz perceived that she had deceived him when she spoke of expecting company; on the contrary, her own return before the appointed hour seemed greatly to astonish the servants.

'Excuse my little subterfuge,' said the countess, in reply to her companion's half-reproachful observation on the subject; 'but that horrid man had made me feel quite uncomfortable, and I longed to be alone, that I might compose my startled mind.'

Franz essayed to smile.

'Nay,' said she, 'do not smile; it ill accords with the expression of your countenance, and I am sure it does not spring from your heart. However, promise me one thing.'

'What is it?'

'Promise me, I say.'

'I will do anything you desire, except relinquish my determination of finding out who this man is. I have more reasons than you can imagine for desiring to know who he is, from whence he came, and whither he is going.'

'Where he comes from I am ignorant; but I can readily tell you where he is going to, and that is down below, without the least doubt.'

'Let us only speak of the promise you wished me to make,' said Franz.

'Well, then, you must give me your word to return immediately to your hotel, and make no attempt to follow this man tonight. There are certain affinities between the persons we quit and those we meet afterwards. For heaven's sake, do not serve as a conductor between that man and me. Pursue your chase after him tomorrow as eagerly as you please; but never bring him near me, if you would not see me die of terror. And now, good-night; go to your rooms, and try to sleep away all recollections of this evening. For my own part, I am quite sure I shall not be able to close my eyes.'

'Faith, Franz,' whispered Albert, 'there is not much to find fault with here.'

'Tell the count,' replied Franz, 'that we will do ourselves the pleasure of calling on him.'

The servant bowed and retired.

'That is what I call an elegant mode of attack,' said Albert, 'You were quite correct in what you said, Signor Pastrini. The Count of Monte Cristo is unquestionably a man of first-rate breeding and knowledge of the world.'

'Then you accept his offer?' said the host.

'Of course we do,' replied Albert. 'Still, I must own I am sorry to be obliged to give up the cart and the group of reapers—it would have produced such an effect! And were it not for the windows at the Palazzo Rospoli, by way of recompense for the loss of our beautiful scheme, I don't know but what I should have held on by my original plan. What say you, Franz?'

'Oh, I agree with you; the windows in the Palazzo Rospoli alone decided me.'

The truth was, that the mention of two places in the Palazzo Rospoli had recalled to Franz the conversation he had overheard the preceding evening in the ruins of the Colosseum between the mysterious unknown and the Transteverin, in which the stranger in the cloak had undertaken to obtain the freedom of a condemned criminal; and if this muffled-up individual proved (as Franz felt sure he would) the same as the person he had just seen in the Teatro Argentina, then he should be able to establish his identity, and also to prosecute his researches respecting him with perfect facility and freedom.

Franz passed the night in confused dreams respecting the two meetings he had already had with his mysterious tormentor, and in waking speculations as to what the morrow would produce. The next day must clear up every doubt; and unless his near neighbour and would-be friend, the Count of Monte Cristo, possessed the ring of Gyges, and by its power was able to render himself invisible, it was very certain he could not escape this time.

Eight o'clock found Franz up and dressed, while Albert, who had not the same motives for early rising, was still soundly asleep. The first act

of Franz was to summon his landlord, who presented himself with his accustomed obsequiousness.

'Pray, Signor Pastrini,' asked Franz, 'is not some execution appointed to take place today?'

'Yes, your excellency; but if your reason for inquiry is that you may procure a window to view it from, you are much too late.'

'Oh, no,' answered Franz, 'I had no such intention; and even if I had felt a wish to witness the spectacle, I might have done so from Monte Pincio; could I not?'

'Ah!' exclaimed mine host, 'I did not think it likely your excellency would have chosen to mingle with such a rabble as are always collected on that hill, which, indeed, they consider as exclusively belonging to themselves.'

'Very possibly I may not go,' answered Franz; 'but in case I feel disposed, give me some particulars of today's executions.'

'What particulars would your excellency like to hear?'

'Why, the number of persons condemned to suffer, their names, and description of the death they are to die.'

'That happens just lucky, your excellency! Only a few minutes ago they brought me the *tavolettas*.'

'What are they?'

'Sort of wooden tablets hung up at the corners of streets the evening before an execution, on which is pasted up a paper containing the names of the condemned persons, their crimes, and mode of punishment. The reason for so publicly announcing all this is, that all good and faithful Catholics may offer up their prayers for the unfortunate culprits, and, above all, beseech of Heaven to grant them a sincere repentance.'

'And these tablets are brought to you that you may add your prayers to those of the faithful, are they?' asked Franz somewhat incredulously.

'Oh, dear, no, your excellency! I have not time for anybody's affairs but my own and those of my honourable guests; but I make an agreement with the man who pastes up the papers, and he brings them to me as he would the playbills, that in case any person staying at my hotel should like to witness an execution, he may obtain every requisite information concerning the time and place etc.'

This fresh allusion to Byron[3] drew a smile to Franz's countenance; although he could but allow that if anything was likely to induce belief in the existence of vampires, it would be the presence of such a man as the mysterious personage before him.

'I must positively find out who and what he is,' said Franz, rising from his seat.

'No, no,' cried the countess; 'you must not leave me. I depend upon you to escort me home. Oh, indeed, I cannot permit you to go.'

'Is it possible,' whispered Franz, 'that you entertain any fear?'

'I'll tell you,' answered the countess. 'Byron had the most perfect belief in the existence of vampires, and even assured me that he had seen them. The description he gave me perfectly corresponds with the features and character of the man before us. Oh, he is the exact personification of what I have been led to expect! The coal-black hair, large bright, glittering eyes, in which a wild, unearthly fire seems burning,—the same ghastly paleness. Then observe, too, that the woman with him is altogether unlike all others of her sex. She is a foreigner—a stranger. Nobody knows who she is, or where she comes from. No doubt she belongs to the same horrible race he does, and is, like himself, a dealer in magical arts. I entreat of you not to go near him—at least tonight; and if tomorrow your curiosity still continues as great, pursue your researches if you will; but tonight you neither can nor shall. For that purpose I mean to keep you all to myself.'

Franz protested he could not defer his pursuit till the following day, for many reasons.

'Listen to me,' said the countess, 'and do not be so very headstrong. I am going home. I have a party at my house tonight, and therefore cannot possibly remain till the end of the opera. Now, I cannot for one instant believe you so devoid of gallantry as to refuse a lady your escort when she even condescends to ask you for it.'

There was nothing else left for Franz to do but to take up his hat, open the door of the box, and offer the countess his arm. It was quite evident, by her manner, that her uneasiness was not feigned; and Franz himself

[3] Scott, of course: 'The son of an ill-fated sire, and the father of a yet more unfortunate family, bore in his looks that cast of inauspicious melancholy by which the physiognomists of that time pretended to distinguish those who were predestined to a violent and unhappy death.'—The Abbot, ch. xxii.

with a puzzled look at his face, burst into a fit of laughter, and begged to know what had happened.

'Countess,' returned Franz, totally unheeding her raillery, 'I asked you a short time since if you knew any particulars respecting the Albanian lady opposite; I must now beseech you to inform me who and what is her husband?'

'Nay,' answered the countess, 'I know no more of him than yourself.'

'Perhaps you never before noticed him?'

'What a question—so truly French! Do you not know that we Italians have eyes only for the man we love?'

'True,' replied Franz.

'All I can say is,' continued the countess, taking up the *lorgnette*, and directing it toward the box in question, 'that the gentleman, whose history I am unable to furnish, seems to me as though he had just been dug up; he looks more like a corpse permitted by some friendly grave-digger to quit his tomb for a while, and revisit this earth of ours, than anything human. How ghastly pale he is!'

'Oh, he is always as colorless as you now see him,' said Franz.

'Then you know him?' almost screamed the countess. 'Oh, pray do, for heaven's sake, tell us all about—is he a vampire, or a resuscitated corpse, or what?'

'I fancy I have seen him before; and I even think he recognizes me.'

'And I can well understand,' said the countess, shrugging up her beautiful shoulders, as though an involuntary shudder passed through her veins, 'that those who have once seen that man will never be likely to forget him.'

The sensation experienced by Franz was evidently not peculiar to himself; another, and wholly uninterested person, felt the same unaccountable awe and misgiving.

'Well.' inquired Franz, after the countess had a second time directed her *lorgnette* at the box, 'what do you think of our opposite neighbour?'

'Why, that he is no other than Lord Ruthven himself in a living form.'

'Upon my word, that is a most delicate attention on your part, Signor Pastrini,' cried Franz.

'Why, your excellency,' returned the landlord, chuckling and rubbing his hands with infinite complacency, 'I think I may take upon myself to say I neglect nothing to deserve the support and patronage of the noble visitors to this poor hotel.'

'I see that plainly enough, my most excellent host, and you may rely upon me to proclaim so striking a proof of your attention to your guests wherever I go. Meanwhile, oblige me by a sight of one of these *tavolettas*.'

'Nothing can be easier than to comply with your excellency's wish,' said the landlord, opening the door of the chamber; 'I have caused one to be placed on the landing, close by your apartment.'

Then, taking the tablet from the wall, he handed it to Franz, who read as follows:

> The public is informed that on Wednesday, February 23rd, being the first day of the Carnival, executions will take place in the Piazza del Popolo, by order of the Tribunal of the Rota, of two persons, named Andrea Rondolo, and Peppino, otherwise called Rocca Priori; the former found guilty of the murder of a venerable and exemplary priest, named Don César Torlini, canon of the church of St. John Lateran; and the latter convicted of being an accomplice of the atrocious and sanguinary bandit, Luigi Vampa, and his band. The first-named malefactor will be *mazzolato*, the second culprit *decapitato*.
>
> The prayers of all good Christians are entreated for these unfortunate men, that it may please God to awaken them to a sense of their guilt, and to grant them a hearty and sincere repentance for their crimes.

This was precisely what Franz had heard the evening before in the ruins of the Colosseum. No part of the programme differed,—the names of the condemned persons, their crimes, and mode of punishment, all agreed with his previous information. In all probability, therefore, the Transteverin was no other than the bandit Luigi Vampa himself, and the

man shrouded in the mantle the same he had known as 'Sinbad the Sailor,' but who, no doubt, was still pursuing his philanthropic expedition in Rome, as he had already done at Porto-Vecchio and Tunis.

Time was getting on, however, and Franz deemed it advisable to awaken Albert; but at the moment he prepared to proceed to his chamber, his friend entered the room in perfect costume for the day. The anticipated delights of the Carnival had so run in his head as to make him leave his pillow long before his usual hour.

'Now, my excellent Signor Pastrini,' said Franz, addressing his landlord, 'since we are both ready, do you think we may proceed at once to visit the Count of Monte Cristo?'

'Most assuredly,' replied he. 'The Count of Monte Cristo is always an early riser; and I can answer for his having been up these two hours.'

'Then you really consider we shall not be intruding if we pay our respects to him directly?'

'Oh, I am quite sure. I will take all the blame on myself if you find I have led you into an error.'

'Well, then, if it be so, are you ready, Albert?'

'Perfectly.'

'Let us go and return our best thanks for his courtesy.'

'Yes, let us do so.'

The landlord preceded the friends across the landing, which was all that separated them from the apartments of the count, rang at the bell, and, upon the door being opened by a servant, said:

'*I signori Francesi*.'

The domestic bowed respectfully, and invited them to enter. They passed through two rooms, furnished in a luxurious manner they had not expected to see under the roof of Signor Pastrini, and were shown into an elegantly fitted-up drawing-room. The richest Turkey carpets covered the floor, and the softest and most inviting couches, easy-chairs, and sofas, offered their high-piled and yielding cushions to such as desired repose or refreshment. Splendid paintings by the first masters were ranged against the walls, intermingled with magnificent trophies of war, while heavy curtains of costly tapestry were suspended before the different doors of the room.

and then, leaning forward again on the railing of her box, she became as absorbed as before in what was going on.

The countenance of the person who had addressed her remained so completely in the shade, that, though Franz tried his utmost, he could not distinguish a single feature. The curtain rose, and the attention of Franz was attracted by the actors; and his eyes turned from the box containing the Greek girl and her strange companion to watch the business of the stage.

Most of my readers are aware that the second act of *Parisina* opens with the celebrated and effective duet in which Parisina, while sleeping, betrays to Azzo the secret of her love for Ugo. The injured husband goes through all the emotions of jealousy, until conviction seizes on his mind, and then, in a frenzy of rage and indignation, he awakens his guilty wife to tell her that he knows her guilt and to threaten her with his vengeance.

This duet is one of the most beautiful, expressive and terrible conceptions that has ever emanated from the fruitful pen of Donizetti. Franz now listened to it for the third time; yet its notes, so tenderly expressive and fearfully grand as the wretched husband and wife give vent to their different griefs and passions, thrilled through the soul of Franz with an effect equal to his first emotions upon hearing it. Excited beyond his usual calm demeanour, Franz rose with the audience, and was about to join the loud, enthusiastic applause that followed; but suddenly his purpose was arrested, his hands fell by his sides, and the half-uttered 'bravos' expired on his lips.

The occupant of the box in which the Greek girl sat appeared to share the universal admiration that prevailed; for he left his seat to stand up in front, so that, his countenance being fully revealed, Franz had no difficulty in recognizing him as the mysterious inhabitant of Monte Cristo, and the very same person he had encountered the preceding evening in the ruins of the Colosseum, and whose voice and figure had seemed so familiar to him.

All doubt of his identity was now at an end; his singular host evidently resided at Rome. The surprise and agitation occasioned by this full confirmation of Franz's former suspicion had no doubt imparted a corresponding expression to his features; for the countess, after gazing

'Oh, I consider her perfectly lovely—she is just my idea of what Medora must have been.'

Franz and the countess exchanged a smile, and then the latter resumed her conversation with Albert, while Franz returned to his previous survey of the house and company. The curtain rose on the ballet, which was one of those excellent specimens of the Italian school, admirably arranged and put on the stage by Henri, who has established for himself a great reputation throughout Italy for his taste and skill in the choreographic art—one of those masterly productions of grace, method, and elegance in which the whole *corps de ballet*, from the principal dancers to the humblest supernumerary, are all engaged on the stage at the same time; and a hundred and fifty persons may be seen exhibiting the same attitude, or elevating the same arm or leg with a simultaneous movement, that would lead you to suppose that but one mind, one act of volition, influenced the moving mass.

The ballet was called *Poliska*.

However much the ballet might have claimed his attention, Franz was too deeply occupied with the beautiful Greek to take any note of it; while she seemed to experience an almost childlike delight in watching it, her eager, animated looks contrasting strongly with the utter indifference of her companion, who, during the whole time the piece lasted, never even moved, not even when the furious, crashing din produced by the trumpets, cymbals, and Chinese bells sounded their loudest from the orchestra. Of this he took no heed, but was, as far as appearances might be trusted, enjoying soft repose and bright celestial dreams.

The ballet at length came to a close, and the curtain fell amid the loud, unanimous plaudits of an enthusiastic and delighted audience.

Owing to the very judicious plan of dividing the two acts of the opera with a ballet, the pauses between the performances are very short, the singers in the opera having time to repose themselves and change their costume, when necessary, while the dancers are executing their pirouettes and exhibiting their graceful steps.

The overture to the second act began; and, at the first sound of the leader's bow across his violin, Franz observed the sleeper slowly arise and approach the Greek girl, who turned around to say a few words to him,

'If your excellencies will please to be seated,' said the man, 'I will let the count know that you are here.'

And with these words he disappeared behind one of the tapestried *portières*. As the door opened, the sound of a *guzla* reached the ears of the young men, but was almost immediately lost, for the rapid closing of the door merely allowed one rich swell of harmony to enter. Franz and Albert looked inquiringly at each other, then at the gorgeous furnishings of the apartment. Everything seemed more magnificent at a second view than it had done at their first rapid survey.

'Well,' said Franz to his friend, 'what think you of all this?'

'Why, upon my soul, my dear fellow, it strikes me that our elegant and attentive neighbour must either be some successful stock-jobber who has speculated in the fall of the Spanish funds, or some prince travelling *incog*.'

'Hush, hush!' replied Franz; 'we shall ascertain who and what he is—he comes!'

As Franz spoke, he heard the sound of a door turning on its hinges, and almost immediately afterwards the tapestry was drawn aside, and the owner of all these riches stood before the two young men. Albert instantly rose to meet him, but Franz remained, in a manner, spellbound on his chair; for in the person of him who had just entered he recognized not only the mysterious visitant to the Colosseum, and the occupant of the box at the Teatro Argentina, but also his extraordinary host of Monte Cristo.

Franz presented Albert as one of the most distinguished young men of the day, both as regarded his position in society and extraordinary talents; nor did he say more than the truth, for in Paris and the circle in which the viscount moved, he was looked upon and cited as a model of perfection. Franz added that his companion, deeply grieved at having been prevented the honour of being presented to the countess during her sojourn in Paris, was most anxious to make up for it, and had requested him (Franz) to remedy the past misfortune by conducting him to her box, and concluded by asking pardon for his presumption in having taken it upon himself to do so.

The countess, in reply, bowed gracefully to Albert, and extended her hand with cordial kindness to Franz; then, inviting Albert to take the vacant seat beside her, she recommended Franz to take the next best, if he wished to view the ballet, and pointed to the one behind her own chair.

Albert was soon deeply engrossed in discoursing upon Paris and Parisian matters, speaking to the countess of the various persons they both knew there. Franz perceived how completely he was in his element; and, unwilling to interfere with the pleasure he so evidently felt, took up Albert's glass, and began in his turn to survey the audience.

Sitting alone, in the front of a box immediately opposite, but situated on the third row, was a woman of exquisite beauty, dressed in a Greek costume, which evidently, from the ease and grace with which she wore it, was her national attire. Behind her, but in deep shadow, was the outline of a masculine figure; but the features of this latter personage it was not possible to distinguish. Franz could not forbear breaking in upon the apparently interesting conversation passing between the countess and Albert, to inquire of the former if she knew who was the fair Albanian opposite, since beauty such as hers was well worthy of being observed by either sex.

'All I can tell about her,' replied the countess, 'is, that she has been at Rome since the beginning of the season; for I saw her where she now sits the very first night of the season, and since then she has never missed a performance. Sometimes she is accompanied by the person who is now with her, and at others she is merely attended by a black servant.'

'And what do you think of her personal appearance?'