'’Tis some travellers, who are visiting the Colosseum by torchlight.'

'’Twere better we should not be seen together; those guides are nothing but spies, and might possibly recognize you; and, however I may be honoured by your friendship, my worthy friend, if once the extent of our intimacy were known, I am sadly afraid both my reputation and credit would suffer thereby.'

'Well, then, if you obtain the reprieve?'

'The middle window at the Café Rospoli will be hung with white damask, bearing a red cross.'

'And if you fail?'

'Then all three windows will have yellow draperies.'

'And then?'

'And then, my good fellow, use your daggers in any way you please, and I further promise you to be there as a spectator of your prowess.'

'We understand each other perfectly, then. Adieu, your excellency; depend upon me as firmly as I do upon you.'

Saying these words, the Transteverin disappeared down the staircase, while his companion, muffling his features more closely than before in the folds of his mantle, passed almost close to Franz, and descended to the arena by an outward flight of steps. The next minute Franz heard himself called by Albert, who made the lofty building re-echo with the sound of his friend's name. Franz, however, did not obey the summons till he had satisfied himself that the two men whose conversation he had overheard were at a sufficient distance to prevent his encountering them in his descent. In ten minutes after the strangers had departed, Franz was on the road to the Piazza di Spagna, listening with studied indifference to the learned dissertation delivered by Albert, after the manner of Pliny and Calpurnius, touching the iron-pointed nets used to prevent the ferocious beasts from springing on the spectators.

Franz let him proceed without interruption, and, in fact, did not hear what was said; he longed to be alone, and free to ponder over all that had occurred. One of the two men, whose mysterious meeting in the Colosseum he had so unintentionally witnessed, was an entire stranger to him, but not so the other; and though Franz had been unable to distinguish his features, from his being either wrapped in his mantle or obscured by the shadow, the tones of his voice had made too powerful an impression on him the first time he had heard them for him ever again to forget them, hear them when or

where he might. It was more especially when this man was speaking in a manner half jesting, half bitter, that Franz's ear recalled most vividly the deep sonorous, yet well-pitched voice that had addressed him in the grotto of Monte Cristo, and which he heard for the second time amid the darkness and ruined grandeur of the Colosseum. And the more he thought, the more entire was his conviction, that the person who wore the mantle was no other than his former host and entertainer, 'Sinbad the Sailor.' Under any other circumstances, Franz would have found it impossible to resist his extreme curiosity to know more of so singular a personage, and with that intent have sought to renew their short acquaintance; but in the present instance, the confidential nature of the conversation he had overheard made him, with propriety, judge that his appearance at such a time would be anything but agreeable. As we have seen, therefore, he permitted his former host to retire without attempting a recognition, but fully promising himself a rich indemnity for his present forbearance should chance afford him another opportunity.

In vain did Franz endeavour to forget the many perplexing thoughts which assailed him; in vain did he court the refreshment of sleep. Slumber refused to visit his eyelids and the night was passed in feverish contemplation of the chain of circumstances tending to prove the identity of the mysterious visitant to the Colosseum with the inhabitant of the grotto of Monte Cristo; and the more he thought, the firmer grew his opinion on the subject.

Worn out at length, he fell asleep at daybreak, and did not awake till late. Like a genuine Frenchman, Albert had employed his time in arranging for the evening's diversion; he had sent to engage a box at the Teatro Argentina; and Franz, having a number of letters to write, relinquished the carriage to Albert for the whole of the day.

At five o'clock Albert returned, delighted with his day's work; he had been occupied in leaving his letters of introduction, and had received in return more invitations to balls and routs than it would be possible for him to accept; besides this, he had seen (as he called it) all the remarkable sights at Rome. Yes, in a single day he had accomplished what his more serious-minded companion would have taken weeks to effect. Neither had he neglected to ascertain the name of the piece to be played that night at the Teatro Argentina, and also what performers appeared in it. The opera of *Parisina* was announced

for representation, and the principal actors were Coselli, Moriani, and La Specchia.

The young men, therefore, had reason to consider themselves fortunate in having the opportunity of hearing one of the best works by the composer of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, supported by three of the most renowned vocalists of Italy.

Albert had never been able to endure the Italian theatres, with their orchestras from which it is impossible to see, and the absence of balconies, or open boxes; all these defects pressed hard on a man who had had his stall at the Bouffes, and had shared a lower box at the Opera. Still, in spite of this, Albert displayed his most dazzling and effective costumes each time he visited the theatres; but, alas, his elegant toilet was wholly thrown away, and one of the most worthy representatives of Parisian fashion had to carry with him the mortifying reflection that he had nearly overrun Italy without meeting with a single adventure.

Sometimes Albert would affect to make a joke of his want of success; but internally he was deeply wounded, and his self-love immensely piqued, to think that Albert de Morcerf, the most admired and most sought after of any young person of his day, should thus be passed over, and merely have his labour for his pains. And the thing was so much the more annoying, as, according to the characteristic modesty of a Frenchman, Albert had quitted Paris with the full conviction that he had only to show himself in Italy to carry all before him, and that upon his return he should astonish the Parisian world with the recital of his numerous love-affairs.

Alas, poor Albert! None of those interesting adventures fell in his way; the lovely Genoese, Florentines, and Neapolitans were all faithful, if not to their husbands, at least to their lovers, and thought not of changing even for the splendid appearance of Albert de Morcerf; and all he gained was the painful conviction that the ladies of Italy have this advantage over those of France, that they are faithful even in their infidelity.

Yet he could not restrain a hope that in Italy, as elsewhere, there might be an exception to the general rule.

Albert, besides being an elegant, well-looking young man, was also possessed of considerable talent and ability; moreover, he was a viscount—a recently created one, certainly, but in the present day it is not necessary to go as far back as

'None whatever. Take what precautions you please, if it is any satisfaction to you to do so; but rely upon my obtaining the reprieve I seek.'

'Remember, the execution is fixed for the day after tomorrow, and that you have but one day to work in.'

'And what of that? Is not a day divided into twenty-four hours, each hour into sixty minutes, and every minute sub-divided into sixty seconds? Now in 86,400 seconds very many things can be done.'

'And how shall I know whether your excellency has succeeded or not.'

'Oh, that is very easily arranged. I have engaged the three lower windows at the Café Rospoli; should I have obtained the requisite pardon for Peppino, the two outside windows will be hung with yellow damasks, and the centre with white, having a large cross in red marked on it.'

'And whom will you employ to carry the reprieve to the officer directing the execution?'

'Send one of your men, disguised as a penitent friar, and I will give it to him. His dress will procure him the means of approaching the scaffold itself, and he will deliver the official order to the officer, who, in his turn, will hand it to the executioner; in the meantime, it will be as well to acquaint Peppino with what we have determined on, if it be only to prevent his dying of fear or losing his senses, because in either case a very useless expense will have been incurred.'

'Your excellency,' said the man, 'you are fully persuaded of my entire devotion to you, are you not?'

'Nay, I flatter myself that there can be no doubt of it,' replied the cavalier in the cloak.

'Well, then, only fulfil your promise of rescuing Peppino, and henceforward you shall receive not only devotion, but the most absolute obedience from myself and those under me that one human being can render to another.'

'Have a care how far you pledge yourself, my good friend, for I may remind you of your promise at some, perhaps, not very distant period, when I, in my turn, may require your aid and influence.'

'Let that day come sooner or later, your excellency will find me what I have found you in this my heavy trouble; and if from the other end of the world you but write me word to do such or such a thing, you may regard it as done, for done it shall be, on the word and faith of— '

'Hush!' interrupted the stranger; 'I hear a noise.'

'Which makes him your accomplice to all intents and purposes. But mark the distinction with which he is treated; instead of being knocked on the head as you would be if once they caught hold of you, he is simply sentenced to be guillotined, by which means, too, the amusements of the day are diversified, and there is a spectacle to please every spectator.'

'Without reckoning the wholly unexpected one I am preparing to surprise them with.'

'My good friend,' said the man in the cloak, 'excuse me for saying that you seem to me precisely in the mood to commit some wild or extravagant act.'

'Perhaps I am; but one thing I have resolved on, and that is, to stop at nothing to restore a poor devil to liberty, who has got into this scrape solely from having served me. I should hate and despise myself as a coward did I desert the brave fellow in his present extremity.'

'And what do you mean to do?'

'To surround the scaffold with twenty of my best men, who, at a signal from me, will rush forward directly Peppino is brought for execution, and, by the assistance of their stilettos, drive back the guard, and carry off the prisoner.'

'That seems to me as hazardous as uncertain, and convinces me that my scheme is far better than yours.'

'And what is your excellency's project?'

'Just this. I will so advantageously bestow 2,000 piastres, that the person receiving them shall obtain a respite till next year for Peppino; and during that year, another skilfully placed 1,000 piastres will afford him the means of escaping from his prison.'

'And do you feel sure of succeeding?'

'*Pardieu!*' exclaimed the man in the cloak, suddenly expressing himself in French.

'What did your excellency say?' inquired the other.

'I said, my good fellow, that I would do more single-handed by the means of gold than you and all your troop could effect with stilettos, pistols, carbines, and blunderbusses included. Leave me, then, to act, and have no fears for the result.'

'At least, there can be no harm in myself and party being in readiness, in case your excellency should fail.'

Noah in tracing a descent, and a genealogical tree is equally estimated, whether dated from 1399 or merely 1815; but to crown all these advantages, Albert de Morcerf commanded an income of 50,000 livres, a more than sufficient sum to render him a personage of considerable importance in Paris. It was therefore no small mortification to him to have visited most of the principal cities in Italy without having excited the most trifling observation.

Albert, however, hoped to indemnify himself for all these slights and indifferences during the Carnival, knowing full well that among the different states and kingdoms in which this festivity is celebrated, Rome is the spot where even the wisest and gravest throw off the usual rigidity of their lives, and deign to mingle in the follies of this time of liberty and relaxation. The Carnival was to commence on the morrow; therefore Albert had not an instant to lose in setting forth the programme of his hopes, expectations, and claims to notice.

With this design he had engaged a box in the most conspicuous part of the theatre, and exerted himself to set off his personal attractions by the aid of the most rich and elaborate toilet. The box taken by Albert was in the first circle; although each of the three tiers of boxes is deemed equally aristocratic, and is, for this reason, generally styled the 'nobility's boxes,' and although the box engaged for the two friends was sufficiently capacious to contain at least a dozen persons, it had cost less than would be paid at some of the French theatres for one admitting merely four occupants.

Another motive had influenced Albert's selection of his seat,—who knew but that, thus advantageously placed, he might not in truth attract the notice of some fair Roman, and an introduction might ensue that would procure him the offer of a seat in a carriage, or a place in a princely balcony, from which he might behold the gayeties of the Carnival?

These united considerations made Albert more lively and anxious to please than he had hitherto been. Totally disregarding the business of the stage, he leaned from his box and began attentively scrutinizing the beauty of each pretty woman, aided by a powerful opera-glass; but, alas, this attempt to attract notice wholly failed; not even curiosity had been excited, and it was but too apparent that the lovely creatures, into whose good graces he was desirous of stealing, were all so much engrossed with themselves, their lovers, or their own thoughts, that they had not so much as noticed him or the manipulation of his glass.

The truth was, that the anticipated pleasures of the Carnival, with the 'Holy Week' that was to succeed it, so filled every fair breast, as to prevent the least attention being bestowed even on the business of the stage. The actors made their entries and exits unobserved or unthought of; at certain conventional moments, the spectators would suddenly cease their conversation, or rouse themselves from their musings, to listen to some brilliant effort of Moriani's, a well-executed recitative by Coselli, or to join in loud applause at the wonderful powers of La Specchia; but that momentary excitement over, they quickly relapsed into their former state of preoccupation or interesting conversation.

Towards the close of the first act, the door of a box which had been hitherto vacant was opened; a lady entered to whom Franz had been introduced in Paris, where indeed, he had imagined she still was. The quick eye of Albert caught the involuntary start with which his friend beheld the new arrival, and, turning to him, he said hastily:

'Do you know the woman who has just entered that box?'

'Yes; what do you think of her?'

'Oh, she is perfectly lovely—what a complexion! And such magnificent hair! Is she French?'

'No; a Venetian.'

'And her name is— '

'Countess G—.'

'Ah, I know her by name!' exclaimed Albert; 'she is said to possess as much wit and cleverness as beauty. I was to have been presented to her when I met her at Madame Villefort's ball.'

'Shall I assist you in repairing your negligence?' asked Franz.

'My dear fellow, are you really on such good terms with her as to venture to take me to her box?'

'Why, I have only had the honour of being in her society and conversing with her three or four times in my life; but you know that even such an acquaintance as that might warrant my doing what you ask.'

At that instant, the countess perceived Franz, and graciously waved her hand to him, to which he replied by a respectful inclination of the head. 'Upon my word,' said Albert, 'you seem to be on excellent terms with the beautiful countess.'

leaped lightly on his feet. The man who had performed this daring act with so much indifference wore the Transtevere costume.

'I beg your excellency's pardon for keeping you waiting,' said the man, in the Roman dialect, 'but I don't think I'm many minutes after my time, ten o'clock has just struck by the clock of Saint John Lateran.'

'Say not a word about being late,' replied the stranger in purest Tuscan; ''tis I who am too soon. But even if you had caused me to wait a little while, I should have felt quite sure that the delay was not occasioned by any fault of yours.'

'Your excellency is perfectly right in so thinking,' said the man; 'I came here direct from the Castle of St. Angelo, and I had an immense deal of trouble before I could get a chance to speak to Beppo.'

'And who is Beppo?'

'Oh, Beppo is employed in the prison, and I give him so much a year to let me know what is going on within his holiness's castle.'

'Indeed! You are a provident person, I see.'

'Why, you see, no one knows what may happen. Perhaps some of these days I may be entrapped, like poor Peppino and may be very glad to have some little nibbling mouse to gnaw the meshes of my net, and so help me out of prison.'

'Briefly, what did you learn?'

'That two executions of considerable interest will take place the day after tomorrow at two o'clock, as is customary at Rome at the commencement of all great festivals. One of the culprits will be *mazzolato*;[1] he is an atrocious villain, who murdered the priest who brought him up, and deserves not the smallest pity. The other sufferer is sentenced to be *decapitato*;[2] and he, your excellency, is poor Peppino.'

'The fact is, that you have inspired not only the pontifical government, but also the neighboring states, with such extreme fear, that they are glad of all opportunity of making an example.'

'But Peppino did not even belong to my band; he was merely a poor shepherd, whose only crime consisted in furnishing us with provisions.'

[1]Knocked on the head.
[2]Beheaded.

gabble of the guides. And his appearance had nothing extraordinary in it; but the hesitation with which he proceeded, stopping and listening with anxious attention at every step he took, convinced Franz that he expected the arrival of some person.

By a sort of instinctive impulse, Franz withdrew as much as possible behind his pillar.

About ten feet from the spot where he and the stranger were, the roof had given way, leaving a large round opening, through which might be seen the blue vault of heaven, thickly studded with stars.

Around this opening, which had, possibly, for ages permitted a free entrance to the brilliant moonbeams that now illumined the vast pile, grew a quantity of creeping plants, whose delicate green branches stood out in bold relief against the clear azure of the firmament, while large masses of thick, strong fibrous shoots forced their way through the chasm, and hung floating to and fro, like so many waving strings.

The person whose mysterious arrival had attracted the attention of Franz stood in a kind of half-light, that rendered it impossible to distinguish his features, although his dress was easily made out. He wore a large brown mantle, one fold of which, thrown over his left shoulder, served likewise to mask the lower part of his countenance, while the upper part was completely hidden by his broad-brimmed hat. The lower part of his dress was more distinctly visible by the bright rays of the moon, which, entering through the broken ceiling, shed their refulgent beams on feet cased in elegantly made boots of polished leather, over which descended fashionably cut trousers of black cloth. From the imperfect means Franz had of judging, he could only come to one conclusion,—that the person whom he was thus watching certainly belonged to no inferior station of life.

Some few minutes had elapsed, and the stranger began to show manifest signs of impatience, when a slight noise was heard outside the aperture in the roof, and almost immediately a dark shadow seemed to obstruct the flood of light that had entered it, and the figure of a man was clearly seen gazing with eager scrutiny on the immense space beneath him; then, as his eye caught sight of him in the mantle, he grasped a floating mass of thickly matted boughs, and glided down by their help to within three or four feet of the ground, and then

'You are mistaken in thinking so,' returned Franz calmly; 'but you merely fall into the same error which leads so many of our countrymen to commit the most egregious blunders,—I mean that of judging the habits and customs of Italy and Spain by our Parisian notions; believe me, nothing is more fallacious than to form any estimate of the degree of intimacy you may suppose existing among persons by the familiar terms they seem upon; there is a similarity of feeling at this instant between ourselves and the countess—nothing more.'

'Is there, indeed, my good fellow? Pray tell me, is it sympathy of heart?'

'No; of taste,' continued Franz gravely.

'And in what manner has this congeniality of mind been evinced?'

'By the countess's visiting the Colosseum, as we did last night, by moonlight, and nearly alone.'

'You were with her, then?'

'I was.'

'And what did you say to her?'

'Oh, we talked of the illustrious dead of whom that magnificent ruin is a glorious monument!'

'Upon my word,' cried Albert, 'you must have been a very entertaining companion alone, or all but alone, with a beautiful woman in such a place of sentiment as the Colosseum, and yet to find nothing better to talk about than the dead! All I can say is, if ever I should get such a chance, the living should be my theme.' 'And you will probably find your theme ill-chosen.'

'But,' said Albert, breaking in upon his discourse, 'never mind the past; let us only remember the present. Are you not going to keep your promise of introducing me to the fair subject of our remarks?'

'Certainly, directly the curtain falls on the stage.'

'What a confounded long time this first act lasts. I believe, on my soul, that they never mean to finish it.'

'Oh, yes, they will; only listen to that charming finale. How exquisitely Coselli sings his part.'

'But what an awkward, inelegant fellow he is.'

'Well, then, what do you say to La Specchia? Did you ever see anything more perfect than her acting?'

'Why, you know, my dear fellow, when one has been accustomed to Malibran and Sontag, such singers as these don't make the same impression on you they perhaps do on others.'

'At least, you must admire Moriani's style and execution.'

'I never fancied men of his dark, ponderous appearance singing with a voice like a woman's.'

'My good friend,' said Franz, turning to him, while Albert continued to point his glass at every box in the theatre, 'you seem determined not to approve; you are really too difficult to please.'

The curtain at length fell on the performances, to the infinite satisfaction of the Viscount of Morcerf, who seized his hat, rapidly passed his fingers through his hair, arranged his cravat and wristbands, and signified to Franz that he was waiting for him to lead the way.

Franz, who had mutely interrogated the countess, and received from her a gracious smile in token that he would be welcome, sought not to retard the gratification of Albert's eager impatience, but began at once the tour of the house, closely followed by Albert, who availed himself of the few minutes required to reach the opposite side of the theatre to settle the height and smoothness of his collar, and to arrange the lappets of his coat. This important task was just completed as they arrived at the countess's box.

At the knock, the door was immediately opened, and the young man who was seated beside the countess, in obedience to the Italian custom, instantly rose and surrendered his place to the strangers, who, in turn, would be expected to retire upon the arrival of other visitors.

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

the vast proportions of the building appear twice as large when viewed by the mysterious beams of a southern moonlit sky, whose rays are sufficiently clear and vivid to light the horizon with a glow equal to the soft twilight of a western clime.

Scarcely, therefore, had the reflective Franz walked a hundred steps beneath the interior porticoes of the ruin, when, abandoning Albert to the guides (who would by no means yield their prescriptive right of carrying their victims through the routine regularly laid down, and as regularly followed by them, but dragged the unconscious visitor to the various objects with a pertinacity that admitted of no appeal, beginning, as a matter of course, with the 'Lions' Den', the 'Hall of the Gladiators' and finishing with 'Cæsar's Podium'), to escape a jargon and mechanical survey of the wonders by which he was surrounded, Franz ascended a half-dilapidated staircase, and, leaving them to follow their monotonous round, seated himself at the foot of a column, and immediately opposite a large aperture, which permitted him to enjoy a full and undisturbed view of the gigantic dimensions of the majestic ruin.

Franz had remained for nearly a quarter of an hour perfectly hidden by the shadow of the vast column at whose base he had found a resting-place, and from whence his eyes followed the motions of Albert and his guides, who, holding torches in their hands, had emerged from a vomitorium at the opposite extremity of the Colosseum, and then again disappeared down the steps conducting to the seats reserved for the Vestal virgins, resembling, as they glided along, some restless shades following the flickering glare of so many *ignes fatui*. All at once his ear caught a sound resembling that of a stone rolling down the staircase opposite the one by which he had himself ascended. There was nothing remarkable in the circumstance of a fragment of granite giving way and falling heavily below; but it seemed to him that the substance that fell gave way beneath the pressure of a foot, and also that someone, who endeavoured as much as possible to prevent his footsteps from being heard, was approaching the spot where he sat.

Conjecture soon became certainty, for the figure of a man was distinctly visible to Franz, gradually emerging from the staircase opposite, upon which the moon was at that moment pouring a full tide of silvery brightness.

The stranger thus presenting himself was probably a person who, like Franz, preferred the enjoyment of solitude and his own thoughts to the frivolous

as on those of Corsica, Tuscany, and Spain; and further, Franz bethought him of having heard his singular entertainer speak both of Tunis and Palermo, proving thereby how largely his circle of acquaintances extended.

But however the mind of the young man might be absorbed in these reflections, they were at once dispersed at the sight of the dark frowning ruins of the stupendous Colosseum, through the various openings of which the pale moonlight played and flickered like the unearthly gleam from the eyes of the wandering dead. The carriage stopped near the Meta Sudans; the door was opened, and the young men, eagerly alighting, found themselves opposite a *cicerone*, who appeared to have sprung up from the ground, so unexpected was his appearance.

The usual guide from the hotel having followed them, they had paid two conductors, nor is it possible, at Rome, to avoid this abundant supply of guides; besides the ordinary *cicerone*, who seizes upon you directly you set foot in your hotel, and never quits you while you remain in the city, there is also a special *cicerone* belonging to each monument—nay, almost to each part of a monument. It may, therefore, be easily imagined there is no scarcity of guides at the Colosseum, that wonder of all ages, which Martial thus eulogizes:

'Let Memphis cease to boast the barbarous miracles of her pyramids, and the wonders of Babylon be talked of no more among us; all must bow to the superiority of the gigantic labour of the Cæsars, and the many voices of Fame spread far and wide the surpassing merits of this incomparable monument.'

As for Albert and Franz, they essayed not to escape from their *ciceronian* tyrants; and, indeed, it would have been so much the more difficult to break their bondage, as the guides alone are permitted to visit these monuments with torches in their hands. Thus, then, the young men made no attempt at resistance, but blindly and confidingly surrendered themselves into the care and custody of their conductors.

Franz had already made seven or eight similar excursions to the Colosseum, while his less favoured companion trod for the first time in his life the classic ground forming the monument of Flavius Vespasian; and, to his credit be it spoken, his mind, even amid the glib loquacity of the guides, was duly and deeply touched with awe and enthusiastic admiration of all he saw; and certainly no adequate notion of these stupendous ruins can be formed save by such as have visited them, and more especially by moonlight, at which time

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?'

'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, 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.

Chapter XXXIV

The Colosseum

FRANZ had so managed his route, that during the ride to the Colosseum they passed not a single ancient ruin, so that no preliminary impression interfered to mitigate the colossal proportions of the gigantic building they came to admire. The road selected was a continuation of the Via Sistina; then by cutting off the right angle of the street in which stands Santa Maria Maggiore and proceeding by the Via Urbana and San Pietro in Vincoli, the travellers would find themselves directly opposite the Colosseum.

This itinerary possessed another great advantage,—that of leaving Franz at full liberty to indulge his deep reverie upon the subject of Signor Pastrini's story, in which his mysterious host of Monte Cristo was so strangely mixed up. Seated with folded arms in a corner of the carriage, he continued to ponder over the singular history he had so lately listened to, and to ask himself an interminable number of questions touching its various circumstances without, however, arriving at a satisfactory reply to any of them.

One fact more than the rest brought his friend 'Sinbad the Sailor' back to his recollection, and that was the mysterious sort of intimacy that seemed to exist between the brigands and the sailors; and Pastrini's account of Vampa's having found refuge on board the vessels of smugglers and fishermen, reminded Franz of the two Corsican bandits he had found supping so amicably with the crew of the little yacht, which had even deviated from its course and touched at Porto-Vecchio for the sole purpose of landing them. The very name assumed by his host of Monte Cristo and again repeated by the landlord of the Hôtel de Londres, abundantly proved to him that his island friend was playing his philanthropic part on the shores of Piombino, Civita Vecchia, Ostia, and Gaëta,