

Empress Octavia

see it smoke with blood. Death was to stalk over it like a Phœnician dyer, when he crushes purple snails upon a white woollen cloak till the dark juices trickle down investing the snowy vesture with a crimson splendor. Banners wave, bronze statues shine in the morning light, the seats of the Senators await them, and before the Emperor's golden chair a superb hanging swells out like a sail into the arena. Now the scene darkens ; high above the heads of the spectators a cloud is rolling, depriving the sun of the right to annoy the citizens of Rome by its fervid heat ; a gigantic screen, woven of variegated material, stretches from one summit of the human mountain to the other, waving, swelling, and concealing the sky ; the multitude greet with enthusiastic cheering the cool shade that is slowly extending over them.

The attentive ear often catches a dull roar, or a hoarse, long-drawn growl, which dominates with its bestial sound the buzzing voices of the throng. Expectant hearts thrill, and one man nudges another, saying : "Do you hear the lions raging behind the grating?" His neighbor, rubbing his hands gleefully, replies : "How hungry the animals must be !"