

The Rockwood Review.

sunset. I told them so; whereupon they pointed out again, with much carefulness, the place where I could find a side of my stone ship. Then I said good-night, and thank you.

"We are your Excellency's servants," they said, in the beautiful Italian of the Roman upper classes. Zetto stayed with them.

Fifty feet away a curious conviction struck me without any warning whatever; for I was thinking of something else.

"Those beggars have picked my pockets," I said to myself suddenly; "and it's mighty lucky that it is only that."

Still walking, I slipped my hand into an inside coat pocket where I kept my money. It was gone. Then down to a side pocket where I kept my change; to my watch—gone too!

Like a flash the thought came, "If I turn suddenly, they will know I have missed things. They can get into the narrow streets before I can reach them."

I took out my note-book and began to write, turning gradually as if for more light. They were moving off slowly. I wrote on. They moved further and further away, looking back at me slyly. When they thought I had forgotten them, they turned and walked rapidly, their three heads close together, examining the booty. Then I made a dash, running swift on my toes.

I was almost upon them when Zetto turned. I heard a name yelled, probably a rendezvous; then they vanished into three different alleys among hundreds of poor people coming from work. One might as well have chased three cats in an alley with the hope of catching them.

I went home slowly, half humorous, half sad. There were only a few francs in the pocketbook, and the watch was a cheap one kept for traveling. It had all been done so cleanly, so artistically! "We are your Excellency's servants," I kept saying, trying to catch the accent of exquisite politeness. And I had been such a

perfect young gull! Lucky, too, perhaps, to get off without a nasty scrap! But Zetto—it was sad to lose a soul like that. I wondered if it were partly my fault; if I might not have done more to save him.

That night I had forgotten the incident, under circumstances that might well make one forget anything. After sundown it had been wild and stormy; but at ten the clouds broke and the moon came out. I would have but one day more in Rome. The desire swept over me to see the ruins of the Colosseum again by moonlight, and alone, if possible. Yes, the storm would keep what tourists there were in Rome snug at home. I would have it to myself to dream over. Yes, I must go.

At eleven I was there alone, on a broken column, drinking in the wonder of it. By daylight the ruin is stupendous, impressive beyond words, beyond all other works of man; by night it is marvellous, wonderful; too great, seemingly, for human hands to make or mar. And I see it alone at last, flooded by moonlight. Its vastness overpowers me.

Before me stretch the sands on which so many thousands have poured out their lives; gladiators, in the fierce lust of blood; captives, in the fiercer lust for freedom; Christian martyrs, women, little children, with the charging roar of lions in their ears. I see them marching, their faces lifted, an endless throng. Beyond are deep holes, vaults, and tumbling arches where excavation has laid open the dens of the beasts under the arena by scores and hundreds. Above them, tier on tier, rise the seats, up and away to the sky on every side. I see them filled with the rabble of Rome and the princes. The lust of blood is in their faces; their thumbs are down remorselessly.

Over all hangs the moon, clear, still, impassive—that saw it all.

The place is full of creeping shadows. Down in the dens there, under that broken arch, is a tiger,