

THE COLOSSEUM, ROME.

How can one attempt to convey to others the profound impression made by the Colosseum at Rome, ruined though it now is. In the days of its splendour it must indeed have been "exceeding magnificent" and awe inspiring. It has been described by archaeologists as the most perfect amphitheatre that remains, and consists of a series of arcades placed one over the other, of which the constant repetition of arch over arch gives the spectator a sense of size and grandeur that many finer buildings fail to do.

The Colosseum is built on the site where Nero constructed his lake, and was begun by Vespasian, soon after Nero's death, and completed by Titus in A.D. 80, when it was inaugurated by games lasting for 100 days in which 5,000 wild animals were killed.

Imagine this great ellipse filled with 40-50,000 spectators, the foremost row being reserved for the Emperor, the Senators, the Vestal Virgins and other distinguished persons.

Each spectator was provided with an ivory ticket on which was written the name of his section, the row and the number of his seat.

The Colosseum was used for gladiatorial demonstrations, wild beast chases, aquatic sports and a great variety of triumphal spectacles. The wild animals were kept under the special charge of soldiers in a menagerie, near the great Pretorian Camp, and brought to the dens under the arena by an underground passage.

Many things have changed in this great amphitheatre where men and beasts fought together, and where the spectacle of the massacre of Christian martyrs provided entertainment for a Roman holiday. But still intact are the slopes leading to the cages of the wild beasts, and the quarters where slaves and the victims of this cruel sport passed the previous night of agony, in the knowledge of the fate which awaited them when, having been brought to the arena, the lions and other wild animals, released from their cages, rushed up the slopes, and attacked and killed their victims. It needs little imagination to picture the scene. There broods over the stillness which has succeeded the excited cries and shouts of the great multitude there assembled, as the unequal fights proceeded, a sinister atmosphere which envelops one as a pall, and makes one feel that one has stepped back many centuries and that Imperial and Pagan Rome, with its glories and its cruelties still haunts the place. We should scarcely be surprised

if there were a sudden rush of evil things, and if the powers of darkness fought once more with those of light, as they did of old until forbidden by Constantine, the first Christian Emperor.

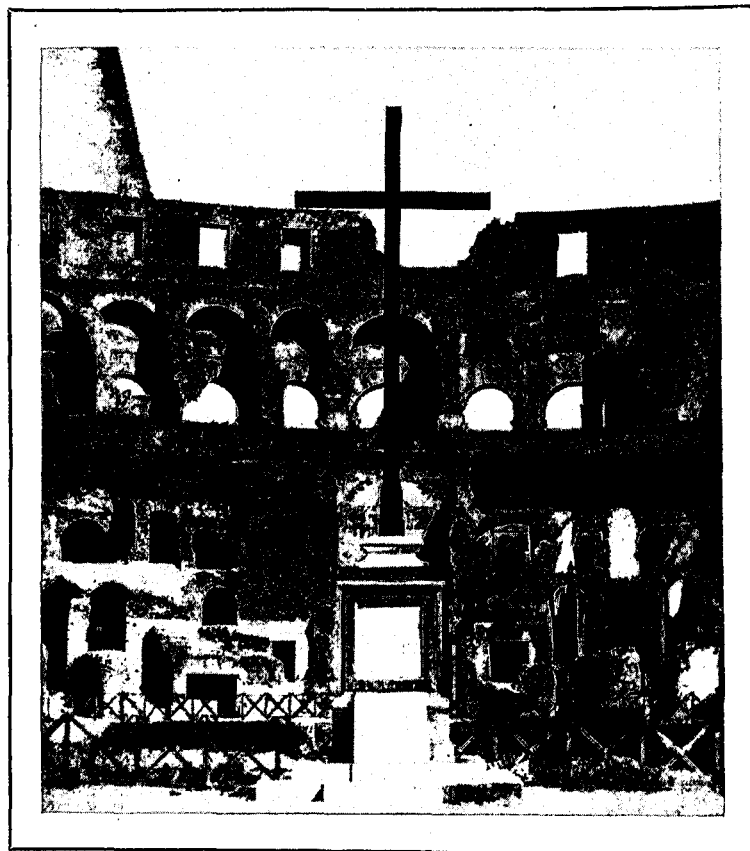
It was here, in the centre of the Colosseum that, in the last Holy Year (1927) the bronze cross shown in our picture was set up, and the Holy Sacrifice celebrated on an altar placed at its base.

The cross bears the inscription "Ave Crux, Spes Unica" (Hail the Cross our only Hope), a hope which sustained the Christian martyrs and kept them steadfast to the bitter end. A further inscription bears witness to the fact of the frequency with which the blood of the martyrs was shed there.

But see the Colosseum by moonlight for choice, as did some of the British visitors to the recent Congress by the

light of the harvest moon, which bathed everything in a silver radiance piercing the soul with its beauty, mystic, wonderful, and you will realise that enveloped by a power not of this earth, and strong in the faith which conquers through the power of the Cross, they passed through the grave and gate of death to a joyful resurrection, and their exceeding great reward. A great peace fills your heart as you realize that, by the grace of God, you too may conquer in that sign.

Though now a ruin, the grandeur of the Colosseum must always be impressive. Destroyed partly by earthquake, — and partly, alas! by human hands, — since the beginning of the nineteenth century, efforts have been made to preserve what still remains of this magnificent relic of Imperial Rome.



THE BRONZE CROSS IN THE COLOSSEUM AT ROME,
AVE CRUX SPES UNICA.

A detail of interest which, for lack of space, has so far been omitted, in reference to our Italian visit, is the Porta Santa, at St. Peter's, Rome, which is permanently closed and only opened in the year of Jubilee (the Holy Year), and then by the Pope himself. At the West End, on the same side, is Michael Angelo's *Pieta*, exquisitely modelled in marble, and depicting the Madonna holding in her lap the dead Christ. On the left side, in the first chapel as we enter are the tombs of the last of the Stuarts, James III, Charles Edward, and his brother, Cardinal York, built at the cost of George IV.

Mention must also be made of the beautiful basilica of SS. Annunziata, the church of the Servite Order, one of the treasures of which is a miraculous picture of the Virgin.

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