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VENETIAN LIFE.

MR. W. D. HOWELLS'S WORKS.

POCKET EDITION, IN ONE SHILLING VOLUMES.

A FOREGONE CONCLUSION.

A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE.

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EDINBURGH: DAVID DOUGLAS.
LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.

VENETIAN LIFE

BY

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Author's Edition

VOL. II.

EDINBURGH
DAVID DOUGLAS, CASTLE STREET
1883

Edinburgh University Press:
T. AND A. CONSTABLE, PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY.

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VENETIAN LIFE.

CHAPTER XV.

SOME MEMORABLE PLACES.

WE came away from the Ghetto, as we had arrived, in a gentle fall of goose-down, and winding crookedly through a dirty canal, glided into purer air and cleaner waters. I cannot well say how it was we came upon the old Servite Convent, which I had often looked for in vain, and which, associated with the great name of Paolo Sarpi, is to me one of the most memorable places in Venice. We reached it, after passing by that old, old palace, which was appointed in the early ages of Venetian commerce for the reception of oriental traffic and traffickers, and where it is said the Moorish merchants resided till the later time of the Fondaco dei Turchi on the Grand Canal. The façade of the palace is

richly sculptured; and near one corner is the bass-relief of a camel and his turbaned driver,—in token, perhaps, that man and beast (as orientals would understand them) were here entertained.

We had lived long enough in Venice to know that it was by no means worth while to explore the interior of this old palace because the outside was attractive, and so we left it; and, turning a corner, found ourselves in a shallow canal, with houses on one side, and a grassy bank on the other. The bank sloped gently from the water up to the walls of some edifice, on which ruin seemed to have fastened soon after the architect had begun his work. The vast walls, embracing several acres in their close, rose only some thirty or forty feet from the ground—only high enough, indeed, to join over the top of the great Gothic gates, which pierced them on two façades. There must have been barracks near; for, on the sward, under the walls, muskets were stacked, and Austrian soldiers were practising the bayonet-exercise with long poles padded at the point. "*Ein, zwei, drei, — vorwärts! Ein, zwei, drei,—rückwärts!*" snarled the drill-sergeant, and the dark-faced Hungarian soldiers—who may have soon afterward

prodded their Danish fellow-beings all the more effectively for that day's training—stooped, writhed, and leaped obedient. I, who had already caught sight of a little tablet in the wall bearing the name of Paolo Sarpi, could not feel the propriety of the military performance on that scene; yet I was very glad, dismounting from the gondola, to get by the soldiers without being forced back at the padded point of a pole, and offered no audible objection to their presence.

So passing to the other side I found entrance through a disused chapel to the interior of the convent. The gates on the outside were richly sculptured, and were reverend and clean; tufts of harsh grass grew from their arches, and hung down like the "overwhelming brows" of age. Within, at first sight, I saw nothing but heaps of rubbish, piles of stone, and here and there a mutilated statue. I remember two pathetic caryatides, that seemed to have broken and sunk under too heavy a weight for their gentle beauty—and everywhere the unnamable filth with which ruin is always dishonoured in Italy, and which makes the most picturesque and historic places inaccessible to the foot, and intolerable to the senses and the soul.

I was thinking with a savage indignation on this incurable *porcheria* of the Italian poor (who are guilty of such desecrations), when my eye fell upon an enclosed space in one corner, where some odd-looking boulders were heaped together. It was a space about six feet in depth, and twenty feet square; and the boulders, on closer inspection, turned out to be human skulls, nestling on piles of human bones. In any other land than Italy I think I should have turned from the grisly sight with a cowardly sickness and shuddering; but here!—Why, heaven and earth seem to take the loss of men so good-naturedly, —so many men have died and passed away with their difficult, ambitious, and troublesome little schemes,—and the great mass of mankind is taken so small account of in the course of destiny, that the idea of death does not appear so alien and repulsive as elsewhere, and the presence of such evidences of our poor mortality can scarcely offend sensibility. These were doubtless the bones of the good Servite friars who had been buried in their convent, and had been digged up to make way for certain improvements now taking place within its walls. I have no doubt that their deaths were a rest to their bodies, to say nothing of their souls.

If they were at all in their lives like those who have come after them, the sun baked their bald brows in summer, and their naked feet—poor feet! clapping round in wooden-soled sandals over the frozen stones of Venice—were swollen and gnawed with chilblains in winter; and no doubt some fat friar of their number, looking all the droller in his bare feet for the spectacles on his nose, came down Calle Falier then, as now, to collect the charity of bread and fuel, far oftener than the dwellers in that aristocratic precinct wished to see him.

The friars' skulls looked contented enough, and smiled after the hearty manner of skulls; and some of the leg-bones were thrust through the enclosing fence, and hung rakishly over the top. As to their spirits, I suppose they must have found out by this time that these confused and shattered tabernacles which they left behind them are not nearly so corrupt and dead as the monastic system which still cumbers the earth. People are building on the site of the old convent a hospital for indigent and decrepit women, where a religious sisterhood will have care of the inmates. It is a good end enough, but I think it would be the true compensation if all the rubbish of the old cloister were

cleared from the area of those walls, and a great garden planted in the space, where lovers might whisper their wise nonsense, and children might romp and frolic, till the crumbling masonry forgot its old office of imprisonment and the memory of its prisoners. For here, one could only think of the moping and mumming herd of monks, who were certainly not worth remembering, while the fame of Paolo Sarpi, and the good which he did, refused to be localised. That good is an inheritance which has enriched the world; but the share of Venice has been comparatively small in it, and that of this old convent ground still less. I rather wondered, indeed, that I should have taken the trouble to look up the place; but it is a harmless, if even a very foolish, pastime to go seeking for the sublime secret of the glory of the palm in the earth where it struck root and flourished. So far as the life-long presence and the death of a man of clear brain and true heart could hallow any scene, this ground was holy; for here Sarpi lived, and here in his cell he died, a simple Servite friar—he who had caught the bolts of excommunication launched against the Republic from Rome, and broken them in his hand,—who had breathed upon the mighty arm of

the temporal power, and withered it to the juiceless stock it now remains. And yet I could not feel that the ground *was* holy, and it did not make me think of Sarpi; and I believe that only those travellers who invent in cold blood their impressions of memorable places ever have remarkable impressions to record.

Once, before the time of Sarpi, an excommunication was pronounced against the Republic with a result as terrible as that of the later interdict was absurd. Venice took possession, early in the fourteenth century, of Ferrara, by virtue of a bargain which the high contracting parties—the Republic and an exiled claimant to the ducal crown of Ferrara—had no right to make. The father of the banished prince had displeased him by marrying late in life, when the thoughts of a good man should be turned on other things, and the son compassed the sire's death. For this the Ferrarese drove him away, and as they would not take him back to reign over them at the suggestion of Venice, he resigned his rights in favour of the Republic, and the Republic at once annexed the city to its territories. The Ferrarese appealed to the Pope for his protection, and Clement v., supporting an

ancient but long quiescent claim to Ferrara on the part of the Church, called upon the Venetians to surrender the city, and, on their refusal, excommunicated them. All Christian peoples were commanded "to arm against the Venetians, to spoil them of their goods, as separated from the union of Christians, and as enemies of the Roman Church." They were driven out of Ferrara, but their troubles did not end with their loss of the city. Giustina Renier-Michiel says the nations, under the shelter of the Pope's permission and command, "exercised against them every species of cruelty; there was no wrong or violence of which they were not victims. All the rich merchandise which they had in France, in Flanders, and in other places, was confiscated; their merchants were arrested, maltreated, and some of them killed. Woe to us, if the Saracens had been baptized Christians! our nation would have been utterly destroyed. Such was the ruin brought upon us by this excommunication that to this day it is a popular saying, concerning a man of gloomy aspect, '*He looks as if he were bringing the excommunication of Ferrara.*'"

No proverb, sprung from the popular terror, commemorates the interdict of the Republic

which took place in 1606, and which, I believe, does not survive in popular recollection at Venice. It was at first a collision of the Venetian and Papal authorities at Ferrara, and then an interference of the Pope to prevent the execution of secular justice upon certain ecclesiastical offenders in Venetia, which resulted in the excommunication of the Republic, and finally in the defeat of St. Peter and the triumph of St. Mark. Chief among the ecclesiastical offenders mentioned were the worthy Abbate Brandolino of Narvesa, who was accused, among other things, of poisoning his own father; and the good Canonico Saraceni of Vicenza, who was repulsed in overtures made to his beautiful cousin, and who revenged himself by defaming her character, and "filthily defacing" the doors of her palace. The abbate was arrested, and the canon, on this lady's complaint to the Ten at Venice, was thrown into prison, and the weak and furious Pope Paul v., being refused their release by the Ten, excommunicated the whole Republic.

In the same year, that is to say 1552, the bane and antidote, Paul the Pope and Paul Sarpi the friar, were sent into the world. The latter grew in piety, fame, and learning,

and at the time the former began his quarrel with the Republic, there was none in Venice so fit and prompt as Sarpi to stand forth in her defence. He was at once taken into the service of St. Mark, and his clear, acute mind fashioned the spiritual weapons of the Republic, and helped to shape the secular measures taken to annul the interdict. As soon as the bull of excommunication was issued, the Republic instructed her officers to stop every copy of it at the frontier, and it was never read in any church in the Venetian dominions. The Senate refused to receive it from the Papal Nuncio. All priests, monks, and other servants of the Church, as well as all secular persons, were commanded to disregard it; and refractory ecclesiastics were forced to open their churches on pain of death. The Jesuits and Capuchins were banished; and clerical intriguers, whom Rome sent in swarms to corrupt social and family relations, by declaring an end of civil government in Venice, and preaching among women disobedience to patriotic husbands and fathers, were severely punished. With internal safety thus provided for, the Republic intrusted her moral, religious, and political defence entirely to Sarpi, who devoted him-

self to his trust with fidelity, zeal, and power.

It might have been expected that the friend of Galileo, and the most learned and enlightened man of his country, would have taken the short and decisive method of discarding all allegiance to Rome as the most logical resistance to the unjust interdict. But the Venetians have ever been faithful Catholics,[1] and Sarpi was (or, according to the papal writers, seemed to be) a sincere and obedient Servite friar, believing in the spiritual supremacy of the Pope, and revering the religion of Rome. He therefore

[1] It is convenient here to attest the truth of certain views of religious sentiment in Italy, which Mr. Trollope, in his *Paul the Pope and Paul the Friar*, quotes from an "Italian author, by no means friendly to Catholicism, and very well qualified to speak of the progress of opinions and tendencies among his fellow-countrymen." This author is Bianchi Giovini, who, speaking of modern Catholicism as the heir of the old materialistic paganism, says: "The Italians have identified themselves with this mode of religion. Cultivated men find in it the truth there is in it, and the people find what is agreeable to them. But both the former and the latter approve it as conformable to the national character. And whatever may be the religious system which shall govern our descendants twenty centuries hence, I venture to affirm that the exterior forms of it will be pretty nearly the same as those which prevail at present, and which

fought Paul inside of the Church, and his writings on the interdict remain the monument of his polemical success. He was the heart and brain of the Republic's whole resistance,—he supplied her with inexhaustible reasons and answers,—and, though tempted, accused, and threatened, he never swerved from his fidelity to her.

As he was the means of her triumph,[1] he remained the object of her love. He could never be persuaded to desert his cell in the Minorite Convent for the apartments appointed him by the State; and even when his busy days were spent in council at the

did prevail twenty centuries ago." Mr. Trollope generously dissents from the "*pessimism*" of these views. The views are discouraging for some reasons; but, with considerable disposition and fair opportunity to observe Italian character in this respect, I had arrived at precisely these conclusions. I wish here to state that in my slight sketch of Sarpi and his times I have availed myself freely of Mr. Trollope's delightful book—it is near being too much of a good thing—named above.

[1] The triumph was such only so far as the successful resistance to the interdict was concerned; for at the intercession of the Catholic powers the Republic gave up the ecclesiastical prisoners, and allowed all the banished priests, except the Jesuits, to return. The Venetians utterly refused to perform any act of humiliation or penance. The interdict had been defied, and it remained despised.

Ducal Palace, he returned each night to sleep in the cloister. After the harmless interdict had been removed by Paul, and the unyielding Republic forgiven, the wrath of Rome remained kindled against the friar whose logic had been too keen for the last reason of popes. He had been tried for heresy in his youth at Milan, and acquitted; again, during the progress of St. Mark's quarrel with Rome, his orthodoxy had been questioned; and now that all was over, and Rome could turn her attention to one particular offender, he was entreated, coaxed, commanded to come to her, and put her heart at rest concerning these old accusations. But Sarpi was very well in Venice. He had been appointed Consultor in Theology to the Republic, and had received free admission to the secret archives of the State,—a favour, till then, never bestowed on any. So he would not go to Rome, and Rome sent assassins to take his life. One evening, as he was returning from the Ducal Palace in company with a lay-brother of the convent, and an old patrician, very infirm and helpless, he was attacked by these *nuncios* of the papal court: one of them seized the lay-brother, and another the patrician, while a third dealt Sarpi innumer-

able dagger thrusts. He fell as if dead, and the ruffians made off in the confusion.

Sarpi had been fearfully wounded, but he recovered. The action of the Republic in this affair is a comforting refutation of the saying that Republics are ungrateful, and the common belief that Venice was particularly so. The most strenuous and unprecedented efforts were made to take the assassins, and the most terrific penalties were denounced against them. What was much better, new honours were showered upon Sarpi, and extraordinary and affectionate measures were taken to provide for his safety.

And, in fine, he lived in the service of the Republic, revered and beloved, till his seventieth year, when he died with zeal for her good shaping his last utterance: "I must go to St. Mark, for it is late, and I have much to do."

Brave Sarpi, and brave Republic! Men cannot honour them enough. For though the terrors of the interdict were doubted to be harmless even at that time, it had remained for them to prove the interdict, then and for ever, an instrument as obsolete as the catapult.

I was so curious as to make some inquiry among the workmen on the old convent

ground, whether any stone or other record commemorative of Sarpi had been found in the demolished cells. I hoped, not very confidently, to gather some trace of his presence there—to have, perhaps, the spot on which he died shown me. To a man, they were utterly ignorant of Sarpi, while affecting, in the Italian manner, to be perfectly informed on the subject. I was passed, with my curiosity, from one to another, till I fell into the hands of a kind of foreman, to whom I put my questions anew. He was a man of Napoleonic beard, and such fair red-and-white complexion, that he impressed me as having escaped from a show of wax-works, and I was not at all surprised to find him a wax figure in point of intelligence. He seemed to think my questions the greatest misfortunes which had ever befallen him, and to regard each suggestion of *Sarpi—tempo della Repubblica—scomuni ca di Paolo Quinto* —as an intolerable oppression. He could only tell me that on a certain spot (which he pointed out with his foot) in the demolished church there had been found a stone with Sarpi's name upon it. The padrone, who had the contract for building the new convent, had said,—"Truly, I have heard speak of this Sarpi;" but the stone had

been broken, and he did not know what had become of it.

And, in fact, the only thing that remembered Sarpi, on the site of the convent where he spent his life, died, and was buried, was the little tablet on the outside of the wall, of which the abbreviated Latin announced that he had been Theologue to the Republic, and that his dust was now removed to the island of San Michele. After this failure, I had no humour to make researches for the bridge on which the friar was attacked by his assassins. But, indeed, why should I look for it? Finding it, could I have kept in my mind the fine dramatic picture I now have, of Sarpi, returning to his convent on a mild October evening, weary with his long walk from St. Mark's, and pacing with downcast eyes,—the old patrician and the lay-brother at his side, and the masked and stealthy assassins, with uplifted daggers, behind him? Nay, I fear I should have found the bridge with some scene of modern life upon it, and brought away in my remembrance an old woman with on oil-bottle, or a straggling boy with a tumbler, and a very little wine in it.

On our way home from the Servite Convent, we stopped again near the corner and

bridge of Sior Antonio Rioba,—this time to go into the house of Tintoretto, which stands close at the right hand, on the same quay. The house, indeed, might make some pretensions to be called a palace: it is large, and has a carved and balconied front, in which are set a now illegible tablet describing it as the painter's dwelling, and a medallion portrait of Robusti. It would have been well if I had contented myself with this goodly outside; for penetrating, by a long narrow passage and complicated stairway, to the interior of the house, I found that it had nothing to offer me but the usual number of commonplace rooms in the usual blighting state of restoration. I must say that the people of the house, considering they had nothing in the world to show me, were kind and patient under the intrusion, and answered with very polite affirmation my discouraged inquiry if this were really Tintoretto's house.

Their conduct was different from that of the present inmates of Titian's house, near the Fondamenta Nuove, in a little court at the left of the church of the Jesuits. These unreasonable persons think it an intolerable bore that the enlightened travelling public should break in upon their privacy. They

put their heads out of the upper windows, and assure the strangers that the house is as utterly restored within as they behold it without (and it *is* extremely restored), that it merely occupies the site of the painter's dwelling, and that there is nothing whatever to see in it. I never myself had the heart to force an entrance after these protests; but an acquaintance of the more obdurate sex, whom I had the honour to accompany thither, once did so, and came out with a story of rafters of the original Titianic kitchen being still visible in the new one. After a lapse of two years I revisited the house, and found that so far from having learned patience by frequent trial, the inmates had been apparently goaded into madness during the interval. They seemed to know of our approach by instinct, and thrust their heads out, ready for protest, before we were near enough to speak. The lazy, frowzy women, the worthless men, and idle, loafing boys of the neighbourhood, gathered round to witness the encounter; but though repeatedly commanded to ring (I was again in company with ladies), and try to force the place, I refused decidedly to do so. The garrison were strengthening their position by plastering and renewed renovation, and I doubt

that by this time the original rafters are no longer to be seen. A plasterer's boy, with a fine sense of humour, stood clapping his trowel on his board, inside the house, while we debated retreat, and derisively invited us to enter: "*Suoni pure, O signore! Questa e la famosa casa del gran pittore, l'immortale Tiziano,—suoni, signore!*" (Ring, by all means, sir. This is the famous house of the great painter, the immortal Titian. Ring!) *Da capo.* We retired amid the scorn of the populace. But indeed I could not blame the inhabitants of Titian's house; and were I condemned to live in a place so famous as to attract idle curiosity, flushed and insolent with travel, I should go to the verge of man-traps and shot-guns to protect myself.

This house, which is now hemmed in by larger buildings of later date, had in the painter's time an incomparably "lovely and delightful situation." Standing near the northern boundary of the city, it looked out over the lagoon,—across the quiet isle of sepulchres, San Michele,—across the smoking chimneys of the Murano glass-works, and the bell-towers of her churches,—to the long line of the sea-shore on the right and to the mainland on the left; and beyond

the nearer lagoon islands and the faintly pencilled outlines of Torcello and Burano in front, to the sublime distance of the Alps, shining in silver and purple, and resting their snowy heads against the clouds. It had a pleasant garden of flowers and trees, into which the painter descended by an open stairway, and in which he is said to have studied the famous tree in The Death of Peter Martyr. Here he entertained the great and noble of his day, and here he feasted and made merry with the gentle sculptor Sansovino, and with their common friend, the rascal-poet Aretino. The painter's and the sculptor's wives knew each other, and Sansovino's Paola was often in the house of Cecilia Vecellio;[1] and any one who is wise enough not to visit the place, can easily think of those ladies there, talking at an

[1] The wife of Titian's youth was, according to Ticozzi, named Lucia. It is in Mutinelli that I find allusion to Cecilia. The author of the *Annali Urbani*, speaking of the friendship and frequent meetings of Titian and Sansovino, says,—"Vivevano . . . allora ambedue di un amore fatto sacro dalle leggi divine, essendo moglie di Tiziano una Cecilia." I would not advise the reader to place too fond a trust in anything concerning the house of Titian. Mutinelli refers to but one house of the painter, while Ticozzi makes him proprietor of two.

open window that gives upon the pleasant garden, where their husbands walk up and down together in the purple evening light.

In the palace where Goldoni was born a servant showed me an entirely new room near the roof, in which he said the great dramatist had composed his immortal comedies. As I knew, however, that Goldoni had left the house when a child, I could scarcely believe what the cicerone said, though I was glad he said it, and that he knew anything at all of Goldoni. It is a fine old Gothic palace on a small canal near the Frari, and on the Calle dei Nomboli, just across from a shop of indigestible pastry. It is known by an inscription, and by the medallion of the dramatist above the land-door; and there is no harm in looking in at the court on the ground-floor, where you may be pleased with the picturesque old stairway, wandering upward I hardly know how high, and adorned with many little heads of lions.

Several palaces dispute the honour of being Bianca Capello's birthplace, but Mutinelli awards the distinction to the palace at Sant' Appollinare near the Ponte Storto. One day a gondolier vaingloriously rowed us to the water-gate of the edifice through a very narrow, damp, and uncleanly canal,

pretending that there was a beautiful staircase in its court. At the moment of our arrival, however, Bianca happened to be hanging out clothes from a window, and shrilly disclaimed the staircase, attributing this merit to another Palazzo Capello. We were less pleased with her appearance here, than with that portrait of her which we saw on another occasion in the palace of a lady of her name and blood. This lady has since been married, and the name of Capello is now extinct.

The Palazzo Mocenigo, in which Byron lived, is galvanised into ghastly newness by recent repairs, and as it is one of the ugliest palaces on the Grand Canal, it has less claim than ever upon one's interest. The custodian shows people the rooms where the poet wrote, dined, and slept, and I suppose it was from the hideous basket-balcony over the main door that one of his mistresses threw herself into the canal. Another of these interesting relics is pointed out in the small butter-and-cheese shop which she keeps in the street leading from Campo Sant' Angelo to San Paterinan: she is a fat sinner, long past beauty, bald, and somewhat melancholy to behold. Indeed Byron's memory is not a presence which I approach with

pleasure, and I had most enjoyment in his palace when I thought of good-natured little Thomas Moore, who once visited his lordship there. Byron himself hated the recollection of his life in Venice, and I am sure no one else need like it. But he is become a *cosa di Venezia*, and you cannot pass his palace without having it pointed out to you by the gondoliers. Early after my arrival in the city I made the acquaintance of an old smooth-shaven, smooth-mannered Venetian, who said he had known Byron, and who told me that he once swam with him from the Port of San Nicolò to his palace-door. The distance is something over three miles; but if the swimmers came in with the sea the feat was not so great as it seems, for the tide is as swift and strong as a mill-race. I think it would be impossible to make the distance against the tide.

CHAPTER XVI.

COMMERCE.

TO make an annual report in September upon the Commercial Transactions of the port, was an official duty to which I looked forward at Venice with a vague feeling of injury during a year of almost uninterrupted tranquillity. It was not because the preparation of the report was an affair of so great labour that I shrank from it; but because the material was wanting with which to make a respectable show among my consular peers in the large and handsomely misprinted volume of Commercial Relations annually issued by the enterprising Congressional publishers. It grieved me that upstart ports like Marseilles, Liverpool, and Bremen should occupy so much larger space in this important volume than my beloved Venice; and it was with a feeling of profound mortification that I used to post my meagre account of a commerce that once was greater than all the rest of the world's

together. I sometimes desperately eked out the material furnished me in the statistics of the Venetian Chamber of Commerce by an agricultural essay on the disease of the grapes and its cure, or by a few wretched figures representative of a very slender mining interest in the province. But at last I determined to end these displeasures, and to make such researches into the history of her commerce as should furnish me forth material for a report worthy of the high place Venice held in my reverence.

Indeed, it seemed to be by a sort of anachronism that I had ever mentioned contemporary Venetian commerce; and I turned with exultation from the phantom transactions of the present to that solid and magnificent prosperity of the past, of which the long-enduring foundations were laid in the earliest Christian times. For the new cities formed by the fugitives from barbarian invasion of the mainland, during the fifth century, had hardly settled around a common democratic government on the islands of the lagoons, when they began to develop maritime energies and resources; and long before this government was finally established at Rialto (the ancient seaport of Padua), or Venice had become the capital of the young

Republic, the Veneti had thriftily begun to turn the wild invaders of the mainland to account, to traffic with them, and to make treaties of commerce with their rulers. Theodoric, the king of the Goths, had fixed his capital at Ravenna, in the sixth century, and would have been glad to introduce Italian civilisation among his people; but this warlike race were not prepared to practise the useful arts, and although they inhabited one of the most fruitful parts of Italy, with ample borders of sea, they were neither sailors nor tillers of the ground. The Venetians supplied them (at a fine profit, no doubt) with the salt made in the lagoons, and with wines brought from Istria. The Goths viewed with especial amazement their skill in the management of their river-craft, by means of which the dauntless traders ascended the shallowest streams to penetrate the mainland, "running on the grass of the meadows, and between the stalks of the harvest field,"—just as in this day our own western steamers are known to run in a heavy dew.

The Venetians continued to extend and confirm their commerce with those helpless and hungry warriors, and were ready also to open a lucrative trade with the Longobards

when they descended into Italy about the year 570. They had, in fact, abetted the Longobards in their war with the Greek Emperor Justinian (who had opposed their incursion), and in return the barbarians gave them the right to hold great free marts or fairs on the shores of the lagoons, whither the people resorted from every part of the Longobard kingdom to buy the salt of the lagoons, grain from Istria and Dalmatia, and slaves from every country.

The slave-trade, indeed, formed then one of the most lucrative branches of Venetian commerce, as now it forms the greatest stain upon the annals of that commerce. The islanders, however, were not alone guilty of this infamous trade in men; other Italian states made profit of it, and it may be said to have been all but universal. But the Venetians were the most deeply involved in it, they pursued it the most unscrupulously, and they relinquished it the last. The pope forbade and execrated their commerce, and they sailed from the papal ports with cargoes of slaves for the infidels in Africa. In spite of the prohibitions of their own government, they bought Christians of kidnappers throughout Europe, and purchased the captives of the pirates on the seas, to sell them

again to the Saracens. Nay, being an ingenious people, they turned their honest penny over and over again: they sold the Christians to the Saracens, and then for certain sums ransomed them and restored them to their countries; they sold Saracens to the Christians, and plundered the infidels in similar transactions of ransom and restoration. It is not easy to fix the dates of the rise or fall of this slave-trade; but slavery continued in Venice as late as the fifteenth century, and in earlier ages was so common that every prosperous person had two or three slaves.[1] The corruption of the citizens at this time is properly attributed in part to the existence of slavery among them; and Mutinelli goes so far as to declare that the institution impressed permanent traits on the populace, rendering them idle and indisposed to honest labour, by degrading labour and making it the office of bondmen.

While this hateful and enormous traffic in man was growing up, the Venetians enriched themselves by many other more blameless and legitimate forms of commerce, and

[1] Mutinelli, *Del Costume Veneziano*. The present sketch of the history of Venetian commerce is based upon facts chiefly drawn from Mutinelli's delightful treatise, *Del Commercio dei Veneziani*.

gradually gathered into their grasp that whole trade of the East with Europe which passed through their hands for so many ages. After the dominion of the Franks was established in Italy in the eighth century, they began to supply that people, more luxurious than the Lombards, with the costly stuffs, the rich jewelry, and the perfumes of Byzantium; and held a great annual fair at the imperial city of Pavia, where they sold the Franks the manufactures of the polished and effeminate Greeks, and whence in return they carried back to the East the grain, wine, wool, iron, lumber, and excellent armour of Lombardy.

From the time when they had assisted the Longobards against the Greeks, the Venetians found it to their interest to cultivate the friendship of the latter, until, in the twelfth century, they mastered the people so long caressed, and took their capital, under Enrico Dandolo. The privileges conceded to the wily and thrifty republican traders by the Greek emperors were extraordinary in their extent and value. Otho, the western Cæsar, having succeeded the Franks in the dominion of Italy, had already absolved the Venetians from the annual tribute paid the Italian kings for the liberty

of traffic, and had declared their commerce free throughout the Peninsula. In the meantime they had attacked and beaten the pirates of Dalmatia, and the Greeks now recognised their rule all over Dalmatia, thus securing to the Republic every port on the eastern shores of the Adriatic. Then, as they aided the Greeks to repel the aggressions of the Saracens and Normans, their commerce was declared free in all the ports of the empire, and they were allowed to trade without restriction in all the cities, and to build warehouses and dépôts throughout the dominions of the Greeks, wherever they chose. The harvest they reaped from the vast field thus opened to their enterprise must have more than compensated them for their losses in the barbarisation of the Italian continent by the incessant civil wars which followed the disruption of the Lombard League, when trade and industry languished throughout Italy. When the Crusaders had taken the Holy Land, the king of Jerusalem bestowed upon the Venetians, in return for important services against the infidel, the same privileges conceded them by the Greek emperor; and when, finally, Constantinople fell into the hands of the Crusaders (whom they had skilfully diverted

from the reconquest of Palestine to the siege of the Greek metropolis), nearly all the Greek islands fell to the share of Venice; and the Latin emperors, who succeeded the Greeks in dominion, gave her such privileges as made her complete mistress of the commerce of the Levant.

From this opulent traffic the insatiable enterprise of the Republic turned, without relinquishing the old, to new gains in the furthest Orient. Against her trade the exasperated infidel had closed the Egyptian ports, but she did not scruple to coax the barbarous prince of the Scythian Tartars, newly descended upon the shores of the Black Sea; and having secured his friendship, she proceeded, without imparting her design to her Latin allies at Constantinople, to plant a commercial colony at the mouth of the Don, where the city of Azof stands. Through this entrepôt, thenceforward, Venetian energy, with Tartar favour, directed the entire commerce of Asia with Europe, and incredibly enriched the Republic. The vastness and importance of such a trade, even at that day, when the wants of men were far simpler and fewer than now, could hardly be over-stated; and one nation then monopolised the traffic which is now free to

the whole world. The Venetians bought their wares at the great marts of Samarcand, and crossed the country of Tartary in caravans to the shores of the Caspian Sea, where they set sail and voyaged to the river Volga, which they ascended to the point of its closest proximity to the Don. Their goods were then transported overland to the Don, and were again carried by water down to their mercantile colony at its mouth. Their ships, having free access to the Black Sea, could, after receiving their cargoes, return direct to Venice. The products of every country of Asia were carried into Europe by these dauntless traffickers, who, enlightened and animated by the travels and discoveries of Matteo, Nicolò, and Marco Polo, penetrated the remotest regions, and brought away the treasures which the prevalent fears and superstitions of other nations would have deterred them from seeking, even if they had possessed the means of access to them.

The partial civilisation of the age of chivalry had now reached its climax, and the class which had felt its refining effects was that best able to gratify the tastes still unknown to the great mass of the ignorant and impoverished people. It was a splendid

time, and the robber counts and barons of the continent, newly tamed and Christianised into knights, spent splendidly, as became magnificent cavaliers serving noble ladies. The Venetians, who seldom did merely heroic things, who turned the Crusades to their own account and made money out of the Holy Land, and whom one always fancies as having a half scorn of the noisy grandeur of chivalry, were very glad to supply the knights and ladies with the gorgeous stuffs, precious stones, and costly perfumes of the East; and they now also began to establish manufactories, and to practise the industrial arts at home. Their jewellers and workers in precious metals soon became famous throughout Europe; the glass-works of Murano rose into celebrity and importance, which they have never since lost (for they still supply the world with beads); and they began to weave stuffs of gold tissue at Venice, and silks so exquisitely dyed that no cavalier or dame of perfect fashion was content with any other. Besides this, they gilded leather for lining walls, wove carpets, and wrought miracles of ornament in wax,—a material that modern taste is apt to disdain,—while Venetian candles in chandeliers of Venetian glass

lighted up the palaces of the whole civilised world.

The private enterprise of citizens was in every way protected and encouraged by the State, which did not, however, fail to make due and just profit out of it. The ships of the merchants always sailed to and from Venice in fleets, at stated seasons, seven fleets departing annually—one for the Greek dominions, a second for Azof, a third for Trebizond, a fourth for Cyprus, a fifth for Armenia, a sixth for Spain, France, the Low Countries, and England, and a seventh for Africa. Each squadron of traders was accompanied and guarded from attacks of corsairs and other enemies by a certain number of the state galleys, let severally to the highest bidders for the voyage, at a price never less than about five hundred dollars of our money. The galleys were all manned and armed by the State, and the crew of each amounted to three hundred persons; including a captain, four supercargoes, eight pilots, two carpenters, two calkers, a master of the oars, fifty cross-bowmen, three drummers, and two hundred rowers. The State also appointed a commandant of the whole squadron with absolute authority to hear complaints, decide controversies, and punish offences.

While the Republic was thus careful in the protection and discipline of its citizens in their commerce upon the seas, it was no less zealous for their security and its own dignity in their traffic with the continent of Europe. In that rude day, neither the life nor the property of the merchant who visited the ultramontane countries was safe; for the sorry device which he practised, of taking with him a train of apes, buffoons, dancers, and singers, in order to divert his ferocious patrons from robbery and murder, was not always successful. The Venetians, therefore, were forbidden by the State to trade in those parts; and the Bohemians, Germans, and Hungarians who wished to buy their wares, were obliged to come to the lagoons and buy them at the great marts which were held in different parts of the city, and on the neighbouring main-land. A triple purpose was thus served,—the Venetian merchants were protected in their lives and goods, the national honour was saved from insult, and many an honest zecchino was turned by the innkeepers and others who lodged and entertained the customers of the merchants.

Five of these great fairs were held every week, the chief market being at Rialto; and

the transactions in trade were carefully supervised by the servants of the State. Among the magistracies especially appointed for the orderly conduct of the foreign and domestic commerce were the so-called Mercantile Consuls (*Ufficio dei Consoli dei Mercanti*), whose special duty it was to see that the traffic of the nation received no hurt from the schemes of any citizen or foreigner, and to punish offences of this kind with banishment and even graver penalties. They measured every ship about to depart, to learn if her cargo exceeded the lawful amount; they guarded creditors against debtors and protected poor debtors against the rapacity of creditors, and they punished thefts sustained by the merchants. It is curious to find, contemporary with this beneficent magistracy, a charge of equal dignity exercised by the College of Reprisals. A citizen offended in his person or property abroad demanded justice of the government of the country in which the offence was committed. If the demand was refused, it was repeated by the Republic; if still refused, then the Republic, although at peace with the nation from which the offence came, seized any citizen of that country whom it could find, and, through its College of Reprisals, spoiled him of sufficient pro-

perty to pay the damage done to its citizen. Finally, besides several other magistracies resident in Venice, the Republic appointed Consuls in its colonies and some foreign ports to superintend the traffic of its citizens, and to compose their controversies. The Consuls were paid out of duties levied on the merchandise; they were usually nobles, and acted with the advice and consent of twelve other Venetian nobles or merchants.

At this time, and, indeed, throughout its existence, the great lucrative monopoly of the Republic was the salt manufactured in the lagoons, and forced into every market, at rates that no other salt could compete with. Wherever alien enterprise attempted rivalry, it was instantly discouraged by Venice. There were troublesome salt mines, for example, in Croatia; and in 1381 the Republic caused them to be closed by paying the King of Hungary an annual pension of seven thousand crowns of gold. The exact income of the State, however, from the monopoly of salt, or from the various imposts and duties levied upon merchandise, it is now difficult to know, and it is impossible to compute accurately the value or extent of Venetian commerce at any one time. It reached the acme of its prosperity

under Tommaso Mocenigo, who was Doge from 1414 to 1423. There were then three thousand and three hundred vessels of the mercantile marine, giving employment to thirty-three thousand seamen, and netting to their owners a profit of forty per cent. on the capital invested. How great has been the decline of this trade may be understood from the fact that in 1863 it amounted, according to the careful statistics of the Chamber of Commerce, to only $60,229,740, and that the number of vessels now owned in Venice is one hundred and fifty. As the total tonnage of these is but 26,000, it may be inferred that they are small craft, and in fact they are nearly all coasting vessels. They no longer bring to Venice the drugs and spices and silks of Samarcand, or carry her own rare manufactures to the ports of western Europe; but they sail to and from her canals with humble freights of grain, lumber, and hemp. Almost as many Greek as Venetian ships now visit the old queen, who once levied a tax upon every foreign vessel in her Adriatic; and the shipping from the cities of the kingdom of Italy exceeds hers by ninety sail, while the tonnage of Great Britain is vastly greater. Her commerce has not only wasted to the

shadow of its former magnitude, but it has also almost entirely lost its distinctive character. Glass of Murano is still exported to a value of about two millions of dollars annually; but in this industry, as in nearly all others of the lagoons, there is an annual decline. The trade of the port falls off from one to three millions of dollars yearly, and the manufacturing interests of the province have dwindled in the same proportion. So far as silk is concerned, there has been an immediate cause for the decrease in the disease which has afflicted the cocoons for several years past. Wine and oil are at present articles of import solely,—the former because of a malady of the grape, the latter because of negligent cultivation of the olive.

A considerable number of persons are still employed in the manufacture of objects of taste and ornament; and in the Ruga Vecchia at Rialto they yet make the famous Venetian gold chain, which few visitors to the city can have failed to notice hanging in strands and wound upon spools, in the shop windows of the Old Procuratie and the Bridge of Rialto. It is wrought of all degrees of fineness, and is always so flexile that it may be folded and wound in any shape. It is now no longer made in great

quantity, and is chiefly worn by contadine (as a safe investment of their ready money),[1] and old-fashioned people of the city, who display the finer sort in skeins or strands. At Chioggia, I remember to have seen a babe at its christening in church literally manacled and shackled with Venetian chain; and the little girl who came to us one day, to show us the splendours in which she had appeared at a *disputa* (examination of children in doctrine) was loaded with it. Formerly in the luxurious days of the Republic, it is said the chain was made as fine as sewing-silk, and worn embroidered on Genoa velvet by the patrician dames. It had then a cruel interest from the fact that its manufacture, after a time, cost the artisans their eyesight, so nice and subtle was the work. I could not help noticing that the workmen at the shops in the Ruga Vecchia still suffer in their eyes, even though the work is much coarser. I do not hope to describe the chain, except by saying that the

[1] Certain foreigners living in Venice were one day astonished to find their maid-servant in possession of a mass of this chain, and thought it their business to reprove her extravagance. "Signori," she explained paradoxically, "if I keep my money, I spend it; if I buy this chain, it is always money (*è semper soldi*)."

links are horseshoe and oval shaped, and are connected by twos,—an oval being welded crosswise into a horseshoe, and so on, each two being linked loosely into the next.

An infinitely more important art, in which Venice was distinguished a thousand years ago, has recently been revived there by Signor Salviati, an enthusiast in mosaic painting. His establishment is on the Grand Canal, not far from the Academy, and you might go by the old palace quite unsuspicious of the ancient art stirring with new life in its breast. "A. Salviati, Avvocato," is the legend of the bell-pull, and you do not by any means take this legal style for that of the restorer of a neglected art, and a possessor of forgotten secrets in gilded glass and "smalts," as they term the small delicate rods of vitreous substance, with which the wonders of the art are achieved. But inside of the palace are some two hundred artisans at work,—cutting the smalts and glass into the minute fragments of which the mosaics are made, grinding and smoothing these fragments, polishing the completed works, and reproducing, with incredible patience and skill, the lights and shadows of the pictures to be copied.

You first enter the rooms of those whose

talent distinguishes them as artists, and in whose work all the wonderful neatness and finish and long-suffering toil of the Byzantines are visible, as well as original life and inspiration alike impossible and profane to the elder mosaicists. Each artist has at hand a great variety of the slender stems of smalts already mentioned, and, breaking these into minute fragments as he proceeds, he inserts them in the bed of cement prepared to receive his picture, and thus counterfeits in enduring mineral the perishable work of the painter.

In other rooms artisans are at work upon various tasks of *marqueterie*,—table-tops, album-covers, paper-weights, brooches, pins, and the like,—and in others they are sawing the smalts and glass into strips, and grinding the edges. Passing through yet another room, where the finished mosaic-works—of course not the pictorial mosaics—are polished by machinery, we enter the store-room, where the crowded shelves display blocks of smalts and glass of endless variety of colour. By far the greater number of these colours are discoveries or improvements of the venerable mosaicist Lorenzo Radi, who has found again the Byzantine secrets of counterfeiting, in vitreous paste, aventurine (gold stone),

onyx, chalcedony, malachite, and other natural stones, and who has been praised by the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice for producing mosaics even more durable in tint and workmanship than those of the Byzantine artists.

In an upper story of the palace a room is set apart for the exhibition of the many beautiful and costly things which the art of the establishment produces. Here, besides pictures in mosaic, there are cunningly inlaid tables and cabinets, caskets, rich vases of chalcedony mounted in silver, and delicately wrought jewelry, while the floor is covered with a mosaic pavement ordered for the viceroy of Egypt. There are here, moreover, to be seen the designs furnished by the Crown Princess of Prussia for the mosaics of the Queen's Chapel at Windsor. These, like all other pictures and decorations in mosaic, are completed in the establishment on the Grand Canal, and are afterward put up as wholes in the places intended for them.

In Venice nothing in decay is strange. But it is startling to find her in her old age nourishing into fresh life an art that, after feebly preserving the memory of painting for so many centuries, had decorated her prime only with the glories of its decline;—for

Kugler ascribes the completion of the mosaics of the church of St. Cyprian in Murano to the year 882, and the earliest mosaics of St. Mark's to the tenth or eleventh centuries, when the Greek Church had already laid her ascetic hand on Byzantine art, and fixed its conventional forms, paralysed its motives, and forbidden its inspirations.

I think, however, one would look about him in vain for other evidences of a returning prosperity in the lagoons. The old prosperity of Venice was based upon her monopoly of the most lucrative traffic in the world, as we have already seen,—upon her exclusive privileges in foreign countries, upon the enlightened zeal of her government, and upon men's imperfect knowledge of geography, and the barbarism of the rest of Europe, as well as upon the indefatigable industry and intelligent enterprise of her citizens. America was still undiscovered; the overland route to India was the only one known; the people of the continent outside of Italy were unthrifty serfs, ruled and ruined by unthrifty lords. The whole world's ignorance, pride, and sloth were Venetian gain; and the religious superstitions of the day, which, gross as they were, embodied perhaps its noblest and most hopeful sentiment, were a

source of incalculable profit to the sharp-witted mistress of the Adriatic. It was the age of penances, pilgrimages, and relic-hunting, and the wealth which she wrung from the devotion of others was exceedingly great. Her ships carried the pilgrims to and from the Holy Land: her adventurers ransacked Palestine and the whole Orient for the bones and memorials of the saints; and her merchants sold the precious relics throughout Europe at an immense advance upon first cost.

But the foundations of this prosperity were at last sapped by the tide of wealth which poured into Venice from every quarter of the world. Her citizens brought back the vices as well as the luxuries of the debauched Orient, and the city became that seat of splendid idleness and proud corruption which it continued till the Republic fell. It is needless here to rehearse the story of her magnificence and decay. At the time when the hardy, hungry people of other nations were opening paths to prosperity by land and sea, the Venetians, gorged with the spoils of ages, relinquished their old habits of daring enterprise, and dropped back into luxury and indolence. Their incessant wars with the Genoese began, and though they signally

defeated the rival Republic in battle, Genoa finally excelled in commerce. A Greek prince had arisen to dispute the sovereignty of the Latin emperors, whom the Venetians had helped to place upon the Byzantine throne; the Genoese, seeing the favourable fortunes of the Greek, threw the influence of their arms and intrigues in his favour, and the Latins were expelled from Constantinople in 1271. The new Greek emperor had promised to give the sole navigation of the Black Sea to his allies, together with the church and palaces possessed by the Venetians in his capital, and he bestowed also upon the Genoese the city of Smyrna. It does not seem that he fulfilled literally all his promises, for the Venetians still continued to sail to and from their colony of Tana, at the head of the Sea of Azof, though it is certain that they had no longer the sovereignty of those waters; and the Genoese now planted on the shores of the Black Sea three large and important colonies to serve as entrepôts for the trade taken from their rivals. The oriental traffic of the latter was maintained through Tana, however, for nearly two centuries later, when, in 1410, the Mongol Tartars, under Tamerlane, fell upon the devoted colony, took,

sacked, burnt, and utterly destroyed it. This was the first terrible blow to the most magnificent commerce which the world had ever seen, and which had endured for ages. No wonder that, on the day of Tana's fall terrible portents of woe were seen at Venice, —that meteors appeared, that demons rode the air, that the winds and waters rose and blew down houses and swallowed ships! A thousand persons are said to have perished in the calamities which commemorated a stroke so mortally disastrous to the national grandeur. After that the Venetians humbly divided with their ancient foes the possession and maintenance of the Genoese colony of Caffa, and continued, with greatly diminished glory, their traffic in the Black Sea; till, the Turks having taken Constantinople, and the Greeks having acquired under their alien masters a zeal for commerce unknown to them during the times of their native princes, the Venetians were finally, on the first pretext of war, expelled from those waters in which they had latterly maintained themselves only by payment of heavy tribute to the Turks.

In the meantime the industrial arts, in which Venice had heretofore excelled, began to be practised elsewhere, and the Florentines

and the English took that lead in the manufactures of the world, which the latter still retain. The league of the Hanseatic cities was established and rose daily in importance. At London, at Bruges, at Bergen, and Novogorod banks were opened under the protection and special favour of the Hanseatic League; its ships were preferred to any other, and the tide of commerce setting northward, the cities of the League persecuted the foreigners who would have traded in their ports. On the west Barcelona began to dispute the pre-eminence of Venice in the Mediterranean, and Spanish salt was brought to Italy itself and sold by the enterprising Catalonians. Their corsairs vexed Venetian commerce everywhere; and in that day, as in our own, private English enterprise was employed in piratical depredations on the traffic of a friendly power.

The Portuguese also began to extend their commerce, once so important, and catching the rage for discovery then prevalent, infested every sea in search of unknown land. One of their navigators, sailing by a chart which a monk named Fra Mauro, in his convent on the island of San Michele, had put together from the stories of travellers, and his own guesses at geography, discovered the

Cape of Good Hope, and the trade of India with Europe was turned in that direction, and the old overland traffic perished. The Venetian monopoly of this traffic had long been gone; had its recovery been possible, it would now have been useless to the declining prosperity of the Republic.

It remained for Christopher Columbus, born of that Genoese nation which had hated the Venetians so long and so bitterly, to make the discovery of America, and thus to give the death-blow to the supremacy of Venice. While all these discoveries were taking place, the old queen of the seas had been weighed down with many and unequal wars. Her naval power had been everywhere crippled; her revenues had been reduced; her possessions, one after one, had been lopped away; and at the time Columbus was on his way to America, half Europe, united in the League of Cambray, was attempting to crush the Republic of Venice.

The whole world was now changed. Commerce sought new channels; fortune smiled on other nations. How Venice dragged onward from the end of her commercial greatness, and tottered with a delusive splendour to her political death, is surely one of the saddest of stories if not the sternest of lessons.

CHAPTER XVII.

VENETIAN HOLIDAYS.

THE national character of the Venetians was so largely influenced by the display and dissipation of the frequent festivals of the Republic, that it cannot be fairly estimated without taking them into consideration, nor can the disuse of these holidays (of which I have heretofore spoken) be appreciated in all its import, without particular allusion to their number and nature. They formed part of the aristocratic polity of the old commonwealth, which substituted popular indulgence for popular liberty, and gave the people costly pleasures in return for the priceless rights of which they had been robbed, set up national pride in the place of patriotism, and was as well satisfied with a drunken joy in its subjects as if they had possessed a true content.

Full notice of these holidays would be his-

tory of Venice,[1] for each one had its origin in some great event of her existence, and they were so numerous as to commemorate nearly every notable incident in her annals. Though, as has been before observed, they had nearly all a general religious character, the Church, as usual in Venice, only seemed to direct the ceremonies in its own honour, while it really ministered to the political glory of the oligarchy, which knew how to manage its priests as well as its prince and people. Nay, it happened in one case, at least, that a religious anniversary was selected by the Republic as the day on which to put to shame before the populace certain of the highest

1 "Siccome," says the editor of Giustina Renier-Michiel's *Origine delle Feste Venezian*,—"Siccome l'illustre Autrice ha voluto applicare al suo lavoro il modesto titolo di *Origine delle Feste Venesiane*, e siccome questo potrebbe porgere un' idea assai diversa dell' opera a chi non ne ha alcuna cognizione, da quello che è sostanzialmente, si espone questo Epitome, perchè ognun vegga almeno in parte, che quest' opera sarebbe del titolo di *storia* condegna, giacchè essa non è che una costante descrizione degli avvenimenti più importanti e luminosi della Repubblica di Venezia." The work in question is one of much research and small philosophy, like most books which Venetians have written upon Venice; but it has admirably served my purpose, and I am indebted to it for most of the information contained in this chapter.

and reverendest dignitaries of the Church. In 1162, Ulrich, the Patriarch of Aquileja, seized, by a treacherous stratagem, the city of Grado, then subject to Venice. The Venetians immediately besieged and took the city, with the patriarch and twelve of his canons in it, and carried them prisoners to the lagoons. The turbulent patriarchs of Aquileja had long been disturbers of the Republic's dominion, and the people now determined to make an end of these displeasures. They refused, therefore, to release the patriarch, except on condition that he should bind himself to send them annually a bull and twelve fat hogs. It is not known what meaning the patriarch attached to this singular ceremony; but with the Venetians the bull was typical of himself, and the swine of his canons, and they yearly suffered death in these animals, which were slaughtered during Shrovetide in the Piazza San Marco amid a great concourse of the people, in the presence of the Doge and Signory. The locksmiths and other workers in iron had distinguished themselves in the recapture of Grado, and to their guild was allotted the honour of putting to death the bull and swine. Great art was shown in striking off the bull's head at one blow, without suffer-

ing the sword to touch the ground after passing through the animal's neck; the swine were slain with lances. Athletic games among the people succeeded, and the Doge and his Senators attacked and destroyed, with staves, several lightly built wooden castles, to symbolise the abasement of the feudal power before the Republic. As the centuries advanced, this part of the ceremony, together with the slaughter of the swine, was disused; in which fact Mr. Ruskin sees evidence of a corrupt disdain of simple and healthy allegory on the part of the proud doges, but in which I think most people will discern only a natural wish to discontinue in more civilised times a puerile barbarity. Mr. Ruskin himself finds no evidence of "state pride" in the abolition of the slaughter of the swine. The festival was very popular, and continued a long time, though I believe not till the fall of the Republic.

Another tribute, equally humiliating to those who paid it, was imposed upon the Paduans for an insult offered to St. Mark, and gave occasion for a national holiday, some fifty years after the Patriarch of Aquileja began atonement for his outrage. In the year 1214, the citizens of Treviso made

an entertainment, to which they invited the noble youth of the surrounding cities. In the chief piazza of the town, a castle of wood, exquisitely decorated, was held against all comers by a garrison of the fairest Trevisan damsels. The weapons of defence were flowers, fruits, bonbons, and the bright eyes of the besieged; while the missiles of attack were much the same, with whatever added virtue might lie in tender prayers and sugared supplications. Padua, Vicenza, Bassano, and Venice sent their gallantest youths, under their municipal banners, to take part in this famous enterprise; and the attack was carried on by the leagued forces with great vigour, but with no effect on the Castle of Love, as it was called, till the Venetians made a breach at a weak point. These young men were better skilled in the arts of war than their allies; they were richer, and had come to Treviso decked in the spoils of the recent sack of Constantinople, and at the moment they neared the castle, it is reported that they corrupted the besieged by throwing handfuls of gold into the tower. Whether this be true or not, it is certain that the conduct of the Venetians in some manner roused the Paduans to insult, and that the hot youths came to blows.

In an instant the standard of St. Mark was thrown down and trampled under the feet of the furious Paduans; blood flowed, and the indignant Trevisans drove the combatants out of their city. The spark of war spreading to the rival cities, the Paduans were soon worsted, and three hundred of their number were made prisoners. These they would willingly have ransomed at any price, but their enemies would not release them except on the payment of two white pullets for each warrior. The shameful ransom was paid in the Piazza, to the inextinguishable delight of the Venetians, who, never wanting in sharp and biting wit, abandoned themselves to sarcastic exultation. They demanded that the Paduans should, like the patriarch, repeat the tribute annually; but the prudent Doge Ziani judged the single humiliation sufficient, and refused to establish a yearly celebration of the feast.

One of the most famous occasional festivals of Venice is described by Petrarch in a Latin letter to his friend Pietro Bolognese. It was in celebration of the reduction of the Greeks of Candia, an island which, in 1361, had recently been ceded to the Republic. The Candiotes rose in general rebellion, but

were so promptly subdued that the news of the outbreak scarcely anticipated the announcement of its suppression in Venice. Petrarch was at this time the guest of the Republic, and from his seat at the right of the Doge on the gallery of St. Mark's Church, in front of the bronze horses, he witnessed the chivalric shows given in the Piazza below, which was then unpaved, and admirably adapted for equestrian feats of arms. It is curious to read the poet's account of these in a city where there is now no four-footed beast larger than a dog. But in the age of chivalry, even the Venetians were mounted, and rode up and down their narrow streets, and jousted in their great campos.

Speaking of twenty-four noble and handsome youths, whose feats formed a chief part of a show of which he "does not know if in the whole world there has been seen the equal," Petrarch says: "It was a gentle sight to see so many youths decked in purple and gold, as they ruled with the rein and urged with the spur their coursers, moving in glittering harness, with iron-shod feet which scarcely seemed to touch the ground." And it must have been a noble sight, indeed, to behold all this before the "golden facade of

the temple," in a place so packed with spectators "that a grain of barley could not have fallen to the ground. The great piazza, the church itself, the towers, the roofs, the arcades, the windows, all were—I will not say full, but running over, walled and paved with people." At the right of the church was built a great platform, on which sat "four hundred honestest gentlewomen, chosen from the flower of the nobility, and distinguished in their dress and bearing, who, amid the continual homage offered them morning, noon, and night, presented the image of a celestial congress." Some noblemen, come hither by chance, "from the part of Britain, comrades and kinsmen of their king, were present," and attracted the notice of the poet. The feasts lasted many days, but on the third day Petrarch excused himself to the Doge, pleading, he says, his "ordinary occupations, already known to all."

Among remoter feasts in honour of national triumphs, was one on the Day of the Annunciation, commemorative of the removal of the capital of the Venetian isles to Rialto from Malamocco, after King Pepin had burnt the latter city, and when, advancing on Venice, he was met in the lagoons and

beaten by the islanders and the tides : these by their recession stranding his boats in the mud, and those falling upon his helpless host with the fury of an insulted and imperilled people. The Doge annually assisted at mass in St. Mark's in honour of the victory, but not long afterward the celebration of it ceased, as did that of a precisely similar feat of the Hungarians, who had just descended from Asia into Europe. In 1339 there were great rejoicings in the Piazza for the peace with Mastino della Scala, who, beaten by the Republic, ceded his city of Treviso to her.

Doubtless the most splendid of all the occasional festivals was that held for the Venetian share of the great Christian victory at Lepanto over the Turks. All orders of the State took part in it ; but the most remarkable feature of the celebration was the roofing of the Merceria, all the way from St. Mark's to Rialto, with fine blue cloth, studded with golden stars to represent the firmament, as the shopkeepers imagined it. The pictures of the famous painters of that day, Titian, Tintoretto, Palma, and the rest, were exposed under this canopy, at the end near Rialto. Later, the Venetian victories over the Turks at the

Dardanelles were celebrated by a regatta, in 1658; and Morosini's brilliant reconquest of the Morea, in 1688, was the occasion of other magnificent shows.

The whole world has now adopted, with various modifications, the picturesque and exciting pastime of the regatta, which, according to Mutinelli,[1] originated among the lagoons at a very early period, from a peculiar feature in the military discipline of the Republic. A target for practice with the bow and cross-bow was set up every week on the beach at the Lido, and nobles and plebeians rowed thither in barges of thirty oars, vying with each other in the speed and skill with which the boats were driven. To divert the popular discontent that followed the Serrar del Consiglio and the suppression of Bajamonte Tiepolo's conspiracy early in the fourteenth century, the proficiency arising from this rivalry was turned to account, and the spectacle of the regatta was instituted. Agreeably, however, to the aristocratic spirit of the newly established oligarchy, the patricians withdrew from the lists, and the regatta became the affair exclusively of the gondoliers. In other Italian cities, where horse and donkey races

[1] *Annali Urbani di Venezia.*

were the favourite amusement, the riders were of both sexes; and now at Venice women also entered into the rivalry of the regatta. But in gallant deference to their weakness, they were permitted to begin the course at the mouth of the Grand Canal before the Doganna di Mare, while the men were obliged to start from the Public Gardens. They followed the Grand Canal to its opposite extremity, beyond the present railway station, and there doubling a pole planted in the water near the Ponte della Croce, returned to the common goal before the Palazzo Foscari. Here was erected an ornate scaffolding to which the different prizes were attached. The first boat carried off a red banner; the next received a green flag; the third, a blue; and the fourth, a yellow one. With each of these was given a purse, and with the last was added, by way of gibe, a live pig, a picture of which was painted on the yellow banner. Every regatta included five courses, in which single and double-oared boats, and single and double-oared gondolas, successively competed,—the fifth contest being that in which the women participated with two-oared boats. Four prizes like those described were awarded to the winners in each course.

The regatta was celebrated with all the pomp which the superb city could assume. As soon as the government announced that it was to take place, the preparations of the champions began. "From that time the gondolier ceased to be a servant; he became almost an adoptive son;"[1] his master giving him every possible assistance and encouragement in the daily exercises by which he trained himself for the contest, and his parish priest visiting him in his own house, to bless his person, his boat, and the image of the Madonna or other saint attached to the gondola. When the great day arrived the Canalazzo swarmed with boats of every kind. "All the trades and callings," says Giustina Renier-Michiel,[2] with that pride in the Venetian past which does not always pass from verbosity to eloquence, "had each its boats appropriately mounted and adorned; and private societies filled a hundred more. The chief families among the nobility appeared in their boats, on which they had lavished their taste and wealth." The rowers were dressed with the most profuse and elaborate luxury, and the barges were made to represent historical and mythological conceptions. "To this end the

[1] *Feste Venesiane.* [2] *Ibid.*

builders employed carving and sculpture, together with all manner of costly stuffs of silk and velvet, gorgeous fringes and tassels of silver and gold, flowers, fruits, shrubs, mirrors, furs, and plumage of rare birds. . . . Young patricians, in fleet and narrow craft, propelled by swift rowers, preceded the champions and cleared the way for them, obliging the spectators to withdraw on either side. . . . They knelt on sumptuous cushions in the prows of their gondolas, cross-bow in hand, and launched little pellets of plaster at the directors of such obstinate boats as failed to obey their orders to retire. . . .

"To augment the brilliancy of the regatta the nature of the place concurred. Let us imagine that superb canal, flanked on either side by a long line of edifices of every sort; with great numbers of marble palaces,—nearly all of noble and majestic structure, some admirable for an antique and Gothic taste, some for the richest Greek and Roman architecture,—their windows and balconies decked with damasks, stuffs of the Levant, tapestries, and velvets, the vivid colours of which were animated still more by borders and fringes of gold, and on which leaned beautiful women richly dressed and wearing

tremulous and glittering jewels in their hair. Wherever the eye turned, it beheld a vast multitude at doorways, on the rivas, and even on the roofs. Some of the spectators occupied scaffoldings erected at favourable points along the sides of the canal; and the patrician ladies did not disdain to leave their palaces, and, entering their gondolas, lose themselves among the infinite number of the boats. . . .

"The cannons give the signal of departure. The boats dart over the water with the rapidity of lightning. . . . They advance and fall behind alternately. One champion who seems to yield the way to a rival suddenly leaves him in the rear. The shouts of his friends and kinsmen hail his advantage, while others already passing him, force him to redouble his efforts. Some weaker ones succumb midway, exhausted. . . . They withdraw, and the kindly Venetian populace will not aggravate their shame with jeers; the spectators glance at them compassionately, and turn again to those still in the lists. Here and there they encourage them by waving handkerchiefs, and the women toss their shawls in the air. Each patrician following close upon his gondolier's boat, incites him with his voice, salutes him

by name, and flatters his pride and spirit. . . . The water foams under the repeated strokes of the oars ; it leaps up in spray and falls in showers on the backs of the rowers already dripping with their own sweat. . . . At last behold the dauntless mortal who seizes the red banner! His rival had almost clutched it, but one mighty stroke of the oar gave him the victory. . . . The air reverberates with a clapping of hands so loud that at the remotest point on the canal the moment of triumph is known. The victors plant on their agile boat the conquered flag, and instead of thinking to rest their weary arms, take up the oars again and retrace their course to receive congratulations and applause."

The regattas were by no means of frequent occurrence, for only forty-one took place during some five centuries. The first was given in 1315, and the last in 1857, in honour of the luckless Archduke Maximilian's marriage with Princess Charlotte of Belgium. The most sumptuous and magnificent regatta of all was that given to the city in the year 1686, by Duke Ernest of Brunswick. This excellent prince having sold a great part of his subjects to the Republic for use in its wars against the Turk, generously spent their

price in the costly and edifying entertainments of which Venice had already become the scene. The Judgment of Paris and the Triumph of the Marine Goddesses had been represented at his expense on the Grand Canal, with great acceptance, and now the Triumph of Neptune formed a principal feature in the gaieties of his regatta. Nearly the whole of the salt-water mythology was employed in the ceremony. An immense wooden whale supporting a structure of dolphins and Tritons, surmounted by a statue of Neptune, and drawn by sea-horses, moved from the Piazzetta to the Palazzo Foscari, where numbers of Sirens sported about in every direction till the regatta began. The whole company of the deities, very splendidly arrayed, then joined them as spectators, and behaved in the manner affected by gods and goddesses on these occasions. Mutinelli[1] recounts the story with many sighs and sneers and great exactness; but it is not interesting.

The miraculous recovery of the body of St. Mark, in 1094, after it had been lost for nearly two centuries, created a festive anniversary which was celebrated for a while with great religious pomp; but the rejoicings were not separately continued in after years.

[1] *Annali Urbani.*

The festival was consolidated (if one may so speak) with two others in honour of the same saint, and the triple occasions were commemorated by a single holiday. The holidays annually distinguished by civil or ecclesiastical displays were twenty-five in number, of which only eleven were of religious origin, though all were of partly religious observance. One of the most curious and interesting of the former was of the earliest date, and was continued till the last years of the Republic. In 596 Narses, the general of the Greek Emperor, was furnished by the Venetians with means of transport by sea from Aquileja to Ravenna for the army which he was leading against the Ostrogoths; and he made a vow that if successful in his campaign, he would requite their generosity by erecting two churches in Venice. Accordingly, when he had beaten the Ostrogoths, he caused two votive churches to be built,—one to St. Theodore, on the site of the present St. Mark's Church, and another to San Geminiano, on the opposite bank of the canal which then flowed there. In lapse of time the citizens, desiring to enlarge their Piazza, removed the church of San Geminiano back as far as the present Fabbrica Nuova, which Napoleon built on the site of the demolished

temple, between the western ends of the New and Old Procuratie. The removal was effected without the Pope's leave, which had been asked, but was refused in these words:—"The Holy Father cannot sanction the commission of a sacrilege, though he can pardon it afterwards." The pontiff, therefore, imposed on the Venetians for penance that the Doge should pay an annual visit for ever to the Church. On the occasion of this visit the parish priest met him at the door, and offered the holy water to him; and then the Doge, having assisted at mass, marched with his Signory and the clergy of the church to its original site, where the clergy demanded that it should be rebuilt, and the Doge replied with the promise,—"Next year." A red stone was set in the pavement to mark the spot where the Doge renewed this never-fulfilled promise.[1] The old church was de-

[1] As the author of the *Feste Veneziane* tells this story it is less dramatic and characteristic. The clergy, she says, reminded the Doge of the occasion of his visit, and his obligation to renew it the following year, which he promised to do. I cling to the version in the text, for it seems to me that the Doge's perpetual promise to rebuild the church was a return in kind for the Pope's astute answer to the petition asking him to allow its removal. So good a thing ought to be history.

stroyed by fire, and Sansovino built, in 1506, the temple thrown down by Napoleon to make room for his palace.

The 31st of January, on which day in 828 the body of St. Mark was brought from Alexandria to Venice, is still observed, though the festival has lost all the splendour which it received from civil intervention. For a thousand years the day was hallowed by a solemn mass in St. Mark's, at which the Doge and his Signory assisted.

The chief of the State annually paid a number of festive visits, which were made the occasion of as many holidays. To the convent of San Zaccaria he went in commemoration of the visit paid to that retreat by Pope Benedict III., in 855, when the pontiff was so charmed by the piety and goodness of the fair nuns, that, after his return to Rome, he sent them great store of relics and indulgences. It thus became one of the most popular of the holidays, and the people repaired in great multitude with their Doge to the convent, on each recurrence of the day, that they might see the relics and buy the indulgences. The nuns were of the richest and noblest families of the city, and on the Doge's first visit they presented him with that bonnet which became the symbol

of his sovereignty. It was wrought of pure gold, and set with precious stones of marvellous great beauty and value; and in order that the State might never seem forgetful of the munificence which bestowed the gift, the bonnet was annually taken from the treasury and shown by the Doge himself to the Sisters of San Zaccaria. The Doge Pietro Tradonico, to whom the bonnet was given, was killed in a popular tumult on this holiday, while going to the convent.

There was likewise a vast concourse of people and traffic in indulgences at the church of Santa Maria della Carità (now the Academy of Fine Arts), on the anniversary of the day when Pope Alexander III., in 1177, flying from the Emperor Barbarossa, found refuge in that monastery.[1] He bestowed great privileges upon it, and the Venetians honoured the event to the end of their national existence.

One of the rare occasions during the year when the Doge appeared officially in public after nightfall was on St. Stephen's Day. He then repaired at dusk in his gilded barge,

[1] Selvatico and Lazari in their admirable *Guida Artistica e Storica di Veneza*, say that the Pope merely lodged in the monastery on the day when he signed the treaty of peace with Barbarossa.

with splendid attendance of nobles and citizens, to the island church of San Giorgio Maggiore, whither, in 1009, the body of St. Stephen was brought from Constantinople. On the first of May the Doge visited the Convent of the Virgins (the convent building now forms part of the Arsenal), where the abbess presented him with a bouquet, and graceful and pleasing ceremonies took place in commemoration of the erection and endowment of the church. The head of the State also annually assisted at mass in St. Mark's to celebrate the arrival in Venice of St. Isidore's body, which the Doge Domenico Michiel brought with him from the East, at the end of twenty-six years' war against the infidels; and, finally, after the year 1485, when the Venetians stole the bones of San Rocco from the Milanese, and deposited them in the newly finished Scuola di San Rocco, a ducal visit was annually paid to that edifice.

Two only of the national religious festivals yet survive the Republic,—that of the church of the Redentore on the Giudecca, and that of the church of the Salute on the Grand Canal, both votive churches, built in commemoration of the city's deliverances from the pest in 1578 and 1630. In their general features

the celebrations of the two holidays are much alike; but that of the Salute is the less important of the two, and is more entirely religious in its character. A bridge of boats is annually thrown across the Canalazzo, and on the day of the Purification, the people throng to the Virgin's shrine to express their gratitude for her favour. This gratitude was so strong immediately after the cessation of the pest in 1630, that the Senate, while the architects were preparing their designs for the present church, caused a wooden one to be built on its site, and consecrated with ceremonies of singular splendour. On the Festa del Redentore (the third Sunday of July) a bridge of boats crosses the great canal of the Giudecca, and vast throngs constantly pass it, day and night. But though the small tradesmen who deal in fried cakes, and in apples, peaches, pears, and other fruits, make intolerable uproar behind their booths on the long quay before the church; though the vendors of mulberries (for which the gardens of the Giudecca are famous) fill the air with their sweet jargoning (for their cries are like the shrill notes of so many singing-birds); though thousands of people pace up and down, and come and go upon the bridge, yet the Festa

del Redentore has now none of the old-time gaiety it wore when the Venetians thronged the gardens, and feasted, sang, danced, and flirted the night away, and at dawn went in their fleets of many-lanterned boats, covering the lagoon with fairy light, to behold the sunrise on the Adriatic Sea.

Besides the religious festivals mentioned, there were five banquets annually given by the State on the several days of St. Mark, St. Vitus, St. Jerome, and St. Stephen, and the Day of the Ascension, all of which were attended with religious observances. Good Friday was especially hallowed by church processions in each of the campos; and St. Martha's Day was occasion for junketings on the Giudecca Canal, when a favourite fish, being in season, was devotionally eaten.

The civil and political holidays which lasted till the fall of the Republic were eleven. One of the earliest was the anniversary of the recapture of the Venetian Brides, who were snatched from their bridegrooms, at the altar of San Pietro di Castello, by Triestine pirates. The class of citizens most distinguished in the punishment of the abductors was the trade of carpenters, who lived chiefly in the parish of Santa Maria Formosa; and when the Doge in his grati-

tude bade them demand any reasonable grace, the trade asked that he should pay their quarter an annual visit. "But if it rains?" said the Doge. "We will give you a hat to cover you," answered the carpenters. "And if I am hungry?" "We will give you to eat and drink." So when the Doge made his visit on the day of the Virgin's Purification, he was given a hat of gilded straw, a bottle of wine, and loaves of bread. On this occasion the State bestowed dowers upon twelve young girls among the fairest and best of Venice (chosen two from each of the six sections of the city), who marched in procession to the church of Santa Maria Formosa. But as time passed, the custom lost its simplicity and purity: pretty girls were said to make eyes at handsome youths in the crowd, and scandals occurred in public. Twelve wooden figures were then substituted, but the procession in which they were carried was followed by a disgusted and hooting populace, and assailed with a shower of turnips. The festivities, which used to last eight days, with incredible magnificence, fell into discredit, and were finally abolished during the war when the Genoese took Chioggia and threatened Venice, under Doria. This was the famous Festa delle Marie.

In 997 the Venetians beat the Narentines at sea, and annexed all Istria, as far as Dalmatia, to the Republic. On the day of the Ascension, of the same year, the Doge, for the first time, celebrated the dominion of Venice over the Adriatic, though it was not till some two hundred years later that the Pope Alexander III. blessed the famous espousals, and confirmed the Republic in the possession of the sea for ever. "What," cries Giustina Renier-Michiel, turning to speak of the holiday thus established, and destined to be the proudest in the Venetian calendar,—"what shall I say of the greatest of all our solemnities, that of the Ascension? Alas! I myself saw Frenchmen and Venetians, full of derision and insult, combine to dismantle the Bucintoro and burn it for the gold upon it!"[1] . . . (This was the nuptial-ship in which the Doge went to wed the sea, and the patriotic lady tells us concerning the Bucintoro of her day): "It was in the form of a galley, and two hundred

[1] That which follows is a translation of the report given by Cesare Cantù, in his *Grande Illustrazione del Lombardo-Veneto*, of a conversation with the author of *Feste Veneziane*. It is not necessary to remind readers of Venetian history that Renier and Michiel were of the foremost names in the Golden Book. She who bore them both was born before the fall of the Re-

feet long, with two decks. The first of these was occupied by a hundred and sixty rowers, the handsomest and strongest of the fleet, who sat four men to each oar, and there awaited their orders; forty other sailors completed the crew. The upper deck was divided lengthwise by a partition, pierced with arched doorways, ornamented with gilded figures, and covered with a roof supported by caryatides—the whole surmounted by a canopy of crimson velvet embroidered with gold. Under this were ninety seats, and at the stern a still richer chamber for the Doge's throne, over which drooped the banner of St. Mark. The prow was double-beaked, and the sides of the vessel were enriched with figures of Justice, Peace, Sea, Land, and other allegories and ornaments.

"Let me imagine those times—it is the habit of the old. At midday, having heard mass in the chapel of the Collegio, the Doge descends the Giant's Stairs, issues from the

public which she so much loved and lamented, and no doubt felt more than the grief she expresses for the fate of the last Bucintoro. It was destroyed, as she describes, in 1796, by the French Republicans and Venetian Democrats after the abdication of the oligarchy; but a fragment of its mast yet remains, and is to be seen in the museum of the Arsenal.

Porta della Carta,[1] and passes the booths of the mercers and glass-vendors erected for the fair beginning that evening. He is preceded by eight standard-bearers with the flags of the Republic,—red, blue, white, and purple,—given by Alexander III. to the Doge Ziani. Six trumpets of silver, borne by as many boys, mix their notes with the clangour of the bells of the city. Behind come the retinues of the ambassadors in sumptuous liveries, and the fifty Comandadori in their flowing blue robes and red caps; then follow musicians, and the squires of the Doge in black velvet; then the guards of the Doge, two chancellors, the secretary of the Pregadi, a deacon clad in purple and bearing a wax taper, six canons, three parish priests in their sacerdotal robes, and the Doge's chaplain dressed in crimson. The grand chancellor is known by his crimson vesture. Two squires bear the Doge's chair and the cushion of cloth-of-gold. And the Doge—the representative, and not the master of his country; the executor, and not the maker of the laws; citizen and prince, revered and guarded, sovereign of individuals, servant of the State—comes clad in a long mantle of

[1] The gate of the Ducal Palace which opens upon the Piazzetta next St. Mark's.

ermine, cassock of blue, and vest and hose of *tocca d'oro*,[1] with the golden bonnet on his head, under the umbrella borne by a squire, and surrounded by the foreign ambassadors and the papal nuncio, while his drawn sword is carried by a patrician recently destined for some government of land or sea, and soon to depart upon his mission. In the rear comes a throng of personages,—the grand captain of the city, the judges, the three chiefs of the Forty, the Avogodori, the three chiefs of the Council of Ten, the three censors, and the sixty of the Senate with the sixty of the Aggiunta, all in robes of crimson silk.

"On the Bucintoro, each takes the post assigned him, and the prince ascends the throne. The Admiral of the Arsenal and the Lido stands in front as pilot; at the helm is the Admiral of Malamacco, and around him the ship-carpenters of the Arsenal. The Bucintoro, amid redoubled clamour of bells and roar of cannon, quits the riva and majestically ploughs the lagoon, surrounded by innumerable boats of every form and size.

"The Patriarch, who had already sent several vases of flowers to do courtesy to the

[1] A gauze of gold and silk.

company in the Bucintoro, joins them at the island of Sant' Elena, and sprinkles their course with holy water. So they reach the port of Lido, whence they formerly issued out upon the open sea; but in my time they paused there, turning the stern of the vessel to the sea. Then the Doge, amid the thunders of the artillery of the fort, took the ring blessed by the Patriarch,—who now emptied a cup of holy water into the sea,—and, advancing into a little gallery behind his throne, threw the ring into the waves, pronouncing the words, *Desponsamus te, mare, in signum veri perpetuique dominii.* Proceeding then to the church of San Nicoletto, they listened to a solemn mass, and returned to Venice, where the dignitaries were entertained at a banquet, while the multitude peacefully dispersed among the labyrinths of the booths erected for the fair." [1]

[1] One of the sops thrown to the populace on this occasion, as we learn from Mutinelli, was the admission to the train of gilded barges following the Bucintoro of a boat bearing the chief of the Nicolotti, one of the factions into which from time immemorial the lower classes of Venice had been divided. The distinction between the two parties seems to have been purely geographical; for there is no apparent reason why a man should have belonged to the Castellani

This fair, which was established as early as 1180, was an industrial exhibition of the arts and trades peculiar to Venice, and was repeated annually, with increasing ostentation, till the end, in 1796. Indeed, the feasts of the Republic at last grew so numerous that it became necessary, as we have seen before, to make a single holiday pay a double or triple debt of rejoicing. When the Venetians recovered Chioggia after the terrible war of 1380, the Senate refused to yield them another *festa*, and merely ordered that St. Mark's Day should be thereafter observed with some added ceremony: there was already one festival commemorative of a

except that he lived in the eastern quarter of the city, or to the Nicolotti, except that he lived in the western quarter. The government encouraged a rivalry not dangerous to itself, and for a long time the champions of the two sections met annually and beat each other with rods. The form of contest was afterwards modified, and became a struggle for the possession of certain bridges, in which the defeated were merely thrown into the canals. I often passed the scene of the fiercest of these curious battles at San Barnaba, where the Ponte de Pugni is adorned with four feet of stone let into the pavement, and defying each other from the four corners of the bridge. Finally, even these contests were given up, and the Castellani and Nicolotti spent their rivalry in marvellous acrobatic feats.

triumph over the Genoese (that of San Giovanni Decollato, on whose day, in 1358, the Venetians beat the Genoese at Negroponte), and the Senate declared that this was sufficient. A curious custom, however, on the Sunday after Ascension, celebrated a remoter victory over the same enemies, to which it is hard to attach any historic probability. It is not known exactly when the Genoese in immense force penetrated to Poveglia (one of the small islands of the lagoons), nor why being there they stopped to ask the islanders the best way of getting to Venice. But tradition says that the sly Povegliesi persuaded these silly Genoese that the best method of navigating the lagoons was by means of rafts, which they constructed for them, and on which they sent them afloat. About the time the Venetians came out to meet the armada, the withes binding the members of the rafts gave way, and the Genoese who were not drowned in the tides stuck in the mud, and were cut in pieces like so many melons. No one will be surprised to learn that not a soul of them escaped, and that only the Povegliesi lived to tell the tale. Special and considerable privileges were conferred on them for their part in this exploit, and were annually confirmed by the Doge,

when a deputation of the islanders called on him in his palace, and hugged and kissed the devoted prince.

People who *will* sentimentalise over the pigeons of St. Mark's, may like to know that they have been settled in the city ever since 877. After the religious services on Palm Sunday, it was anciently the custom of the sacristans of St. Mark's to release doves fettered with fragments of paper, and thus partly disabled from flight, for the people to scramble for in the Piazza. The people fatted such of the birds as they caught, and ate them at Easter, but those pigeons which escaped took refuge in the roof of the church, where they gradually assumed a certain sacredness of character, and increased to enormous numbers. They were fed by provision of the Republic, and being neglected at the time of its fall, many of them were starved. But they now flourish on a bequest left by a pious lady for their maintenance, and on the largess of grain and polenta constantly bestowed by strangers.

Besides the holidays mentioned, the 6th of December was religiously observed in honour of the taking of Constantinople, the Doge assisting at mass in the ducal chapel of St. Nicholas. He also annually visited, with

his Signory in the state barges, and with great concourse of people, the church of San Vito on the 15th of June, in memory of the change of the government from a democracy to an oligarchy, and of the suppression of Bajamonte Tiepolo's conspiracy. On St. Isidore's Day he went with his Signory, and the religious confraternities, in torchlight procession, to hear mass at St. Mark's in celebration of the failure of Marin Falier's plot. On the 17th of January he visited by water the hospital erected for invalid soldiers and sailors, and thus commemorated the famous defence of Scutari against the Turks in 1413. For the peace of 1516, concluded after the dissolution of the League of Cambray, he went in his barge to the church of Santa Marina, who had potently exerted her influence for the preservation of the Republic against allied France, Austria, Spain, and Rome. On St. Jerome's Day, when the newly-elected members of the Council of Ten took their seats, the Doge entertained them with a banquet, and there were great popular rejoicings over an affair in which the people had no interest.

It is by a singular caprice of fortune that, while not only all the Venetian holidays in anywise connected with the glory of the

Republic, but also those which peculiarly signalised her piety and gratitude, have ceased to be, a festival common to the whole Catholic world should still be observed in Venice with extraordinary display. On the day of Corpus Christi there is a superb ecclesiastical procession in the Piazza.

The great splendour of the solemnisation is said to date from the times when Enrico Dandolo and his fellow-Crusaders so far forgot their purpose of taking Palestine from the infidels as to take Constantinople from the schismatics. Up to that period the day of Corpus Christi was honoured by a procession from what was then the Cathedral of San Pietro di Castello; but now all the thirty parishes of the city, with their hundred churches, have part in the procession, which is of such great length as to take some two hours in its progress round the Piazza.

Several days before the holiday workmen begin to build, within the Place of St. Mark, the colonnade through which the procession is to pass; they roof it with blue cotton cloth, and adorn it with rolls of pasteboard representing garlands of palm. At last, on the festive morning, the dwellers on the Grand Canal are drawn to their balconies by the apparition of boat loads of facchini, gor-

geous in scarlet robes, and bearing banners, painted candles, and other moveable elements of devotion, with which they pass to the Piazzetta, and thence into St. Mark's. They re-appear presently, and with a guard of Austrian troops to clear the way before them, begin their march under the canopy of the colonnade.

When you have seen the Place of St. Mark by night your eye has tasted its most delicate delight. But then it is the delight given by a memory only, and it touches you with sadness. You must see the Piazza to-day,—every window fluttering with rich stuffs and vivid colours; the three great flag-staffs[1] hanging their heavy flags; the brilliant square alive with a holiday population, with resplendent uniforms, with Italian gesture and movement, and that long glittering procession, bearing slowly on the august paraphernalia of the Church—you must see all this before you can enter into the old heart of Venetian magnificence, and feel its life about you.

To-day, the ancient church of San Pietro di Castello comes first in the procession, and, with a proud humility, the Basilica San

[1] Once bearing the standards of Cyprus, Candia, and Venice.

Marco last. Before each parochial division goes a banner displaying the picture or distinctive device of its titular saint, under the shadow of which chants a priest; there are the hosts of the different churches, and the gorgeous canopies under which they are elevated; then come facchini dressed in scarlet and bearing the painted candles, or the long carved and gilded candlesticks; and again facchini delicately robed in vestments of the purest white linen, with caps of azure, green, and purple, and shod with sandals or white shoes, carrying other apparatus of worship. Each banner and candlestick has a fluttering leaf of tinsel paper attached to it, and the procession makes a soft rustling as it passes. The matter-of-fact character of the external Church walks between those symbolists, the candle-bearers, —in the form of persons who gather the dropping fatness of the candles, and deposit it in a vase carried for that purpose. Citizens march in the procession with candles; and there are charity-schools which also take part, and sing in the harsh, shrill manner, of which I think only little boys who have their heads closely shorn are capable.

On all this we looked down from a window of the Old Procuratie—of course with that

calm sense of superiority which people are apt to have in regarding the solemnities of a religion different from their own. But that did not altogether prevent us from enjoying what was really beautiful and charming in the scene. I thought most of the priests, very good and gentle-looking,—and in all respects they were much pleasanter to the eye than the monks of the Carmelite order, who, in shaving their heads to simulate the Saviour's crown of thorns, produce a hideous burlesque of the divine humiliation. Yet many even of these had earnest and sincere faces, and I could not think so much as I ought, perhaps, of their idle life, and the fleas in their coarse brown cloaks. I confess, indeed, I felt rather a sadness than an indignation at all that self-sacrifice to an end of which I could but dimly see the usefulness. With some things in this grand spectacle we were wholly charmed, and doubtless had most delight in the little child who personated John the Baptist, and who was quite naked, but for a fleece folded about him : he bore the cross-headed staff in one small hand, and led with the other a lamb much tied up with blue ribbon. Here and there in the procession little girls, exquisitely dressed, and gifted by fond mothers with

wings and aureoles, walked, scattering flowers. I likewise greatly relished the lively holiday air of a company of airy old men, the pensioners of some charity, who, in their white linen trousers and blue coats, formed a prominent feature of the display. Far from being puffed up with their consequence, they gossiped cheerfully with the spectators in the pauses of the march, and made jests to each other in that light-hearted, careless way observable in old men taken care of, and with nothing before them to do worth speaking of but to die. I must own that the honest facchini who bore the candles were equally affable, and even freer with their jokes. But in this they formed a fine contrast to here and there a closely-hooded devotee, who, with hidden face and silent lips, was carrying a taper for religion, and not, like them, for money. I liked the great good-natured crowd, so orderly and amiable; and I enjoyed even that old citizen in the procession who, when the Patriarch gave his blessing, found it inconvenient to kneel, and compromised by stretching one leg a great way out behind him. These things, indeed, quite took my mind off of the splendours; and I let the canopy of the Scuola di San Rocco (worth 40,000 ducats)

go by with scarce a glance, and did not bestow much more attention upon the brilliant liveries of the Patriarch's servants, —though the appearance of these ecclesiastical flunkies is far more impressive than that of any of their secular brethren. They went gorgeously before the Patriarch, who was surrounded by the richly-dressed clergy of St. Mark's, and by clouds of incense rising from the smoking censers. He walked under the canopy in his cardinal's robes, and with his eye fixed upon the Host.

All at once the procession halted, and the Patriarch blessed the crowd, which knelt in a profound silence. Then the military band before him struck up an air from "Un Ballo in Maschera;" the procession moved on to the cathedral, and the crowd melted away.

The once-magnificent day of the Ascension the Venetians now honour by closing all shop-doors behind them and putting all thought of labour out of their minds, and going forth to enjoy themselves in the mild, inexplosive fashion which seems to satisfy Italian nature. It is the same on all the feast-days: then the city sinks into profounder quiet; only bells are noisy, and where their clangour is so common as in Venice, it seems at last to make friends with the general

stillness, and disturbs none but people of untranquil minds. We always go to the Piazza San Marco when we seek pleasure, and now, for eight days only of all the year, we have there the great spectacle of the Adoration of the Magi, performed every hour by automata within the little golden-railed gallery on the façade of the Giant's Clock Tower. There the Virgin sits above the azure circle of the zodiac, all heavily gilded, and holding the Child, equally splendid. Through the doors on either side, usually occupied by the illuminated figures of the hours, appears the procession, and disappears. The stately giant on the summit of the tower, at the hither side of the great bell, solemnly strikes the hour—as a giant should who has struck it for centuries —with a grand, whole-arm movement, and a slow, muscular pride. We look up—we tourists of the red-backed books; we peasant-girls radiant with converging darts of silver piercing the masses of our thick black hair; we Austrian soldiers in white coats and blue tights; we voiceful sellers of the cherries of Padua, and we calm loafers about the many-pillared base of the church —we look up and see the Adoration. First, the trumpeter, blowing the world news of the

act; then the first king, turning softly to the Virgin, and bowing; then the second, that enthusiastic devotee,—the second who lifts his crown quite from his head; last, the Ethiopian prince, gorgeous in green and gold, who, I am sorry to say, burlesques the whole solemnity. His devotion may be equally heartfelt, but it is more jerky than that of the others. He bows well and adequately, but recovers his balance with a prodigious start, altogether too suggestive of springs and wheels. Perhaps there is a touch of the pathetic in this grotesque fatality of the black king, whose suffering race has always held mankind between laughter and tears, and has seldom done a fine thing without leaving somewhere the neutralising absurdity; but if there is, the sentimental may find it, not I. When the procession has disappeared, we wait till the other giant has struck the hour, and then we disperse.

If it is six o'clock, and the sea has begun to breathe cool across the Basin of St. Mark, we find our account in strolling upon the long Riva degli Schiavoni towards the Public Gardens. One would suppose, at first thought, that here, on this magnificent quay, with its glorious look-out over the

lagoons, the patricians would have built their finest palaces; whereas there is hardly anything but architectural shabbiness from the Ponte della Paglia at one end, to the Ponte Santa Marina at the other. But there need be nothing surprising in the fact, after all. The feudal wealth and nobility of other cities kept the base at a respectful distance by means of lofty stone walls, and so shut in their palaces and gardens. Here equal seclusion could only be achieved by building flush upon the water, and therefore all the finest palaces rise sheer from the canals; and caffè, shops, barracks, and puppet-shows occupy the Riva degli Schiavoni. Nevertheless, it is the favourite promenade of the Venetians for the winter sunshine, and at such times in the summer as when the sun's rage is tempered. There is always variety in the throng on the Riva, but the fashionable part of it is the least interesting: here and there a magnificent Greek flashes through the crowd, in dazzling white petticoats and gold-embroidered leggings and jacket; now and then a tall Dalmat or a solemn Turk; even the fishermen and the peasants, and the lower orders of the people, are picturesque; but polite Venice is hopelessly given to the pride of the eyes, and

commits all the excesses of the French modes. The Venetian dandy, when dressed to his own satisfaction, is the worst-dressed man in the world. His hat curls outrageously in brim and sides; his coat-sleeves are extremely full, and the garment pinches him at the waist; his pantaloons flow forth from the hips, and contract narrowly at the boot, which is square-toed and made too long. The whole effect is something not to be seen elsewhere, and is well calculated to move the beholder to desperation.[1] The Venetian fine lady, also, is prone to be superfine. Her dress is as full of colour as a Paolo Veronese: in these narrow streets, where it is hard to expand an umbrella, she exaggerates hoops to the utmost; and she fatally hides her ankles in pantalets.

In the wide thoroughfare leading from the last bridge of the Riva to the gate of the gardens there is always a clapping of wooden shoes on the stones, a braying of hand-organs, a shrieking of people who sell fish and fruit, at once insufferable and indescribable. The street is a *rio terrá*,—a filled-up canal,—and, as always happens

[1] These exaggerations of the fashions of 1862 have been succeeded by equal travesties of the present modes.

with *rii terrai*, is abandoned to the poorest classes who manifest themselves, as the poorest classes are apt to do always, in groups of frowzy women, small girls carrying large babies, beggars, of course, and soldiers. I spoke of fruit-sellers; but in this quarter the traffic in pumpkin-seeds is the most popular,—the people finding these an inexpensive and pleasant excess, when taken with a glass of water flavoured with anise.

The Gardens were made by Napoleon, who demolished to that end some monasteries once cumbering the ground. They are pleasant enough, and are not gardens at all, but a park of formally-planted trees—sycamores, chiefly. I do not remember to have seen here any Venetians of the better class, except on the Mondays-of-the-Garden, in September. Usually the promenaders are fishermen, Austrian corporals, loutish youth of low degree, and women too old and too poor to have anything to do. Strangers go there, and the German visitors even drink the exceptionable beer which is sold in the wooden cottage on the little hillock at the end of the Gardens. There is also a stable—where are the only horses in Venice. They are let at a florin an hour, and I do not know

why the riders are always persons of the Hebrew faith. In a word, nothing can be drearier than the company in the Gardens, and nothing lovelier than the view they command,—from the sunset on the dome of the church of the Salute, all round the broad sweep of lagoon, to the tower at the port of San Nicolò, where you catch a glimpse of the Adriatic.

The company is commonly stupid, but one evening, as we strolled idly through the walks, we came upon an interesting group—forty or fifty sailors, soldiers, youth of the people, grey-haired fishermen, and contadini—sitting and lying on the grass, and listening with rapt attention to an old man reclining against a tree. I never saw a manner of sweeter or easier dignity than the speaker's. Nature is so lavish of her grace to these people that grow near her heart—the sun! Infinite study could not have taught one northern-born the charm of oratory as this old man displayed it. I listened, and heard that he was speaking Tuscan. Do you guess with what he was enchanting his simple auditors? Nothing less than "Orlando Furioso." They listened with the hungriest delight, and when Ariosto's interpreter raised his finger and said, "Disse l'imperatore," or,

"Orlando disse, Carlomano mio," they hardly breathed.

On the *Lunedì dei Giardini*, already mentioned, all orders of the people flock thither, and promenade, and banquet on the grass. The trees get back the voices of their dryads, and the children fill the aisles with glancing movement and graceful sport.

Of course, the hand-organ seeks here its proper element, the populace,—but here it brays to a peculiarly beautiful purpose. For no sooner does it sound than the young girls of the people wreathe themselves into dances, and improvise the poetry of motion. Over the grass they whirl, and up and down the broad avenues, and no one of all the gentle and peaceable crowd molests or makes them afraid. It is a scene to make you believe in Miriam dancing with Donatello there in that old garden at Rome, and reveals a simple beauty in the nature of the Italian poor, which shall one day, I hope, be counted in their favour when they are called to answer for lying and swindling.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS.

It often happens, even after the cold has announced itself in Venice, that the hesitating winter lingers in the Tyrol, and a mellow Indian-summer weather has possession of the first weeks of December. There was nothing in the December weather of 1863 to remind us Northerners that Christmas was coming. The skies were as blue as those of June, the sun was warm, and the air was bland, with only now and then a trenchant breath from the Alps, coming like a delicate sarcasm from loveliness unwilling to be thought insipidly amiable. But if there was no warning in the weather, there were other signs of Christmas-time not to be mistaken: a certain foolish leaping of the heart in one's own breast, as if the dead raptures of childhood were stirred in their graves by the return of the happy season; and in Venice, in weary, forlorn Venice, there was the half-unconscious tumult, the expectant bustle which cities

feel at the approach of holidays. The little shops put on their gayest airs; there was a great clapping and hammering on the stalls and booths which were building in the campos; the street-cries were more shrill and resonant than ever, and the air was shaken with the continual clangour of the church bells.

All this note of preparation is rather bewildering to strangers, and is apt to disorder the best-disciplined intentions of seeing Christmas as the Venetians keep it. The public observance of the holiday in the churches and on the streets is evident and accessible to the most transient sojourner; but it is curious proof of the difficulty of knowledge concerning the in-door life and usages of the Italians, that I had already spent two Christmases in Venice without learning anything of their home celebration of the day. Perhaps a degree of like difficulty attends like inquiry everywhere, for the happiness of Christmas contracts the family circle more exclusively than ever around the home hearth, or the domestic scaldino, as the case may be. But, at any rate, I was quite ready to say that the observance of Christmas in Venice was altogether public, when I thought it a

measure of far-sighted prudence to consult my barber.

In all Latin countries the barber is a source of information, which, skilfully tapped, pours forth in a stream of endless gossip and local intelligence. Every man talks with his barber; and perhaps a lingering dignity clings to this artist from his former profession of surgeon: it is certain the barber here prattles on with a freedom and importance perfectly admitted and respected by the interlocutory count under his razor. Those who care to know how things passed in an Italian barber shop three hundred years ago, may read it in Miss Evans's *Romola;* those who are willing to see Nello alive, and carrying on his art in Venice at this day, must go to be shaved at his shop in the Frezzaria. Here there is a continual exchange of gossip, and I have often listened with profit to the sage and piquant remarks of the head barber and chief *ciarlone,* on the different events of human life brought to his notice. His shop is well known as a centre of scandal, and I have heard a fair Venetian declare that she had cut from her list all acquaintance who go there, as persons likely to become infected with the worst habits of gossip.

To this Nello, however, I used to go only when in the most brilliant humour for listening, and my authority on Christmas observances is another and humbler barber, but not less a babbler, than the first. By birth, I believe, he is a Mantuan, and he prides himself on speaking Italian instead of Venetian. He has a defective eye, which obliges him to tack before bringing his razor to bear, but which is all the more favourable to conversation. On the whole, he is flattered to be asked about Christmas in Venice, and he first tells me that it is one of the chief holidays of the year :—

"It is then, Signore, that the Venetians have the custom to make three sorts of peculiar presents: Mustard, Fish, and Mandorlato. You must have seen the mustard in the shop windows: it is a thick conserve of fruits, flavoured with mustard; and the mandorlato is a candy made of honey, and filled with almonds. Well, they buy fish, as many as they will, and a vase of mustard, and a box of mandorlato, and make presents of them, one family to another, the day before Christmas. It is not too much for a rich family to present a hundred boxes of mandorlato and as many pots of mustard. These are exchanged between friends in the

city, and Venetians also send them to acquaintance in the country, whence the gift is returned in cakes and eggs at Easter. Christmas Eve, people invite each other to great dinners, and eat and drink, and make merry; but there are only fish and vegetables, for it is a meagre day, and meats are forbidden. This dinner lasts so long that, when it is over, it is almost time to go to midnight mass, which all must attend, or else hear three masses on the morrow; and no doubt it was some delinquent who made our saying,—'Long as a Christmas mass.' On Christmas Day people dine at home, keeping the day with family reunions. But the day after! Ah-heigh! That is the first of Carnival, and all the theatres are opened, and there is no end to the amusements—or was not, in the old time. Now, they never begin. A week later comes the day of the Lord's Circumcision, and then the next holiday is Easter. The Nativity, the Circumcision, and the Resurrection—behold! these are the three mysteries of the Christian faith. Of what religion are the Americans, Signore?"

I think I was justified in answering that we were Christians. My barber was politely surprised. "But there are so

many different religions," he said in excuse.

On the afternoon before Christmas I walked through the thronged Merceria to the Rialto Bridge, where the tumultuous mart which opens at Piazza San Marco culminates in a deafening uproar of bargains. At this time the Merceria, or street of the shops, presents the aspect of a fair, and is arranged with a tastefulness and a cunning ability to make the most of everything, which are seldom applied to the abundance of our fairs at home. The shops in Venice are all very small, and the streets of lofty houses are so narrow and dark, that whatever goods are not exposed in the shop-windows are brought to the door to be clamoured over by purchasers; so that the Merceria is roused by unusual effort to produce a more pronounced effect of traffic and noise than it always wears; but now the effort had been made and the effect produced. The street was choked with the throngs, through which all sorts of peddlers battled their way and cried their wares. In Campo San Bartolomeo, into which the Merceria expands, at the foot of Rialto Bridge, holiday traffic had built enormous barricades of stalls, and entrenched itself

behind booths, whence purchasers were assailed with challenges to buy bargains. More than half the campo was paved with crockery from Rovigo and glass-ware from Murano; clothing of every sort, and all kinds of small household wares, were offered for sale; and among the other booths, in the proportion of two to one, were stalls of the inevitable Christmas mustard and mandorlato.

But I cared rather for the crowd than what the crowd cared for. I had been long ago obliged to throw aside my preconceived notions of the Italian character, though they were not, I believe, more absurd than the impressions of others who have never studied Italian character in Italy. I hardly know what of bacchantic joyousness I had not attributed to them on their holidays: a people living in a mild climate under such a lovely sky, with wine cheap and abundant, might not unreasonably have been expected to put on a show of the greatest jollity when enjoying themselves. Venetian crowds are always perfectly gentle and kindly, but they are also as a whole usually serious; and this Christmas procession, moving up and down the Merceria, and to and fro between the markets of Rialto, was in the fullest sense a

solemnity. It is true that the scene was dramatic, but the drama was not consciously comic. Whether these people bought or sold, or talked together, or walked up and down in silence, they were all equally in earnest. The crowd, in spite of its noisy bustle and passionate uproar, did not seem to me a blithe or light-hearted crowd. Its sole activity was that of traffic, for, far more dearly than any Yankee, a Venetian loves a bargain, and puts his whole heart into upholding and beating down demands.

Across the Bridge began the vegetable and fruit market, where whole Hollands of cabbage and Spains of onions opened on the view, with every other succulent and toothsome growth; and beyond this we entered the glory of Rialto, the fish-market, which is now more lavishly supplied than at any other season. It was picturesque and full of gorgeous colour; for the fish of Venice seem all to catch the rainbow hues of the lagoon. There is a certain kind of red mullet, called *triglia*, which is as rich and tender in its dyes as if it had never swum in water less glorious than that which crimsons under October sunsets. But a fish-market, even at Rialto, with fishermen in scarlet caps and *triglie* in sunset splendours,

is only a fish-market after all: it is wet and slimy under foot, and the innumerable gigantic eels, writhing everywhere, set the soul asquirm, and soon-sated curiosity slides willingly away.

We had an appointment with a young Venetian lady to attend midnight mass at the church of San Moisè, and thither about half-past eleven we went to welcome in Christmas. The church of San Moisè is in the highest style of the Renaissance art, which is, I believe, the lowest style of any other. The richly sculptured façade is divided into stories; the fluted columns are stilted upon pedestals, and their lines are broken by the bands which encircle them like broad barrel-hoops. At every possible point theatrical saints and angels, only sustained from falling to the ground by iron bars let into their backs, start from the niches and cling to the sculpture. The outside of the church is in every way detestable, and the inside is consistently bad. All the side-altars have broken arches, and the high altar is built of rough blocks of marble to represent Mount Sinai, on which a melodramatic statue of Moses receives the tables of the law from God the Father, with frescoed seraphim in the background. For

the same reason, I suppose, that the devout prefer a hideous Bambino and a Madonna in crinoline to the most graceful artistic conception of those sacred personages, San Moisè is the most popular church for the midnight mass in Venice, and there is no mass at all in St. Mark's, where its magnificence would be so peculiarly impressive.

On Christmas Eve, then, this church was crowded, and the door-ways were constantly thronged with people passing in and out. I was puzzled to see so many young men present, for Young Italy is not usually in great number at church; but a friend explained the anomaly: "After the guests at our Christmas Eve dinners have well eaten and drunken, they all go to mass in at least one church, and the younger offer a multiplied devotion by going to all. It is a good thing in some ways, for by this means they manage to see every pretty face in the city, which that night has specially prepared itself to be seen;" and from this slender text my friend began to discourse at large about these Christmas Eve dinners, and chiefly how jollily the priests fared, ending with the devout wish, "Would God had made me nephew of a canonico!" The great dinners of the priests are a favourite theme

with Italian talkers; but I doubt it is after all only a habit of speech. The priests are too numerous to feed sumptuously in most cases.

We had a good place to see and hear, sitting in the middle of the main aisle, directly over the dust of John Law, who alighted in Venice when his great Mississippi bubble burst, and died here, and now sleeps peacefully under a marble tablet in the ugly church of San Moisè. The thought of that busy, ambitious life, come to this unscheming repose under our feet,—so far from the scene of its hopes, successes, and defeats,—gave its own touch of solemnity to the time and place, and helped the offended sense of propriety through the bursts of operatic music, which interspersed the mass. But on the whole, the music was good and the function sufficiently impressive,—what with the gloom of the temple everywhere starred with tapers, and the grand-altar lighted to the mountain-top. The singing of the priests also was here much better than I had found it elsewhere in Venice.

The equality of all classes in church is a noticeable thing always in Italy, but on this Christmas Eve it was unusually evident. The rags of the beggar brushed the silks of

luxury, as the wearers knelt side by side on the marble floor; and on the night when God was born to poverty on earth, the rich seemed to feel that they drew nearer Him in the neighbourhood of the poor. In these costly temples of the eldest Christianity, the poor seem to enter upon their inheritance of the future, for it is they who frequent them most and possess them with the deepest sense of ownership. The withered old woman, who creeps into St. Mark's with her scaldino in her hand, takes visible possession of its magnificence as God's and hers, and Catholic wealth and rank would hardly, if challenged, dispute her claim.

Even the longest mass comes to an end at last, and those of our party who could credit themselves with no gain of masses against the morrow, received the benediction of San Moisè with peculiar unction. We all issued forth, and passing through the lines of young men who draw themselves up on either side of the doors of public places in Venice, to look at the young ladies as they come out, we entered the Place of St. Mark. The Piazza was more gloriously beautiful than ever I saw it before, and the church had a saintly loveliness. The moon was full, and snowed down the mellowest light on the

grey domes, which, in their soft, elusive outlines, and strange effect of far-withdrawal, rhymed like faint-heard refrains to the bright and vivid arches of the façade. And if the bronze horses had been minded to quit their station before the great window over the central arch, they might have paced around the night's whole half-world, and found no fairer resting-place.

As for Christmas Day in Venice, it amounted to very little; everything was closed, and whatever merry-making went on, was all within-doors. Although the shops and the places of amusement were opened the day following, the city entered very sparingly on the pleasures of Carnival, and Christmas week passed off in every-day fashion. It will be remembered that on St. Stephen's Day—the first of Carnival—one of the five annual banquets took place at the Ducal Palace in the time of the Republic. A certain number of patricians received invitations to dinner, and those for whom there was no room were presented with fish and poultry by the Doge. The populace were admitted to look on during the first course, and then, having sated their appetites with this savoury observance, were invited to withdraw. The patriotic Giustina

Renier-Michiel of course makes much of the courtesy thus extended to the people by the State, but I cannot help thinking it must have been hard to bear. The banquet, however, has passed away with the Republic which gave it, and the only savour of dinner which Venetian poverty now inhales on St. Stephen's Day, is that which arises from its own proper pot of broth.

New Year's is the carnival of the beggars in Venice. Their business is carried on briskly throughout the year, but on this day it is pursued with an unusual degree of perseverance, and an enterprise worthy of all disinterested admiration. At every corner, on every bridge, under every door-way, hideous shapes of poverty, mutilation, and deformity stand waiting, and thrust out palms, plates, and pans, and advance good wishes and blessings to all who pass. It is an immemorial custom, and it is one in which all but the quite comfortable classes participate. The facchini in every square take up their collections; the gondoliers have their plates prepared for contribution at every ferry; at every caffè and restaurant begging-boxes appeal to charity. Whoever has lifted hand in your service in any way during the past year expects a reward

on New Year's for the complaisance, and in some cases the shop-keepers send to wish you a *bel capo d'anno*, with the same practical end in view. On New Year's Eve and morning bands of facchini and gondoliers go about howling *vivas* under charitable windows till they open and drop alms. The Piazza is invaded by the legions of beggary, and held in overpowering numbers against all comers; and to traverse it is like a progress through a lazar-house.

Beyond encouraging so gross an abuse as this, I do not know that Venice celebrates New Year's in a peculiar manner. It is a *festa*, and there are masses, of course. Presents are exchanged, which consist chiefly of books—printed for the season, and brilliant outside and dull within, like all annuals.

CHAPTER XIX.

LOVE-MAKING AND MARRYING; BAPTISMS AND BURIALS.

THE Venetians have had a practical and strictly business-like way of arranging marriages from the earliest times. The shrewdest provision has always been made for the dower and for the good of the State; private and public interest being consulted, the small matters of affections have been left to the chances of association: and it does not seem that Venetian society has ever dealt severely with husbands or wives whom incompatibilities forced to seek consolation outside of matrimony. Herodotus relates that the Illyrian Veneti sold their daughters at auction to the highest bidder; and the fair being thus comfortably placed in life, the hard-favoured were given to whomsoever would take them, with such dower as might be considered a reasonable compensation. The auction was discontinued in Christian times, but marriage-contracts

still partook of the form of a public and half-mercantile transaction. At a comparatively late period Venetian fathers went with their daughters to a great annual matrimonial fair at San Pietro di Castello Olivolo, and the youth of the lagoons repaired thither to choose wives from the number of the maidens. These were all dressed in white, with hair loose about the neck, and each bore her dower in a little box, slung over her shoulder by a ribbon. It is to be supposed that there was commonly a previous understanding between each damsel and some youth in the crowd: as soon as all had paired off, the bishop gave them a sermon and his benediction, and the young men gathered up their brides and boxes, and went away wedded. It was on one of these occasions, in the year 944, that the Triestine pirates stole the Brides of Venice with their dowers, and gave occasion to the Festa delle Marie, already described, and to Rogers's poem, which everybody pretends to have read.

This going to San Pietro's, selecting a wife and marrying her on the spot, out of hand, could only have been the contrivance of a straightforward, practical race. Among the common people betrothals were managed

with even greater ease and despatch, till a very late day in history; and in the record of a certain trial which took place in 1443 there is an account of one of these brief and unceremonious courtships. Donna Catarussa, who gives evidence, and whom I take to have been a worthless, idle gossip, was one day sitting at her door, when Piero di Trento passed, selling brooms, and said to her, "Madonna, find me some nice girl." To which Donna Catarussa replied, "Ugly fool! do you take me for a go-between?" "No," said Piero, "not that; I mean a girl to be my wife." And as Donna Catarussa thought at once of a suitable match, she said, "In faith of God, I know one for you. Come again to-morrow." So they both met next day, and the woman chosen by Donna Catarussa being asked, "Wouldst thou like to have Piero for thy husband, as God commands and holy Church?" she answered, "Yes." And Peter being asked the like question, answered, "Why, yes, certainly." And they went off and had the wedding feast. A number of these betrothals takes place in the last scene of Goldoni's *Baruffe Chiozzotte*, where the belligerent women and their lovers take hands in the public streets, and, saluting each other as man and wife, are

affianced, and get married as quickly as possible :—

" *Checa* (to Tofolo). Take my hand.

" *Tofolo.* Wife !

" *Checa.* Husband !

" *Tofolo.* Hurra ! "

The betrothals of the Venetian nobles were celebrated with as much pomp and ceremony as could possibly distinguish them from those of the people, and there was much more polite indifference to the inclinations of the parties immediately concerned. The contract was often concluded before the betrothed had seen each other, by means of a third person, when the amount of the dower was fixed. The bridegroom-elect, having verbally agreed with the parents of the bride, repaired at an early day to the court-yard of the Ducal Palace, where the match was published, and where he shook hands with his kinsmen and friends. On the day fixed for signing the contract the bride's father invited to his house the bridegroom and all his friends, and hither came the high officers of state to compliment the future husband. He, with the father of his betrothed, met the guests at the door of the palace, and conducted them to the grand saloon, which no woman was allowed (*si figuri !*) at this time

to enter. When the company was seated, the bride, clad in white, was led from her rooms and presented. She wore a crown of pearls and brilliants on her head, and her hair, mixed with long threads of gold, fell loose about her shoulders, as you may see it in Carpaccio's pictures of the Espousals of St. Ursula. Her ear-rings were pendants of three pearls set in gold; her neck and throat were bare but for a collar of lace and gems, from which slid a fine jewelled chain into her bosom. Over her breast she wore a stomacher of cloth-of-gold, to which were attached her sleeves, open from the elbow to the hand. The formal words of espousal being pronounced, the bride paced slowly round the hall to the music of fifes and trumpets, and made a gentle inclination to each of the guests; and then returned to her chamber, from which she issued again on the arrival of any tardy friend, and repeated the ceremony. After all this, she descended to the court-yard, where she was received by gentle-women, her friends, and placed on a raised seat (which was covered with rich stuffs) in an open gondola, and thus, followed by a fleet of attendant gondolas, went to visit all the convents in which there were kinspeople of herself or her betrothed. The excessive

publicity of these ceremonies was supposed to strengthen the validity of the marriage contract. At an early day after the espousals the betrothed, preceded by musicians, and followed by relatives and friends, went at dawn to be married in the church,—the bridegroom wearing a toga, and the bride a dress of white silk or crimson velvet, with jewels in her hair, and pearls embroidered on her robes. Visits of congratulation followed, and on the same day a public feast was given in honour of the wedding, to which at least three hundred persons were always invited, and at which the number, quality, and cost of the dishes were carefully regulated by the Republic's laws. On this occasion, one or more persons were chosen as governors of the feast, and after the tables were removed, a mock-heroic character appeared, and recounted with absurd exaggeration the deeds of the ancestors of the bride and groom. The next morning *ristorativi* of sweetmeats and confectionery were presented to the happy couple, by whom the presents were returned in kind.

A splendour so exceptional, even in the most splendid age of the most splendid city, as that which marked the nuptial feasts of

the unhappy Jacopo Foscari, could not be left unnoticed in this place. He espoused Lucrezia, daughter of Lionardo Contarini, a noble as rich and magnificent as Jacopo's own father, the Doge; and, on the 29th of January 1441, the noble Eustachio Balbi being chosen lord of the feasts, the bridegroom, the bride's brother, and eighteen other patrician youths, assembled in the Palazzo Balbi, whence they went on horseback to conduct Lucrezia to the Ducal Palace. They were all sumptuously dressed in crimson velvet and silver brocade of Alexandria, and rode chargers superbly caparisoned. Other noble friends attended them; musicians went before; a troop of soldiers brought up the rear. They thus proceeded to the court-yard of the Ducal Palace, and then, returning, traversed the Piazza, and threading the devious little streets to the Campo San Samuele, there crossed the Grand Canal upon a bridge of boats, to San Barnaba opposite, where the Contarini lived. On their arrival at this place the bride, supported by two Procuratori di San Marco, and attended by sixty ladies, descended to the church and heard mass, after which an oration was delivered in Campo San Barnaba before the Doge, the ambassadors, and a

multitude of nobles and people, in praise of the spouses and their families. The bride then returned to her father's house, and jousts took place in the campos of Santa Maria Formosa and San Polo (the largest in the city), and in the Piazza San Marco. The Doge gave a great banquet, and at its close one hundred and fifty ladies proceeded to the bride's palace in the Bucintoro, where one hundred other ladies joined them, together with Lucrezia, who, seated between Francesco Sforza (then General-in-chief of the Republic's armies) and the Florentine ambassador, was conducted, amid the shouts of the people and the sound of trumpets, to the Ducal Palace. The Doge received her at the riva of the Piazzetta, and, with Sforza and Balbi led her to the foot of the palace stairs, where the Dogaressa, with sixty ladies, welcomed her. A state supper ended this day's rejoicings, and on the following day a tournament took place in the Piazza, for a prize of cloth-of-gold, which was offered by Sforza. Forty knights contested the prize and supped afterward with the Doge. On the next day there were processions of boats with music on the Grand Canal; on the fourth and last day there were other jousts for prizes offered by the

jewellers and Florentine merchants; and every night there were dancing and feasting in the Ducal Palace. The Doge was himself the giver of the last tournament, and with this the festivities came to an end.

I have read an account by an old-fashioned English traveller of a Venetian marriage which he saw, sixty or seventy years ago, at the church of San Giorgio Maggiore: "After a crowd of nobles," he says, "in their usual black robes, had been some time in attendance, the gondolas, appearing, exhibited a fine show, though all of them were painted of a sable hue, in consequence of a sumptuary law, which is very necessary in this place, to prevent an expense which many who could not bear it would incur; nevertheless the barcarioli, or boatmen, were dressed in handsome liveries; the gondolas followed one another in a line, each carrying two ladies, who were likewise dressed in black. As they landed they arranged themselves in order, forming a line from the gate to the great altar. At length the bride, arrayed in white as the symbol of innocence, led by the bridesman, ascended the stairs of the landing-place. There she received the compliments of the bridegroom, in his black toga, who

walked at her right hand to the altar, where they and all the company kneeled. I was often afraid the poor young creature would have sunk upon the ground before she arrived, for she trembled with great agitation, while she made her low courtesies from side to side: however, the ceremony was no sooner performed than she seemed to recover her spirits, and looked matrimony in the face with a determined smile. Indeed, in all appearance she had nothing to fear from her husband, whose age and aspect were not at all formidable; accordingly she tripped back to the gondola with great activity and resolution, and the procession ended as it began. Though there was something attractive in this aquatic parade, the black hue of the boats and the company presented to a stranger, like me, the idea of a funeral rather than a wedding. My expectation was raised too high by the previous description of the Italians, who are much given to hyperbole, who gave me to understand that this procession would far exceed anything I had ever seen. When I reflect upon this rodomontade," disdainfully adds Mr. Drummond, "I cannot help comparing, in my memory, the paltry procession of the Venetian marriage with a very august occurrence

of which I was eye-witness in Sweden," and which, being the reception of their Swedish Majesties by the British fleet, I am sure the reader will not ask me to quote.

With change of government, changes of civilisation following the revolutions, and the decay of wealth among the Venetian nobles, almost all their splendid customs have passed away, and the habit of making wedding presents of sweetmeats and confectionery is perhaps the only relic which has descended from the picturesque past to the present time. These gifts are still exchanged not only by nobles, but by all commoners according to their means, and are sometimes a source of very profuse outlay. It is the habit to send the candies in the elegant and costly paper caskets which the confectioners sell, and the sum of a thousand florins scarcely suffices to pass the courtesy round a moderately large circle of friends.

With the nobility and with the richest commoners marriage is still greatly a matter of contract, and is arranged without much reference to the principals, though it is now scarcely probable in any case that they have not seen each other. But with all other classes, except the poorest, who cannot and

do not seclude the youth of either sex from each other, and with whom, consequently, romantic contrivance and subterfuge would be superfluous, love is made to-day in Venice as in the *capa y espada* comedies of the Spaniards, and the business is carried on with all the cumbrous machinery of confidants, billets-doux, and stolen interviews.

Let us take our nominal friends, Marco and Todaro, and attend them in their solemn promenade under the arcades of the Procuratie, or upon the Molo, whither they go every evening to taste the air and to look at the ladies, while the Austrians and the other foreigners listen to the military music in the Piazza. They are both young, our friends; they have both glossy silk hats; they have both light canes and an innocent swagger. Inconceivably mild are these youths, and in their talk indescribably small and commonplace.

They look at the ladies, and suddenly Todaro feels the consuming ardours of love.

Todaro (to Marco). Here, dear! Behold this beautiful blonde here! Beautiful as an angel! But what loveliness!

Marco. But where?

Todaro. It is enough. Let us go. I follow her.

Such is the force of the passion in southern hearts. They follow that beautiful blonde, who, marching demurely in front of the grey-moustached papa and the fat mamma, after the fashion in Venice, is electrically conscious of pursuit. They follow her during the whole evening, and, at a distance, softly follow her home, where the burning Todaro photographs the number of the house upon the sensitised tablets of his soul.

This is the first great step in love: he has seen his adored one, and he knows that he loves her with an inextinguishable ardour. The next advance is to be decided between himself and the faithful Marco, and is to be debated over many cups of black coffee, not to name glasses of sugar-and-water and the like exciting beverages. The friends may now find out the caffè which the Biondina frequents with her parents, and to which Todaro may go every evening and feast his eyes upon her loveliness, never making his regard known by any word, till some night, when he has followed her home, he steals speech with her as he stands in the street under her balcony,—and looks sufficiently sheepish as people detect him on their late

return from the theatre.[1] Or, if the friends do not take this course in their courtship (for they are both engaged in the wooing), they decide that Todaro, after walking back and forth a sufficient number of times in the street where the Biondina lives, shall write her a tender letter, to demand if she be disposed to correspond his love. This billet must always be conveyed to her by her serving-maid, who must be bribed by Marco for the purpose. At every juncture Marco must be consulted, and acquainted with every step of progress; and no doubt the Biondina has some lively Moretta for her friend, to whom she confides her part of the love-affair in all its intricacy.

It may likewise happen that Todaro shall go to see the Biondina in church, whither, but for her presence, he would hardly go, and that there, though he may not have speech with her, he shall still fan the ardours of her curiosity and pity by persistent sighs. It must be confessed that if the Biondina is not pleased with his looks, his devotion must assume the character of an intolerable bore to her; and that to see him everywhere at

[1] The love-making scenes in Goldoni's comedy of *Il Bugiardo* are photographically faithful to present usage in Venice.

her heels—to behold him leaning against the pillar near which she kneels at church, the head of his stick in his mouth, and his attitude carefully taken with a view to captivation—to be always in deadly fear lest she shall meet him in promenade, or, turning round at the caffè, encounter his pleading gaze—that all this must drive the Biondina to a state bordering upon blasphemy and finger-nails. *Ma, come si fa? Ci vuol pazienza!* This is the sole course open to ingenuous youth in Venice, where confessed and unashamed acquaintance between young people is extremely difficult; and so this blind pursuit must go on, till the Biondina's inclinations are at last laboriously ascertained.

Suppose the Biondina consents to be loved? Then Todaro has just and proper inquiries to make concerning her dower, and if her fortune is as pleasing as herself, he has only to demand her in marriage of her father, and after that to make her acquaintance.

One day a Venetian friend of mine, who spoke a little English, came to me with a joyous air and said—

"I am in lofe."

The recipient of repeated confidences of this kind from the same person, I listened with tempered effusion.

"It is a blonde again?"

"Yes, you have right; blonde again."

"And pretty?"

"Oh, but beautiful. I lofe her—*come si dice!—immensamente.*"

"And where did you see her? Where did you make her acquaintance?"

"I have not make the acquaintance. I see her pass with his fazer every night on Rialto Bridge. We did not spoke yet—only with the eyes. The lady is not of Venice. She has four thousand florins. It is not much—no. But!"

Is not this love at first sight almost idyllic? Is it not also a sublime prudence to know the lady's fortune better than herself, before herself? These passionate, headlong Italians look well to the main chance before they leap into matrimony, and you may be sure Todaro knows, in black and white, what the Biondina has to her fortune before he weds her. After that may come the marriage, and the sonnet written by the next of friendship, and printed to hang up in all the shop-windows, celebrating the auspicious event. If he be rich, or can write *nobile* after his Christian name, perhaps some abbate, elegantly addicted to verses and alive to grateful consequences, may publish a poem,

elegantly printed by the matchless printers at Rovigo, and send it to all the bridegroom's friends. It is not the only event which the facile Venetian Muse shall sing for him. If his child is brought happily through the measles by Dottor Cavasangue, the Nine shall celebrate the fact. If he takes any public honour or scholastic degree, it is equal occasion for verses; and when he dies the mortuary rhyme shall follow him. Indeed, almost every occurrence—a boy's success at school, an advocate's triumphal passage of the perils of examination at Padua, a priest's first mass, a nun's novitiate, a birth, an amputation—is the subject of tuneful effusion, and no less the occasion of a visit from the facchini of the neighbouring campo, who assemble with blare of trumpets and tumult of voices around the victim's door, and proclaim his skill or good fortune, and break into *vivas* that never end till he bribes their enthusiasm into silence. The naïve commonplaceness of feeling in all matrimonial transactions, in spite of the gloss which the operatic methods of courtship threw about them, was a source of endless amusement, as it stole out in different ways. "You know my friend Marco?" asked an acquaintance one day. "Well, we are looking out a wife

for him. He doesn't want to marry, but his father insists; and he has begged us to find somebody. There are three of us on the look-out. But he hates women, and is very hard to suit. *Ben! Ci vuol pazienza!*"

It rarely happens now that the religious part of the marriage ceremony is not performed in church, though it may be performed at the house of the bride. In this case it usually takes place in the evening, and the spouses attend five o'clock mass next morning. But if the marriage takes place at church, it must be between five and eleven in the morning, and the blessing is commonly pronounced about six o'clock. Civil marriage is still unknown among the Venetians. It is entirely the affair of the Church, in which the banns are published beforehand, and which exacts from the candidates a preliminary visit to their parish priest, for examination in their catechism, and for instruction in religion when they are defective in knowledge of the kind. There is no longer any civil publication of the betrothals, and the hand-shaking in the court of the Ducal Palace has long been disused. I cannot help thinking that the ceremony must have been a great affliction, and that, in the Republican times at Venice, a bridegroom

must have fared nearly as hard as a President-elect in our times at home.

There was a curious display on occasion of births among the nobility in former times. The room of the young mother was decorated with a profusion of paintings, sculpture, and jewelry; and, while yet in bed, she received the congratulations of her friends, and regaled them with sweetmeats served in vases of gold and silver.

The child of noble parents had always at least two godfathers, and sometimes as many as a hundred and fifty; but in order that the relationship of godfather (which is the same according to the canonical law as a tie of consanguinity) should not prevent desirable matrimony between nobles, no patrician was allowed to be godfather to another's child. Consequently the *compare* was usually a client of the noble parent, and was not expected to make any present to the godchild, whose father, on the day following the baptism, sent him a piece of marchpane, in acknowledgment of their relationship. No women were present at the baptism except those who had charge of the babe. After the fall of the Republic the French custom of baptism in the parents' house was introduced, as well as the custom, on the godfather's

part, of giving a present,—usually of sugar-plums and silver toys. But I think that most baptisms still take place in church, if I may judge from the numbers of tight little glass cases I have noticed,—half bed and half coffin,—containing little eight-day-old Venetians, closely swathed in mummy-like bandages, and borne to and from the churches by mysterious old women. The ceremony of baptism itself does not apparently differ from that in other Catholic countries, and is performed, like all religious services in Italy, without a ray of religious feeling or solemnity of any kind.

For many centuries funeral services in Venice have been conducted by the *Scuole del Sacramento*, instituted for that purpose. To one of these societies the friends of the defunct pay a certain sum, and the association engages to inter the dead, and bear all the expenses of the ceremony, the dignity of which is regulated by the priest of the parish in which the deceased lived. The rite is now most generally undertaken by the Scuola di San Rocco. The funeral train is of ten or twenty facchini, wearing tunics of white, with caps and capes of red, and bearing the society's long, gilded candlesticks of wood with lighted tapers. Priests follow them

chanting prayers, and then comes the bier,—with a gilt crown lying on the coffin, if the dead be a babe, to indicate the triumph of innocence. Formerly, hired mourners attended, and a candle, weighing a pound, was given to any one who chose to carry it in the procession.

Anciently there was great show of mourning in Venice for the dead, when, according to Mutinelli, the friends and kinsmen of the deceased, having seen his body deposited in the church, "fell to weeping and howling, tore their hair and rent their clothes, and withdrew for ever from that church, thenceforth become for them a place of abomination." Decenter customs prevailed in after times, and there was a pathetic dignity in the ceremony of condolence among patricians: the mourners, on the day following the interment, repaired to the porticos of Rialto and the court of the Ducal Palace, and their friends came, one after one, and expressed their sympathy by a mute pressure of the hand.

Death, however, is hushed up as much as possible in modern Venice. The corpse is hurried from the house of mourning to the parish church, where the friends, after the funeral service, take leave of it. Then it is

placed in a boat and carried to the burial-ground, where it is quickly interred. I was fortunate, therefore, in witnessing a cheerful funeral at which I one day casually assisted at San Michele. There was a church on this island as early as the tenth century, and in the thirteenth century it fell into the possession of the Comandulensen Friars. They built a monastery on it, which became famous as a seat of learning, and gave much erudite scholarship to the world. In later times Pope Gregory XVI. carried his profound learning from San Michele to the Vatican. The present church is in the Renaissance style, but not very offensively so, and has some indifferent paintings. The arcades and the courts around which it is built contain funeral monuments as unutterably ugly and tasteless as anything of the kind I ever saw at home; but the dead, for the most part, lie in graves marked merely by little iron crosses in the narrow and roofless space walled in from the lagoon, which laps sluggishly at the foot of the masonry with the impulses of the tide. The old monastery was abolished in 1810, and there is now a convent of Reformed Benedictines on the island, who perform the last service for the dead.

On the day of which I speak, I was taking

a friend to see the objects of interest at San Michele, which I had seen before, and the funeral procession touched at the riva of the church just as we arrived. The procession was of one gondola only, and the pall-bearers were four pleasant ruffians in scarlet robes of cotton, hooded, and girdled at the waist. They were accompanied by a priest of a broad and jolly countenance, two grinning boys, and finally the corpse itself, severely habited in an under-dress of black box, but wearing an outer garment of red velvet, bordered and tasseled gaily. The pleasant ruffians (who all wore smoking-caps with some other name) placed this holiday corpse upon a bier, and after a lively dispute with our gondolier, in which the compliments of the day were passed in the usual terms of Venetian chaff, lifted the bier on shore and set it down. The priest followed with the two boys, whom he rebuked for levity, simultaneously tripping over the Latin of a prayer, with his eyes fixed on our harmless little party as if we were a funeral, and the dead in the black box an indifferent spectator. Then he popped down upon his knees, and made us a lively little supplication, while a blind beggar scuffled for a lost soldo about his feet, and

the gondoliers quarrelled volubly. After which, he threw off his surplice with an air of one who should say his day's work was done, and preceded the coffin into the church.

We had hardly deposited the bier upon the floor in the centre of the nave, when two pale young friars appeared, throwing off their hooded cloaks of coarse brown, as they passed to the sacristy, and reappearing in their rope-girdled gowns. One of them bore a lighted taper in his right hand and a book in his left; the other had also a taper, but a pot of holy water instead of the book.

They are very handsome young men, these monks, with heavy, sad eyes, and graceful, slender figures, which their monastic life will presently overload with gross humanity full of coarse appetites. They go and stand beside the bier, giving a curious touch of solemnity to a scene composed of the four pleasant ruffians in the loaferish postures which they have learned as facchini waiting for jobs; of the two boys with inattentive grins, and of the priest with wandering eyes, kneeling behind them.

A weak, thin-voiced organ pipes huskily from its damp loft: the monk hurries

rapidly over the Latin text of the service, while

"His breath to heaven like vapour goes"

on the chilly, humid air; and the other monk makes the responses, giving and taking the sprinkler, which his chief shakes vaguely in the direction of the coffin. They both bow their heads — shaven down to the temples, to simulate His crown of thorns. Silence. The organ is still; the priest has vanished; the tapers are blown out; the pall-bearers lay hold of the bier, and raise it to their shoulders; the boys slouch into procession behind them; the monks glide softly and dispiritedly away. The soul is prepared for eternal life, and the body for the grave.

The ruffians are expansively gay on reaching the open air again. They laugh, they call "Ciò!"[1] continually, and banter each other as they trot to the grave.

[1] Literally, *That* in Italian, and meaning in Venetian, *You! Heigh!* To talk in *Ciò ciappa* is to assume insolent familiarity or unbounded good-fellowship with the person addressed. A Venetian says *Ciò* a thousand times in a day, and hails every one but his superior in that way. I think it is hardly the Italian pronoun, but rather a contraction of *Veccio* (vecchio), *Old fellow!* It is common with all classes

The boys follow them, gambolling among the little iron crosses, and trying if here and there one of them may not be overthrown.

We two strangers follow the boys.

But here the pall-bearers become puzzled: on the right is an open trench, on the left is an open trench. "Presence of the Devil! To which grave does this dead belong?" They discuss, they dispute, they quarrel.

From the side of the wall, as if he rose from the sea, appears the grave-digger, with his shovel on his shoulder—slouching towards us.

"Ah heigh! Ciò, the grave-digger! Where does this dead belong?"

"Body of Bacchus, what potatoes! Here, in this trench to the right."

They set down the bier there, gladly. They strip away the coffin's gay upper garment; they leave but the under-dress of black box, painted to that favour with pitch. They shove it into the grave-

of the people: parents use it in speaking to their children, and brothers and sisters call one another *Ciò*. It is a salutation between friends, who cry out, *Ciò!* as they pass in the street. Acquaintances, men who meet after separation, rush together with "*Ah Ciò!*" Then they kiss on the right cheek, "*Ciò!*" on the left, "*Ciò!*" on the lips, "*Ciò! Bon dì Ciò!*"

digger's arms, where he stands in the trench, in the soft earth, rich with bones. He lets it slide swiftly to the ground—thump! *Ecco fatto!*

The two boys pick up the empty bier, and dance merrily away with it to the riva-gate, feigning a little play after the manner of children,—"Oh, what a beautiful dead!"

The eldest of the pleasant ruffians is all the pleasanter for *sciampagnin*, and can hardly be persuaded to go out at the right gate.

We strangers stay behind a little, to consult with another spectator—Venetian, this.

"Who is the dead man, signore?"

"It is a woman, poor little thing! Dead in childbed. The baby is in there with her."

It has been a cheerful funeral, and yet we are not in great spirits as we go back to the city.

For my part, I do not think the cry of sea-gulls on a gloomy day is a joyous sound; and the sight of those theatrical angels, with their shameless, unfinished backs, flying off the top of the rococo façade of the church of the Jesuits, has always been a spectacle to fill me with despondency and foreboding.

CHAPTER XX.

VENETIAN TRAITS AND CHARACTERS.

ON a small canal, not far from the railroad station, the gondoliers show you a house, by no means notable (except for the noble statue of a knight, occupying a niche in one corner), as the house of Othello. It was once the palace of the patrician family Moro, a name well known in the annals of the Republic, and one which, it has been suggested, misled Shakespeare into the invention of a Moor of Venice. Whether this is possibly the fact, or whether there is any tradition of a tragic incident in the history of the Moro family similar to that upon which the play is founded, I do not know; but it is certain that the story of Othello, very nearly as Shakespeare tells it, is popularly known in Venice; and the gondoliers have fixed upon the Casa Moro in question as the edifice best calculated to give satisfaction to strangers in search of the True and the Memorable. The statue is

happily darkened by time, and thus serves admirably to represent Othello's complexion, and to place beyond the shadow of a doubt the fact of his residence in the house. Indeed, what can you say to the gondolier, who, in answer to your cavils, points to the knight, with the convincing argument, "There is his statue!"

One day I was taken to see this house, in company with some friends, and when it had been victoriously pointed out, as usual, we asked meekly, "Who was Othello?"

"Othello, Signori," answered the gondolier, "was a general of the Republic, in the old times. He was an African, and black; but nevertheless the State valued him, and he beat the Turks in many battles. Well, Signori, this general Othello had a very young and beautiful wife, and his wife's cousin (*sic!*) Cassio was his major-domo, or, as some say, his lieutenant. But after a while happens along (*capita*) another soldier of Othello, who wants Cassio's employment, and so accuses him to the general of corrupting his wife. Very well, Signori! Without thinking an instant, Othello, being made so, flew into a passion (*si riscaldò la tèsta*) and killed his wife; and then when her innocence came out, he killed himself and

that liar; and the State confiscated his goods, he being a very rich man. There has been a tragedy written about all this, you know."

"But how is it called? Who wrote it?"

"Oh! in regard to that, then, I don't know. Some Englishman."

"Shakespeare?"

"I don't know, Signori. But if you doubt what I tell you, go to any bookseller, and say, 'Favour me with the tragedy of "Othello."' He will give it you, and there you will find it all written out just as I tell it."

This gondolier confirmed the authenticity of his story, by showing us the house of Cassio near the Rialto Bridge, and I have no doubt he would also have pointed out that of Iago if we had wished it.

But as a general thing, the lore of the gondoliers is not rich nor very great. They are a loquacious and a gossiping race, but they love better to have a quiet chat at the tops of their voices, as they loaf idly at the ferries, or to scream repartees across the Grand Canal, than to tell stories. In all history that relates to localities they are sufficiently versed to find the notable places for strangers, but beyond this they trouble

themselves as little with the past as with the future. Three tragic legends, however, they know, and will tell with the most amusing effect, namely: Biasio, *luganegher;* the Innocent Baker-Boy, and Veneranda Porta.

The first of these legends is that of a sausage-maker who flourished in Venice some centuries ago, and who improved the quality of the broth which the *luganegheri* make of their scraps and sell to the gondoliers, by cutting up into it now and then a child of some neighbour. He was finally detected by a gondolier who discovered a little finger in his broth, and, being brought to justice, was dragged through the city at the heels of a wild horse. This most uncomfortable character appears to be the first hero in the romance of the gondoliers, and he certainly deserves to rank with that long line of imaginary personages who have made childhood so wretched and tractable. The second is the Innocent Baker-Boy already named, who was put to death on suspicion of having murdered a noble, because in the dead man's heart was found a dagger fitting a sheath which the baker had picked up in the street, on the morning of the murder, and kept in his possession. Many years

afterwards, a malefactor who died in Padua confessed the murder, and thereupon two lamps were lighted before a shrine in the southern façade of St. Mark's Church,—one for the murdered nobleman's soul, and the other for that of the innocent boy. Such is the gondoliers' story, and the lamps still burn every night before the shrine from dark till dawn, in witness of its truth. The fact of the murder and its guiltless expiation is an incident of Venetian history, and it is said that the Council of the Ten never pronounced a sentence of death thereafter, till they had been solemnly warned by one of their number with "*Ricordatevi del povero Fornaretto!*" (Remember the poor Baker-Boy!) The poet Dall 'Ongaro has woven the story into a beautiful and touching tragedy; but I believe the poet is still to be born who shall take from the gondoliers their Veneranda Porta, and place her historic figure in dramatic literature. Veneranda Porta was a lady of the days of the Republic, between whom and her husband existed an incompatibility. This was increased by the course of Signora Porta in taking a lover, and it at last led to the assassination of the husband by the paramours. The head of the murdered man was

found in one of the canals, and being exposed, as the old custom was, upon the granite pedestal at the corner of St. Mark's Church, it was recognised by his brother, who found among the papers on which the long hair was curled fragments of a letter he had written to the deceased. The crime was traced to the paramours, and being brought before the Ten, they were both condemned to be hanged between the columns of the Piazzetta. The gondoliers relate that when the sentence was pronounced, Veneranda said to the Chief of the Ten, "But as for me this sentence will never be carried out. You cannot hang a woman. Consider the impropriety!" The Venetian rulers were wise men in their generation, and, far from being balked by this question of delicacy, the Chief replied, solving it, "My dear, you shall be hanged in my breeches."

It is very coarse salt which keeps one of these stories; another is remembered because it concerns one of the people; and another for its abomination and horror. The incidents of Venetian history which take the fancy and touch the sensibility of the world seem hardly known to the gondoliers, the most intelligent and quick-witted of the

populace, and themselves the very stuff that some romantic dreams of Venice are made of. However sad the fact, it is undeniable that the stories of the sausage-maker whose broth was flavoured with murder, and the baker-boy who suffered guiltlessly, and that savage jest at the expense of the murderess, interest these people more than the high well-born sorrows of the Foscari, the tragic fate of Carmagnola, or the story of Falier,—which last they know partly, however, because of the scandal about Falier's wife. Yet, after all, though the gondoliers are not the gondoliers of imaginative literature, they have qualities which recommended them to my liking, and I look back upon my acquaintance with two or three of them in a very friendly spirit. Compared with the truculent hackmen, who prey upon the travelling public in all other cities of the civilised world, they are eminently intelligent and amiable. Rogues they are, of course, for small dishonesties are the breath in the nostrils of common carriers by land or water, everywhere; but the trickery of the gondoliers is so good-natured and simple that it can hardly offend. A very ordinary jocular sagacity defeats their profoundest purposes of swindling, and no one enjoys

their exposure half so much as themselves, while a faint prospect of future employment purifies them of every trait of dishonesty. I had only one troublesome experience with them, and that was in the case of the old gondolier who taught me to row. He, when I had no longer need of his services, plunged into drunkenness, and came and dismissed me one day with every mark of ignominy. But he afterwards forgave me, and saluted me kindly when we met.

The immediate goal of every gondolier's ambition is to serve, no matter for how short a time, an Inglese, by which generic title nearly all foreigners except Germans are known to him. The Inglese, whether he be English or American, is apt to make the tour of the whole city in a gondola, and to give handsome drink-money at the end, whereas your Tedesco frugally walks to every place accessible by land, or when, in a party of six or eight, he takes a gondola, plants himself upon the letter of the tariff, and will give no more than the rate fixed by law. The gondolier is therefore flowingly polite to the Inglese, and he is even civil to the Tedesco; but he is not at all bound in courtesy to that provincial Italian who comes from the country to Venice, bargains

furiously for his boat, and commonly pays under the tariff. The Venetian who does not himself keep a gondola seldom hires one, and even on this rare occasion makes no lavish demand, such as "How much do you want for taking me to the railway station?" Lest the fervid imagination of the gondolier rise to zwanzigers and florins, and a tedious dispute ensue, he asks: "How many centissimi do you want?" and the contract is made for a number of soldi.

The number of private gondolas owned in Venice is not very great. The custom is rather to hire a gondolier with his boat. The exclusive use of the gondola is thus secured, and the gondolier gives his services as a domestic when off his special duty. He waits at table, goes marketing, takes the children to school, and serves the ladies as footman, for five francs a day, himself paying the proprietor of the gondola about a franc daily for the boat. In former times, when Venice was rich and prosperous, many noble families kept six or seven gondolas; and what with this service, and the numerous gala-days of the Republic, when the whole city took boat for the Lido, or the Giudecca, or Murano, and the gondoliers were allowed to exact any pay they could,

they were a numerous and prosperous class. But these times have passed from Venice for ever, and though the gondoliers are still, counting the boatmen of the Giudecca and Lido, some thousands in number, there are comparatively few young men among them, and their gains are meagre.

In the little city of Venice, where the dialect spoken at Canareggio or Castello is a different tongue from that heard under the Procuratie of St. Mark's Place, the boatmen of the several quarters of the city, of course, vary greatly in character and appearance; and the gondolier who lounges at the base of the columns of the Piazetta, and airily invites the Inglesi to tours of the Grand Canal, is of quite a different type from the weather-beaten *barcaiuolo*, who croaks "*Barca!*" at the promenaders on the Zattere. But all, as I say, are simple and harmless enough, and however loudly they quarrel among themselves, they never pass from the defamation of their female relatives to blows. As for the game of knives, as it is said to be played at Naples, and as About describes it at Rome, I doubt if it is much known to the populace of Venice. Only the doctors let blood there—though from their lancets it flows pretty freely and constantly.

It is true that the gondolier loves best of everything a clamorous quarrel, carried on with the canal between him and his antagonist; but next to this, he loves to spend his leisure at the ferry in talking of eating and of money, and he does not differ from many of his fellow-citizens in choice of topics. I have seldom caught a casual expression from passers in the streets of Venice which did not relate in some way to gold Napoleons, zwanzigers, florins, or soldi, or else to wine and polenta. I note this trait in the Venetians, which Goldoni observed in the Milanese a hundred years ago, and which I incline to believe is common to all Italians. The gondoliers talk a great deal in figure and hyperbole, and their jocose chaff is quite inscrutable even to some classes of Venetians. With foreigners, to whom the silence and easy progress of the gondola gives them the opportunity to talk, they are fond of using a word or two of French. They are quick at repartee, and have a clever answer ready for most occasions. I was one day bargaining for a boat to the Lido, whither I refused to be taken in a shabby gondola, or at a rate higher than seventy-five soldi for the trip. At last the patience of the gondoliers was exhausted, and one of them called out,

"Somebody fetch the Bucintoro, and take this gentleman to the Lido for seventy-five soldi!" (The Bucintoro being the magnificent barge in which the Doge went to wed the Adriatic.)

The skill with which the gondoliers manage their graceful craft is always admired by strangers, and is certainly remarkable. The gondola is very long and slender, and rises high from the water at either end. Both bow and stern are sharp, the former being ornamented with that deeply serrated blade of steel, which it is the pride of the gondolier to keep bright as silver, and the poop having a small platform, not far behind the cabin, on which he stands when he rows. The danger of collision has always obliged Venetian boatmen to face the bow, and the stroke with the oar (for the gondolier uses only a single oar) is made by pushing, and not by pulling. No small degree of art (as I learnt from experience) is thus required to keep the gondola's head straight,—all the strokes being made on one side,—and the sculling return of the oar-blade, preparatory for each new stroke, is extremely difficult to effect. Under the hands of the gondolier, however, the gondola seems a living thing, full of grace and win-

ning movement. The wood-work of the little cabin is elaborately carved, and it is usually furnished with mirrors and seats luxuriously cushioned. The sensation of the gondola's progress, felt by the occupant of the cabin, as he falls back upon these cushions, may be described, to the female apprehension at least, as "*too* divine." The cabin is removable at pleasure, and is generally taken off and replaced by awnings in summer. But in the evening, when the fair Venetians go out in their gondolas to take the air, even this awning is dispensed with, and the long slender boat glides darkly down the Grand Canal, bearing its dazzling freight of white *tulle*, pale-faced, black-eyed beauty, and flashing jewels, in full view.

As for the singing of the gondoliers, they are the only class of Venetians who have not good voices, and I am scarcely inclined to regret the silence which long ago fell upon them. I am quite satisfied with the peculiar note of warning which they utter as they approach the corner of a canal, and which, meaning simply "To the Right," or "To the Left," is the most pathetic and melancholy sound in the world. If, putting aside my own comfort, I have sometimes wished for the sake of a dear, sentimental old friend

at home, who loves such idle illusions with an ardour unbecoming his years, that I might hear the voice

"of Adria's gondolier,
By distance mellowed, o'er the waters sweep,"

I must still confess that I never did hear it under similar circumstances, except in conversation across half a mile of lagoon, when, as usual, the burden of the lay was polenta or soldi.

A recent Venetian writer, describing the character of the lower classes of Venice, says: "No one can deny that our populace is loquacious and quick-witted; but, on the other hand, no one can deny that it is regardless of improvement. Venice, a city exceptional in its construction, its customs, and its habits, has also an exceptional populace. It still feels, although sixty-eight years have passed, the influence of the system of the fallen Republic of that oligarchic government, which, affording almost every day some amusement to the people, left them no time to think of their offended rights. . . . Since 1859 Venice has resembled a sepulchre of the living,—squalor and beggary gaining ground with each day, and commerce, with few exceptions, converted into monopoly; yet the populace remains attached to its old habits,

and will have its pleasure. If the earnings are little, what then? Must one die of ennui? The caffè is depopulated: not so the drinking-house. The last day before the drawing of the lottery, the offices are thronged with fathers and mothers of families, who stint their children of bread to buy dearly a few hours of golden illusion. . . . At the worst, there is the Monte di Pietà, as a last resort."

It is true, as this writer says, that the pleasure-loving populace still looks back fondly to the old Republican times of feasting and holidays; but there is certainly no truth any more in the old idea that any part of Italy is a place where people may be "idle with impunity," or make amusement the serious business of life. I can remember that the book from which I received my first impressions of geography was illuminated with a picture professing to represent Italian customs. The spirit of inquiry had long before caused me to doubt the exact fidelity of this representation; but it cost me a pang to learn that the picture was utterly delusive. It has been no part of my experience in Venice to see an Italian sitting upon the ground, and strumming the guitar, while two gaily-dressed peasants

danced to the music. Indeed, the indolence of Venetians is listless and silent, not playful or joyous; and as I learned to know their life more intimately, I came to understand that in many cases they are idle from despair of finding work, and that indolence is as much their fate as their fault. Any diligence of theirs is surprising to us of northern and free lands, because their climate subdues and enervates us, and because we can see before them no career open to intelligent industry. With the poorest, work is necessarily a hand-to-hand struggle against hunger; with those who would not absolutely starve without it, work is an inexplicable passion.

Partly because the ways of these people are so childlike and simple in many things, and partly from one's own swindling tendency to take one's-self in (a tendency really fatal to all sincerity of judgment, and incalculably mischievous to such downfallen peoples as have felt the baleful effects of the world's sentimental, impotent sympathy), there is something pathetic in the patient content with which Italians work. They have naturally so large a capacity for enjoyment, that the degree of self-denial involved in labour seems exorbitant, and one

feels that these children, so loved of Nature, and so gifted by her, are harshly dealt with by their stepmother Circumstance. No doubt there ought to be truth in the silly old picture, if there is none, and I would willingly make-believe to credit it, if I could. I am glad that they at least work in old-world, awkward, picturesque ways, and not in commonplace, handy, modern fashion. Neither the habits nor the implements of labour are changed since the progress of the Republic ceased, and her heart began to die within her. All sorts of mechanics' tools are clumsy and inconvenient: the turner's lathe moves by broken impulses; door-hinges are made to order, and lift the door from the ground as it opens upon them; all nails and tacks are hand-made; window-sashes are contrived to be glazed without putty, and the panes are put in from the top, so that to repair a broken glass the whole sash is taken apart; cooking-stoves are unknown to the native cooks, who work at an open fire, with crane and dangling pot-hooks; furniture is put together with wooden pegs instead of screws; you do not buy a door-lock at a hardware store,—you get a *fabbro* to make it, and he comes with a leathern satchel full of tools

to fit and finish it on the door. The wheelbarrow of this civilisation is peculiarly wonderful in construction, with a prodigious wooden wheel, and a ponderous, incapable body. The canals are dredged with scoops mounted on long poles, and manned each by three or four Chiozzotti. There never was a pile-driving machine known in Venice; nor a steam-tug in all the channels of the lagoons, through which the largest craft are towed to and from the ports by row-boats. In the model of the sea-going vessels there has apparently been little change from the first. Yet in spite of all this backwardness in invention, the city is full of beautiful workmanship in every branch of artificing, and the Venetians are still the best sailors in the Adriatic.

I do not offer the idea as a contribution to statistics, but it seems to me that the most active branch of industry in Venice is plucking fowls. In summer the people all work on their thresholds, and in their windows, and as nearly out of doors as the narrowness of the streets will let them,—and it is hard to pass through any part of the city without coming to a poulterer's shop, in the door of which inevitably sits a boy, tugging at the plumage of some wretched bird. He is seldom

to be seen except in that crisis of plucking when he seems to have all but finished; yet he seems never to accomplish the fact perfectly. Perhaps it is part of his hard fate that the feathers shall grow again under his hand as fast as he plucks them away: at the restaurants, I know, the quantity of plumage one devours in consuming roast chicken is surprising—at first. The birds are always very lean, too, and have but a languid and weary look, in spite of the ardent manner in which the boy clasps them while at work. It may be that the Venetians do not like fat poultry. Their turkeys, especially, are of that emaciation which is attributed among ourselves only to the turkey of Job; and as for the geese and ducks, they can only interest anatomists. It is as if the long ages of incursion and oppression which have impoverished and devastated Italy had at last taken effect upon the poultry, and made it as poor as the population.

I do not want to give too exclusive an impression of Venetian industry, however, for now I remember the Venetian *lasagnoni*, whom I never saw doing anything, and who certainly abound in respectable numbers.

The lasagnone is a loafer, as an Italian

can be a loafer, without the admixture of ruffianism, which blemishes most loafers of northern race. He may be quite worthless, and even impertinent, but he cannot be a rowdy,—that pleasing blossom on the nose of our fast, high-fed, thick-blooded civilisation. In Venice he must not be confounded with other loiterers at the caffè; not with the natty people who talk politics interminably over little cups of black coffee; not with those old habitués, who sit for ever under the Procuratie, their hands folded upon the tops of their sticks, and staring at the ladies who pass with a curious steadfastness and knowing scepticism of gaze, not pleasing in the dim eyes of age; certainly, the last persons who bear any likeness to the lasagnone are the Germans, with their honest, heavy faces comically anglicised by leg-of-mutton whiskers. The truth is, the lasagnone does not flourish in the best caffè; he comes to perfection in cheaper resorts, for he is commonly not rich. It often happens that a glass of water, flavoured with a little anisette, is the order over which he sits a whole evening. He knows the waiter intimately, and does not call him "Shop!" (Bottega), as less familiar people do, but Gigi, or Beppi, as the waiter is pretty sure

to be named. "Behold!" he says, when the servant places his modest drink before him, "who is that loveliest blonde there?" Or to his fellow-lasagnone: "She regards me! I have broken her the heart!" This is his sole business and mission, the cruel lasagnone—to break ladies the heart. He spares no condition,—neither rank nor wealth is any defence against him. I often wonder what is in that note he continually shows to his friend. The confession of some broken heart, I think. When he has folded it, and put it away, he chuckles "*Ah, cara!*" and sucks at his long, slender Virginia cigar. It is unlighted, for fire consumes cigars. I never see him read the papers,—neither the Italian papers nor the Parisian journals, though if he can get *Galignani* he is glad, and he likes to pretend to a knowledge of English, uttering upon occasion, with great relish, such distinctively English words as "Yes" and "Not," and to the waiter, "A-little-fire-if-you-please." He sits very late in the caffè, and he touches his hat—his curly French hat—to the company as he goes out with a mild swagger, his cane held lightly in his left hand, his coat cut snugly to show his hips, and genteelly swaying with the motion

of his body. He is a dandy, of course,—all Italians are dandies,—but his vanity is perfectly harmless, and his heart is not bad. He would go half-an-hour out of his way to put you in the direction of the Piazza. A little thing can make him happy,—to stand in the pit at the opera, and gaze at the ladies in the lower boxes—to attend the Marionette, or the Malibran Theatre, and imperil the peace of pretty seamstresses and contadinas—to stand at the church doors and ogle the fair saints as they pass out. Go, harmless lasagnone, to thy lodging, in some mysterious height, and break hearts if thou wilt. They are quickly mended.

Of other vagabonds in Venice, if I had my choice, I think I must select a certain ruffian who deals in dog-flesh, as the nearest my ideal of what a vagabond should be in all respects. He stands habitually under the Old Procuratie, beside a basket of small puppies in that snuffling and quivering state which appears to be the favourite condition of very young dogs, and occupies himself in conversation with an adjacent dealer in grapes and peaches, or sometimes fastidiously engages in trimming the hair upon the closely shaven bodies of the dogs; for in Venice it is the ambition of every dog to

look as much like the Lion of St. Mark as the nature of the case will permit. My vagabond at times makes expeditions to the groups of travellers always seated in summer before the Caffè Florian, appearing at such times with a very small puppy,—neatly poised upon the palm of his hand, and winking pensively,—which he advertises to the company as a "Beautiful Beast," or a "Lovely Babe," according to the inspiration of his light and pleasant fancy. I think the latter term is used generally as a means of ingratiation with the ladies, to whom my vagabond always shows a demeanour of agreeable gallantry. I never saw him sell any of these dogs, nor ever in the least cast down by his failure to do so. His air is grave, but not severe; there is even, at times, a certain playfulness in his manner, possibly attributable to sciampagnin. His curling black locks, together with his velveteen jacket and pantaloons, are oiled and glossy, and his beard is cut in the French-imperial mode. His personal presence is unwholesome, and it is chiefly his moral perfection as a vagabond that makes him fascinating. One is so confident, however, of his fitness for his position and business, and of his entire contentment

with it, that it is impossible not to exult in him.

He is not without self-respect. I doubt it would be hard to find any Venetian of any vocation, however base, who forgets that he too is a man and a brother. There is enough servility in the language,—it is the fashion of the Italian tongue, with its *Tu* for inferiors, *Voi* for intimates and friendly equals, and *Lei* for superiors,—but in the manner there is none, and there is a sense of equality in the ordinary intercourse of the Venetians, at once apparent to foreigners.

All ranks are orderly; the spirit of aggression seems not to exist among them, and the very boys and dogs in Venice are so well-behaved, that I have never seen the slightest disposition in them to quarrel. Of course, it is of the street boy—the *biricchino*, the boy in his natural, unreclaimed state—that I speak. This state is here, in winter, marked by a clouded countenance, bare head, tatters, and wooden-soled shoes open at the heels; in summer by a preternatural purity of person, by abandon to the amphibious pleasure of leaping off the bridges into the canals, and by an insatiable appetite for polenta, fried minnows, and water melons.

When one of these boys takes to beggary,

as a great many of them do, out of a spirit of adventure and wish to pass the time, he carries out the enterprise with splendid daring. A favourite artifice is to approach Charity with a slice of polenta in one hand, and, with the other extended, implore a soldo to buy cheese to eat with the polenta. The street-boys also often perform the duties of the *gransieri*, who draw your gondola to shore, and keep it firm with a hook. To this order of beggar I usually gave; but one day at the railway-station I had no soldi, and as I did not wish to render my friend discontented with future alms by giving silver, I deliberately apologised, praying him to excuse me, and promising him for another time. I cannot forget the lofty courtesy with which he returned,—"*S'accomodi pur, Signor!*" They have sometimes a sense of humour, these poor swindlers, and can enjoy the exposure of their own enormities. An amiable rogue drew our gondola to land one evening when we went too late to see the church of San Giorgio Maggiore. The sacristan made us free of a perfectly dark church, and we rewarded him as if it had been noon-day. On our return to the gondola, the same beggar whom we had just fee'd held out his

hat for another alms. "But we have just paid you," we cried in an agony of grief and desperation. "*Sì signori!*" he admitted with an air of argument, "*è vero. Ma, la chiesa!*" (Yes, gentlemen, it is true. But the Church!) he added with confidential insinuation, and a patronising wave of the hand toward the edifice, as if he had been San Giorgio himself, and held the church as a source of revenue. This was too much, and we laughed him to scorn; at which, beholding the amusing abomination of his conduct, he himself joined in our laugh with a cheerfulness that won our hearts.

Beggary is attended by no disgrace in Italy, and it therefore comes that no mendicant is without a proper degree of the self-respect common to all classes. Indeed, the habit of taking gifts of money is so general and shameless that the street beggars must be diffident souls indeed if they hesitated to ask for it. A perfectly well-dressed and well-mannered man will take ten soldi from you for a trifling service, and not consider himself in the least abased. The detestable custom of largess, instead of wages, still obtains in so great degree in Venice that a physician, when asked for his account, replies: "What you please to

give." Knowing these customs, I hope I have never acted discourteously to the street beggars of Venice even when I gave them nothing, and I know that only one of them ever so far forgot himself as to curse me for not giving. Him, however, I think to have been out of his right mind at the time.

There were two mad beggars in the parish of San Stefano, whom I should be sorry to leave unmentioned here. One, who presided chiefly over the Campo San Stefano, professed to be also a facchino, but I never saw him employed, except in addressing select circles of idlers whom a brawling noise always draws together in Venice. He had been a soldier, and he sometimes put himself at the head of a file of Croats passing through the campo, and gave them the word of command, to the great amusement of those swarthy barbarians. He was a good deal in drink, and when in this state was proud to go before any ladies who might be passing, and clear away the boys and idlers, to make room for them. When not occupied in any of these ways, he commonly slept in the arcades of the old convent.

But the mad beggar of Campo Sant' Angelo seemed to have a finer sense of what became him as a madman and a beggar, and

never made himself obnoxious by his noise. He was, in fact, very fat and amiable, and in the summer lay asleep, for the most part, at a certain street corner which belonged to him. When awake he was a man of extremely complaisant presence, and suffered no lady to go by without a compliment to her complexion, her blonde hair, or her beautiful eyes, whichever it might be. He got money for these attentions, and people paid him for any sort of witticism. One day he said to the richest young dandy of the city,—"Pah! you stomach me with your perfumes and fine airs;" for which he received half a florin. His remarks to gentlemen had usually this sarcastic flavour. I am sorry to say that so excellent a madman was often drunk and unable to fulfil his duties to society.

There are, of course, laws against mendicancy in Venice, and they are, of course, never enforced. Beggars abound everywhere, and nobody molests them. There was long a troop of weird sisters in Campo San Stefano, who picked up a livelihood from the foreigners passing to and from the Academy of Fine Arts. They addressed people with the title of Count, and no doubt gained something by this sort of heraldry,

though there are counts in Venice almost as poor as themselves, and titles are not distinctions. The Venetian seldom gives to beggars; he says deliberately, "*No go*" (I have nothing), or "*Quando ritornerò*" (when I return), and never comes back that way. I noticed that professional hunger and cold took this sort of denial very patiently, as they did every other; but I confess I had never the heart to practise it. In my walks to the Public Gardens there was a venerable old man, with the beard and bearing of a patriarch, whom I encountered on the last bridge of the Riva, and who there asked alms of me. When I gave him a soldo, he returned me a blessing which I would be ashamed to take in the United States for half a dollar; and when the soldo was in some inaccessible pocket, and I begged him to await my coming back, he said sweetly,—"Very well, Signor, I will be here." And I must say, to his credit, that he never broke his promise, nor suffered me, for shame's sake, to break mine. He was quite a treasure to me in this respect, and assisted me to ferm habits of punctuality.

That exuberance of manner which one notes, the first thing, in his intercourse with

Venetians, characterises all classes, but is most excessive and relishing in the poor. There is a vast deal of ceremony with every order, and one hardly knows what to do with the numbers of compliments it is necessary to respond to. A Venetian does not come to see you, he comes to revere you; he not only asks if you be well when he meets you, but he bids you remain well at parting, and desires you to salute for him all common friends; he reverences you at leave-taking; he will sometimes consent to incommode you with a visit; he will relieve you of the disturbance when he rises to go. All spontaneous wishes which must, with us, take original forms, for lack of the complimentary phrase, are formally expressed by him,—good appetite to you, when you go to dinner, much enjoyment, when you go to the theatre; a pleasant walk if you meet in promenade. He is your servant at meeting and parting; he begs to be commanded when he has misunderstood you. But courtesy takes its highest flights, as I hinted, from the poorest company. Acquaintances of this sort, when not on the *Ciò ciappa* footing, or that of the familiar thee and thou, always address each other in *Lei* (lordship), or *Elo*, as the Venetians have it;

and their compliment-making at encounter and separation is endless: I salute you! Remain well! Master! Mistress! (*Paron! parona!*) being repeated as long as the polite persons are within hearing.

One day, as we passed through the crowded Merceria, an old Venetian friend of mine, who trod upon the dress of a young person before us, called out, "*Scusate, bella giovane!*" (Pardon, beautiful girl!) She was not so fair nor so young as I have seen women; but she half turned her face with a forgiving smile, and seemed pleased with the accident that had won her the amiable apology. The waiter of the caffè frequented by the people, says to the ladies for whom he places seats,—"Take this place, beautiful blonde;" or, "Sit here, lovely brunette," as it happens.

A Venetian who enters or leaves any place of public resort touches his hat to the company, and one day, at a restaurant, some ladies, who had been dining there, said "*Complimenti!*" on going out, with a grace that went near to make the beefsteak tender. It is this uncostly gentleness of bearing which gives a winning impression of the whole people, whatever selfishness or real discourtesy lie beneath it. At home it

sometimes seems that we are in such haste to live and be done with it, we have no time to be polite. Or is popular politeness merely a vice of servile peoples? And is it altogether better to be rude? I wish it were not. If you are lost in his city (and you are pretty sure to be lost there, continually), a Venetian will go with you wherever you wish. And he will do this amiable little service out of what one may say old civilisation has established in place of goodness of heart, but which is perhaps not so different from it.

You hear people in the streets bless each other in the most dramatic fashion. I once caught these parting words between an old man and a young girl: —

Giovanetta. Revered sir! (*Patron riverito!*)

Vecchio. (With that peculiar backward wave and beneficent wag of the hand, only possible to Italians.) Blessed child. (*Benedetta!*)

It was in a crowd, but no one turned round at the utterance of terms which Anglo-Saxons would scarcely use in their most emotional moments. The old gentleman who sells boxes for the theatre in the Old Procuratie always gave me his benediction when I took a box.

There is equal exuberance of invective, and I have heard many fine maledictions on the Venetian streets, but I recollect none more elaborate than that of a gondolier who, after listening peacefully to a quarrel between two other boatmen, suddenly took part against one of them, and saluted him with—"Ah! baptized son of a dog! And if I had been present at thy baptism, I would have dashed thy brains out against the baptismal font!"

All the theatrical forms of passion were visible in a scene I witnessed in a little street near San Samuele, where I found the neighbourhood assembled at doors and windows in honour of a wordy battle between two poor women. One of these had been forced in-doors by her prudent husband, and the other upbraided her across the marital barrier. The assailant was washing, and twenty times she left her tub to revile the besieged, who thrust her long arms out over those of her husband, and turned each reproach back upon her who uttered it, thus:—

Assailant. Beast!
Besieged. Thou!
A. Fool!
B. Thou!

A. Liar!

B. Thou!

E via in seguito! At last the assailant, beating her breast with both hands, and tempestuously swaying her person back and forth, wreaked her scorn in one wild outburst of vituperation, and returned finally to her tub, wisely saying, on the purple verge of asphyxiation, "*O, non discorro più con gente.*"

I returned half an hour later, and she was laughing and playing sweetly with her babe. It suits the passionate nature of the Italians to have incredible ado about buying and selling, and a day's shopping is a sort of campaign, from which the shopper returns plundered and discomfited, or laden with the spoil of vanquished shopmen.

The embattled commercial transaction is conducted in this wise:—

The shopper enters, and prices a given article. The shopman names a sum, of which only the fervid imagination of the South could conceive as corresponding to the value of the goods.

The purchaser instantly starts back with a wail of horror and indignation, and the shopman throws himself forward over the counter with a protest that, far from being

dear, the article is ruinously cheap at the price stated, though they may nevertheless agree for something less.

What, then, is the very most ultimate price?

Properly, the very most ultimate price is so much. (Say, the smallest trifle under the price first asked.)

The purchaser moves toward the door. He comes back, and offers one-third of the very most ultimate price.

The shopman, with a gentle desperation, declares that the thing cost him as much. He cannot really take the offer. He regrets, but he cannot. That the gentleman would say something more! So much—for example. That he regard the stuff, its quality, fashion, beauty.

The gentleman laughs him to scorn. Ah, heigh! and, coming forward, he picks up the article and reviles it. Out of the mode, old, fragile, ugly of its kind.

The shopman defends his wares. There is not such quantity and quality elsewhere in Venice. But if the gentleman will give even so much (still something preposterous), he may have it, though truly its sale for that money is utter ruin.

The shopper walks straight to the door.

The shopman calls him back from the threshold, or sends his boy to call him back from the street.

Let him accommodate himself—which is to say, take the thing at his own price.

He takes it.

The shopman says cheerfully, "Servo suo!"

The purchaser responds, "Bon dì! Patron!" (Good day! my Master!)

Thus, as I said, every bargain is a battle, and every purchase a triumph or a defeat. The whole thing is understood; the opposing forces know perfectly well all that is to be done beforehand, and retire after the contest, like the captured knights in "*Morgante Maggiore*," "calm as oil,"—however furious and deadly their struggle may have appeared to strangers.

Foreigners soon discern, however, that there is no bloodshed in such encounters, and enter into them with a zeal as great as that of natives, though with less skill. I knew one American who prided himself on such matters, and who haughtily closed a certain bargain without words, as he called it. The shopman offered several articles, for which he demanded prices amounting in all to ninety-three francs. His wary cus-

tomer rapidly computed the total and replied, "Without words, now, I 'll give you a hundred francs for the lot." With a pensive elevation of the eyebrows, and a reluctant shrug of the shoulders, the shopman suffered him to take them.

Your Venetian is *simpatico*, if he is anything. He is always ready to feel and to express the deepest concern, and I rather think he likes to have his sensibilities appealed to, as a pleasant and healthful exercise for them. His sympathy begins at home, and he generously pities himself as the victim of a combination of misfortunes, which leave him citizen of a country without liberty, without commerce, without money, without hope. He next pities his fellow-citizens, who are as desperately situated as himself. Then he pities the degradation, corruption, and despair into which the city has fallen. And I think his compassion is the most hopeless thing in his character. That alone is touched ; that alone is moved; and when its impulse ceases he and everything about him remain just as before.

With the poor, this sensibility is amusingly mischievous. They never speak of one of their own class without adding some such ejaculation as "Poor fellow!" or

"Poor little creature!" They pity all wretchedness, no matter from what cause, and the greatest rogue has their compassion when under a cloud. It is all but impossible to punish thieves in Venice, where they are very bold and numerous, for the police are too much occupied with political surveillance to give due attention to mere cut-purses and housebreakers, and even when they make an arrest, people can hardly be got to bear witness against their unhappy prisoner. *Povareto anca lu!* There is no work and no money; people must do something; so they steal. *Ci vuol pazienza!* Bear witness against an ill-fated fellow-sufferer? God forbid! Stop a thief? I think a burglar might run from Rialto to San Marco, and not one compassionate soul in the Merceria would do aught to arrest him—*povareto!* Thieves came to the house of a friend of mine at noon-day, when his servant was out. They tied their boat to his landing, entered his house, filled their boat with plunder from it, and rowed out into the canal. The neighbours on the floor above saw them, and cried "Thieves! thieves!" It was in the most frequented part of the Grand Canal, where scores of boats passed and repassed; but no one

molested the thieves, and these *povareti* escaped with their booty.[1]

One night in a little street through which we passed to our ferry, there came a wild rush before us, of a woman screaming for help, and pursued by her husband with a knife in his hand; their children, shrieking piteously, came after them. The street was crowded with people and soldiers, but no one put out his hand; and the man presently overtook his wife and stabbed her in the back. We only knew of the rush, but what it all meant we could not tell, till we saw the woman bleeding from the stab, which, happily, was slight. Inquiry of the by-standers developed the facts, but, singularly enough, scarcely a word of pity. It was entirely a family affair, it seemed; the man, poor little fellow, had a mistress, and his wife had maddened him with reproaches. *Come si fa?* He had to stab her. The

[1] The rogues, it must be confessed, are often very polite. This same friend of mine one day found a man in the act of getting down into a boat with his favourite singing bird in its cage. "What are you doing with that bird?" he thought himself authorised to inquire. The thief looked about him a moment, and perceiving himself detected, handed back the cage with a cool "*La scusi!*" ("Beg pardon!") as if its removal had been a trifling inadvertence.

woman's case was not one that appealed to popular compassion, and the only words of pity for her which I heard were expressed by the wife of a fruiterer, whom her husband angrily silenced.

CHAPTER XXI.

SOCIETY.

IT was natural that the Venetians, whose State lay upon the borders of the Greek Empire, and whose greatest commerce was with the Orient, should be influenced by the Constantinopolitan civilisation. Mutinelli records that in the twelfth century they had many religious offices and observances in common with the Greeks, especially the homily or sermon, which formed a very prominent part of the service of worship. At this time, also, when the rupture of the Lombard League had left other Italian cities to fall back into incessant local wars, and barbarised their customs, the people of Venice dressed richly and delicately, after the Greek fashion. They combed and dressed their hair, and wore the long, pointed Greek beard;[1] and though these Byzantine modes fell, for the most part, into disuse, in aftertime, there is

[1] A Foscarini, in 1687, was the last patrician who wore the beard.

still a peculiarity of dress among the women of the Venetian poor which is said to have been inherited from the oriental costumes of Constantinople; namely, that high-heeled, sharp-toed slipper, or sandal, which covers the front of the foot, and drops from the heel at every step, requiring no slight art in the wearer to keep it on at all.

The philosophic vision, accustomed to relate trifling particulars to important generalities, may perhaps see another relic of Byzantine civilisation among the Venetians, in that jealous restraint which they put upon all the social movements of young girls, and the great liberty which they allow to married women. It is true that their damsels are now no longer imprisoned under the parental roof, as they were in times when they never left its shelter but to go, closely veiled, to communion in the church, on Christmas and Easter; but it is still quite impossible that any young lady should go out alone. Indeed, she would scarcely be secure from insult in broad day if she did so. She goes out with her governess, and, even with this protection, she cannot be too guarded and circumspect in her bearing; for in Venice a woman has to encounter upon the public street a rude licence of glance, from men of all ages and

conditions, which falls little short of outrage. They stare at her as she approaches; and I have seen them turn and contemplate ladies as they passed them, keeping a few paces in advance, with a leisurely sidelong gait. Something of this insolence might be forgiven to thoughtless, hot-blooded youth; but the gross and knowing leer that the elders of the Piazza and the caffè put on at the approach of a pretty girl is an ordeal which few women, not as thoroughly inured to it as the Venetians, would care to encounter. However, as I never heard the trial complained of by any but foreigners, I suppose it is not regarded by Italians as intolerable; and it is certain that an audible compliment, upon the street, to a pretty girl of the poor, is by no means an affront.

The arts of pleasing and of coquetry come by nature to the gentler sex; and if in Italy they add to them a habit of intrigue, I wonder how much they are to blame, never being in anywise trusted? They do not differ from persons of any age or sex in that country, if the world has been as justly, as it has always been firmly, persuaded that the people of Italy are effete in point of good faith. I have seen much to justify this opinion, and something also to confute it;

and as long as Garibaldi lives, I shall not let myself believe that a race which could produce a man so signally truthful and single-hearted is a race of liars and cheats. I think the student of their character should also be slow to upbraid Italians for their duplicity, without admitting, in palliation of the fault, facts of long ages of alien and domestic oppression, in politics and religion, which must account for a vast deal of every kind of evil in Italy. Yet after exception and palliation has been duly made, it must be confessed that in Italy it does not seem to be thought shameful to tell lies, and that there the standard of sincerity, compared with that of the English or American, is low, as the Italian standard of morality in other respects is also comparatively low.

With the women, bred in idleness and ignorance, the imputed national untruthfulness takes the form naturally to be expected, and contributes to a state of things which must be examined with the greatest caution and reservation by every one but the Italians themselves. Gœthe says that there is no society so corrupt that a man may not live virtuously in it; and I think the immorality of any people will not be directly and wholly seen by the stranger who does not seek it.

Certainly the experience and acquaintance of a foreigner in Italy must have been most unfortunate, if they confirm all the stories of corruption told by Italians themselves. A little generous distrust is best in matters of this kind; but while I strengthen my incredulity concerning the utter depravation of Venetian society in one respect, I am not disposed to deal so leniently with it in others. The state of things is bad in Venice, not because all women in society are impure, but because the Italian theory of morals does not admit the existence of opportunity without sin. It is by rare chance that a young girl makes acquaintance with young men in society; she seldom talks with them at the parties to which she is sometimes taken by her mother, and they do not call upon her at her home; while for her to walk alone with a young man would be vastly more scandalous than much worse things and, is, consequently, unheard of. The Italians say freely they cannot trust their women as northern women are trusted; and some Italian women frankly confess that their sex would be worse if it were trusted more. But the truth does not appear in this shallow suspicion and this shallow self-conviction; and one who cares to have a just estimate of this matter must by

no means believe all the evil he hears. There may be much corruption in society, but there is infinitely more wrong in the habits of idle gossip and guilty scandal, which eat all sense of shame and pity out of the heart of Venice. There is no parallel to the prying, tattling, backbiting littleness of the place elsewhere in the world. A small country village in America or England has its meddlesomeness, but not its worldly, wicked sharpness. Figure the meanness of a chimney-corner gossip, added to the bitter shrewdness and witty penetration of a gifted roué, and you have some idea of Venetian scandal. In that city, where all the nobler organs of expression are closed by political conditions, the viler channels run continual filth and poison, and the people, shut out from public and free discussion of religious and political themes, occupy themselves with private slander, and rend each other in their abject desperation. As it is part of the existing political demonstration to avoid the opera and theatre, the Venetians are deprived of these harmless distractions; balls and evening parties, at which people, in other countries, do nothing worse than bore each other, are almost unknown, for the same reason; and when persons meet in society, it is too often to retail personalities,

or Italian politics made as unintelligible and as like local gossip as possible. The talk which is small and noxious in private circles is the same thing at the caffè, when the dread of spies does not reduce the talkers to a dreary silence. Not permitted to feel the currents of literature and the great world's thought in religion freshly and directly, they seldom speak of these things, except in that tone of obsolete superiority which Italians are still prone to affect, as the monopolists of culture. As to Art, the Venetians are insensible to it and ignorant of it, here in the very atmosphere of Art, to a degree absolutely amusing. I would as soon think of asking a fish's opinion of water as of asking a Venetian's notion of architecture or painting, unless he were himself a professed artist or critic.

Admitting, however, that a great part of the corruption of society is imputed, there still remains, no doubt, a great deal of real immorality to be accounted for. This, I think, is often to be attributed to the bad system of female education, and the habits of idleness in which women are bred. Indeed, to Americans, the whole system of Italian education seems calculated to reduce women to a state of imbecile captivity before

marriage; and I have no fault to find with the Italians that they are jealous in guarding those whom they have unfitted to protect themselves, but have rather to blame them that, after marriage, their women are thrown at once upon society, when worse than helpless against its temptations. Except with those people who attempt to maintain a certain appearance in public upon insufficient means (and there are too many of these in Venice as everywhere else), and who spare in every other way that they may spend on dress, it does not often happen that Venetian ladies are housekeepers. Servants are cheap and numerous, as they are uncleanly and untrustworthy, and the Venetians prefer to keep them[1] rather than take part in housewifely duties; and, since they must lavish upon dress and show, to suffer from cold and hunger in their fireless houses and at their meagre boards. In this way the young girls, kept imprisoned from the world, instead of learning cookery and other domestic arts, have the grievous burden of idleness added to that of their solitary confinement, not only among the rich and noble, but among that

[1] A clerk or employé with a salary of fifty cents a day keeps a maid-servant, that his wife may fulfil to society the important duty of doing nothing.

large class which is neither, and wishes to appear both.[1] Their idle thoughts, not drilled by study nor occupied with work, run upon the freedom which marriage shall bring them, and form a distorted image of the world, of which they know as little as of their own undisciplined selves. Denied the just and wholesome amusements of society during their girlhood, it is scarcely a matter of surprise that they should throw themselves into the giddiest whirl of its

[1] The poet Gray, genteelly making the grand tour in 1740, wrote to his father from Florence:—"The only thing the Italians shine in is their reception of strangers. At such times everything is magnificence: the more remarkable as in their ordinary course of life they are parsimonious to a degree of nastiness. I saw in one of the vastest palaces of Rome (that of the Prince Pamfilio), the apartment which he himself inhabited, a bed that most servants in England would disdain to lie in, and furniture much like that of a soph at Cambridge. This man is worth £30,000 a year." Italian nature has changed so little in a century, that all this would hold admirably true of Italian life at this time. The goodly outside in religion, in morals, in everything, is too much the ambition of Italy; this achieved, she is content to endure any pang of self-denial, and sell what little comfort she knows—it is mostly imported, like the word, from England—to strangers at fabulous prices. In Italy the luxuries of life are cheap, and the conveniences unknown or excessively dear.

excitement when marriage sets them free to do so.

I have said I do not think Venetians who give each other bad names are always to be credited, and I have no doubt that many a reputation in Venice is stained while the victim remains without guilt. A questioned reputation is, however, no great social calamity. It forms no bar to society, and few people are so cruel as to blame it, though all discuss it. And it is here that the harshness of American and English society toward the erring woman (harshness which is not injustice, but half-justice only) contrasts visibly to our advantage over the bad naïveté and lenity of the Italians. The carefully secluded Italian girl is accustomed to hear of things and speak of things which, with us, parents strive in every way to keep from their daughters' knowledge; and while her sense of delicacy is thus early blunted, while she is thus used to know good and evil, she hears her father and mother comment on the sinful errors of a friend or neighbour, who visits them and meets them every day in society. How can the impunity of the guilt which she believes to exist around her but sometimes have its effect, and ripen, with opportunity, into wrong? Nay, if the girl

reveres her parents at all, how can she think the sin, which they caress in the sinner, is so very bad? If, however, she escape all these early influences of depravation; if her idleness, and solitude, and precocious knowledge leave her unvitiated; if, when she goes into society, it is by marriage with a man who is neither a dotard nor a fortune-seeker, and who remains constant, and does not tempt her, by neglect to forebode offence and to inflict anticipative reprisals—yet her purity goes uncredited, as her guilt would go unpunished; scandal makes haste to blacken her name to the prevailing hue; and whether she has sin or not, those with sin will cast, not the stone that breaks and kills, but the filth that sticks and stinks. The wife must continue the long social exile of her girlhood if she would not be the prey of scandal. The *cavaliere servente* no longer exists, but gossip now attributes often more than one lover in his place, and society has the cruel clemency to wink at the licence. Nothing is in worse taste than jealousy, and, consequently, though intrigue sometimes causes stabbing, and the like, among low people, it is rarely noticed by persons of good breeding. It seems to me that in Venetian society the reform must begin, not with dissolute life, but

with the social toleration of the impure, and with the wanton habits of scandal, which make all other life incredible, and deny to virtue the triumph of fair fame.

I confess that what I saw of the innocent amusements of this society was not enough to convince me of their brilliancy and attractiveness; but I doubt if a foreigner can be a trustworthy judge of these things, and perhaps a sketch drawn by an alien hand, in the best faith, might have an air of caricature. I would not, therefore, like to trust my own impression of social diversions. They were, very probably, much more lively and brilliant than I thought them. But Italians assembled anywhere, except at the theatre or the caffè, have a certain stiffness, all the more surprising, because tradition has always led one to expect exactly the reverse of them. I have seen nothing equal to the formality of this people, who deride colder nations for inflexible manners; and I have certainly never seen society in any small town in America so ill at ease as I have seen society in Venice, writhing under self-imposed restraints. At a musical soiree, attended by the class of people who at home would have been chatty and sociable, given to making acquaintance and to keeping up

acquaintance,—the young men harmlessly talking and walking with the young ladies, and the old people listening together, while constant movement and intercourse kept life in the assembly, and there was some real pleasure felt amidst a good deal of unavoidable suffering,—I say, I found such a soiree in Venice to be a spectacle of ladies planted in formal rows of low-necks and white dresses around the four sides of one room, and of gentlemen restively imprisoned in dress-coats and white gloves in another. During the music all these devoted people listened attentively, and at the end, the ladies lapsed back into their chairs and fanned themselves, while the gentlemen walked up and down the floor of their cell, and stopped, two by two, at the door of the ladies' room, glanced mournfully athwart the moral barrier which divided them, and sadly and dejectedly turned away. Amazed at this singular species of social enjoyment, I inquired afterward, of a Venetian lady, if evening parties in Venice were usually such ordeals, and was discouraged to learn that what I had seen was scarcely an exaggeration of prevailing torments. Commonly people do not know each other, and it is difficult for the younger to procure intro-

ductions; and when there is previous acquaintance, the presence of some commanding spirit is necessary to break the ice of propriety, and substitute enjoyment for correctness of behaviour. Even at dancing parties, where it would seem that the poetry of motion might do something to soften the rigid bosom of Venetian deportment, the poor young people separate after each dance, and take each sex its appointed prison, till the next quadrille offers them a temporary liberation. For my own part, I cannot wonder that young men fly these virtuous scenes, and throng the rooms of those pleasant women of the *demi-monde*, who only exact from them that they shall be natural and agreeable; I cannot wonder that their fair partners in wretchedness seize the first opportunity to revenge themselves upon the propriety which has so cruelly used them. It is said that the assemblies of the Jews, while quite as unexceptionable in character, are far more sociable and lively than those of the Christians. The young Hebrews are frequently intelligent, well-bred, and witty, with a *savoir-faire* which their Christian brethren lack. But, indeed, the young Venetian is, at that age when all men are owlish, ignorant, and vapid, the

most owlish, ignorant, and vapid man in the world. He talks, not milk-and-water, but warm water alone, a little sweetened; and, until he has grown wicked, has very little good in him.

Most ladies of fashion receive calls on a certain day of each week, when it is made a matter of pride to receive as many calls as possible. The number sometimes reaches three hundred, when nobody sits down, and few exchange more than a word with the hostess. In winter, the stove is heated on these reception days, and little cups of black coffee are passed round to the company; in summer lemonade is substituted for the coffee; but in all seasons a thin, waferish slice of toasted rusk (the Venetian *baicolo*) is offered to each guest with the drink. At receptions where the sparsity of the company permits the lady of the house to be seen, she is commonly visible on a sofa, surrounded by visitors in a half-circle. Nobody stays more than ten or fifteen minutes, and I have sometimes found even this brief time of much greater apparent length, and apt to produce a low state of nerves, from which one seldom recovers before dinner. Gentlemen, however, do not much frequent these receptions; and I assert again the

diffidence I should feel in offering this glance at Venetian social enjoyment as conveying a just and full idea of it. There is no doubt that the Venetians find delight in their assemblies, where a stranger seeks it in vain. I dare say they would not think our own reunions brilliant, and that, looking obliquely (as a foreigner must) on the most sensible faces at one of our evening parties, they might mistake the look of pathetic dejection, visible in them, as the expression of people rather bored by their pleasure than otherwise.

The conversazioni are of all sorts, from the conversazioni of the rigid proprietarians, where people sit down to a kind of hopeless whist, at a soldo the point, and say nothing, to the conversazioni of the *demi-monde*, where they say anything. There are persons in Venice, as well as everywhere else, of new-fashioned modes of thinking, and these strive to give a greater life and ease to their assemblies, by attracting as many young men as possible; and in their families, gentlemen are welcome to visit, and to talk with the young ladies in the presence of their mothers. But though such people are no more accused of impropriety than the straitest of the old-fashioned, they are

not regarded with the greatest esteem, and their daughters do not so readily find husbands. The Italians are fickle, the women say; they get soon tired of their wives after marriage, and when they see much of ladies before marriage, they get tired of them then, and never make them their wives. So it is much better to see nothing of a possible husband till you actually have him. I do not think conversazioni of any kind are popular with young men, however; they like better to go to the caffè, and the people you meet at private houses are none the less interesting for being old, or middle-aged. A great many of the best families, at present, receive no company at all, and see their friends only in the most private manner; though there are still cultivated circles to which proper introduction gives the stranger (who has no Austrian acquaintance) access. But unless he have thorough knowledge of Italian politics localised to apply to Venice, an interest in the affairs, fortunes, and misfortunes of his neighbours, and an acquaintance with the Venetian dialect, I doubt if he will be able to enjoy himself in the places so cautiously opened to him. Even in the most cultivated society, the dialect is habitually spoken; and if

Italian is used, it is only in compliment to some foreigner present, for whose sake, also, topics of general interest are sometimes chosen.

The best society is now composed of the families of professional men, such as advocates, the physicians, and the richer sort of merchants. The shop-keepers, master-artisans, and others, whom industry and thrift distinguish from the populace, seem not to have any social life, in the American sense. They are wholly devoted to affairs, and, partly from choice, and partly from necessity, are sordid and grasping. It is their class which has to fight hardest for life in Europe, and they give no quarter to those above or below them. The shop is their sole thought and interest, and they never, never sink it. But, since they have habits of diligence, and, as far as they are permitted, of enterprise, they seem to be in great part the stuff from which a prosperous State is to be rebuilt in Venice, if ever the fallen edifice rise again. They have sometimes a certain independence of character, which a better condition of things, and further education, would perhaps lift into honesty; though as yet they seem not to scruple to take any unfair advantage, and

not to know that commercial success can never rest permanently on a system of bad faith. Below this class is the populace, between which and the patrician order a relation something like Roman clientage existed, contributing greatly to the maintenance of exclusively aristocratic power in the State. The greatest conspiracy (that of Marin Falier) which the commons ever moved against the oligarchy was revealed to one of the nobility by his plebeian creature, or client; and the government rewarded by every species of indulgence a class in which it had extinguished even the desire of popular liberty. The heirs of the servile baseness which such a system as this must create are not yet extinct. There is still a helplessness in many of the servant class, and a disposition to look for largess as well as wages, which are the traits naturally resulting from a state of voluntary submission to others. The nobles, as the government, enervated and debauched the character of the poor by public shows and countless holidays; as individuals, they taught them to depend upon patrician favour, and not upon their own plebeian industry, for support. The lesson was an evil one, hard to be unlearned, and it is yet

to be forgotten in Venice. Certain traits of soft and familiar dependence give great charm to the populace; but their existence makes the student doubtful of a future to which the plebeians themselves look forward with perfect hope and confidence. It may be that they are right, and will really rise to the dignity of men, when free government shall have taught them that the labourer is worthy of his hire—after he has earned it. This has been the result, to some degree, in the kingdom of Italy, where the people have found that freedom, like happiness, means work.

Undoubtedly the best people in the best society of Venice are the advocates, an order of consequence even in the times of the Republic, though then shut out from participation in public affairs by a native government, as now by a foreign one. Acquaintance with several members of this profession impressed me with a sense of its liberality of thought and feeling, where all liberal thinking and feeling must be done by stealth, and where the common intelligence of the world sheds its light through multiplied barriers. Daniele Manin, the President of the Republic of 1848, was of this class, which, by virtue of its learning,

enlightenment, and talent, occupies a place in the esteem and regard of the Venetian people far above that held by the effete aristocracy. The better part of the nobility, indeed, is merged in the professional class, and some of the most historic names are now preceded by the learned titles of Doctor and Advocate, rather than the cheap dignity of Count, offered by the Austrian government to all the patricians who chose to ask for it, when Austrian rule was extended over their country.

The physicians rank next to the advocates, and are usually men learned in their profession, however erroneous and old-fashioned some of their theories of practice may be. Like the advocates, they are often men of letters: they write for the journals, and publish little pamphlets on those topics of local history which it is so much the fashion to treat in Venice. No one makes a profession of authorship. The returns of an author's work would be too uncertain, and its restrictions and penalties would be too vexatious and serious; and so literary topics are only occasionally treated by those whose main energies are bent in another direction.

The doctors are very numerous, and a considerable number of them are Hebrews, who,

even in the old jealous times, exercised the noble art of medicine, and who now rank very highly among their professional brethren. These physicians haunt the neat and tasteful apothecary shops, where they sit upon the benching that passes round the interior, read the newspapers, and discuss the politics of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, with all the zest that you may observe to characterise their discussions in Goldoni's plays. There they spend their evenings, and many hours of every day, and thither the sick send to call them,—each physician resorting to a particular apothecary's, and keeping his name inscribed on a brass plate against the wall, above the head of the druggist, who presides over the reunions of the doctors, while his apprentice pestles away at their prescriptions.

In 1786 there were, what with priests, monks, and nuns, a multitude of persons of ecclesiastical profession in Venice; and though many convents and monasteries were abolished by Napoleon, the priests are still very numerous, and some monastic establishments have been revived under Austrian rule. The high officers of the Church are, of course, well paid, but most of the priesthood live miserably enough. They receive from

the government a daily stipend of about thirty-five soldi, and they celebrate mass, when they can get something to do in that way, for forty soldi. Unless, then, they have private income from their own family, or have pay for the education of some rich man's son or daughter, they must fare slenderly.

There is much said, in and out of Venice, about their influence in society; but this is greatly modified, and I think is chiefly exercised upon the women of the old-fashioned families.[1] I need hardly repeat the well-known fact that all the moral power of the Roman Church over the younger men is gone; these seldom attend mass, and almost never go to confession, and the priests are their scorn and byword. Their example, in some degree, must be much followed also by women; and though women must everywhere make more public professions of religion than men, in order to retain social standing, I doubt if the

[1] It is no longer usual for girls to be educated in convents, and most young ladies of the better classes, up to the age of thirteen or fourteen years, receive their schooling in secular establishments, whither they go every day for study, or where they sometimes live as in our boarding-schools, and where they are taught the usual accomplishments, greater attention being paid to French and music than to other things.

priests have a very firm hold upon the fears or reverence of the sisters and wives of liberal Venetians.

If, however, they contribute in anywise to keep down the people, they are themselves enslaved to their superiors and to each other. No priest can leave the city of Venice without permission of the Patriarch. He is cut off as much as possible from his own kinspeople, and subjected to the constant surveillance of his class. Obliged to maintain a respectable appearance on twenty cents a day,—hampered and hindered from all personal liberty and private friendship, and hated by the great mass of the people,—I hardly think the Venetian priest is to be envied in his life. For my own part, knowing these things, I was not able to cherish toward the priests those feelings of scornful severity which swell many Protestant bosoms; and so far as I made their acquaintance, I found them kind and amiable. One ecclesiastic, at least, I may describe as one of the most agreeable and cultivated gentlemen I ever met.

Those who fare best among the priests are the Jesuits, who returned from repeated banishment with the Austrians in this century. Their influence is very extended, and

the confessional is their forte. Venetians say that with the old and the old-fashioned these crafty priests suggest remorse and impose penances; that with the young men and the latter-day thinkers they are men of the world, and pass off pleasant sins as trifles. All the students of the government schools are obliged by law to confess twice a month, and are given printed certificates of confession, in blank, which the confessor fills up and stamps with the seal of the Church. Most of them go to confess at the church of the Jesuits, who are glad to hear the cock-and-bull story invented by the student, and to cultivate his friendship by an easy penance and a liberal tone. This ingenuous young man of course despises the confessional. He goes to confess because the law obliges him to do so; but the law cannot dictate what he must confess. Therefore, he ventures as near downright burlesque as he dares, and (if the account he gives of the matter be true) puts off his confessor with some well-known fact, as that he has blasphemed. Of course he has blasphemed, blasphemy being as common as the forms of salutation in Venice. So the priest, who wishes him to come again, and to found some sort of influence over him, says,—"Oh dear,

dear! This is very bad. Blasphemy is deadly sin. If you *must* swear, swear by the heathen gods: say Body of Diana, instead of Body of God; Presence of the Devil, instead of Blood of Mary. Then there is no harm done." The students laugh over the pleasant absurdity together, and usually agree upon the matter of their semi-monthly confessions beforehand.

As I have hinted, the young men do not love the government or the Church, and though I account for the loss of much high hope and generous sympathy in growth from youth to middle age, I cannot see how, when they have replaced their fathers, the present religious and political discontent is to be modified. Nay, I believe it must become worse. The middle-aged men of Venice grew up in times of comparative quiet, when she did not so much care who ruled over her, and negatively, at least, they honoured the Church. They may now hate the foreign rule, but there are many considerations of timidity, and many effects of education, to temper their hate. They may dislike the priests, but they revere the Church. The young men of to-day are bred in a different school, and all their thoughts are of opposition to the government and of war upon the

Church, which they detest and ridicule. The fact that their education is still in the hands of the priests, in some measure, does not render them more tractable. They have no fears to be wrought upon by their clerical professors, who seldom have sought to act upon their nobler qualities. The influence of the priesthood is again limited by the fact that the teachers in the free schools of the city, to which the poor send their children, are generally not priests; and ecclesiastics are no longer so commonly the private tutors of the children of the rich, as they once were when they lived with the family, and exercised a direct and important influence on it. Express permission from the Pope is now necessary to the maintenance of a family chaplain, and the office is nearly disused.[1]

The Republic was extremely jealous of the political power of the priests, who could not hold secular office in its time. A curious punishment was inflicted upon the priest who proved false to his own vows of chastity, and there is a most amusing old ballad—by

[1] In early days every noble Venetian family had its chaplain, who, on the occasion of great dinners and suppers, remained in the kitchen, and received as one of his perquisites the fragments that came back from the table.

no means cleanly in its language—purporting to be the lament of a priest suspended in the iron cage, appointed for the purpose, from the belfry of the Campanile San Marco, and enduring the jeers and insults of the mob below. We may suppose that with advancing corruption (if corruption has indeed advanced from remote to later times) this punishment was disused for want of room to hang out the delinquents. In the last century, especially, the nuns and monks led a pleasant life. You may see in the old pictures of Pietro Longhi and his school, how at the aristocratic and fashionable convent of San Zaccaria, the lady nuns received their friends and acquaintances of this world in the ante-room, where the dames and their cavaliers flirted and drank coffee, and the gentlemen coquetted with the brides of heaven through their grated windows.

Among other privileges of the Church, abolished in Venice long ago, was that ancient right of the monks of St. Anthony, Abbot, by which their herds of swine were made free of the whole city. These animals, enveloped in an odour of sanctity, wandered here and there, and were piously fed by devout people, until the year 1409, when, being found dangerous to children and in-

convenient to everybody, they were made the subject of a special decree, which deprived them of their freedom of movement. The Republic was always limiting the privileges of the Church! It is known how when the holy inquisition was established in its dominions in 1249, the State stipulated that great part of the process against heresy should be conducted by secular functionaries, and that the sentence should rest with the Doge and his councillors,—a kind of inquisition with claws clipped and teeth filed, as one may say, and the only sort ever permitted in Venice. At present there is no absolute disfavour shown to the clergy; but, as we have seen, many a pleasant island, which the monks of old reclaimed from the salty marshes, and planted with gardens and vineyards, now bears only the ruins of their convents, or else, converted into a fortress or government dépôt, is all thistly with bayonets. Anciently, moreover, there were many little groves in different parts of the city, where the pleasant clergy, of what Mr. Ruskin would have us believe the pure and religious days of Venice, met and made merry so riotously together by night that the higher officers of the Church were forced to prohibit their little soirees.

An old custom of rejoicing over the installation of a new parish priest is still to be seen in almost primitive quaintness. The people of each parish—nobles, citizens, and plebeians alike—formerly elected their own priest, and, till the year 1576, they used to perambulate the city to the sound of drums, with banners flying, after an election, and proclaim the name of their favourite. On the day of the *parroco's* induction his portrait was placed over the church door, and after the celebration of the morning mass, a breakfast was given, which grew to be so splendid in time, that in the fifteenth century a statute limited its profusion. In the afternoon the new parroco, preceded by a band of military music, visited all the streets and courts of his parish, and then, as now, all the windows of the parish were decorated with brilliant tapestries, and other gay-coloured cloths and pictures. In those times as in these, there was an illumination at night, throngs of people in the campo of the church, and booths for traffic in cakes of flour and raisins,—fried in lard upon the spot, and sold smoking hot, with immense uproar on the part of the merchant; and for three days afterward the parish bells were sounded in concert.

The difficulty of ascertaining anything with certainty in Venice attends in a degree peculiarly great the effort to learn exactly the present influence and standing of the nobility as a class. One is tempted, on observing the free and unembarrassed bearing of all ranks of people toward each other, to say that no sense of difference exists,—and I do not think there is ever shown, among Italians, either the aggressive pride or the abject meanness which marks the intercourse of people and nobles elsewhere in Europe; and I have not seen the distinction of rich and poor made so brutally in Italy as sometimes in our own *soi-disant* democratic society at home. There is, indeed, that equality in Italian fibre which I believe fits the nation for democratic institutions better than any other, and which is perhaps partly the result of their ancient civilisation. At any rate, it fascinates a stranger to see people so mutually gentle and deferential; and must often be a matter of surprise to the Anglo-Saxon, in whose race, reclaimed from barbarism more recently, the native wild-beast is still so strong as to sometimes inform the manner. The uneducated Anglo-Saxon is a savage; the Italian, though born to utter ignorance, poverty, and

depravity, is a civilised man. I do not say that his civilisation is of a high order, or that the civilisation of the most cultivated Italian is at all comparable to that of a gentleman among ourselves. The Italian's education, however profound, has left his passions undisciplined, while it has carefully polished his manner; he yields lightly to temptation, he loses his self-control, he blasphemes habitually; his gentleness is conventional, his civilisation not individual. With us the education of a gentleman (I do not mean a person born to wealth or station, but any man who has trained himself in morals or religion, in letters, and in the world) disciplines the impulses, and leaves the good manner to grow naturally out of habits of self-command and consequent habitual self-respect.

The natural equality of the Italians is visible in their community of good looks as well as good manners. They have never, perhaps, that high beauty of sensitive expression which is found among Englishmen and Americans (preferably among the latter), but it very rarely happens that they are brutally ugly; and the man of low rank and mean vocation has often a beauty of as fine sort as the man of education and refinement.

If they changed clothes, and the poor man could be persuaded to wash himself, they might successfully masquerade, one for another. The plebeian Italian, inspired by the national vanity, bears himself as proudly as the noble, without at all aggressing in his manner. His beauty, like that of the women of his class, is world-old,—the beauty of the pictures and the statues: the ideal types of loveliness are realised in Italy; the saints and heroes, the madonnas and nymphs, come true to the stranger at every encounter with living faces. In Venice, particularly, the carriage of the women, of whatever rank, is very free and noble, and the servant is sometimes to be distinguished from the mistress only by her dress and by her labour-coarsened hands; certainly not always by her dirty finger-nails and foul teeth, for though the clean shirt is now generally in Italy, some lesser virtues are still unknown: the nail-brush and tooth-brush are of but infrequent use; the four-pronged fork is still imperfectly understood, and as a nation the Italians may be said to eat with their knives.

The Venetian, then, seeing so little difference between himself and others, whatever his rank may be, has, as I said, little temp-

tation to arrogance or servility. The effects of the old relationship of patron and client are amusingly noticeable in the superior as well as the inferior; a rich man's dependants are perfectly free with advice and comment, and it sometimes happens that he likes to hear their lively talk, and at home secretly consorts with his servants. The former social differences between commoners and patricians (which, I think, judging from the natural temper of the race, must have been greatly modified at all times by concession and exception) may be said to have quite disappeared in point of fact; the nobility is now almost as effete socially as it is politically. There is still a number of historic families, which are in a certain degree exclusive; but rich *parvenus* have admission to their friendship, and commoners in good circumstances are permitted their acquaintance; the ladies of this patrician society visit ladies of less rank, and receive them at their great parties, though not at more sacred assemblies, where they see only each other.

The Venetians have a habit of saying their best families are in exile, but this is not meant to be taken literally. Many of the best families are yet in the city, living

in perfect retirement, or very often merged in the middle class, and become men of professions, and active, useful lives. Of these nobles (they usually belong to the families which did not care to ask nobility of Austria, and are therefore untitled),[1] the citizens are affectionately proud, while I have heard from them nothing but contempt and ridicule of the patricians who, upon a wretched pension, or meagre government office, attempt to maintain patrician distinction. Such nobles are usually Austriacanti in their politics, and behind the age in everything; while there are other descendants of patrician families mingled at last with the very populace, sharing their ignorance and degradation, and feeling with them. These sometimes exercise the most menial employments: I knew one noble lord who had been a facchino, and I heard of another who was a street-sweeper.

[1] The only title conferred on any patrician of Venice during the Republic was Cavaliere, and this was conferred by a legislative act in reward of distinguished service. The names of the nobility were written in the Golden Book of the Republic, and they were addressed as Illustrissimo or Eccellenza. They also signed themselves *nobile*, between the Christian name and surname, as it is still the habit of the untitled nobility to do.

Conte che non conta, non conta niente,[1] says the sneering Italian proverb; and it would be little less than miraculous if a nobility like that of modern Venice maintained superior state and regard in the eyes of the quick-witted, intelligent, sarcastic commonalty.

The few opulent patricians are by no means the most violent of Italianissimi. They own lands and houses, and as property is unsafe when revolutionary feeling is rife, their patriotism is tempered. The wealth amassed in early times by the vast and enterprising commerce of the country was, when not dissipated in riotous splendour, invested in real estate upon the mainland as the Republic grew in territory, and the income of the nobles is now from the rents of these lands. They reside upon their estates during the season of the *villeggiatura*, which includes the months of September and October, when every one who can possibly leave the city goes into the country. Then the patricians betake themselves to their villas near Padua, Vicenza, Bassano, and Treviso, and people the sad-coloured, weather-worn stucco

[1] A count who doesn't count (money) counts for nothing.

hermitages, where the mutilated statues, swaggering above the gates, forlornly commemorate days when it was a far finer thing to be a noble than it is now. I say the villas look dreary and lonesome as places can be made to look in Italy, what with their high garden walls, their long, low piles of stabling, and the *passée* indecency of their nymphs and fauns, foolishly strutting in the attitudes of the silly and sinful old Past; and it must be but a dull life that the noble proprietors lead there.

It is better, no doubt, on the banks of the Brenta, where there are still so many villas as to form a street of these seats of luxury, almost the whole length of the canal, from Fusina to Padua. I am not certain that they have a right to the place which they hold in literature and sentiment, and yet there is something very charming about them, with their gardens, and chapels, and statues, and shaded walks. We went to see them one day early in October, and found them every one, when habitable, inhabited, and wearing a cheerful look, that made their proximity to Venice incredible. As we returned home after dark, we saw the ladies from the villas walking unattended along the road, and giving the scene

an air of homelike peace and trustfulness which I had not found before in Italy; while the windows of the houses were brilliantly lighted, as if people lived in them; whereas, you seldom see a light in Venetian palaces. I am not sure that I did not like better, however, the villas that were empty and ruinous, and the gardens that had run wild, and the statues that had lost legs and arms. Some of the ingenious proprietors had enterprisingly whitewashed their statues, and there was a horrible primness about certain of the well-kept gardens which offended me. Most of the houses were not large, but there was here and there a palace as grand as any in the city. Such was the great villa of the Contarini of the Lions, which was in every way superb, with two great lions of stone guarding its portals, and a gravel walk, over-arched with stately trees, stretching a quarter of a mile before it. At the moment I was walking down this aisle I met a clean-shaven old canonico, with red legs and red-tasselled hat, and with a book under his arm, and a meditative look, whom I here thank for being so venerably picturesque. The palace itself was shut up, and I wish I had known, when I saw it, that it had a

ghostly underground passage from its cellar to the chapel,—wherein, when you get halfway, your light goes out, and you consequently never reach the chapel.

This is at Mira; but the greatest of all the villas is the magnificent country-seat of the family Pisani at Stra, which now, with scarcely any addition to its splendour, serves for the residence of the abdicated Emperor of Austria. There is such pride in the vastness of this edifice and its gardens as impresses you with the material greatness which found expression in it, and never raises a regret that it has utterly passed away. You wander around through the aisles of trim-cut lime-trees, bullied and overborne by the insolent statues, and expect at every turn to come upon intriguing spectres in bag-wigs, immense hoops and patches. How can you feel sympathy for those dull and wicked ghosts of eighteenth-century corruption? There is rottenness enough in the world without digging up old putridity and sentimentalising on it; and I doubt if you will care to know much of the way in which the noble owner of such a villa ascended the Brenta at the season of the *villeggiatura* in his great gilded barge, all carven outside with the dumpling

loves and loose nymphs of the period, with fruits, and flowers, and what not; and within, luxuriously cushioned and furnished, and stocked with good things for pleasure-making in the gross old fashion.[1] King Cole was not a merrier old soul than Illustrissimo of that day: he outspent princes; and his agent, while he harried the tenants to supply his master's demands, plundered Illustrissimo frightfully. Illustrissimo never looked at accounts. He said to his steward, "*Caro veccio, fè vu. Mi remeto a quel che fè vu.*" (Old fellow, you attend to it. I shall be satisfied with what you do). So the poor agent had no other course but to swindle him, which he did; and Illustrissimo, when he died, died poor, and left his lordly debts and vices to his sons.

In Venice, the noble still lives sometimes in his ancestral palace, dimly occupying the halls where his forefathers flourished in so much splendour. I can conceive, indeed, of no state of things more flattering to human pride than that which surrounded the patrician of the old aristocratic Republic. The house in which he dwelt was

[1] Mutinelli, *Gli Ultimi Cinquant' Anni della Repubblica di Venezia.*

the palace of a king, in luxury of appointment and magnificence of size. Troops of servants that ministered to his state peopled its vast extent; and the gondolas that carried his grandeur abroad were moored in little fleets to the piles that rose before his palace, painted with the family arms and colours. The palace itself stood usually on the Grand Canal, and rose sheer from the water, giving the noble that haughty inaccessibility which the lord of the main-land achieved only by building lofty walls and multiplying gates. The architecture was as costly in its ornament as wild Gothic fancy, or Renaissance luxury of bad taste, could make it; and when the palace front was not of sculptured marble, the painter's pencil filled it with the delight of colour. The mainland noble's house was half a fortress, and formed his stronghold in times of popular tumult or family fray; but at Venice the strong arm of St. Mark suppressed all turbulence in a city secure from foreign war; and the peaceful arts rejoiced in undisturbed possession of the palaces, which rose in the most delicate and fantastic beauty, and mirrored in the brine a dream of sea-deep strangeness and richness. You see much of the beauty yet, but the

pride and opulence which called it into being are gone for ever.

Most palaces, whether of the Gothic or classicistic period, have the same internal arrangement of halls and chambers, and are commonly built of two lofty and two low stories. On the ground floor, or water level, is a hall running back from the gate to a bit of garden at the other side of the palace; and on either side of this hall, which, in old times, was hung with the family trophies of the chase and war, are the porter's lodge and gondoliers' rooms. On the first and second stories are the family apartments, opening on either side from great halls, of the same extent as that below, but with loftier roofs, of heavy rafters gilded or painted. The fourth floor is of the same arrangement, but has a lower roof, and was devoted to the better class of servants. Of the two stories used by the family, the third is the loftier and airier, and was occupied in summer; the second was the winter apartment. On either hand, the rooms open in suites.

We have seen something of the ceremonies, public and private, which gave peculiar gaiety and brilliance to the life of the Venetians of former days; but in his

political character, the noble had yet greater consequence. He was part of the proudest, strongest, and securest system of his time. He was a king with the fellowship of kings, flattered with the equality of an aristocracy which was master of itself, and of its nominal head. During the earlier times, it was his office to go daily to the Rialto and instruct the people in their political rights and duties for four hours; and even when the duties became everything and the rights nothing (after the Serrar del Consiglio), the friendly habit of daily intercourse between patricians and citizens was still kept up at the same place. Once each week, and on every holiday, the noble took his seat in the Grand Council (the most august assembly in the world, without doubt), or the Ten, or the Three, according to his office in the State,—holding his place in the Council by right of birth, and in the other bodies by election of his peers.

Although the patricians were kept as one family, apart from the people, and jealously guarded in their aristocratic purity by the State, they were only equals of the poorest before the laws of their own creation, and their condescension to the people was frequent and great. Indeed, the Venetians of

all classes are social creatures, loving talk and gossip, and these constant habits of intercourse must have done much to produce that equality of manner now observable in them. Their amusements were for a long time the same, the nobles taking part in the public holidays, and in the popular exercises of rowing and swimming. In the earlier times, hunting in the lagoons was a favourite diversion; but as the decay of the Republic advanced, and the patrician blossomed into the fine gentleman of the last century, these hearty sports were relinquished, and everything was voted vulgar but masking in carnival, dancing and gaming at Ridotto, and intrigning everywhere.

The accounts which Venetian writers give of Republican society in the eighteenth century form a *chronique scandaleuse* which need not be minutely copied here. Much may be learned of Venetian manners of this time from the comedies of Goldoni; and the faithlessness of society may be argued from the fact that in these plays, which contain nothing salacious or indecent, there is scarcely a character of any rank who scruples to tell lies; and the truth is not to be found in works intended to school the public to virtue. The ingenious old play-

wright's memoirs are full of gossip concerning that poor old Venice, which is now no more; and the worthy autobiographer, Casanova, also gives much information about things that had best not be known.

As the Republic drew near its fall, in 1797, there was little left in its dominant class worth saving, if we may believe the testimony of Venetians which Mutinelli brings to bear upon the point in his "Annali Urbani," and his "History of the Last Fifty Years of the Republic." Long prosperity and prodigious opulence had done their worst, and the patricians, and the lowest orders of the people, their creatures and dependants, were thoroughly corrupt; while the men of professions began to assume that station which they now hold. The days of a fashionable patrician of those times began at a little before sunset, and ended with the following dawn. Rising from his bed, he dressed himself in dainty linen, and placed himself in the hands of the hairdresser to be combed, oiled, perfumed, and powdered; and then sallied forth for a stroll through the Merceria, where this excellent husband and father made tasteful purchases to be carried to the lady he served. At dinner, which he took about seven or eight, his board was covered

with the most tempting viands, and surrounded by needy parasites, who detailed the spicy scandals of the day in payment of their dinner, while the children of the host were confided to the care of the corrupt and negligent servants. After dinner the father went to the theatre, or to the *casino*, and spent the night over cards and wine, in the society of dissolute women; and renewed on the morrow the routine of his useful existence. The education of the children of the man of fashion was confided to a priest, who lived in his family, and called himself an abbate, after the mode of the *abbés* of French society; he had winning manners with the ladies, indulgent habits with his pupils, and dressed his elegant person in silks of Lyons and English broadcloths. In the pleasant old days he flitted from palace to villa, dining and supping, and flattering the ladies, and tapping the lid of his jewelled snuff-box in all fashionable companies. He was the cadet of a patrician family (when not the ambitious son of a low family), with a polite taste for idleness and intrigue, for whom no secular sinecure could be found in the State, and who obliged the Church by accepting orders. Whether in the palace on the Grand Canal, or the Villa on the Brenta, this gentle and

engaging priest was surely the most agreeable person to be met, and the most dangerous to ladies' hearts,—with his rich suit of black, and his smug clean-shaven face, and his jewelled hands, and his sweet, seducing manners. Alas! the world is changed! The priests whom you see playing *tre-sette* now at the conversazioni are altogether different men, and the delightful abbate is as much out of fashion as the bag-wig or the queue. When in fashion he loved the theatre, and often showed himself there at the side of his noble patron's wife. Nay, in that time the theatre was so prized by the Church that a popular preacher thought it becoming to declare from his pulpit that to compose well his hearers should study the comedies of Goldoni,—and his hearers were the posterity of that devout old aristocracy which never undertook a journey without first receiving the holy sacrament; which had built the churches and endowed them from private wealth!

Ignorance, as well as vice, was the mode in those elegant days, and it is related that a charming lady of good society once addressed a foreign *savant* at her conversazione, and begged him to favour the company with a little music, because, having heard that he

was *virtuous*, she had no other association with the word than its technical use in Italy to indicate a professional singer as a *virtuoso*. A father of a family who kept no abbate for the education of his children ingeniously taught them himself. "Father," asked one of his children, "what are the stars?" "The stars are stars, and little things that shine, as thou seest." "Then they are candles, perhaps?" "Make thy account that they are candles exactly." "Of wax or tallow?" pursues the boy. "What! tallow-candles in heaven? No, certainly—wax, wax!"

These, and many other scandalous stories, the Venetian writers recount of the last days of their Republic, and the picture they produce is one of the most shameless ignorance, the most polite corruption, the most unblushing baseness. I have no doubt that the picture is full of national exaggeration. Indeed, the method of Mutinelli (who I believe intends to tell the truth) in writing social history is altogether too credulous and incautious. It is well enough to study contemporary comedy for light upon past society, but satirical ballads and lampoons, and scurrilous letters, cannot be accepted as historical authority. Still there is no question but Venice was very corrupt. As you read of

her people in the last century, one by one the ideas of family faith and domestic purity fade away; one by one the beliefs in public virtue are dissipated; until at last you are glad to fly the study, close the filthy pages, and take refuge in doubt of the writers, who declare that they must needs disgrace Venice with facts since her children have dishonoured her in their lives. "Such as we see them," they say, "were the patricians, such the people of Venice, after the middle of the eighteenth century. The Venetians might be considered as extinguished; the marvellous city, the pomp only of the Venetians, existed."

Shall we believe this? Let each choose for himself. At that very time the taste and wealth of a Venetian noble fostered the genius of Canova; and then, when their captains starved the ragged soldiers of the Republic to feed their own idleness and vice, —when the soldiers dismantled her forts to sell the guns to the Turk,—when her sailors rioted on shore and her ships rotted in her ports, she had still military virtue enough to produce that Emo, who beat back the Algerine corsairs from the commerce of Christendom, and attacked them in their stronghold, as of old her galleys beat back

the Turks. Alas! there was not the virtue in her statesmen to respond to this greatness in the hero. One of their last public acts was to break his heart with insult, and to crave peace of the pirates whom he had cowed. It remained for the helpless Doge and the abject patricians, terrified at a threat of war, to declare the Republic at an end, and San Marco was no more.

I love Republics too well to lament the fall of Venice. And yet, *Pax tibi, Marce!* If I have been slow to praise, I shall not hasten to condemn, a whole nation. Indeed, so much occurs to me to qualify with contrary sense what I have written concerning Venice, that I wonder if, after all, I have not been treating throughout less of the rule than of the exception. It is a doubt which must force itself upon every fair and temperate man who attempts to describe another people's life and character; and I confess that it troubles me so sorely now. at the end of my work, that I would fain pray the gentle reader to believe much more good and much less evil of the Venetians than I have said. I am glad that it remains for me to express a faith and hope in them for the future, founded upon their present political feeling, which, however tainted with self-

interest in the case of many, is no doubt with the great majority a high and true feeling of patriotism. And it is impossible to believe that a people which can maintain the stern and unyielding attitude now maintained by the Venetians toward an alien government disposed to make them any concession short of freedom, in order to win them into voluntary submission, can be wanting in the great qualities which distinguish living peoples from those passed hopelessly into history and sentiment. In truth, glancing back over the whole career of the nation, I can discern in it nothing so admirable, so dignified, so steadfastly brave, as its present sacrifice of all that makes life easy and joyous, to the attainment of a good which shall make life noble.

The Venetians desire now, and first of all things, Liberty, knowing that in slavery men can learn no virtues; and I think them fit, with all their errors and defects, to be free now, because men are never fit to be slaves.

CHAPTER XXII.

OUR LAST YEAR IN VENICE.

(*As it seems Seven Years after.*)

THE last of four years which it was our fortune to live in the city of Venice was passed under the roof of one of her most beautiful and memorable palaces, namely, the Palazzo Giustiniani, whither we went, as has been told in an earlier chapter of this book, to escape the encroaching nepotism of Giovanna, the flower of serving-women. The experience now, in Cambridge, Mass., refuses to consort with ordinary remembrances, and has such a fantastic preference for the company of rather vivid and circumstantial dreams, that it is with no very strong hope of making it seem real that I shall venture to speak of it.

The Giustiniani were a family of patricians very famous during the times of a Republic that gave so many splendid names to history,

and the race was preserved to the honour and service of Saint Mark by one of the most romantic facts of his annals. During a war with the Greek Emperor in the twelfth century every known Giustiniani was slain, and the heroic strain seemed lost for ever. But the State that mourned them bethought itself of a half-forgotten monk of their house, who was wasting his life in the Convent of San Nicolò; he was drawn forth from this seclusion, and, the permission of Rome being won, he was married to the daughter of the reigning doge. From them descended the Giustiniani of after-times, who still exist; indeed, in the year 1865 there came one day a gentleman of the family, and tried to buy from our landlord that part of the palace which we so humbly and insufficiently inhabited. It is said that as the unfrocked friar and his wife declined in life they separated, and as if in doubt of what had been done for the State through them, retired each into a convent, Giustiniani going back to San Nicolò, and dying at last to the murmur of the Adriatic waves along the Lido's sands.

Next after this Giustiniani I like best to think of that latest hero of the family, who had the sad fortune to live when the ancient Republic fell at a threat of Napo-

leon, and who alone among her nobles had the courage to meet with a manly spirit the insolent menaces of the conqueror. The Giustiniani governed Treviso for the Senate; he refused, when Napoleon ordered him from his presence, to quit Treviso without the command of the Senate; he flung back the taunts of bad faith cast upon the Venetians; and when Napoleon changed his tone from that of disdain to one of compliment, and promised that in the general disaster he was preparing for Venice, Giustiniani should be spared, the latter generously replied that he had been a friend of the French only because the Senate was so; as to the immunity offered, all was lost to him in the loss of his country, and he should blush for his wealth if it remained intact amidst the ruin of his countrymen.

The family grew in riches and renown from age to age, and, some four centuries after the marriage of the monk, they reared the three beautiful Gothic palaces, in the noblest site on the Grand Canal, whence on one hand you can look down to the Rialto Bridge, and on the other far up towards the church of the Salute and the the Basin of Saint Mark. The architects were those Buoni, father and son, who did some of the most beautiful work on

the Ducal Palace, and who wrote in an equal inspiration upon these homes of the Giustiniani, building the delicate Gothic arches of the windows, with their slender columns and their graceful balconies, and crowning all with the airy battlements.

The largest of the three palaces became later the property of the Foscari family, and here dwelt with his father that unhappy Jacopo Foscari, who after thrice suffering torture by the state for a murder he never did, at last died in exile; hither came the old Doge Foscari, who had consented to this cruel error of the state, and who, after a life spent in its service, was deposed and disgraced before his death; and hither, when he lay dead, came remorseful Venice, and claimed for sumptuous obsequies the dust which his widow yielded with bitter reproaches. Here the family faded away generation by generation, till (according to the tale told us) early in this century, when the ultimate male survivor of the line had died, under a false name, in London, where he had been some sort of obscure actor, there were but two old maiden sisters left, who, lapsing into imbecility, were shown to strangers by the rascal servants as the last of the Foscari; and here in our time was quartered a regiment of Aus-

trian troops, whose neatly pipe-clayed belts decorated the balconies on which the princely ladies of the house had rested their jewelled arms in other days.

The Foscari added a story to the palace to distinguish it from the two other palaces Giustiniani, but these remain to the present day as they were originally planned. That in which we lived was called Palazzo Giustiniani of the Bishops, because one of the family was the first patriarch of Venice. After his death he was made a saint by the Pope; and it is related that he was not only a very pious, but a very good man. In his last hours he admitted his beloved people to his chamber, where he meekly lay upon a pallet of straw, and at the moment he expired, two monks in the solitude of their cloister, heard an angelical harmony in the air: the clergy performed his obsequies not in black, funereal robes, but in white garments, and crowned with laurel, and bearing gilded torches, and although the patriarch had died of a malignant fever, his body was miraculously preserved incorrupt during the sixty-five days that the obsequies lasted. The other branch of the family was called the Giustiniani of the Jewels, from the splendour of their dress; but neither palace

now shelters any of their magnificent race. The edifice on our right was exclusively occupied by a noble Viennese lady, who as we heard,—vaguely, in the right Venetian fashion,—had been a ballet-dancer in her youth, and who now in her matronly days dwelt apart from her husband, the Russian count, and had gondoliers in blue silk, and and the finest gondola on the Grand Canal, but was a plump, florid lady, looking long past beauty, even as we saw her from our balcony.

Our own place—as we absurdly grew to call it—was owned and inhabited in a manner much more proper to modern Venice, the proprietorship being about equally divided between our own landlord and a very well known Venetian painter, son of a painter still more famous. This artist was a very courteous old gentleman, who went with Italian and clock-like regularity every evening in summer to a certain caffe, where he seemed to make it a point of conscience to sip one sherbet, and to read the "Journal des Débats." In his coming and going we met him so often that we became friends, and he asked us many times to visit him, and see his father's pictures, and some famous frescoes with which his part of the

palace was adorned. It was a characteristic trait of our life, that though we constantly meant to avail ourselves of this kindness, we never did so. But we continued in the enjoyment of the beautiful garden, which this gentleman owned at the rear of the palace, and on which our chamber windows looked. It was full of oleanders and roses, and other bright and odorous blooms, which we could enjoy perfectly well without knowing their names; and I could hardly say whether the garden was more charming when it was in its summer glory, or when, on some rare winter day, a breath from the mountains had clothed its tender boughs and sprays with a light and evanescent flowering of snow. At any season the lofty palace walls rose over it, and shut it in a pensive seclusion which was loved by the old mother of the painter and by his elderly maiden sister. These often walked on its moss-grown paths, silent as the roses and oleanders to which one could have fancied the blossom of their youth had flown; and sometimes there came to them there, grave, black-gowned priests,—for the painter's was a devout family,—and talked with them in tones almost as tranquil as the silence was, save when one of the ecclesiastics placidly

took snuff,—it is a dogma of the Church for priests to take snuff in Italy,—and thereafter, upon a prolonged search for his handkerchief, blew a resounding nose. So far as we knew, the garden walls circumscribed the whole life of these ladies; and I am afraid that such topics of this world as they touched upon with their priests must have been deplorably small.

Their kinsman owned part of the story under us, and both of the stories above us; he had the advantage of the garden over our landlord; but he had not so grand a gondola-gate as we, and in some other respects I incline to think that our part of the edifice was the finer. It is certain that no mention is made of any such beautiful hall in the property of the painter as is noted in that of our landlord, by the historian of a "Hundred Palaces of Venice,"—a work for which I subscribed, and then for my merit was honoured by a visit from the author, who read aloud to me in a deep and sonorous voice the annals of our temporary home. This hall occupied half the space of the whole floor; but it was altogether surrounded by rooms of various shapes and sizes, except upon one side of its length, where it gave through Gothic windows of

vari-coloured glass, upon a small court below,—a green-mouldy little court, further dampened by a cistern, which had the usual curb of a single carven block of marble. The roof of this stately *sala* was traversed by a long series of painted rafters, which in the halls of nearly all Venetian palaces are left exposed, and painted or carved and gilded. A suite of stately rooms closed the hall from the Grand Canal, and one of these formed our parlour; on the side opposite the Gothic windows was a vast aristocratic kitchen, which, with its rows of shining coppers, its great chimney-place well advanced toward the middle of the floor, and its tall gloomy windows, still affects my imagination as one of the most patrician rooms which I ever saw; at the back of the hall were those chambers of ours overlooking the garden of which I have already spoken, and another kitchen, less noble than the first, but still sufficiently grandiose to make most New World kitchens seem very meekly minute and unimpressive. Between the two kitchens was another court, with another cistern, from which the painter's family drew water with a bucket on a long rope, which, when let down from the fourth story, appeared to be dropped from the

clouds, and descended with a noise little less alarming than thunder.

Altogether the most surprising object in the great *sala* was a sewing-machine, and we should have been inconsolably outraged by its presence there, amid so much that was merely venerable and beautiful, but for the fact that it was in a state of harmonious and hopeless disrepair, and, from its general contrivance, gave us the idea that it had never been of any use. It was, in fact, kept as a sort of curiosity by the landlord, who exhibited it to the admiration of his Venetian friends.

The reader will doubtless have imagined, from what I have been saying, that the Palazzo Giustiniani had not all that machinery which we know in our houses here as modern improvements. It had nothing of the kind, and life there was, as in most houses in Italy, a kind of permanent camping out. When I remember the small amount of carpeting, of furniture, and of upholstery we enjoyed, it appears to me pathetic; and yet, I am not sure that it was not the wisest way to live. I know that we had compensation in things not purchasable here for money. If the furniture of the principal bedroom was somewhat scanty, its dimen-

sions were unstinted: the ceiling was fifteen feet high, and was divided into rich and heavy panels, adorned each with a mighty rosette of carved and gilded wood, two feet across. The parlour had not its original decorations in our time, but it had once had so noble a carved ceiling that it was found worth while to take it down and sell it into England; and it still had two grand Venetian mirrors, a vast and very good painting of a miracle of St. Anthony, and imitation antique tables and arm-chairs. The last were frolicked all over with carven nymphs and cupids; but they were of such frail construction that they were not meant to be sat in, much less to be removed from the wall against which they stood; and more than one of our American visitors was dismayed at having these proud articles of furniture go to pieces upon his attempt to use them like mere arm-chairs of ordinary life. Scarcely less impressive or useless than these was a monumental plaster-stove, surmounted by a bust of Æsculapius. When this was broken by accident, we cheaply repaired the loss with a bust of Homer (the dealer in the next campo being out of Æsculapiuses), which no one could have told from the bust it replaced; and this and

the other artistic glories of the room made us quite forget all possible blemishes and defects. And will the reader mention any house with modern improvements in America which has also windows, with pointed arches of marble, opening upon balconies that overhang the Grand Canal?

For our new apartment, which consisted of six rooms, furnished with every article necessary for Venetian housekeeping, we paid one dollar a day, which, in the innocence of our hearts, we thought rather dear, though we were somewhat consoled by reflecting that this extravagant outlay secured us the finest position on the Grand Canal. We did not mean to keep house as we had in Casa Falier, and perhaps a sketch of our easier *ménage* may not be out of place. Breakfast was prepared in the house, for in that blessed climate all you care for in the morning is a cup of coffee, with a little bread and butter, a musk-melon, and some clusters of white grapes, more or less. Then we had our dinners sent in warm from a cook's who had learned his noble art in France: he furnished a dinner of five courses for three persons at a cost of about eighty cents; and they were dinners so happily conceived and so justly executed, that I

cannot accuse myself of an excess of sentiment when I confess that I sigh for them to this day. Then as for our immaterial tea, we always took that at the Caffe Florian in the Piazza of Saint Mark, where we drank a cup of black coffee and ate an ice, while all the world promenaded by, and the Austrian bands made heavenly music.

Those bands no longer play in Venice, and I believe that they are not the only charm which she has lost in exchanging Austrian servitude for Italian freedom; though I should be sorry to think that freedom was not worth all other charms. The poor Venetians used to be very rigorous (as I have elsewhere related) about the music of their oppressors, and would not come into the Piazza until it had ceased and the Austrian promenaders had disappeared, when they sat down at Florian's, and listened to such bands of strolling singers and minstrels as chose to give them a concord of sweet sounds, without foreign admixture. We, in our neutrality, were wont to sit out both entertainments, and then go home well toward midnight, through the sleepy little streets, and over the bridges that spanned the narrow canals, dreaming in the shadows of the palaces.

We moved with half-conscious steps till we came to the silver expanse of the Grand Canal, where, at the ferry, darkled a little brood of black gondolas, into one of which we got, and were rowed noiselessly to the thither side, where we took our way toward the land-gate of our palace through the narrow streets of the parish of San Barnabà, and the campo before the ugly façade of the church; or else we were rowed directly to the water-gate, where we got out on the steps worn by the feet of the Giustiniani of old, and wandered upward through the darkness of the stairway, which gave them a far different welcome of servants and lights when they returned from an evening's pleasure in the Piazza. It seemed scarcely just; but then, those Giustiniani were dead, and we were alive, and that was one advantage; and, besides, the loneliness and desolation of the palace had a peculiar charm, and were at any rate cheaper than its former splendour could have been. I am afraid that people who live abroad in the palaces of extinct nobles do not keep this important fact sufficiently in mind; and as the Palazzo Giustiniani is still let in furnished lodgings, and it is quite possible that some of my readers may be going to spend next summer

in it, I venture to remind them that if they have to draw somewhat upon their fancy for patrician accommodations there, it will cost them far less in money than it did the original proprietors, who contributed to our selfish pleasure by the very thought of their romantic absence and picturesque decay. In fact, the Past is everywhere like the cake of proverb: you cannot enjoy it and have it.

And here I am reminded of another pleasure of modern dwellers in Venetian palaces, which could hardly have been indulged by the patricians of old, and which is hardly imaginable by people of this day, whose front doors open upon dry land: I mean to say the privilege of sea-bathing from one's own threshold. From the beginning of June till far into September all the canals of Venice are populated by the amphibious boys, who clamour about in the brine, or poise themselves for a leap from the tops of bridges, or show their fine, statuesque figures, bronzed by the ardent sun, against the façades of empty palaces, where they hover among the marble sculptures, and meditate a headlong plunge. It is only the Venetian ladies, in fact, who do not share this healthful amusement. Fathers of fami-

lies, like so many plump, domestic drakes, lead forth their aquatic broods, teaching the little ones to swim by the aid of various floats, and delighting in the gambols of the larger ducklings. When the tide comes in fresh and strong from the sea the water in the Grand Canal is pure and refreshing; and at these times it is a singular pleasure to leap from one's door-step into the swift current, and spend a half-hour, very informally, among one's neighbours there. The Venetian bathing-dress is a mere sketch of the pantaloons of ordinary life; and when I used to stand upon our balcony, and see some bearded head ducking me a polite salutation from a pair of broad, brown shoulders that showed above the water, I was not always able to recognise my acquaintance, deprived of his factitious identity of clothes. But I always knew a certain stately consul-general by a vast expanse of baldness upon the top of his head; and it must be owned, I think, that this form of social assembly was, with all its disadvantages, a novel and vivacious spectacle. The Venetian ladies, when they bathed, went to the Lido, or else to the bath-houses in front of the Ducal Palace, where they saturated themselves a good part of the

day, and drank coffee, and, possibly, gossiped.

I think that our balconies at Palazzo Giustiniani were even better places to see the life of the Grand Canal from than the balcony of Casa Falier, which we had just left. Here at least we had a greater stretch of the Canal, looking, as we could, up either side of its angle. Here, too, we had more gondola stations in sight, and as we were nearer the Rialto, there was more picturesque passing of the market-boats. But if we saw more of this life, we did not see it in greater variety, for I think we had already exhausted this. There was a movement all night long. If I woke at three or four o'clock, and offered myself the novel spectacle of the Canal at that hour, I saw the heavy-laden barges go by to the Rialto, with now and then also a good-sized coasting schooner making lazily for the lagoons, with its ruddy fire already kindled for cooking the morning's meal, and looking very enviably cosy. After our own breakfast we began to watch for the gondolas of the tourists of different nations, whom we came to distinguish at a glance. Then the boats of the various artisans went by, the carpenter's, the mason's, the plasterer's, with those

that sold fuel, and vegetables, and fruit, and fish, to any household that arrested them. From noon till three or four o'clock the Canal was comparatively deserted; but before twilight it was thronged again by people riding out in their open gondolas to take the air after the day's fervour. After nightfall they ceased, till only at long intervals a solitary lamp, stealing over the dark surface, gave token of the movement of some gondola bent upon an errand that could not fail to seem mysterious or fail to be matter of fact. We never wearied of this oft-repeated variety, nor of our balcony in any way; and when the moon shone in through the lovely arched window and sketched its exquisite outline on the floor, we were as happy as moonshine could make us.

Were we otherwise content? As concerns Venice, it is very hard to say, and I do not know that I shall ever be able to say with certainty. For all the entertainment it afforded us, it was a very lonely life, and we felt the sadness of the city in many fine and not instantly recognisable ways. Englishmen who lived there bade us beware of spending the whole year in Venice, which they declared apt to result in a morbid depression of the spirits. I believe they at-

tributed this to the air of the place, but I think it was more than half owing to her mood, to her old, ghostly, aimless life. She was, indeed, a phantom of the past, haunting our modern world,—serene, inexpressibly beautiful, yet inscrutably and unspeakably sad. Remembering the charm that was in her, we often sigh for the renewal of our own vague life there,—a shadow within the shadow; but remembering also her deep melancholy, an involuntary shiver creeps over us, and we are glad not to be there. Perhaps some of you who have spent a summer day or a summer week in Venice do not recognise this feeling; but if you will remain there, not four years as we did, but a year or six months even, it will ever afterwards be only too plain. All changes, all events, were affected by the inevitable local melancholy; the day was as pensive amidst that populous silence as the night; the winter not more pathetic than the long, tranquil, lovely summer. We rarely sentimentalised consciously, and still more seldom openly, about the present state of Venice as contrasted with her past glory. I am glad to say that we despised the conventional poetastery about her; but I believe that we had so far lived into sympathy with her, that, whether

we realised it or not, we took the tone of her dispiritedness, and assumed a part of the common experience of loss and of hopelessness. History, if you live where it was created, is a far subtler influence than you suspect; and I would not say how much Venetian history, amidst the monuments of her glory and the witnesses of her fall, had to do in secret and tacit ways with the prevailing sentiment of existence, which I now distinctly recognise to have been a melancholy one. No doubt this sentiment was deepened by every freshly added association with memorable places; and each fact, each great name and career, each strange tradition as it rose out of the past for us and shed its pale lustre upon the present, touched us with a pathos which we could neither trace nor analyse.

I do not know how much the modern Venetians had to do with this impression, but something, I have no question. They were then under Austrian rule; and in spite of much that was puerile and theatrical in it, there was something very affecting in their attitude of what may best be described as passive defiance. This alone made them heroic, but it also made them tedious. They rarely talked of anything but politics; and

as I have elsewhere said, they were very jealous to have every one declare himself of their opinion. Hemmed in by this jealousy on one side, and by a heavy and rebellious sense of the wrongful presence of the Austrian troops and the Austrian spies on the other, we for ever felt dimly constrained by something, we could not say precisely what, and we only knew what, when we went sometimes on a journey into free Italy, and threw off the irksome caution we had maintained both as to patriotic and alien tyrants. This political misery circumscribed our acquaintance very much, and reduced the circle of our friendship to three or four families, who were content to know our sympathies without exacting constant expression of them. So we learned to depend mainly upon passing Americans for our society; we hailed with rapture the arrival of a gondola distinguished by the easy hats of our countrymen and the pretty faces and pretty dresses of our countrywomen. It was in the days of our war; and talking together over its events, we felt a brotherhood with every other American.

Of course, in these circumstances, we made thorough acquaintance with the people about us in the palace. The landlord had

come somehow into a profitable knowledge of Anglo-Saxon foibles and susceptibilities; but his lodgings were charming, and I recognise the principle that it is not for literature to make its prey of any possibly conscious object. For this reason, I am likewise mostly silent concerning a certain attaché of the palace, the right-hand man and intimate associate of the landlord. He was the descendant of one of the most ancient and noble families of Italy,—a family of popes and cardinals, of princes and ministers, which in him was diminished and tarnished in an almost inexplicable degree. He was not at all worldly-wise, but he was a man of great learning, and of a capacity for acquiring knowledge that I have never seen surpassed. He possessed, I think, not many shirts on earth; but he spoke three or four languages, and wrote very pretty sonnets in Italian and German. He was one of the friendliest and willingest souls living, and as generous as utter destitution can make a man; yet he had a proper spirit, and valued himself upon his name. Sometimes he brought his great-grandfather to the palace; a brisk old gentleman in his nineties, who had seen the fall of the Republic and three other revolutions in

Venice, but had contrived to keep a government pension through all, and now smiled with unabated cheerfulness upon a world which he seemed likely never to leave.

The palace servants were two, the gondolier and a sort of housekeeper,—a handsome, swarthy woman, with beautiful white teeth and liquid black eyes. She was the mother of a pretty little boy, who was going to bring himself up for a priest, and whose chief amusement was saying mimic masses to an imaginary congregation. She was perfectly statuesque and obliging, and we had no right, as lovers of the beautiful or as lodgers, to complain of her, whatever her faults might have been. As to the gondolier, who was a very important personage in our palatial household, he was a handsome, bashful, well-mannered fellow, with a good-natured blue eye and a neatly waxed moustache. He had been ten years a soldier in the Austrian army, and was, from his own account and from all I saw of him, one of the least courageous men in the world; but then no part of the Austrian system tends to make men brave, and I could easily imagine that before it had done with one it might give him reasons enough to be timid all the rest of his life. Piero had not very

much to do, and he spent the greater part of his leisure in a sort of lazy flirtation with the women about the kitchen fire, or in the gondola, in which he sometimes gave them the air. We always liked him; I should have trusted him in any sort of way, except one that involved danger. It once happened that burglars attempted to enter our rooms, and Piero declared to us that he knew the men; but before the police, he swore that he knew nothing about them. Afterwards he returned privately to his first assertion, and accounted for his conduct by saying that if he had borne witness against the burglars, he was afraid that their friends would jump on his back (*saltarmi adosso*), as he phrased it, in the dark; for by this sort of terrorism the poor and the wicked have long been bound together in Italy. Piero was a humourist in his dry way, and made a jest of his own caution; but his favourite joke was, when he dressed himself with particular care, to tell the women that he was going to pay a visit to the Princess Clary, then the star of Austrian society. This mild pleasantry was repeated indefinitely with never-failing effect.

More interesting to us than all the rest was our own servant, Bettina, who came to

us from a village on the mainland. She was very dark, so dark and so Southern in appearance as almost to verge upon the negro type; yet she bore the English-sounding name of Scarbro, and how she ever came by it remains a puzzle to this day, for she was one of the most pure and entire of Italians. I mean this was her maiden name; she was married to a trumpeter in the Austrian service, whose Bohemian name she was unable to pronounce, and consequently never gave us. She was a woman of very few ideas indeed, but perfectly honest and good-hearted. She was pious, in her peasant fashion, and in her walks about the city did not fail to bless the baby before every picture of the Madonna. She provided it with an engraved portrait of that Holy Nail which was venerated in the neighbouring church of San Pantaleon; and she apparently aimed to supply it with playthings of a religious and saving character like that piece of ivory, which resembled a small torso, and which Bettina described as "A bit of the Lord, Signor,"—and it was, in fact, a fragment of an ivory crucifix, which she had somewhere picked up. To Bettina's mind, mankind broadly divided themselves into two races, Italians and Germans, to which latter she

held that we Americans in some sort belonged. She believed that America lay a little to the south of Vienna, and in her heart I think she was persuaded that the real national complexion was black, and that the innumerable white Americans she saw at our house were merely a multitude of exceptions. But, with all her ignorance, she had no superstitions of a gloomy kind: the only ghost she seemed ever to have heard of was the spectre of an American ship captain which a friend of Piero's had seen at the Lido. She was perfectly kind and obedient, and was deeply attached in an inarticulate way to the baby, which was indeed the pet of the whole palace. This young lady ruled arbitrarily over them all, and was for ever being kissed and adored. When Piero went out to the wine-shop for a little temperate dissipation, he took her with him on his shoulder, and exhibited her to the admiring gondoliers of his acquaintance; there was no puppet-show, no church festival, in that region to which she was not carried; and when Bettina, and Giulia, and all the idle women of the neighbourhood assembled on a Saturday afternoon in the narrow alley behind the palace (where they dressed one another's thick black hair in fine braids soaked

in milk, and built it up to last the whole of the next week), the baby was the cynosure of all hearts and eyes. But her supremacy was yet more distinguished when, late at night, the household gave itself a feast of snails stewed in oil and garlic, in the vast kitchen. There her anxious parents have found her seated in the middle of the table with the bowl of snails before her, and armed with a great spoon, while her vassals sat round, and grinned their fondness and delight in her small tyrannies; and the immense room, dimly lit, with the mystical implements of cookery glimmering from the wall, showed like some witch's cavern, where a particularly small sorceress was presiding over the concoction of an evil potion or the weaving of a powerful spell.

From time to time we had fellow-lodgers, who were always more or less interesting and mysterious. Among the rest, there was once a French lady, who languished, during her stay, under the disfavour of the police, and for whose sake there was a sentinel with a fixed bayonet stationed day and night at the palace gate. At last, one night, this French lady escaped by a rope-ladder from her chamber window, and thus no doubt satisfied alike the female instinct for

intrigue and elopement and the political agitator's love of a mysterious disappearance. It was understood dimly that she was an author, and had written a book displeasing to the police.

Then there was the German baroness and her son and daughter, the last very beautiful and much courted by handsome Austrian officers; the son rather weak-minded, and a great care to his sister and mother, from his propensity to fall in love and marry below his station; the mother very red-faced and fat, a good-natured old creature, who gambled the summer months away at Homburg and Baden, and in winter resorted to Venice to make a match for her pretty daughter.

Then, moreover, there was that English family, between whom and ourselves there was the reluctance and antipathy, personal and national, which exists between all right-minded Englishmen and Americans. No Italian can understand this just and natural condition, and it was the constant aim of our landlord to make us acquainted. So one day when he found a member of each of these unfriendly families on the neutral ground of the grand *sala*, he introduced them. They had, happily, the piano-

forte between them, and I flatter myself that the insulting coldness and indifference with which they received each other's names carried to our landlord's bosom a dismay never before felt by a good-natured and well-meaning man.

The pianoforte which I have mentioned belonged to the landlord, who was fond of music and of all fine and beautiful things; and now and then he gave a musical *soirée*, which was attended, more or less surreptitiously, by the young people of his acquaintance. I do not think he was always quite candid in giving his invitations, for on one occasion a certain count, who had taken refuge from the glare of the *sala* in our parlour for the purpose of concealing the very loud-plaided pantaloons he wore, explained pathetically that he had no idea it was a party, and that he had been so long out of society, for patriotic reasons, that he had no longer a dress suit. But to us they were very delightful entertainments, no less from the great variety of character they afforded than from the really charming and excellent music which the different amateurs made; for we had airs from all the famous operas, and the instrumentation was by a gifted young composer. Besides, the

gaiety seemed to recall in some degree the old, brilliant life of the palace, and at least showed us how well it was adapted to social magnificence and display.

We enjoyed our whole year in Palazzo Giustiniani, though some of the days were too long and some too short, as everywhere. From heat we hardly suffered at all, so perfectly did the vast and lofty rooms answer to the purpose of their builders in this respect. A current of sea-air drew through to the painter's garden by day; and by night there was scarcely a mosquito of the myriads that infested some parts of Venice. In winter it was not so well. Then we shuffled about in wadded gowns and boots lined with sheep-skin,—the woolly side in, as in the song. The passage of the *sala* was something to be dreaded, and we shivered as fleetly through it as we could, and were all the colder for the deceitful warmth of the colours which the sun cast upon the stone floor from the window opening on the court.

I do not remember any one event of our life more exciting than that attempted burglary of which I have spoken. In a city where the police gave their best attention to political offenders, there were naturally a

great many rogues, and the Venetian rogues, if not distinguished for the more heroic crimes, were very skilful in what I may call the *genre* branch of robbing rooms through open windows, and committing all kinds of safe domestic depredations. It was judged best to acquaint Justice (as they call law in Latin countries) with the attempt upon our property, and I found her officers housed in a small room of the Doge's Palace, clerkly men in velvet skull-caps, driving loath quills over the rough official paper of those regions. After an exchange of diplomatic courtesies, the commissary took my statement of the affair down in writing, pertinent to which were my father's name, place, and business, with a full and satisfactory personal history of myself down to the period of the attempted burglary. This, I said, occurred one morning about daylight, when I saw the head of the burglar peering above the window-sill, and the hand of the burglar extended to prey upon my wardrobe.

"Excuse me, Signor Console," interrupted the commissary, "how could you see him?"

"Why, there was nothing in the world to prevent me. The window was open."

"The window was open!" gasped the

commissary. "Do you mean that you sleep with your windows open?"

"Most certainly!"

"Pardon!" said the commissary, suspiciously. "Do *all* Americans sleep with their windows open?"

"I may venture to say that they all do, in summer," I answered; "at least, it's the general custom."

Such a thing as this indulgence in fresh air seemed altogether foreign to the commissary's experience; and but for my official dignity, I am sure I should have been effectually browbeaten by him. As it was, he threw himself back in his arm-chair and stared at me fixedly for some moments. Then he recovered himself with another "Perdoni!" and, turning to his clerk, said, "Write down that, *according to the American custom*, they were sleeping with their windows open." But I know that the commissary, for all his politeness, considered this habit a relic of the times when we Americans all abode in wigwams; and I suppose it paralysed his energies in the effort to bring the burglars to justice, for I have never heard anything of them from that day to this.

The truth is, it was a very uneventful

year; and I am the better satisfied with it as an average Venetian year on that account. We sometimes varied the pensive monotony by a short visit to the cities of the mainland; but we always came back to it willingly, and I think we unconsciously abhorred any interruption of it. The days, as they followed each other, were wonderfully alike, in every respect. For eight months of summer they were alike in their clear-skied, sweet-breathed loveliness; in the autumn, there where the melancholy of the falling leaf could not spread its contagion to the sculptured foliage of Gothic art, the days were alike in their sentiment of tranquil oblivion and resignation, which was as autumnal as any aspect of woods or fields could have been; in the winter, they were alike in their dreariness and discomfort. As I remember, we spent by far the greater part of our time in going to the Piazza, and we were devoted Florianisti, as the Italians call those that lounge habitually at the Caffè Florian. We went every evening to the Piazza as a matter of course; if the morning was long, we went to the Piazza; if we did not know what to do with the afternoon, we went to the Piazza; if we had friends with us, we went to the Piazza;

if we were alone, we went to the Piazza; and there was no mood or circumstances in which it did not seem a natural and fitting thing to go to the Piazza. There were all the prettiest shops; there were all the finest caffès; there was the incomparable Church of St. Mark; there was the whole world of Venice.

Of course, we had other devices besides going to the Piazza; and sometimes we spent entire weeks in visiting the churches, one after another, and studying their artistic treasures, down to the smallest scrap of an old master in their darkest chapel; their history, their storied tombs, their fictitious associations. Very few churches escaped, I believe, except such as had been turned into barracks, and were guarded by an incorruptible Austrian sentinel. For such churches as did escape, we have a kind of envious longing to this day, and should find it hard to like anybody who had succeeded better in visiting them. There is, for example, the church of San Giobbe, the doors of which we haunted with more patience than that of the titulary saint: now the sacristan was out; now the church was shut up for repairs; now it was Holy Week and the pictures were veiled; we had to

leave Venice at last without a sight of San Giobbe's three Saints by Bordone, and Madonna by Bellini, which, unseen, outvalue all the other Saints and Madonnas that we looked at; and I am sure that life can never become so aimless but we shall still have the desire of some day going to see the church of San Giobbe. If we read some famous episode of Venetian history, we made it the immediate care of our lives to visit the scene of its occurrence; if Ruskin told us of some recondite beauty of sculpture hid away in some unthought-of palace court, we invaded that palace at once; if in entirely purposeless strolls through the city, we came upon anything that touched the fancy or piqued curiosity, there was no gate or bar proof against our bribes. What strange old nests of ruin, what marvellous homes of solitude and dilapidation, did we not wander into! What boarded-up windows peer through, what gloomy recesses penetrate! I have lumber enough in my memory stored from such rambles to load the nightmares of a generation, and stuff for the dreams of a whole people. Does any gentleman or lady wish to write a romance? Sir or madam, I know just the mouldy and sunless alley

for your villain to stab his victim in, the canal in which to plunge his body, the staircase and the hall for the subsequent wanderings of his ghost; and all these scenes and localities I will sell at half the cost price; as also, balconies for flirtation, gondolas for intrigue and elopement, confessionals for the betrayal of guilty secrets. I have an assortment of bad and beautiful faces and picturesque attitudes and effective tones of voice; and a large stock of sympathetic sculptures and furniture and dresses, with other articles too numerous to mention, all warranted Venetian, and suitable to every style of romance. Who bids? Nay, I cannot sell, nor you buy. Each memory, as I hold it up for inspection, loses its subtle beauty and value, and turns common and poor in my hawker's fingers.

Yet I must needs try to fix here the remembrance of two or three palaces, of which our fancy took the fondest hold, and to which it yet most fondly clings. It cannot locate them all, and least of all can it place that vast old palace, somewhere near Cannaregio, which faced upon a campo, with lofty windows blinded by rough boards, and empty from top to bottom. It was of the later Renaissance in style, and we

imagined it built in the Republic's declining years by some ruinous noble, whose extravagance forbade his posterity to live in it, for it had that peculiarly forlorn air which belongs to a thing decayed without being worn out. We entered its coolness and dampness, and wandered up the wide marble staircase, past the vacant niches of departed statuary, and came on the third floor to a grand portal which was closed against us by a barrier of lumber. But this could not hinder us from looking within, and we were aware that we stood upon the threshold of our ruinous noble's great banqueting-hall, where he used to give his magnificent *feste da ballo*. Lustrissimo was long gone with all his guests; but there in the roof were the amazing frescos of Tiepolo's school, which had smiled down on them, as now they smiled on us; great piles of architecture, airy tops of palaces, swimming in summer sky, and wantoned over by a joyous populace of divinities of the lovelier sex that had nothing but their loveliness to clothe them and keep them afloat; the whole grandiose and superb beyond the effect of words, and luminous with delicious colour. How it all rioted there with its inextinguishable beauty in the solitude and

silence, from day to day, from year to year, while men died, and systems passed, and nothing remained unchanged but the instincts of youth and love that inspired it! It was music and wine and wit; it was so warm and glowing that it made the sunlight cold; and it seemed ever after a secret of gladness and beauty that the sad old palace was keeping in its heart against the time to which Venice looks forward when her splendour and opulence shall be indestructibly renewed.

There is a ballroom in the Palazzo Pisani, which some of my readers may have passed through on their way to the studio of the charming old Prussian painter, Nerly; the frescos of this are dim and faded and dusty, and impress you with a sense of irreparable decay, but the noble proportions and the princely air of the place are inalienable, while the palace stands. Here might have danced that Contarini who, when his wife's necklace of pearls fell upon the floor in the way of her partner, the King of Denmark, advanced and ground it into powder with his foot, that the king might not be troubled to avoid treading on it; and here, doubtless, many a gorgeous masquerade had been in the long Venetian carnival; and what pas-

sion and intrigue and jealousy, who knows? Now the palace was let in apartments, and was otherwise a barrack, and in the great court, steadfast as any of the marble statues, stood the Austrian sentinel. One of the statues was a figure veiled from head to foot, at the base of which it was hard not to imagine lovers masked and hooded, and for ever hurriedly whispering their secrets in the shadow cast in perpetual moonlight.

Yet another ballroom in yet another palace opens to memory, but this is all bright and fresh with recent decoration. In the blue vaulted roof shine stars of gold; the walls are gay with dainty frescos; a gallery encircles the whole, and from this drops a light stairway, slim-railed, and guarded at the foot by torch-bearing statues of swarthy Eastern girls; through the glass doors at the other side glimmers the green and red of a garden. It was a place to be young in, to dance in, dream in, make love in; but it was no more a surprise than the whole palace to which it belonged, and which there, in that tattered and poverty-stricken old Venice, was a vision of untarnished splendour and prosperous fortune. It was richly furnished throughout all its vast extent, adorned with every caprice and

delight of art, and appointed with every modern comfort. The foot was hushed by costly carpets, the eye was flattered by a thousand beauties and prettinesses. In the grates the fires were laid and ready to be lighted; the candles stood upon the mantels, the toilet-linen was arranged for instant use in the luxurious chambers; but from basement to roof the palace was a solitude; no guest came there, no one dwelt there save the custodian; the eccentric lady of whose possessions it formed a part abode in a little house behind the palace, and on her door-plate had written her *vanitas vanitatum* in the sarcastic inscription, "John Humdrum, Esquire."

Of course she was Inglese; and that other lady, who was selling off the furniture of her palace, and was so amiable a guide to its wonders in her curious broken English, was Hungarian. Her great pride and joy, amidst the objects of *vertu* and the works of art, was a set of *Punch*, which she made us admire, and which she prized the more because she had always been allowed to receive it when the government prohibited it to everybody else. But we were Americans, she said; and had we ever seen this book? She held up *The Potiphar Papers*,

a volume which must have been inexpressibly amused and bewildered to find itself there, in that curious little old lady's hand.

Shall I go on and tell of the palace in which our strange friend Padre L—— dwelt, and the rooms of which he had filled up with the fruits of his passion for the arts and sciences; the anteroom he had frescoed to represent a grape-arbour with a multitude of clusters overhead; the parlour with his oil-paintings on the walls, and the piano and melodeon arranged so that Padre L—— could play upon them both at once; the oratory turned forge, and harbouring the most alchemic-looking apparatus of all kinds; the other rooms in which he had stored his inventions in portable furniture, steam-propulsion, rifled cannon, and perpetual motion; the attic with the camera by which one could photograph one's self,—shall I tell of this, and yet other palaces? I think there is enough already; and I have begun to doubt somewhat the truth of my reminiscences, as I advise the reader to do.

Besides, I feel that the words fail to give all the truth that is in them; and if I cannot make them serve my purpose as to the palaces, how should I hope to impart through them my sense of the glory and loveliness of

Venetian art? I could not give the imagination and the power of Tintoretto as we felt it, nor the serene beauty, the gracious luxury of Titian, nor the opulence, the worldly magnificence of Paolo Veronese. There hang their mighty works for ever, high above the reach of any palaverer; they smile their stately welcome from the altars and palace-walls, upon whoever approaches them in the sincerity and love of beauty that produced them; and thither you must thus go if you would know them. Like fragments of dreams, like the fleeting

"Images of glimmering dawn,"

I am from time to time aware, amid the work-day world, of some happiness from them, some face or form, some drift of a princely robe or ethereal drapery, some august shape of painted architecture, some unnameable delight of colour; but to describe them more strictly and explicitly, how should I undertake?

There was the exhaustion following every form of intense pleasure, in their contemplation, such a wear of vision and thought, that I could not call the life we led in looking at them an idle one, even if it had no result in after times; so I will not say that it was to severer occupation our minds turned more

and more in our growing desire to return home. For my own part personally I felt keenly the fictitious and transitory character of official life. I knew that if I had become fit to serve the government by four years' residence in Venice, that was a good reason why the government, according to our admirable system, should dismiss me, and send some perfectly unqualified person to take my place; and in my heart also I knew that there was almost nothing for me to do where I was, and I dreaded the easily formed habit of receiving a salary for no service performed. I reminded myself that, soon or late, I must go back to the old fashion of earning money, and that it had better be sooner than later. Therefore, though for some reasons it was the saddest and strangest thing in the world to do, I was on the whole rejoiced when a leave of absence came, and we prepared to quit Venice.

Never had the city seemed so dream-like and unreal as in this light of farewell,—this tearful glimmer which our love and regret cast upon it. As in a maze, we haunted once more and for the last time the scenes we had known so long, and spent our final, phantasmal evening in the Piazza; looked, through the moonlight, our mute adieu to islands and

lagoons, to church and tower; and then returned to our own palace, and stood long upon the balconies that overhung the Grand Canal. There the future became as incredible and improbable as the past; and if we had often felt the incongruity of our coming to live in such a place, now, with tenfold force, we felt the cruel absurdity of proposing to live anywhere else. We had become part of Venice; and how could such atoms of her fantastic personality ever mingle with the alien and unsympathetic world?

The next morning the whole palace household bestirred itself to accompany us to the station: the landlord in his best hat and coat, our noble friend in phenomenal linen, Giulia and her little boy, Bettina shedding bitter tears over the baby, and Piero, sad but firm, bending over the oar and driving us swiftly forward. The first turn of the Canal shut the Palazzo Giustiniani from our lingering gaze, a few more curves and windings brought us to the station. The tickets were bought, the baggage was registered; the little oddly assorted company drew itself up in a line, and received with tears our husky adieux. I feared there might be a remote purpose in the hearts of the landlord and his retainer to embrace and kiss me,

after the Italian manner, but if there was, by a final inspiration they spared me the ordeal. Piero turned away to his gondola; the two other men moved aside; Bettina gave one long, hungering, devouring hug to the baby; and as we hurried into the waiting-room, we saw her, as upon a stage, standing without the barrier, supported and sobbing in the arms of Giulia.

It was well to be gone, but I cannot say we were glad to be going.

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THE END.

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