2

blood must have been persistent for it is to this element that the Venetians are thought to owe their marked artistic quality.

The country of the Veneti was assimilated and Romanized (by a nominal alliance with Rome) in the third century before Christ and under the Romans became wealthy, with many important cities, among them Altinum, Aquileia and Padua.

At the head of the Adriatic, between the mountains and the sea, lies that part of the Lombard plain known as the Venetian. The whole of this plain has been formed by the debris and silt swept down from the Alps by the rivers (the Po, the Brenta, Tagliamento and others). These rivers assume an erratic trend in their efforts to reach the sea, and

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To know a little of the story of Venice, to recall her simple beginnings, her antiquity, the slow growth of the Republic into power and magnificence, would seem an indispensable preparation for understanding and appreciating the monuments of beauty, fame and historical interest which she contains.

The name of Venice or Venezia was in its origin, the name of a country rather than a town, and the part of north-eastern Italy between Verona and the sea bore that name. The inhabitants of this district were of Etruscan origin and although later the country was occupied by the Veneti, an Illyrian tribe, the Etruscan

the result is that the plain is being gradually extended in an easterly direction and cities like Ravenna, Adria and Aquileia which were once seaports, are now many miles inland. (The encroachment of land upon water is estimated at the rate of about three miles in a thousand years)

A strong current sets around the head of the Adriatic from east to west. This current catches the silt brought down by the rivers and projects it in long banks or kids, parallel with the shore. In process of time some of the banks raise themselves above the level of the water and become the true shore line, while behind them lie large surfaces of water called lagoons, formed partly by the fresh water brought down by the rivers,

partly by the salt-water tide which found its way in by the mouths of the rivers. Along the east-line, roughly speaking, between the Apennines of Rimini and the Carnic Alps of Trieste, three main systems of lagoons were then created, the lagoon of Grado or Marano to the east, the lagoon of Venice in the middle, and the lagoon of Commacchio to the south west. All these are dotted with small islands little less than low mud-banks. At an early day these islands ~~may have been~~ were populated by a few families who got their living by fishing. It would be difficult to imagine a site less adapted for the foundation and growth of a great community.

6

still bearing the impress of the Roman civilization from which they came. There were finally twelve islands or wards, each of these in charge of people who had occupied a high position in the old cities. Their dwellings, in all probability were at first rude huts made of reeds and wattle, which were replaced, as time went on, by brick made of the lagoon mud. Later on the new houses were built from the ruins of the old, brought from the mainland. The process of disintegration on the mainland and of development on the islets was a slow one. As each wave of barbaric invasion

6.

When the first invaders from the north came over the Alps and descended with fire and sword upon the rich mainland, the Venetic fled before them to seek refuge upon the sand-bars and muddy flats along the coast, and we may suppose a migration of refugees, at each invasion, for several centuries, who built shelters upon the small islands. These repeated incursions of the Goths from beyond the Alps had a double action on the development of the Lagoons: first they drove the mainlanders for refuge to the islands, and secondly they gradually weakened and destroyed the great mainland cities, and thereby left the island populations independent,

X 8. (7th & 8th pages censored)

Those ages of terror and flight and exile in which the Republic took its birth, we must study them at Torcello. Here, in fact lies the secret of Venetian history, the one Key by which it is possible to understand the riddle of the Republic. The Goth and the Lombard, the Frank and the Hun never ruled this last corner of the Roman world. This strip of sea-board was the one spot in the Empire where foot of barbarian never trod. But as it rose, so it set. From that older world of which it was a part, the history of Venice shrinked on to the French Revolution, untouched by Teutonic influences. The old Roman life, which became steadily more in the Capital, lingered smallest beside the Palace of the

9.

Exarch over north-eastern Italy, and toiled to the south, or was driven back over the Alps, the refugees returned from their temporary asylums in the lagoons to their homes on the main-land. The people did not emigrate suddenly, and it took time to convince them that their only sure dwelling was upon the waters.

The people of Altinum settled upon one of the islands and gradually built Torcello, which is often called the mother-city of Venice, and is now a desolate ruin, most beautifully described by Ruskin.

In his "Venice and Rome," Richard Henry Green says "Really to understand the origin of Venice,

They began that tremendous struggle with nature, which built up the Venice we now see. They strengthened the muddy islands with dykes and rows of driven poles: they dug canals, and lined them first with wood, and then with stone; they straightened the course of the currents lest they should wash away the least fragment of earth where there was so little; they marched like beavers to win a foot of earth from the waters makers.

"It was essentially a flight and settlement of nobles. As soon as the barbaric hordes swept on, the farmer and the peasant would creep back to his field and his cabin on the mainland and submit himself to the German master whom the conquest had left behind.

The strange ducal cap, the red ducal slippers, the fan of bright feathers borne before the ducal chair, all came unchanged from the ages when they were the distinction of every great officer of the Imperial State. Venice in its origin was simply the Imperial province of Venetia floated across to the islands of the lagoons, and anchored there. It is startling to think that Venice brought Ancient Rome almost to the doors of the western world, - that the unchanged traditions of the empire passed away with the last of the Doges, at the coming of Napoleon's armies in 1797.

As soon as the fugitives on the islands had given up hope of returning to the mainland

so enthusiastic in his praises of Venice to the Venetians that he forgets the immediate subject of his communication. "There be your houses, (he says) built like sea-birds' nests, half on sea and half on land, or as it were like the Cyclades spread over the surface of the water, made not by nature but by the industry of man. For the solidity of earth is secured only by wattle-work and yet you fear not to place so frail a barrier between yourselves and the sea. Your inhabitants have fish in abundance. The same food for all: there is no distinction between rich and poor; the houses all alike— and so, away that vice which rules the world is absent there. All your activity is devoted to your salt works, whence comes your wealth,

But the patrician had filled too great a place in the old social order to stoop easily to the new." He had a crowd of dependents,— his fishermen and his rock laborers, and it was the duty of the noble to provide all the rest with the means of living, as well as to govern and protect them. The people worked in the small fields, they planted the vineyards where there were a few feet of earth to hold them; (as time went on they even had cattle,) but their chief resource was the preparation of salt. They were a simple people, not yet rich, but the slow accumulation of wealth began at an early period.

Cassiodorus, secretary to Theodoric the Great, wrote a famous letter to the Venetians about 537-538, in which he became

the forsaken cities on the mainland, and the best and most artistic of these were always used in the construction of the churches.

They were a very devout people, and much space is given in all their chronicles to the miraculous visions experienced by the clergy and others, which led to the building of churches. (In fact the Apostles and Martyrs appeared very often for the sole purpose of ordering churches to be built!)

The legend of the last flight from the mainland, and how the people of Altinum came to settle on Torcello, is given in every chronicle, and I will read the account by Horatio Brown in "Venice, an Historical Sketch"

(pp. 568)

Pages 10 - 11, marked.

Upon your industry all other productions depend, for there may be those who seek not gold, but there never yet lived the man who desires not salt. From your gains you built your boats, which like barges, you took out up at your home door.

Their speech was still Latin at this time, both verse & prose with great simplicity clinging to the old Roman fashions. Later, as traffic with their neighbors increased, the influence of the Greeks and the Lombards began to be felt in their language, as well as in their dress, their ornaments and their architecture.

Their houses and their churches were now built of the fragments of stone and marble which they gathered amidst the ruins of their

deepest channel, as the name indicates, ~~and the best sea port.~~ each island had its Tribune to administer the affairs of that island, but as the population became larger, a revision of the existing government ~~became~~ necessary was formed but in 568 a second Tribune was created, one for each of the twelve communities, superior to the other Tribunes. When these sent letters, they used this form: "We, the Tribunes of the maritime islands, appointed by the whole body of them." They managed the common concerns of the entire lagoon.

Down to the year 568 the history of Venice had been the history of the various stages by which the lagoons acquired their population. After that, the, because continuous

This little Golden Age could not last long. As the population increased, the need of a wider field of activity began to be felt, and the Venetians rapidly developed the sea-faring instincts of all healthy island dwellers. Two hundred years had not elapsed since the last flight from the mainland, before the little Archipelago at the head of the Adriatic was in possession of the finest fleet of vessels Italy could yet boast. There is an old Chronicle which gives the ~~date of~~ 25th of March, 451 as the day on which Venice was born. This is misleading, but at least this date marks the concentration of the population on the different islands, in a commercial centre, that of the Rialto, where was the

reach us save by the sea alone, and of them we have no fear"!

They however consented to accept protection from Constantinople, and even sent an embassy to the Imperial court. It was not possible that the Venetians should remain in diplomatic relations with the East alone. They soon found themselves brought into contact with the Lombards also, for the purposes of commerce. Hence thus found themselves in a middle position between the Eastern Emperor and the Kingdom of Italy. The difficulties and dangers of this position were very great, for the claims of each were ever present as a threat to her liberty. What the Venetians desired was commercial privileges and protection from both East and West, what they dreaded was absorption with the empire or the kingdom. As the general wealth increased the

of themselves as a unit, and soon gave evidence of this. Their neighbors on the East and on the West, began to seek their co-operation, and saw the possibility the Venetians had as valuable ~~allies and~~ friends. They were urged to make formal submission to the Eastern Emperor (Justinian at Constantinople) and their answer to this demand shows a clear conception of their practical independence, and a resolve to maintain it. They affirmed that they themselves had made their lagoon islands: "And God who is our help and protection has saved us in order that we may dwell upon these waters. This second denial that we have raised us these lagoons is a mighty habitation for us. No power of Emperor or Prince can

foreign powers. But the General Assembly was required to declare war, to conclude peace, and to elect a Doge.

The internal troubles were far from being settled by the election of a Doge, and the families who had envies and hates one another, unite in envying and hating the family of the Doge

These internal troubles, serious as they were, did not prevent the Republic from growing in power, and achieving an immense extension of her commerce. In the year 811 Rialto became the seat of Venetian government, as well as the centre of commerce, and the Doge (Agnello Participacio) resolved to erect a city worthy to be the capital of the whole Lagoon community. The Venetians had always been

families of the Tribunes tried to outdo one another in the display of power and riches, so that there was strife between the infant communities, and blood was often shed in these bitter quarrels. It was then decided that internal peace could only be maintained by electing a single leader over all, and at a General Assembly of the Lagoon people in the year 697, the Venetians elected their first Doge (Paolo Lucio Anafesto)

The Tribunes were retained, but only as magistrates, appointed by the Doge, who could punish or remove them. The Doge had the right to summon the General Assembly, (called Concio) he also dealt with

forced to fight, not only against man but also against nature, for the very ground upon which they stood, and fighting was necessary now before Rialto could be made secure and large enough for its rapidly growing population.

A committee of three was appointed by the Doge to superintend the various works; to Nicolo Ardisonio was entrusted the consolidation of the Lido against the ~~violence~~ inclement encroachment of the sea; Foscari was charged with digging the canals, and the formation of building sites; and Pietro Tradonico with the direction of new buildings. The small neighboring islands were soon united to Rialto, and among them grew up what was the beginning of modern Venice, more than eleven hundred years ago. A binding for the Government was needed, and

Agnello began to build a ducal palace on part of the site occupied by the present one.

The devout tendencies of the people had changed little during the years, and they now sought a patron Saint for the new Republic. They remembered the ancient legend of St. Mark the Evangelist, how he was ship-wrecked and cast upon the shores of Rialto, and how he heard a mysterious voice, saying: "Peace be with thee, O Mark, my evangelist. — ~~Thy~~ ~~made~~ ~~these~~ ~~words~~ ~~the~~ ~~motto~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~Republic~~, and San Marco became their war-cry ~~for many~~ ~~centuries~~ ~~and~~ ~~became~~, the desire of every Venetian to get possession of relics of St. Mark's body which was buried at Alexandria, ~~therefore left~~ ~~by the Mussulmans~~ ~~being left by the Christians in the pagan~~ ~~where~~ it was most carefully guarded, ~~and~~ ~~there~~ were many difficulties in the way, but finally two brave Venetian merchants

24

During the ninth century there arose a tendency to make the Dogeship hereditary in some one powerful family, — a tendency which was always checked by the instinct of the people who said they "had not come to the Lagunes to live under a Lord." (Ziver) The constant efforts of a few great families to secure the Supreme for themselves, and the opposition of the people led to frequent riots There was ecclesiastical strife also, among the Bishops of the various Sees, and sometimes the Republic seemed almost on the point of perishing amidst these inglorious struggles, when a danger from abroad caused them to forego their differences for a time & unite against a common enemy. For many years the Dalmatian pirates had been taking advantage of all this internal dissent to descend upon any unprotected coast

23

and navigators determined to risk their lives and fortunes to obtain the precious body. They fitted out a very fast vessel, and set sail without disclosing their destination. Space and time prevent the narration of the many quaint legends about this adventure, which was successful, and when the ship came into Venice the body was received with every honour. The Doge assigned a piece of land for the erection of a church in honor of the Evangelist.

This incident has more significance that at first appears. Venice had a peculiar interest in the Apostle, and his reflected glory gave the Venetians the right to consider their Patriarchal See as not far inferior to that of Rome itself — for was not Mark the Evangelist and Apostle, not at least as honorable as Peter the Saint? And this belief was not without its influence upon the attitude which the Venetians adopted towards Rome in ecclesiastical matters" (Rems)

of the islands. The Venetians seem to have been more than a match for them when actually at sea, but the corsairs lost no opportunity to plunder and lay waste the land and even to carry off the people into slavery. A raid of these pirates, more daring in scope and operation took place on the day of their annual festival, which took place on the day of the yearly marriage ceremonies, and marks one of the turning points of Venetian history. In order that this may be clearly understood, it is necessary to explain the marriage customs of Venice at this period, different from those of any other city. The brides of Venice were all married on the same day, the 2nd day of February, in the cathedral. When the day arrived, every household in which there was a marriable girl, was astir very early in the morning

"Why did our ancestors seek these islands of salt to live in freedom? Had they wished to be slaves, there were many better dwelling-places where they might have settled."

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Clarets all the young couples, and each bridegroom slipped upon his lady's finger the symbolic ring, ~~which was the same for all~~. Upon one of these yearly ceremonies occurs what Rashid calls "that most touching and true legend of the Brides of Venice."

The body of pirates conceived the idea of descending upon the cathedral on the marriage morning, and carrying away the brides with their dowries. During the night before the corsairs ran their boats under the shelter of the island and stole ashore to lie in wait in the shadow of the cathedral. While the brides were ranging themselves around the altar to wait for their bridegrooms, the pirates rushed in, brandishing their daggers. It had all been so well planned that the robbers reached their boats carrying the girls and their dowries, and pushed

The bride was dressed, more or less richly, according to her fortune, but always in a long white gown, with fine gold thread entwined among her flowing hair. She then came down from her work room, and knelt ~~down~~ before her mother and her father to receive their solemn blessing, and her dowry, which it was customary for the bride to carry to the church, enclosed in a little casket, called "arcella". The historians tell us it was never very heavy in those days.

When they proceeded to the church, and ranged themselves around the altar, holding their caskets in their hands. At last the bridegrooms came, dressed in their best clothes and accompanied by their "sponsors of the ring," or best men, as we would say. The Doge was always present, and when all were assembled, the bishop

29.

and to receive, there, a consecrated standard — and on the same day the whole fleet set sail. When Narentium, the strong hold of the Dalmatians was reached, negotiations were commenced, and the pirates accepted certain terms, and gave a pledge not to infest the Adriatic. The object of the expedition seemed to have been gained, but the Doge had no sooner set his course towards Venice than the pirates took up arms again. Then Venice determined to attack their fortress of Pagasta which was supposed to be impregnable. And the successful in taking it after subduing the inhabitants the Venetians pleased & to the ground. It is not surprising that the Venetians should have resolved to commemorate the day upon which Venice sailed upon this glorious expedition. The form which this celebration took

28.

off, almost without striking a blow. There was no loss of time when the cheated bridegrooms arrived. They found boats and weapons where they could and followed the Doge's ship. The barge which had sprung up at Venice soon died down, and the men of Venice, rowing like Damons, overtook the pirates and drew them to a man. Themselves almost unhurt. They brought their brides back to Venice, and married them before the sun went down.

The Dalmatians continued to molest Venetian commerce for a many years, and finally the Doge Orseolo resolved upon their complete annihilation. Every care was taken to make his expedition a powerful one, and to ensure success. On May 6th in the year 1000 the Doge and his officers went to hear mass in the cathedral

31.

In all probability there was a double meaning in the observance. The Venetians desired to assert solemnly the result of their past experiences, that they and the sea on which they lived were inseparably one: and secondly, by a purification of themselves, and the rejection of their sins, symbolised by the offerings and the reversion of the water into the sea, they desired to render "that element propitious." Our narrative has brought us to the beginning of the eleventh century and we leave our subject at the most glorious and thrilling period of the history of Venice: her connection with the Crusades, her struggle for supremacy in the Mediterranean, and her expansion in the East.

30.

was a solemn procession from Venice out into the open sea by the Lido port. The ceremony was one of supplication and placation: the formula in earliest use consisted of the prayer: "Grant, O Lord, that for us, and for all who sail thereon, the sea may be calm and quiet: this in our prayers. Do thou hear us." After which the Doge and his attendants were aspersed, and the rest of the water was poured into the sea, while the priests chanted the words: "Wash me with hyssop and I shall be clean." In later years, it developed into the magnificent function, so famous and so well known as the Sposalizio del Mar.

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