

THE QUEEN OF THE ADRIATIC

SOME NOTES ON VENICE.

It has been stated in the press that the Pope has made representations to the Emperor Francis Joseph that Venice might be spared. Aircraft, nevertheless, have launched their bombs upon the city, and the Queen of the Adriatic is thus shown to be exposed to the danger of destruction. Destruction of any of the historic piles of this wonderful city would be a disaster sufficient to make the world weep (says a writer in the *Universe*).

Venice is more than a city as a vision may be said to be more than substance. Conjure back childhood's vision of one of those wonderful capitals of romance to which some fairy queen led some gallant prince as a reward for his deeds of chivalry. Picture such a dazzling city set in the heart of the ocean. Such is Venice. I left the world we know and entered that fairyland—that fairyland which in early years seemed to exist somewhere, in later years was ignored as fable, and now seemed, indeed, an actuality. The means of transport was a railway train; but a train which sped along a vine-bordered track, now flanking a smiling lake, now skirting the feet of an Alpine range, until it plunged off Europe and the world, on to a blue lagoon, and reached an enchanted island after daylight had passed and the stars had begun to sparkle like gems on a canopy of velvet. Arrive in Venice at such a time, watch black, swan-like gondolas with their colored lanterns gliding majestically along the still waterways of the canals; view the stately buildings with magic shapes, that appear on either side, outlined in the moonlight; let that be the first impression of Venice, and to deny the reality of fairyland will be impossible. Wonderment, however, is not only for those who enter Venice by night. It fills those who enter by day, when the sun, its glory doubled by the lagoon, flashes up the Adriatic and dances on the domes and cupolas and noble palaces and multi-formed and multi-colored buildings that make Venice—Venice, 'throned on her hundred isles.'

San Marco,

as the Venetians call the wonderful Basilica in which the Patriarch sits enthroned, is the heart of Venice. But religion—like its offspring, art—is international, and San Marco, whether viewed as a monument of ecclesiastical continuity or as an art treasure-house, is a coruscant gem that belongs not to Venice alone but to heaven and earth. Think what Christendom would lose if, through any misfortune of war, destruction should fall upon San Marco. For nearly eleven centuries Mass has been said daily under the roof of this venerable church. For nearly a thousand years the church has had its present form—a magnificent Greek cross crowned with five Byzantine domes, and adorned with many other domes of lesser size and beauty. Five hundred pillars of the richest alabaster and marble adorn the sacred edifice, and events of sacred history are depicted in mosaics, covering an area of over five thousand square yards, in which the richest marbles and the quaintest and loveliest glass shed colors that have defied the sun from the tenth century till now. The glory of the State of Venice is told by the four brazen horses above the chief portal. These choice ornaments are not the gifts of wealthy Venetians. They adorned the triumphal arch of Nero; they decked the arch of Trajan; Constantine used them at Constantinople, and one of the Dukes of Venice brought them back to this sea-boru city, only to have them stolen five centuries later by Napoleon. On the great restoration after the Treaty of Vienna they were returned to Venice in 1815. Now, in 1915, when metals are sought for the manufacture of shells and projectiles, one must tremble to think whether the horses of St. Mark's will eventually share the fate said to have been already suffered by some of the famous bells of Flanders. St. Mark's teems with pictures and statues, some of which were placed there before William the Conqueror invaded Britain. To view

The Beauties of this Gorgeous Shrine

one enters a vestibule, which recalls the proverb: 'He who tries to eat the Pope dies of his dinner.' Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, the haughty Hohenstaufen, sought to reduce the liberties of Italy, and, like other plunderers, found in the Pope his greatest obstacle. To remove this obstacle he attempted to storm Rome itself, having already conquered Milan; but at the gates of Rome a plague seized his army, death dissipated his forces, and he had to return to Germany. Ten years later in humble submission to the Pope (Alexander III.) he knelt in the vestibule of St. Mark's. And St. Mark's has a treasure—the Patriarchal Throne within the sanctuary—which pious Venetians have contemplated sadly since August, 1914, for it was vacated for the Chair of Peter by a beloved patriarch, the late Pope, the first great martyr of the present great war!

Nor is San Marco the only temple of beauty in Venice. Santa Maria della Salute, chaste in its marble dome which lights the eastern extremity of the Grand Canal, the waters of which wash the steps of the stately church, contrasts in design and in composition with the noble Basilica of St. Mark. Nevertheless it speaks the same noble faith which taught and teaches men that the grandest of everything should be for the honor of God. Erected three hundred years ago to celebrate the passing of a plague, it testifies to the splendor of the gratitude of that age for deliverance. Its splendor appeals to the artist, for it shares with the Rialto the greatest popularity with the painter and the photographer.

The Church of the Madonna dell' Orto, with its rich facade and curious tower, contains the tomb of Tintoretto (buried there in 1594), whose magnificent paintings adorn several of the churches of Venice. His 'Last Judgment' and 'The Adoration of the Golden Calf' are seen in the choir, and find themselves in company here with the works of other famous painters of the Middle Ages.

The Torre dell' Orologio, or Clock Tower, contained mechanism which made Strassburg envious of Venice; for here, at the hours of the Angelus, a door in the clock opened and the Three Magi, led by a star, passed in adoration before the Virgin and Child, and re-entered the clock—an evidence of the desire to direct daily attention to the great Nativity.

The Palace of the Dukes of Venice

—the monument of centuries of national greatness—also makes its appeal to the world. It recalls Venice, the mistress of the seas; it conjures up the deeds of great rulers, who brought the treasures of the world to adorn the Basilica of San Marco. The palace, the prison, the Bridge of Sighs which connects the two, San Marco, all cluster round the piazza, which throbs with the life of Venice, and over whose marble pavements have walked the elite of every town in Christendom. Its splendor of a summer evening, when thousands promenade, or sip wine or coffee, while they listen to the music of the grandest Italian bands, has likened this majestic square to a great open-air drawing-room, but one in which rich and great move together with a community of life begotten of the Catholicity of their belief.

There are two other evidences of Catholic life in Venice. One, a little lovely islet, in the great lagoon. On it stands a little shrine dedicated to La Madonna dell' Acqua, which the gondolier never passes without a reverential prayer. The other is to be found at the end of a disused little alley between two buildings where, little more than breast-high, a picture of 'Our Lady of Good Counsel' (or is it of Perpetual Succour?) is painted upon the wall and honored with a little colored lamp burning daily and nightly.

Well may the world weep should the missiles of destruction fall upon this ancient Venezia.

WANTED KNOWN—That Billheads, Circulars, Memoriam Cards, Concert Tickets and Programmes, and General Printing of every description are executed at the TABLET OFFICE. Moderate rates.