

Europe to look with doubt and disfavour on this new contestant and to form alliances against her.

Worse still, a new threat now appeared in the East. In 1453 the Eastern Empire fell to the Turks. The Christian powers, including Venice, had recklessly weakened the power of Constantinople in their internal struggles and had only themselves to blame. Venice had now to bear the weight of the expanding Moslem power and she proved unequal to the task. She had always refused to share her profits with anyone, and Europe looked on with complete sangfroid while she attempted to defend those profits and failed.

Her trade would have gone on, even under disabilities, but in 1486 came the shrewdest blow of all. The Cape Route to India was discovered, and Venice now entered upon a slow but inevitable decline. The process, started by the withering of her trade, was accelerated by the League of Cambrai, composed of France, Austria, Spain and the Pope. It was a League of Robbers, for the conspirators proposed to fall on Venice without warning, after many assertions of their peaceful feelings toward her. Venice lost, temporarily, most of her territory, but her unrivalled skill at diplomacy

enabled her eventually to break up an alliance founded only on greed between countries who displayed neither moral principle nor good faith, and the lost towns were recovered. But from now on the hues of dissolution and decay became increasingly visible in the once great city of the lagoons.

However, the Lion of St. Mark, was by no means dead. Four times between 1500 and 1716 Venice warred with Turkey. Every war saw some further loss of her overseas possessions. Cyprus, Crete, and the Morea went one by one, and the Republic slowly shrank towards her original lagoons, the last dying effort being the humbling of the Bey of Tunis in 1792 by Angelo Emo, last of the great Venetian sailors. This period of decadence, when paupers multiplied, and trade decreased, was marked, curiously enough, by a great increase in extravagance, and Venice became to Europe a pleasure resort where the rich, the idle, and the spendthrift gathered to see the splendid shows, to gamble at the celebrated Ridotto, and to intrigue in the salons and drawing rooms of the palazzi.

At last, in 1797, came Napoleon and, at his touch, the government of the Serene and Ancient Republic crumbled and disappeared.

