

Verona

BY ARTHUR SYMONS

I

IN Verona the gutters are of marble. The ledge you lean upon, the flight of steps going up outside a house, the posts which block a street against wheels, the fountain in the market-place, are all made of white or red marble. Pillars of white or red marble hold up the overhanging roofs of shops, and the shopkeepers paste their advertisements over the marble. Every street has its marble doorway, window, or balcony, shaped after a fine Renaissance pattern or carved with beautiful ornament. The Loggia, in that Piazza dei Signori which holds so much history in its stones, shows only, in its harmony of delicate proportions and faint colors, white and gold and pink, a subtler and more conscious use of the materials which lie ready to the hand everywhere in Verona.

In an angle near the Ponte Navi, made by the Via Leoni and the Lungadige Bartolomeo Rubele, is an old fragment of white marble, on which two old and sleepy lions, wounded and worn with age, crouch on each side of a low pediment. To the right and left is a short marble pillar, with a square cross in a circle carved upon it. Over the tops of the houses, opposite the river, one sees the red and white tower, and the choir with its pointed gables set between slender cone-topped pillars, of the Gothic church of San Fermo Maggiore. In this huddle of white stone, which lies uncared for, in the road, before the doors of two shops, the forms are still alive, though sunk into the uneasy sleep of the wounded; for the back of one of the lions is clean broken away, and the faces of both have gone dim, as if rubbed and washed out by rains and dust. Not far off, along the Via Leoni, is the Arch of the Lions, a beautiful fragment of a double Roman gateway, built into the wall of a house, with a shop-window fitted into the arch, and oil-lamps in the shop-window; it stands

there, just turned aside from the tram-line, a beautiful and indestructible thing, all its forms washed over and half obliterated, but still keeping the pathetic grace of a broken statue.

And there are monsters everywhere, in red and white marble, crouching at the doors of churches and leaning over from the lintels, and carved in slabs let into the walls of houses. A very dreadful beast, with a face like a wheel, squats over the side doorway of the cathedral, clutched, I think, from behind by another beast whose home is in the stone; and over the pillar on the other side of the doorway there is another fantastic wrestle. At the main doorway there are two monsters of red marble, which still look alive and hardly older after seven centuries; their fur ribbed elegantly in conventional patterns along their smooth sides, and on one of them a strange design of a wheel, as if stamped into its flesh. They have not the solemn humor of the two red marble lions outside St. Mark's at Venice, homely, companionable beasts, but are fierce and watchful. They have the heads of cats or tigers, and one of them lays its heavy claws upon two rams' heads, which it crushes under it, while the other clutches the coils of a great snake which bites it with wide-open jaws. Columns of twisted and fluted red marble are set on their backs, and columns of smooth white marble stand behind them; and they help to hold up the under arch of the square doorway, with its alternate layers of smooth red marble and carved white marble.

And the two colors of Veronese marble, red and white, are repeated in bricks, in pavements, in castles, churches, palaces, and bridges; and at sunset the whole city seems to flush with ruddy light. After the lamps are lighted the colors are still visible. Square towers rise white and red above the houses, and everywhere there are tall archways which open upon



A FRAGMENT OF THE ARENA

lines of ruddy walls, or upon the gold blackness of a narrowing street.

II

In the Piazza Erbe there is a marble fountain of the time of Berengarius I.; a later statue, a little distracting, has been added to it, but its original design is the most simple and ample of any fountain I know. The basin is but slightly hollowed, and the water falling into it overflows upon a pavement that slopes outwards only just enough for the water to pour off it into a narrow rim around its edge, from which it is drained off on

one side through an iron grating. The Tribuna, the other marble columns, the column with the lion of St. Mark, set there when Verona became tributary to Venice, stand about it in the Piazza; and all over the ground white umbrellas rise like a wood of tall mushrooms, covering the stalls of fruit and vegetables, each umbrella set solidly into its wooden box, upon which it stands furled at night, like a great unlighted altar-candle. The Piazza Erbe is the most individual square that I know; hardly two houses are of the same century, and each has its own personal quality. There is one house

eight stories high; an ancient carved pillar stands in front of it; but it is mean, discolored, the plaster blackened, the green shutters peeled and stained; it is but two windows in breadth, and under almost every window there is a fragment of carved stone under the rusty iron balcony. The frescos in the Casa Mazzanti, Can Grande's house, where Dante was a guest, are not yet all gone from the walls; poor people look out between them from every window, and look on a square hardly changed except for its tram-line.

In the Via Mazzanti, at the back of the Piazza Erbe, the house of the Scalas is covered with balconies in long lines, with others set irregularly; and a tall outer staircase goes up along the wall to the third story. A few fine windows are still left; and below, clamped by long trails of iron hanging from the walls on each side of the narrow street, is a marble well, its eight sides covered with florid, effective carving, colored to many shades by age and dust. On the walls of the house, beside the *Volto Barbaro*, a passage which goes under fragments of old brickwork, looking out from the midst of modern building, there is an inscription, typical of many which may be seen in Verona: "*Mastino I della Scala, eletto Podestà nel 1260, Capitano del Popolo nel 1261, cadde ucciso a tradimento li*

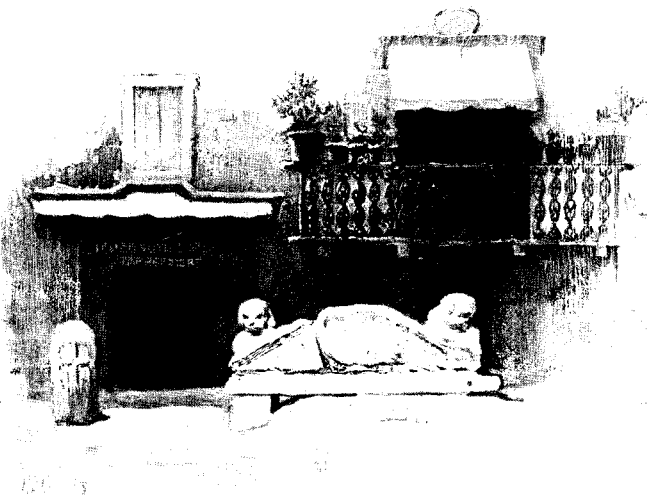
17 Ottobre 1277, presso questo volto da ciò detto Barbaro" (*Mastino I della Scala, elected Podestà in 1260, Captain of the People in 1261, fell, treacherously slain, the 17th October, 1277, near this arch, thence called Barbarous*).

The Piazza was once the Forum, when Verona was Roman; now it is the fruit-market, and the tram runs backwards and forwards through it all day long, down the street of the Lions, and past the house where they tell you Juliet lived. I was walking through it after dark, and I heard a thin tinkle of music coming out between half-closed shutters. Looking through them, I saw the waiter of the "*Deposito di Birra*," in his shirt-sleeves, whirled round in the arms of a customer who wore a hat and was smoking a Virginia. A moment later the landlady and a woman who had been sitting at one of the tables waltzed past the window. The guitar tinkled; the dancers laughed, stopped, and went back to the tables at which they sat or waited.

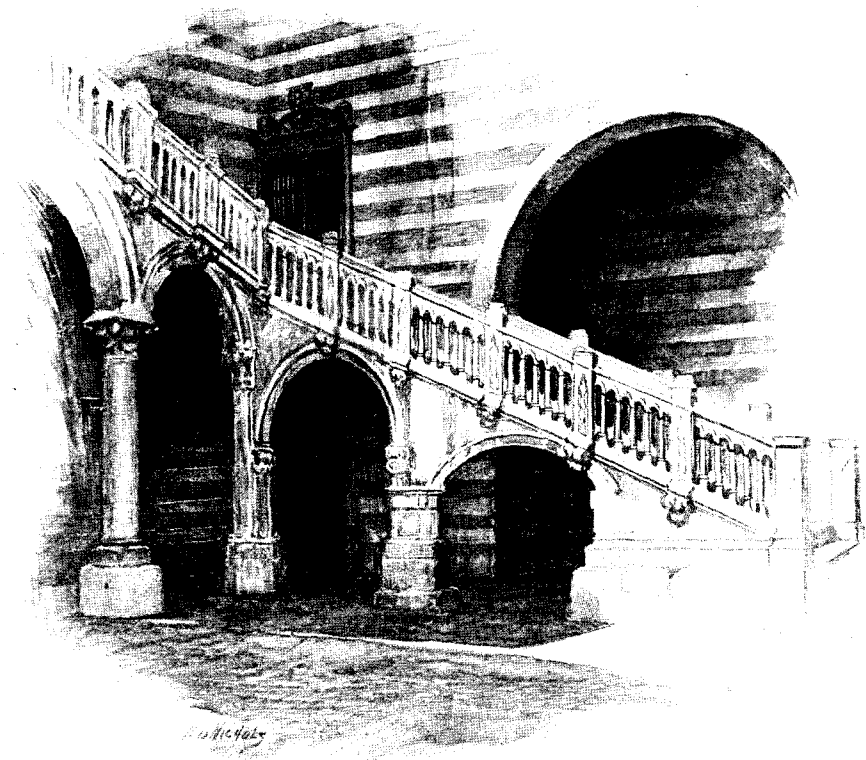
III

Among the many pictures at Verona I remember chiefly two Mantegnas. In San Zeno there is a throned Madonna and Saints, painted in 1459, and in this early picture one sees the suggestion of almost everything that is to become essentially the quality of Mantegna. It

is fine, firm, and admirably designed, but with something in it a little hard and stiff. The figures, the architecture, the curious and elaborate scrollwork, are all characteristic; and the formal part of a style is there already. But there is not yet a complete mastery, soul as well as form; the temperament, which is to make the artist the great



THE MARBLE LIONS



THE OUTER STAIRCASE IN THE COURTYARD

artist, waits. In the Mantegna of the Palazzo Pompei the paint is cracked and rubbed, giving a roughened surface to the whole picture; but it is wholly fine, and full of gracious and very personal severity. The face of the Madonna is taken from the same model as the famous Madonna in the Brera at Milan; but what seems so much like mere prettiness in that charming composition has disappeared, and the beauty has deepened.

In the same gallery there is a Cesare da Sesto, a Pictà, with the conventional rocks, the conventional arches; but in the tiny picture there is a lovely jewel-like quality which one does not always find in the work of that uncertain painter. There is a Francia, too, a Holy Family, almost like a Perugino, which has a simpler quality of charm than any Francia I remember, with none of that forced and empty quality of pious emphasis which renders so large a part of his work

uninteresting. And there is a Holy Family of Titian which is more purely a picture than anything in the gallery. In Titian's work it is hardly remembered; but it stands there, among so many admirable things, the work of the most wholly pictorial of all the painters.

IV

When I try to call up Verona, it is always the cypresses of the Giardino Giusti, and the tall terraces which their tops almost reach, that come first to my mind. They are among the oldest cypresses in Europe, and among the tallest. I remember a bronze label on one incredibly wrinkled, dry, wizened, but still living bark, attesting it to have stood there four hundred years. The lean, ancient things stood as straight as pillars; the whole slender stem seemed to sway with every breath of wind, as I looked down on them from the height from which

one sees across Verona to the Apennines. A cypress never looks young, and these, when one saw only the sombre green fur of their foliage, looked no older than any cypress in any Turkish graveyard. To pass under them, and look close, was to see how like is the work of time working by centuries upon the vegetable life of trees, to the work of time on the little animal lifetime of men.

And then, as I think again of Verona, I see the church porch at the end of the street to which I came back every day, Sant' Anastasia, with its ribbed brick-work and the marble arch of the doorway, and the fresco of the lunette. The bronze gates of San Zeno, each with its twenty-four reliefs, in the literal twelfth-century manner; the plain arches of the Roman bridge and the winglike Ghibelline battlements of Can Grande's bridge of the fourteenth century, with its inner galleries; a glimpse of old tall houses going right down into the river, as one sees them in Canaletto's pictures of Verona, done before the embankment straightened and spoiled it; and then the lizard which I saw clinging to the wall of the hotel as I looked out of the window, and the inch-long snake which lay

asleep by the side of the pavement—these, by I know not what unconscious choice of the memory, come back before my eyes, and help to station Verona. And, as vividly as anything there, I see the old water-seller who sat just aside from the Via Nuova, her copper-topped table of green wood with its pattern of brass nails, made to fit between the two short pillars of red marble with tops of white marble which stood at the entrance of the alley; the bottles with brass stoppers which held some colored liquid, the large copper can which held the water, and the vast copper bowl with water for washing the glasses.

V

The Via Nuova is a narrow street which leads from the Piazza Erbe to the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele; it is a street of shops, closed at both ends to traffic, like the Sierpes at Seville, and, like that, it is the evening promenade, or the beginning of a promenade which expands into that immense square which contains the Arena in one corner, leaving enough space over for the Municipio, the old Guard House, and the mediæval gateway of the Viscontis, besides a palace, cafés, shops, around no more than



HOUSES NEAR THE ROMAN BRIDGE

its outer edges. Beside the Arena, the oldest things in Verona are new, and look already passing into decay. When Dante walked in it, it was a ruin, and since that century it has suffered little except at the hands of the restorers. It was built for cruel use, not for beauty; and there is a sternness in its aspect which would suit ill with any not serious or deadly sport. But now, browned, defaced, the whole skeleton of its walls left naked, one ruinous fragment of an outer wall still standing, unsupported and in all the disarray of age, it has that beauty of use, order, and strength which we have learned to see in the unadorned

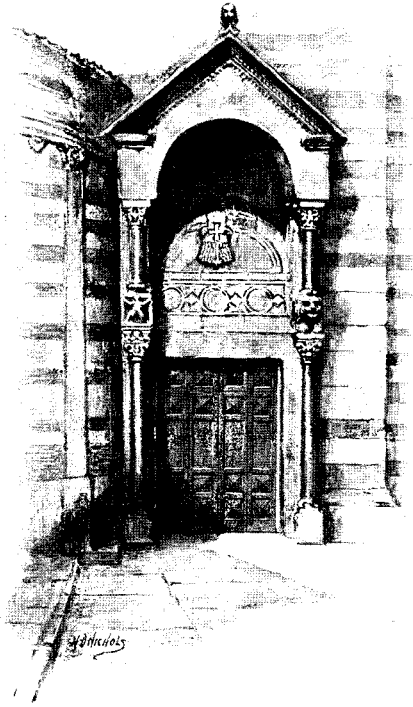
and very simple building of the Romans, almost wherever two stones are left on one another and not yet cast down. Seen at night, with a purple sunset facing it across the gate of the Viscontis, and a tragic moon breaking through clouds, in a circle of white light, behind and above

the great curve of its wall, it has another, romantic, almost Gothic, aspect, like that of those ruins of the Middle Ages which we begin to tire of, as being, like Swiss

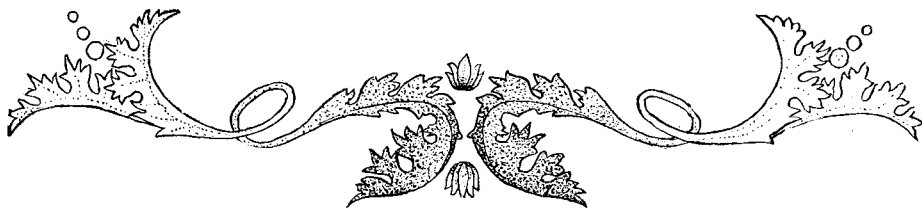
scenery, too picturesque, too splendidly arranged for effect. But a quieting of the clouds brings it back to its austerity.

In the evenings the band plays in the Piazza, and the chairs of the cafés spread right across the broad pavement, and the people walk slowly up and down, coming from the Via Nuova, passing by the Arena, and going nearly up to the old gateway. I sat there with great content, thinking of other city squares where I had sat

watching the people from a chair set on the pavement outside a café, and I wondered whether even in the great square of St. Mark's, where I should soon be, I should find more to remember, in what my eyes rested on, or a more adventurous point of flight for dreams.



SIDE DOORWAY OF CATHEDRAL



The Gray Chieftain

BY OHIYESA—A SIOUX INDIAN

(CHARLES A. EASTMAN, M.D.)

ON the westernmost verge of the Cedar Butte stood Haykinskah and his mate. They looked steadily toward the setting sun, over a landscape which up to that time had scarcely been viewed by man—the inner circle of the Bad Lands.

Cedar Butte guards the southeastern entrance of that wonderland, standing fully a thousand feet above the surrounding country, and nearly half a mile long by a quarter of a mile wide. The summit is a level, grassy plain, its edges heavily fringed with venerable cedars. To attempt the ascent of this butte is like trying to scale the walls of Babylon, for its sides are high and all but inaccessible. Near the top there are hanging lands or terraces and innumerable precipitous points, with here and there deep chimneys or abysses in the solid rock. There are many hidden recesses, and more than one secret entrance to this ancient castle of the Gray Chieftain and his ancestors, but to assail it successfully required more than common skill and spirit.

Many a coyote had gone up as high as the second leaping bridge, and there abandoned the attempt. Old Grizzly had once or twice begun the ascent with doubt and misgiving, but soon discovered his mistake, and made clumsy haste to descend before he should tumble into an abyss from which no one ever returns. Only Igmutanka, the mountain-lion, had achieved the summit, and at every ascent he had been well repaid; yet even he seldom chose to risk such a climb, when there were many fine hunting-grounds in safer neighborhoods.

So it was that Cedar Butte had been the peaceful home of the Big Spoon-horns for untold ages. To be sure, some of the younger and more adventurous members of the clan would depart from

time to time to found new families, but the wiser and more conservative were content to remain in their stronghold. There stood the two patriarchs, looking down complacently upon the herds of buffalo, antelope, and elks that peopled the lower plains. While the red sun hovered over the western hills, a coyote upon a near-by eminence gave his accustomed call to his mate. This served as a signal to all the wild hunters of the plains to set up their inharmonious evening serenade, to which the herbivorous kindred paid but little attention. The phlegmatic Spoon-horn pair listened to it all with a fine air of indifference, like that of one who sits upon his own balcony, superior to the passing noises of the street.

It was a charming moonlight night upon the cedar-fringed plain, and there the old chief presently joined the others in feast and play. His mate sought out a secret resting-place. She followed the next gulch, which was a perfect labyrinth of caves and pockets, and after leaping two chasms she reached her favorite spot. Here the gulch made a square turn, affording a fine view of the country through a windowlike opening. Above and below this were perpendicular walls, and at the bottom a small cavity—the washout made by a root of a pine which had long since fallen. To this led a narrow terrace—so narrow that man or beast would stop and hesitate long before making the venture. The place was her own by right of daring and discovery, and the mother's instinct had brought her here to-night.

In a little while relief came, and the ewe stood over a new-born lamb, licking tenderly the damp, silky coat of hair, and trimming the little hoofs of their cartilaginous points. The world was quiet now, and those whose business it was to hunt or feed at night must do so