

Once a Highway for the World

BY ROBERT SHACKLETON

AT the very edge of Venice is a long and once glorious line of villas where the old Venetians revelled in splendor; villas built upon the mainland, along the course of the river Brenta; villas before whose doors ran the landway and waterway, the double highway, between Padua and Venice, which for many centuries was the main approach to the splendid city of the sea. Venice the Beautiful, as a writer quaintly expressed it, stood beside the domes of St. Mark, but the jewelled train of her mantle stretched along the shores of the Brenta.

The villas, near to Venice though they are, and readily accessible, are now seen by few, for the coming of the railroad made a new approach to the city, and visitors forget their existence. And Venice herself had first forgotten them. For, when the power of the city dwindled and her riches passed away, there came to an end the golden-robed and silken-shod luxury that had loved to display itself in this suburban life. Many of the villas fell long ago forlornly into ruin, with gardens wrecked and balconies demolished and halls and ceilings tottering to a fall. Others vanished utterly. Still others, their fair radiance departed, and now shabby and defaced, give corners of their spaciousness to peasants, who thus sit in the seats of the mighty. Only a few of the villas are well maintained: one, literally a palace, because the government preserves it as a national monument, and two or three because they are in the hands of rich and liberal owners.

It is not only that the poor live in some of the ancient abodes of grandeur. The poor the Italian has always with him, and in abundance; and so here, along the Brenta, there are not only ruined homes of the proud, but also little villages of the humble. The neglected mansions would not be nearly so full of interest, nearly so picturesque, were it

not for the accompanying interest and picturesqueness of peasant and village life. For a gossipy, gladsome, gesticulative folk are these, and though poor enough if measured by the standard of money, rich in content and happiness.

Often and often has the Brenta been the text for enthusiasms. The cultured Evelyn wrote, in his famous diary, of the river so deliciously adorned with villas and gardens. Two hundred years later, Disraeli wrote of the number, variety, and splendor of the houses, which even in his day had fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf. D'Annunzio has seized upon the poetry and inspiration in these melancholy remains of former magnificence. And Mrs. Wharton gives the heroine of a powerful short story, set in the Italy of the past, a triumphant season on the Brenta, in a palace of myriad glories.

Building sumptuous houses on the mainland followed as a consequence of landward conquests and acquisitions. And, indeed, it was the realization of landward ambitions that marked the beginning of the end of Venetian power. The discovery of a route around the Cape of Good Hope is generally set down as the reason for decline, but it would not have been of potency had not the city been already weakened by its landward successes. It conquered Belluno and it conquered Padua, and its warriors loved to ride on horses as well as on vessels of war and gondolas.

And it would really seem—to take the ultimate step in this inquiry of cause and effect—as if the Venetian love for horses lay at the root of their desire to be masters of land. For Venice is an absolutely horseless city. On foot or by water must its people go. And hence there came into operation the yearning, deep-based in human nature, for what is tantalizingly attractive and at the same time attainable only with difficulty. The

Venetians put themselves on horseback and, although infinitely distant from beggarhood, went the proverbial way. The best of all the statues of Venice is an equestrian: that of Colleoni, by Verrocchio, an admirable replica of which has been placed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. And the huge-columned church, that of Saints Giovanni and Paolo, whose portal is guarded by this horsebacked effigy, bears within its stately monuments of old-time doges, bestriding caparisoned steeds. In the sombrely housed libraries of Venice are ancient prints showing Brenta villas in their glory, and in front of the villas the artists loved to place cavaliers upon curvetting horses. For these cavaliers, crossing the lagoon from the city, loved to gallop along the road to Padua, past barges filled with travellers intent on reaching the wonderful city.

For centuries the Brenta was fiercely fought for by Padua and Venice. For centuries its stream has been confined as a canal, for its uncontrolled meanderings led it changefully across the plain between the rival cities. For centuries it was a great artery of commerce, and the interests of Padua and Venice were so diverse as to its course that battles were fought for the mere object of demolishing an old dike or constructing a new one. Not until Padua itself was taken and held by Venice were bounds finally set to the river, and then, at its mouth, was set a contrivance of pulleys and inclined planes, long since vanished, for the lifting of river craft over the bar which was always forming. The Brenta firmly secured, the advantages of its banks as a dwelling-place for wealthy Venetians were seen; and patrician after patrician chose his locality and his stately pleasure dome decreed.

"Venice," naïvely wrote dear old Froissart, five and a half centuries ago, "is one of the dearest towns in the world for strangers." He knew Italy and its cities, his principal visit to that country having been to attend, as a guest, a princely wedding, at which (so runs the delightful old tale) two of his fellow guests were Chaucer and Petrarch. Froissart did not set down that Venice was a town of extravagant citizens as well as a town expensive for strangers, for he doubtless took

it for granted that the citizens' extravagance was matter of common knowledge. And it was but a very few years after he wrote, that the city sought a new outlet for luxurious expenditure by beginning this expansion along the Brenta.

Leaving Venice, leaving the Piazza of St. Mark and the Doge's Palace, and setting forth for the forgotten villas and the forgotten highway that was so long a highway for the world, you do not turn down the familiar Grand Canal, but into the broad and forgotten Giudecca, where you pass big gondolas, two-rowed, heavy laden with great logs that stretch out on either side with centipedal effect. You pass boats with sails of yellow and hulls of red and brown. And you pass merchant ships at anchor, that have come from distant ports of the world.

And now the marvellous city is behind you, and you are sailing across a broad and shimmering lagoon, and you pass an island with the delightful name of St. George in the Seaweed, and you see the darkened surface and the reed-like wavings that tell that the island is well named. Of note, this island, in the ancient days, though no one ever visits it now; for, midway between mainland and city, it was where ambassadors and other guests of state were often received. The island was long the site of a great churchly establishment, and monks looked out upon a busy world from what is now a crumbled red pile of masonry; and, glancing at it as the boat carries you by, you notice that a few soldiers militant have replaced the soldiers of the cross.

Farther you go, across the shallow waters of the lagoon; and soon you are nearing a reedy and melancholy shore, where a little patch of tile and plaster, red and yellow, marks ancient Fusina, at the Brenta's mouth.

Following the river inland, there is a great stretch of level country, endlessly ditched and irrigated. Here and there the thatched house of a peasant, here and there a stooping line of toilers in the fields; women and men in clothing of sun-mellowed charm; and soon, above the vine-grown levels and the glimmering canals, a spacious building comes in view.

A palace, this; but its glory has departed, its princely tenants have gone.

It is fronted by a row of mighty columns, but below them the carefully wrought work of the artisan has fallen away in ruin, and of the noble stairways which formed the outer approach, one has altogether vanished and the other has lost its classic balustrade and stands in bare denudedness. This palace, one of the masterpieces of Palladio, was built for two brothers of the house of Foscari; and the name by which it is known—Malcontenta—is the survival of the dark story of a woman, of discontent, of love and jealousy.

The palace is now naked and bleak, and on either side are apartments exactly alike: one set of rooms for one brother and one for the other, with a cross-shaped audience-hall between for the common use of both.

There are fireplaces of pink marble, and vaulted ceilings, and in the central hall there are frescoed Muses and Arts, that, regardless of their faded beauty, look down with a smile or with grave regard at the visitor whose echoing footsteps disturb their solitude, even as they looked on the gay throngs of vanished time.

And in another room, long since vandalized by whitewash, the yellow covering has flaked away just enough to show a lovely woman, in the splendid apparel of the time of Venetian glory. She is painted on the wall, with her foot on the level of the floor, and gives a curious impression of standing within the room. A haughty and enigmatical smile is on her lips, and you like to believe the legend of the countryside that this woman, decked with pearls and apparelled in silk and lace, is the one whose history gave the shivery name of Malcontenta.

Push aside the shutters from a window whose leaded glass has long since vanished, and there is a sweet and lovely view. There are the interminable stretches, crowded thick with luscious growth; there, to the northward, rises the Alpine line; there is the lagoon, on whose farther side lies Venice, with the sun glistening on towers and domes.

A red-sailed, black-hulled barge comes slowly up the Brenta; a painted ship on water painted marvellously green; and one's mind goes back to the glory of the past, and to that time in the sixteenth

century when, with mighty pomp and circumstance, Henry the Third of France came to this house, accompanied from Venice by senators and patricians in barges rowed by slaves.

With stairs and vaultings of solid stone, and roof and floors of tile, the house defies the desolation of the centuries. But there are lichens and mosses on the walls; latticed windows are wrecked; scrolls and ornaments and carving are defaced. And in a perspectived avenue of trees I saw an incongruous descendant of the past: a strutting peacock with tail gloriously outspread, owned by the peasants who live in a corner of the palace and who cook their dinner of herbs in an enormous Palladian fireplace with carved lion's feet and fluted pillars of stone.

Beyond Malcontenta are willow trees and orchards, and meadows rich in grass, and endless vineyards, and long vines garlanded between pollarded mulberries; and here and there a great gate of wrought iron tells where a villa stood, or at a cottage door stands a shattered pillar, carried there long ago from the wreck of a noble house.

Great numbers of statues are still to be seen. At many of the villas the ancient statues were long since destroyed or carried away, and empty pedestals alone remain; but a host of figures still stand grouped in gardens or extend along old avenues. Smiling or dancing, posing in stateliness, or eternally pouring libations—gods and goddesses, nymphs and heroes, loves and graces, marred, broken, yellowed, lichened—they are doing patiently on their pedestals for the peasants what in old days they did for patricians; and in all this is a grim and theatrical impressiveness, as of broken-down actors and actresses representing the glories of the olden time.

Numbers of the villas have not only the charm of general association with the pride of former days, but have definite legends or history clinging about the great rooms and the window-seats and the charming alcoves. There are tiny canals running up to private landing-places, and loggias from which the procession of boats and horses was watched by languid ladies and from which the snowy Alps are seen, gleaming austere and cold above the steaming plain.

One house, not far from Malcontenta, is honored because it stands upon the site of an earlier one which Dante for a time occupied. Dante wrote of the Brenta, too, but the time of his residence there was before the era of Venetian occupancy.

One must look heedfully if he would see every one of the still existent villas, for there are defaced and cheaply stuccoed houses which might hastily be passed by without interest, but which are shown in the ancient prints as the villas of this or that great family whose name is in the Golden Book. The Italians love to stucco any building, old or new; and, so far as apparent age is concerned, a touch of stucco makes all buildings kin.

Less interesting, except as illustrative of human nature, are the few garish houses, comparatively modern, put up by pretentious folk who would fain have the appearance of living here as did the rich and the powerful; but of real interest are the simple houses of the frankly humble. And the villages and those who live in them have a peculiar right to attention, because some of these towns are very, very ancient, having authentic histories running back for many hundreds of years, and because numbers of the village folk are doubtless of ancestry antedating the period of the glory of Venice.

Tradition has it that near one of these towns one of the battles between Venice and Padua took place, and that the Venetians won through setting free large numbers of bees, who flew at the Paduans and, slipping under their visors, stung them into retreat.

The humble Brenta dwellers are a cheerful and credulous folk. They love music, they love games, they love color, they love the dance. I remember that the little Dutch children of Maarken all seemed men and women; but the men and women of the Brenta all seem children, and all happy ones.

Even the grinness of certain of their beliefs does not give them gloominess. They know that three knockings in the night can come only from the Angel of Death—but (crossing themselves) we ought not to worry, for all of us must die. They know that to spill olive oil or milk brings bad luck, but they also

know (praise this or that Italian saint!) that to spill wine means a marriage. To dream of a tooth drawn out means death; but to find a horseshoe or a muleshoe means good luck, and to find a coin with a hole in it insures very good luck, and, on the whole, there is more good than evil in the world, and so let us eat and drink and be merry, for, in spite of dreams prognostic, to-morrow we live!

I have heard Italians of more favored regions deplore the malaria of the Brenta, and say, "The people are yellow of face." But the Brenta folk do not permit even malaria to disturb them. The men contend endlessly at bowls, or perhaps, in the evening, they eagerly play with queer Italian cards, or get out their checkers and their chess; their chess permitting odd moves with the pawns, and their checkers having the rule that a king is immune from capture except by another king, and that (to border on a Hibernianism) these are not kings at all, but queens.

Even in the literature read by the Brentaside there is found a certain amusement; for I have seen one man reading *L'Asino* and another *Il Mulo* and another *Sigaretta*. Incidentally, it reminded me of having heard, in America, that Italian humor is far beyond our own in purity, delicacy, cleverness, and charm.

The great villas, through the limitless extravagance of their building, their outfitting and maintenance, were the cause of the breaking of many a fortune, and thus of the subsequent desertion and decay of the buildings. That several were built by Palladio recalls the story that, in revenge for being refused admittance into the order of nobility, he deliberately set himself to ruin Italian nobles through the expense that his building plans entailed. The nobles of this part of Italy, however, were themselves not backward in working for their own ruin; like the one who loved to skip gold pieces, sequins, like pebbles, along the surface of the Brenta, or the one who was in the pleasant habit of throwing the fragile table service out of window to thrill his guests.

At one ruined villa, where I found pigeons roosting in the bare and desolate entrance hall, the peasant who opened doors and gates told me, with deep mean-

ing in his tone, as he showed me into the garden, that oleanders once grew there, but had vanished; it being an ancient Italian superstition that with the decay of oleanders begins the decay of the fortunes of a house.

What is known as the villa of Valmarano, near the town of Mira Porte, is a splendid example of the glorious extravagance of the past. I reached there, from my last stopping-place, by

it would do, and which absurdly sank just as we reached the farther side.

This so-called villa consists of two palaces placed where the river, curving, gives a charming view. They are precisely similar, and each stretches back in a succession of lofty rooms. But to say this is to say only part; for in the space between these two palaces there once stood a still grander structure, every vestige of which has gone; a palace of

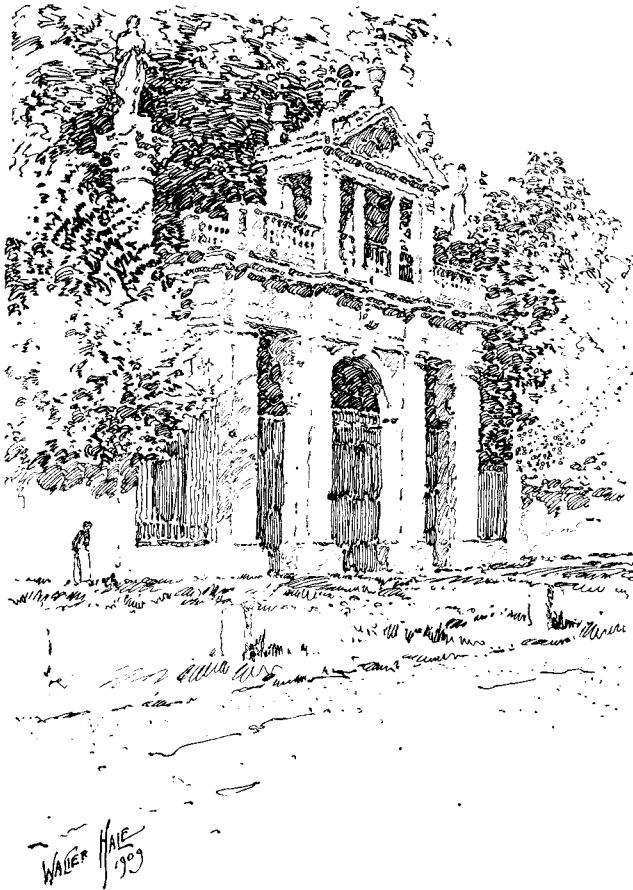
such noble size that these two served fittingly as appanages. And all these united to make the home of a single patrician!

And these two appanages stand in desolation. They have long and stately colonnades, and they show pillared vistas of great impressiveness, but some of the rooms are heaped with grain, others are littered with wine-presses and carts, in others the plaster has fallen in great pieces; and yet, amid this wreck of past glory, lovely goddesses, whose frescoed faces are still full of beauty and charm, bravely smile as if to assert that the smile of woman is superior to ruin and may even recall the tender grace of a day that is dead.

And the reflection comes, that while nations were quarrelling, and armies clashing, artists and sculptors kept calm-

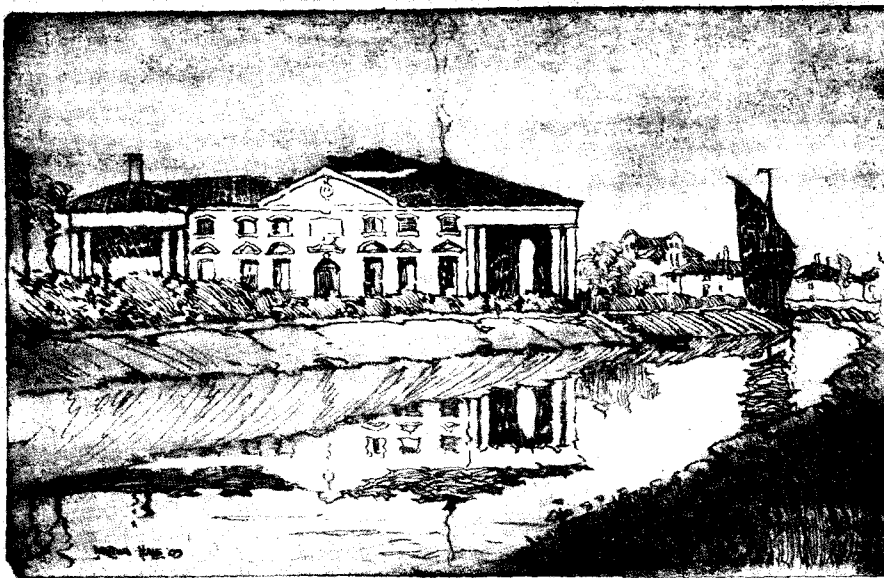
ly at their work. Dante wrote of the Brenta, and Veronese painted ceilings, Palladio erected homes there, and Tintoretto made pictures for their walls, heedless of affairs of peace or war.

To drive beside the river, along the



AN ENTRANCE TO THE PISANI PALACE, ONCE THE HOME OF NAPOLEON

driving beside a Brenta man in a tiny cart drawn by a pony no bigger than a dog, and I crossed the stream with another Brenta man in a water-logged and leaky dugout, which he looked at in lengthy dubitation before deciding that



THE VILLA OF VALMARANO, AN EXAMPLE OF THE GLORIOUS EXTRAVAGANCE OF THE PAST

hard firm roads and past the endless stone road-posts, puts one vividly in touch with the past, and it is even more fascinating to go slowly up the stream by boat—for there are boats, for freight, with red and ochre sails; there are boats drawn by horses or drawn by men; there are boats with long ropes running quaintly, as of old, from the stern to the top of the mast and thence to the towing-power on shore, and there are boats propelled by gondoliers.

There are tall poplars which send their shadows far down into the water. There are pretty peasant girls standing under the escutcheons of nobility. Ox teams swing down ancient avenues. There is a shipyard, where barges have for centuries been launched and where a handful of men still work at hull and keel. There are long white roads. There are ditches, thick-padded with water-lilies and with yellow primroses on their banks. There are ancient plane trees long since trimmed to fan-shaped flatness and now grown distorted and grotesque. There are old stone wells.

It is of especial interest to notice how different is the architecture from any in Venice. It might have been expected that the architects would follow familiar

Venetian forms, but instead they put up a series of houses of an entirely different character.

The possession of this river and of Padua meant much to the Venetians. Not only did it solve questions of health and commerce, and give them indisputably a line of traffic; not only did it give the longed-for chance for rural homes and gardens for their children's play; but it also gave them the source of supply of a strong dark lime which would resist the action of salt water and sea air. It was in the fifteenth century that Padua was seized; had it been earlier, the Campanile of St. Mark's would not have fallen.

At no great distance above Valmarano is a fine villa, yellow-fronted and of happy aspect; with white stone lions pawing armorial bearings at the entrance and little lions crouched captivately above. It looks like one of the charming modern Florentine villas of to-day, so fresh and clean it is. Yet it is a house of the sixteenth century, and was then inhabited by a Contarini, Procurator of St. Mark's, and was given a visit by a foreign king, who, passing by, was so taken with the charm of its appearance that he stopped his barge and landed there.

Noble old apartments are those in this favored Contarini villa; but the ancient furnishings and frescoes passed with the passing of ancient ownership, the finest of the wall decorations having been taken long since to Paris. In front of the villa there is a mighty line of gnarled trees, the trunks of which are green with moss. The immediate surroundings were in the past particularly pleasing, although now all is changed.

Here and there, along the line of the Brenta, there are still the remains of ancient gardens; and an ancient and overgrown and high-walled garden must needs be felicitous, especially when still shaded by the cypress and the ilex, and when untrimmed shrubbery has grown into mysterious thickets, with here and there neglected wall-flowers growing from wall crevices where they have found refuge, and here and there a tangle of rosemary hanging like an old man's beard. And as one walks through such a deserted garden a pungent and fascinating odor arises from the gray-green artemisia crushed underfoot, and mingles with the haunting odor of the bay. And now and then one still finds the great terra-cotta pots, three feet or so across, that held oleanders or orange trees.

One sees along the Brenta that color is a poor man's luxury. A red-capped man ploughs a brown field with white oxen. From the blue-shuttered window of a gray house a green-gowned woman lowers a tiny basket for the casual letter or the morning's milk. A black-hatted priest flourishes a big blue handkerchief. Red-skirted, purple-skirted, maroon-waisted girls sing as they paddle, washing by the waterside. A green-shirted man hammers a tawny dried fish on a gray stone post with a yellow mallet. White ducks go swimming on green water in front of a red-tiled house. It was not an Italian who said that to add another hue unto the rainbow is wasteful and ridiculous excess.

A certain spirit of independence among the peasantry comes largely, I think, from their lifelong familiarity with palaces and coats-of-arms in a state of ruin. It comes, too, from the simple character of their local government. Each man who pays taxes of not less than ten lire (two dollars) a year is priv-

ileged to vote for member of the council, and each town council elects the sindaco or mayor. If in a multitude of councillors there is wisdom, wisdom should be rife here, for a single small town is likely to have as many as thirty, who serve without pay, and come together twice a year unless called for some special meeting in addition. "The Brenta is a country of gold!" said a councillor to me, proudly, one day; but he did not mean this in a material sense.

The old woman who sells you (for one cent) a very holy picture, in very gaudy colors, has her feelings really hurt if you give her the desired wealth and then don't care to take the picture, for she fears you will think her a beggar. Yes; and this in Italy!

Most of the poorer folk never get so far as even to visit near-by Venice. "Why should we go? We do not care for the city. We are tillers of the soil," they will say.

But always, from contemplation of the people, no matter how simple-hearted and interesting, and of the villages, no matter how ancient in history and in legend, one comes back with renewed and deeper interest to the palaces and the villas.

One of the most interesting of the villas is that of the ancient family of the Foscari, but as you approach it, boating up the placid stream, you see but a building of plain and almost commonplace aspect, with some shabby greenery peeping over the wall behind it. It has changed since the days of the past, when it was one of the most beautiful and charming villas of the Brenta.

This is the Brenta villa in which Byron for so many years lived, and in connection with his life here there are tales of his love for an imperious peasant beauty, a Brenta girl, who was long an important factor in his life.

A school for peasant children occupies some of the rooms of this villa, and a maker of soap uses the remainder—but there is much in the history of the building which soap cannot wash away, and there is more to learn from it than will be taught to the black-eyed children whose knives serrate the edges of the simple desks and forms. For there are more than Byronic associations; the villa having been associated with one of the

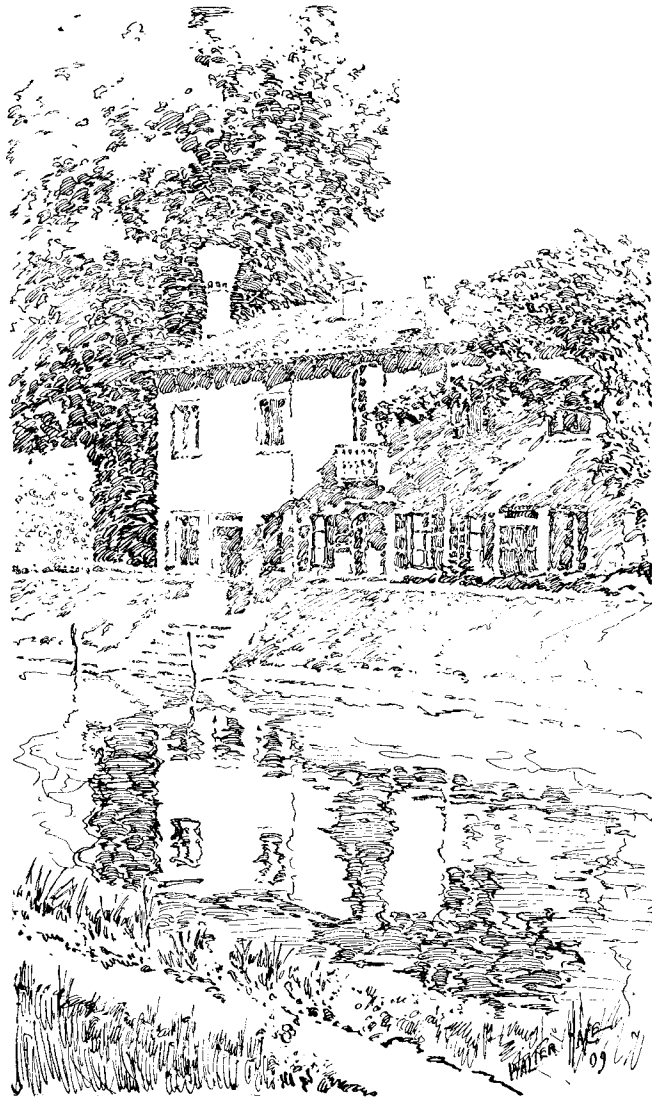
grimmiest of Venetian tragedies, that of the love of Antonio Foscarini for an Englishwoman, the Countess of Arundel, wife of the Arundel of the Marbles, Earl Marshal of England.

The Countess had first met Foscarini when he was ambassador at London; and that he held such a post marks him as a man not only of importance, but of manners and presence.

Some time after Foscarini's recall from London to Venice, about 1620, it was noticed that the Countess of Arundel secured a villa on the Brenta, close beside his; but all prudence and conventionality were observed, and it merely appeared as if she were a foreigner who appreciated the fineness and beauty of that riverside life.

The tragedy, when it came, was made to appear the work of an Italian enemy, but it can scarcely be doubted that the absent Earl of Arundel had been aroused to vengeance, and that he found means to deal a distant blow.

One day in 1622 the great Foscarini found himself before the most dread tribunal on earth, on a charge of treason, the ground for the accusation being his frequent visits to the English Countess, with whom he was charged to be plotting against the interests of the Republic. It was pointed out that he was a man who walked a good deal by night, and that his steps had often led him to the home



A VILLA ON THE BRENTA

of the Countess, who was deemed an apparent enemy of Venice.

Foscarini found his position eminently embarrassing, for his birth and his manliness prevented him from offering such a defence as would put a different face on the matter. The end, for him, came swiftly. The Ten had heard him in secret, but at least they rewarded him openly, for one morning his dead body was found dangling by the foot from the public gallows.

The English ambassador at Venice,

deeply impressed by all this, sent warning to the Countess to escape; but escape was the last thing in her thoughts! Hers was not the first case nor the last in which guilt has been far more bold-faced than innocence could possibly be. She went into the city, and so violently protested her innocence of wrong-doing of any sort, of even wrong intentions, that the Doge was constrained to issue a declaration that her protests were just and that there had been a terrible mistake, the judges having acted on evidence given by a man who, under torture, had now confessed his wickedness.

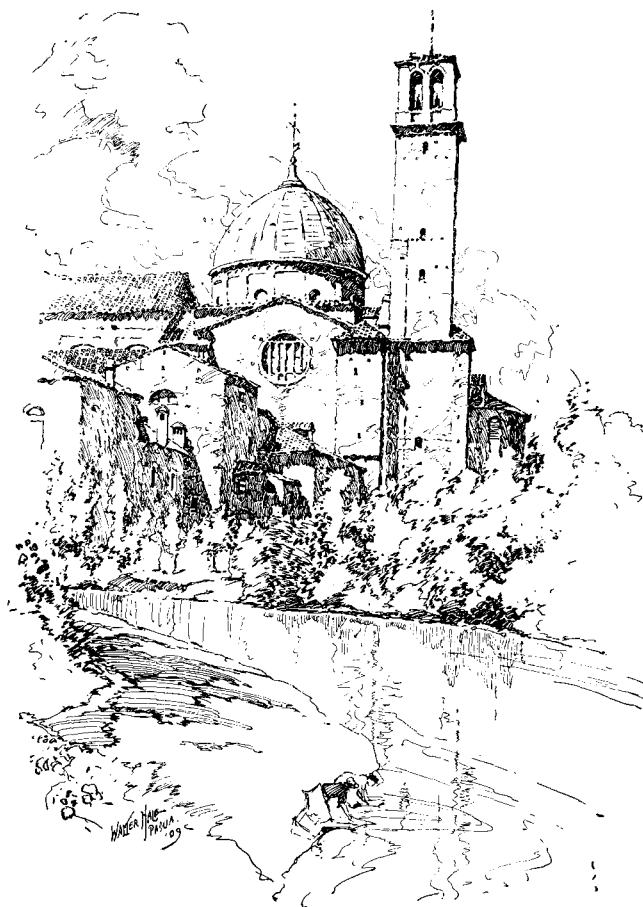
The Doge also sent to the irate Countess his most contrite personal apologies, and with them, in recognition of the eternal feminine, a magnificent gift of

waxworks and sweetmeats. Nor was she content with this. She demanded an exonerative resolution from the Venetian Senate, and it was promptly voted. She then demanded that the Venetian ambassador in London inform her husband and King James the First that there had been a grave mistake, and that she was an innocent woman who had been deeply maligned—which information one may fancy the Earl looking up from the study of his art treasures to receive, with outward thanks for the care for the reputation of his wife and the inward reflection that at least Foscari was well killed.

The garden is still as it was, save that the trees and greenery, long untrimmed, have grown wild and thicket-like, and

that some of the pedestals are now statueless. There is a bosky avenue, crossed with black shadows, where the ill-fated ambassador, little thinking that the shadows were falling across his life, was wont to pace. There are broken stone seats circled about in a retired nook; and there are violets and flowers of yellow and red, such as have been picked by generations of lovers there.

From Fusina to Padua is a little more than twenty miles, and at the distance of fifteen miles one comes to the town of Strà, and near this town stands a palace, of great size and cost, which was put up in final flaunting arrogance when the Venetian Republic was hastening toward its fall. It was erected by the



OLD PADUA, WHICH STILL BEARS TRACES OF VENETIAN SUPREMACY



A SHIPYARD WHERE FOR CENTURIES BARGES HAVE BEEN LAUNCHED

family of Pisani, distinguished for its doges and generals, and may be deemed almost modern, for it was begun and finished less than two centuries ago. It is a huge palace of over two hundred rooms—and Italian rooms are always large!—and there was no sparing of expense for pomp and decoration; and whereas most of the other palaces stand so near the river as to be vividly reflected in the water, this at Strà is set in the midst of a great park.

The palace has a host of princely and even royal associations, through the titled folk who have been visitors there. The great Napoleon made his home at this palace for a time, and the people still tell of how he reviewed his troops from a belvedere above a great entranceway which opens into the palace gardens. It is said, too, by the country folk, that the huge gates of the central portal have remained closed since the time of Napoleon's stay, so that it might forever be said that his carriage was the last to be driven through. It is by beliefs such as these that the real greatness of a man may be tested, even more than by the

winning of battles. Only a giant can print indentations in memory and legend with his lightest touch.

Napoleon so admired the place that he purchased it, and afterward gave it to Eugène, the son of his beloved Josephine. It is now cared for by the Italian government as a national monument.

Continuing up the Brenta, the city of Padua is reached, where the Venetian lion still stands in front of the palace wherein dwelt the Venetian governor, and where the famed university still occupies the building whose erection Venice decreed.

To gain a deep and final impression of this strange Brenta land one should drive along the waterside, on a gloomy day, as the evening mist rises toward a blurred sky.

The pallid, sallow houses, the slim campaniles standing above the level plain, the red-stockinged boys clattering in wooden shoes, the women drawing heavy barrows across the fields, the thatched roofs covered with thick moss, the wayside shrines, the eight white oxen yoked together to draw one plough, the kneeling women washing clothes on the river's

brink and stooping to paddle them with rock or wood—all seem part of an unreal world.

Villas wrecked and ruined or transformed into tenements, palace windows closed with wattled twigs, gaunt façades, once graced with wings and balustrades and pediments, statues standing like spirits of the past, sculptured heads grinning down in sinister enjoyment, the water softly whispering along the shore, the sun-dials which marked the passage of a time which those patricians thought would last forever, unite in telling of

a life that has vanished as a tale that is told.

And as darkness creeps on, and peasants and fisherfolk, gregariously grouped, trudge through this land of shadows, shadowily homeward, one thinks of the old belief that, on the vigil of All Souls, the past and gone Venetians, shrouded with invisibility, leave their graves and wander to their former homes and seat themselves uncannily by the firesides; and you know that none but ghosts could fittingly go back to the ruined palaces of the Brenta.

In Killarney

BY MARIE VAN VORST

JUNE'S done, half gone;
 (Come again, darlin'!)
 See the roses line the hedge,
 And summer rides the blue!
 High shone the day's sun,
 (Come again, darlin'!)
 I lean on the window ledge
 And watch the way for you!

Take this, just a kiss—
 (Come again, darlin'!)
 Every sweet that summer knows
 And all that loving knew
 Wait so tender, (oh,
 Come again, darlin'!)
 I lean where the red rose grows
 And watch the way for you!

Night falls on the walls;
 (Come again, darlin'!)
 Now the little house is still
 And fragrant through and through.
 Here's the light, high and bright,
 (Come again, darlin'!)
 I lean on the window sill
 And watch the night for you!