

CHAPTER X

The Turkish Terror—Acquisition of Cyprus—Discovery of the Cape Route to India—The French Invasions—The League of Cambrai—Decline of Venice

“The gods have done it as to all they do
Destine destruction, that from thence may rise
A poem to instr'ct posterities.”

—Chapman's *Homer*

IN the eyes of Italian and European statesmen, Venice at the death of Doge Foscari seemed mightier than ever, but in truth she had already passed the meridian of her strength and was on the descending arc of her destiny. For a century her consuls had warned the Signory of danger in the East. Pope after pope had summoned his children to cease their fratricidal strife and unite to meet the Turkish peril. During the pauses in the fierce clash of Christian passions and ambitions, could be heard, like the beat of muffled drums, the tread of the advancing infidel hosts sounding the doom of an empire. But no state in Europe, least of all Venice, grasped the full significance of the portent.

In 1416 a fleet had been sent to chastise the Sultan for permitting a violation of treaty rights, and although in the words of the commander, the Turks fought like dragons, yet by the grace of God and the help of the evangelist S. Marco they were utterly routed and the greater part cut in pieces: he was confident on the testimony of a captured Emir that the Turks would never again venture to oppose the Venetians on the seas. In 1438 the Greek Emperor himself came to

Venice to implore her aid and that of Europe against the enemy of Christendom. Twice, in 1452, the appeal was repeated, but the Christian princes were too busy with their own quarrels to listen, and before a year passed the scimitar of the Turk was red with the blood of the Christians at Constantinople. Had not Venice herself proven that the strong city was not impregnable? When it fell the Republic adopted her usual policy. She accepted the situation and secured her trading privileges by treaty with the Sultan. But when news came in 1463 of the conquest of the Morea and Epirus and that the crescent was flying over the Castle of Argos almost in sight of the Adriatic, Venice no longer stopped her ears to the Papal voice. Friar Michael of Milan was permitted to preach the crusade in the Piazza and a big iron box was placed in St Mark's for offerings of money. Cristoforo Moro, the new Doge, addressed the Great Council and in an access of zeal volunteered to lead the crusade. By 1607 ballots against 11 the Great Council approved. Moro¹ was a devout but not very robust creature, and pleading age and infirmity asked permission to withdraw. He was bluntly told by Vettor Cappello to think less of his skin and more of the honour and welfare of the land.

Pius II. came to Ancona with the Sacred College to organise the crusade. A league was made with Hungary. The Duke of Burgundy offered to join in person. Envoys were sent to other Christian princes. On July 30th, 1464, three hours before sunset—a time selected by the astrologers as the best—the Venetian fleet weighed anchor, the

¹ Ruskin, by a curious misunderstanding of Rawdon Brown, has confused this Doge (who, according to a contemporary was a short-statured squint-eyed creature) with the original of Shakespeare's "Othello," and the error has since been repeated. Rawdon Brown's ingenious identification of the Moor of Venice with one Cristoforo Moro, refers to another Venetian of that name who lived a generation later and was a prominent official in the service of the Republic during the wars of the League of Cambrai. Cf. Ruskin, "Stones of Venice," vol. ii. p. 302, note, with Rawdon Brown's "Ragguali sulla vita e sulle opere di M. Sanuto," Parte I pp. 229-235.

Doge leading in a new galley named after him. Scarcely had he disembarked at Ancona when the Pope died and all came to naught. The Doge returned to the ducal palace. The Venetians single-handed fought on sea and land with their usual intrepidity, but the State was already weakened by the Milanese wars. In 1470 she lost the whole island of Negropont. Dazed by the calamity the members of the Collegio slowly walked with leaden feet and downcast looks across the Piazza and, if spoken to, answered not a word. Were they listening to the rustle of the wings of the sable-robed avenging sisters? In the following year a crowd of panic-stricken refugees from Istria and Friuli streamed into Venice and camped on the Piazza and under the arcades of the ducal palace. An army of 20,000 Turks had ravaged the provinces even up to Udine. The Republic was now at the end of her resources. An attempted diversion from Persia had failed. A big loan from her mainland provinces had been swallowed up. The Pope sent her envoys empty away. Not one Italian state stirred to help her. The good Tomaso Mocenigo's warnings were verified. National wrong meant national sorrow. Venice was harvesting the acrid fruit of the Genoese wars and her fifty years of territorial aggression. At the Congress¹ of Carisano in 1466 Galeazzo Sforza, Duke of Milan, had warned the Secretary of the Republic that she was hated not only in Italy but beyond the Alps. "You do a grievous wrong," he vehemently exclaimed; "you possess the fairest State in Italy, yet are not satisfied. You disturb the peace and covet the states of others. If you knew the ill-will universally felt towards you, the very hair of your head would stand on end. Do you think the states of Italy are leagued against you out of love to each other? No; necessity has driven them. They have bound themselves together for the fear they

¹ Met to deal with the situation created by the attempt of the famous Venetian Condottiero Colleoni to win the duchy of Milan in collusion with the Florentine exiles.

have of you and of your power. They will not rest till they have clipped your wings."

Negotiations were twice begun with a view to peace, but the Sultan's demands were intolerable and the unequal contest continued. In 1476 Friuli was again devastated and the flames of burning cities could be seen from St Mark's tower. Sailors were clamouring for their arrears of pay on the very steps of the ducal palace. Scutari (in Albania), after heroically resisting two sieges, was nearing the end. A loan from the mainland provinces and 100,000 ducats from the sum left to the Republic by their condottiero Colleoni were swallowed up. In January 1479 Venice yielded. She ceded Scutari, Stalimene and other territory in the Morea occupied by the Turks during the war, in exchange for which the Sultan restored all that had been taken from her beyond her old boundaries. She maintained consular jurisdiction in Constantinople, but agreed to pay an indemnity of 200,000 ducats and a tribute of 10,000 ducats a year for her trading privileges. It was in Moro's reign that the last vestige of popular government was effaced. The title of "Communitas Venetiarum," long disused in actual practice, was formally changed to the "Signoria." During the wearing anxieties of the Turkish wars from the death of Moro in 1471 to the signature of the peace under Doge Giov. Mocenigo in 1479 four Doges, Nicolo Tron, Nicolo Marcello, Pietro Mocenigo, and Andrea Vendramin followed in rapid succession, the last a descendant of a family ennobled after the Chioggian war. The delimitation of the new frontiers had been barely concluded in the East when a dispute concerning salterns and custom dues on the Po and the arrest of a priest for debt by the Venetian Consul at Ferrara led to another war in the peninsula. In 1482 the whole of Italy was aflame, and states that had watched unmoved the agony of the sixteen years' Turkish wars now turned on Venice and accused her of sinister motives in concluding the peace. The Republic

was now allied with Genoa and the Papacy against the Duke of Ferrara, supported by the King of Naples, by Florence and some minor Italian states. The early operations were in her favour, but in a few months the Pope, alarmed by an attack on Rome by the Neapolitans, joined the league against Venice, and as feudal lord of Ferrara, summoned her, under pain of excommunication, to abandon operations against that city. When the interdict reached the Venetian Embassy at Rome, their ambassador was absent and his agent refused to transmit the document to Venice. It was then fixed on the doors of St Peter's and afterwards forwarded to the Patriarch at Venice, who was ordered under pain of excommunication to serve it on the Signory.¹ The Patriarch fell diplomatically sick and secretly informed the Doge. The Ten were convoked. The Patriarch was warned to keep silence, and that the services of the Church must proceed as usual. The Pope was a long way off; the Ten were near; he obeyed them. A formal appeal was then made to a future Council of the Church and a copy nailed by a secret agent on the door of S. Celso at Rome.

The new combination was too powerful for the crippled resources of Venice. Driven into a corner she adopted the impious expedient of inviting the King of France to make good his claim to Naples and the Duke of Orleans to vindicate his rights over the duchy of Milan. The weight of the great French monarchy fell with decisive effect on the league. Peace was made and the treaty of Bagnolo (1484) added Rovigo and the Polesine to the Venetian dominions. Three days' bell-ringing, illumination and rejoicing celebrated the immediate results of the new diplomacy. But the successors of Louis XI. were now factors in Italian politics. The league of Cambrai was one stage nearer.

¹ In 1483 the Flanders galleys were attacked by a famous Spanish privateer; 130 Venetians were killed, 300 wounded, and an enormous booty was taken. The Signory demanded satisfaction from the Emperor Charles VII., which was refused on the plea that Venice was under the ban of the Church. A certain Christopher Columbus was serving among the Spaniards.

For a few years all went well. By a clever exploitation of dynastic trouble the Signory was able to acquire the long coveted island of Cyprus. On the death of King John II., Carlotta, the rightful heiress and wife of Louis of Savoy, banished her father's bastard son James and seated herself on the throne. By the help of the Sultan of Egypt James was able before a year was past to lead a revolt, expel the Queen and her consort from the island and seize the crown. He made friends with the Venetians and to ensure their goodwill desired the Signory to bestow on him the hand of a Venetian maiden of noble birth. Caterina, daughter of Marco Cornaro, who with two other patrician houses held the greater part of the island in mortgage, was chosen and given a dowry valued at 100,000 ducats. The espousals were quickly celebrated with great pomp, the Doge himself presenting a consecrated ring to James' proxy, the Cypriote ambassador, who placed it on Caterina's finger in the name of the King of Cyprus. The little maid was but fourteen years of age and went from the splendour of the ducal palace to her usual life at home, while James was affirming his authority in the island.

During the same year (1468) the Senate learnt that Ferdinand of Naples was intriguing to draw James into an alliance with his own family. Stern words were used to the King and at length in October 1469 Venice was able to proclaim that she had taken the King and the island of Cyprus under her protection. In the summer of 1472, escorted by a fleet of four galleys, Caterina sailed to make a royal entry into Cyprus, but in a few months her joy was changed to mourning. James died, leaving her with child. The Senate aware that Carlotta was busy with the Italian powers and the Sultan, despatched their Captain-General, Pietro Mocenigo, to protect Caterina and to fortify and garrison the chief stations on the island. Before he arrived, the partizans of Carlotta burst into the palace, slew Caterina's physician before her eyes and cut in pieces her uncle

Andrea and her cousin Bembo who were hasting to her aid. Mocenigo on his arrival quelled the insurrection and hanged the ringleaders. Two Venetian Councillors and a Civil Commissioner were sent to watch events. A prince was born but died in a few months. Fearing a reversion of power to the former dynasty, James' mother, sister and bastard sons were deported to Venice and Marco Cornaro was despatched with instructions to comfort his daughter, to maintain the allegiance of the Cypriotes and to declare the absolute will of the Republic that no change should take place in the order of things. An emissary of Ferdinand, Rizzo di Mario, was caught plotting at Alexandria, sent to Venice and condemned to death by the Ten. The Sultan, who had known him as the ambassador of Naples, threatened the Republic with his displeasure if the sentence were carried out. The Ten had Rizzo strangled in prison and informed the Sultan that he had poisoned himself. The Signory now determined to force Caterina's hand. Subtly but firmly the two Councillors and the Commissioner usurped more and more power, and poor Caterina's position was made intolerable. She wrote pitiful letters to the Doge complaining of the insults and petty persecutions suffered by herself and her father; scuffles took place on the very stairs of the palace. In October 1488 her brother Giorgio was sent by the Ten to persuade her to abdicate, while Captain-General Diedo was instructed to haste to Cyprus and "by wise, circumspect, cautious and secure means to get the Queen on board a galley and bring her here to us at Venice." To persuasions and threats Caterina at last yielded. The banner of St Mark floated over Cyprus and an envoy assured the Sultan of Egypt of the sympathy of the new government which was the "consequence of the full and free determination of our most serene and most beloved daughter Caterina Cornaro." The deposed Queen received a pompous welcome at Venice; made a solemn renunciation and a formal donation of Cyprus to the Republic in St Mark's; and went to live in



THE FISH MARKET.

petty state at the little township of Asolo which was given to her by the Republic. There, the centre of a literary circle, she passed many years of her life in works of charity, until the storm of the league of Cambrai drove her for shelter to Venice where she died, universally mourned, in 1509. To the end she signed herself Queen of Cyprus, Jerusalem and Armenia, and Signora of Asolo.

During the closing years of the fifteenth century the mercantile supremacy of Venice, already threatened by the Ottoman conquests, was doomed by two momentous geographical discoveries. The voyages of Columbus and of Diaz were to change the face of Europe from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, and to shift the commercial centre of the world from Venice to the Spanish peninsula and ultimately to England. The former event excited curiosity in Venice, but not alarm. The Secretary of the Venetian Embassy in Spain, with the alertness of his class, won the confidence of Columbus, and finding him short of money, was able to secure a chart of his discoveries and a copy of a long treatise on the voyage which he caused to be translated and sent to the Signory. Far otherwise was the effect of the latter event, by which the ancient trade routes to the East were to be superseded by the ocean route to India. Priuli gives a graphic story of the consternation which seized the citizens, when, in the early sixteenth century, the report was verified that Vasco da Gama with a Portuguese fleet had reached Calcutta by rounding the Cape of Good Hope, and had returned to Lisbon with a cargo of spices. The wiser heads at once saw the gravity of the news. Owing to the heavy dues exacted by the sultans and princes the cost of a parcel of spices was increased from one ducat to sixty or a hundred by the time it reached Venice. The Portuguese, carrying by sea, would escape the levies and undersell the Venetian merchants in the markets of Europe. Their large and profitable trade from the East would be captured. Leonardo da Ca' Masser

disguised as a merchant was sent to Lisbon to get information. An attempt was made to throttle the nascent commerce by working on the fears of the Sultan of Egypt. Envoys were sent to warn him of the danger to his revenue if the Portuguese were allowed to succeed, and to urge him to ally himself with the Indian princes, and give military aid if necessary, to destroy their trade. But the efforts of Venice availed nothing, for they were directed against the very course of the world's evolution.

The flourishing Eastern trade began to wither, but events seemed to offer opportunity of compensation by permitting a forward policy on the mainland. Venice had opened the gates of Italy to the French king, and it was not long before Charles VIII. marched in with an army such as had never before been seen in the peninsula to achieve his designs on the kingdom of Naples. From his camp at Asti came to Venice Philippe de Comines as an envoy seeking alliance with the Republic. The French diplomatist in his memoirs has left us a charming description of Venice as it appeared in 1494.

As he approached the city he marvelled at the innumerable towers and monasteries, the fair churches, the great mansions and fine gardens all founded in the sea. Twenty-five nobles, well and richly clad in fine silk and scarlet cloth, bade him welcome and conducted him to a boat, large enough to seat forty persons, covered with satin cramoisy and richly carpeted. He was prayed to take his seat between the ambassadors of Milan and Ferrara. "I was taken," he writes, "along the *grande rue*, which they call the Grand Canal, and it is very broad. Galleys cross it, and I have seen great ships of four hundred tons and more near the houses, and it is the fairest street I believe that may be in the whole world, and fitted with the best houses, and it goes the whole length of the said city. The mansions are very large and high and of good stone; the ancient ones all painted. Others, made a hundred years ago, are faced



PALAZZO DARIO

with white marble, and yet have many a great piece of porphyry and serpentine on the front. Inside they have chambers with gilded ceilings and rich chimney-pieces of carved marble, gilded bedsteads of wood, and are well furnished. It is the most triumphant city I have ever seen and that doeth most honour to ambassadors and to strangers, and that most wisely doth govern itself, and where the service of God is most solemnly done: and though they may have many faults I believe that God hath them in remembrance for the reverence they bear to the service of His Church." De Comines found the Doge (Agostino Barbarigo) an amiable, wise and gentle prince, experienced in Italian politics, and after a stay of eight months, left with his mission unfulfilled. The Most Christian King, if we may believe the Venetian ambassador Contarini, lacked many inches of regal majesty. He was short in stature, ill-formed, had an ugly face, prominent white eyes, a big, coarse, aquiline nose, thick lips always open; and a nervous twitching of the hands very unpleasant to see. He was slow in expressing himself and dull-witted. Nor was Anne of Brittany, the Queen, portrayed less rudely. She, says the ungallant diplomatist, was short, bony and lame, with a rather pretty face. She was only seventeen, but most astute for her age, inordinately jealous of the King's majesty, and always succeeded in getting her way by the use of smiles or tears. The *Cristianissimo* marched triumphantly through the length of Italy to realise his dream of winning Naples, and then overthrowing the Mussulman power in the East. Florence, Rome, Naples were successively occupied; the balance of Italian politics was disastrously overthrown, and the unhappy land soon became a cockpit where the rival ambitions of France and Spain were fought out. Milan and Venice had each thought to use the Transalpine Powers for her own ends; they both became their prey. Charles had himself crowned King of Naples, Emperor of the East, and King of Jerusalem, but soon discovered that to conquer was

easier than to hold. The rival powers began to league themselves against him, and in the bewildering moves on the political chess-board Venice and Milan came into line. In March 1495 the Signory assured De Comines that his master should have a free passage for the return of his army through Italy; in July of the same year she concerted with Milan, and fell upon the French at Fornovo di Taro, as they were toiling down the Cisa Pass to Parma. The French were severely punished, and in the fighting the King himself narrowly escaped capture. How the news was received at Venice, a letter dated July 9, 1495, and transcribed by Malipiero, gives a vivid picture. "I arose early and went my usual way to St Mark's," says Nicolo Lippomano, "when I saw a great fury of people running to the Piazza, crying—'Marco! Marco!' I asked the cause and was told the French camp had been routed. I arrived at the corner of St Mark's, where the elders are wont to meet, and found them all glad and many shed tears for joy. I went to Rialto and found everybody talking of the victory, and one kissed the other for very gladness. In a trice all the banks and shops were closed. Boys with flags began to run about the streets shouting of the victory and sacking the fruit-sellers' shops on the way. On the Rialto they met eight Savoyards whom they pelted with eggs, lemon peel and turnips, and otherwise ill-treated. All the people shouted—'To Ferrara! to Ferrara!' All my days I never saw the city in greater uproar. To God be the praise."

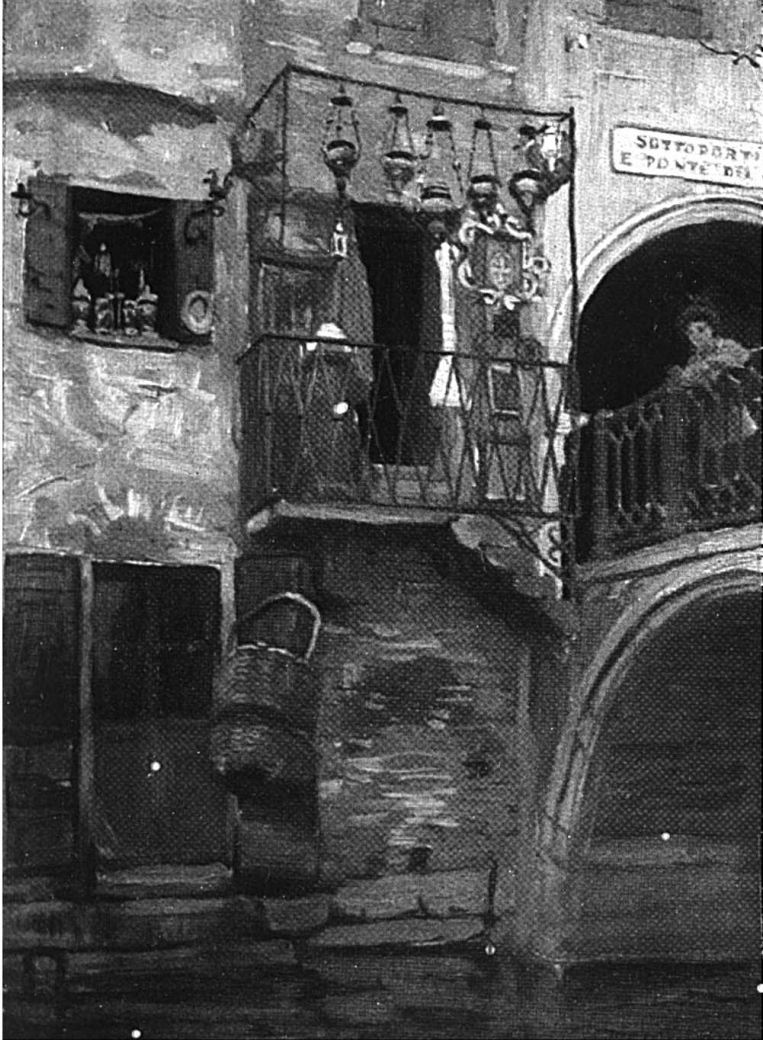
The spot is still shown where, in 1498, Charles broke his foolish head against a beam in a dark passage of the castle at Amboise. His successor, Louis XII., to the ill-hap of Italy, united in his person the claims both of the Orleans princes to Milan and of the French kings to Naples. Ludovico Sforza, fearing for his duchy, approached the Signory, but, to his disgust, learned that Venice had already secretly agreed to aid Louis in his designs on Milan, in return for Cremona and other cities and lands on the

east of the Adda. Sforza, to revenge himself on Venice invited the Turks to attack her. In twenty days Louis had won the Milanese, and Venice was paid the price of her shame.

In November 1499, despatches from Constantinople warned the Signory that the Sultan was preparing to attack. Strenuous efforts were made to raise money. Antonio Grimani was sent with a large fleet to the East, and came upon the enemy off Sapienza, a name of ill-omen in Venetian naval history. The Turks had made amazing progress in naval construction; one of their ships is said to have been manned by one thousand Janissaries and sailors. The first encounter, after four hours' fighting, ended on August 12, 1499, in a Turkish success. On August 20, a small French fleet joined the Venetians, and on the 25th the final engagement was fought. The Venetians suffered a disastrous defeat. Malipiero, who was present as civil commissioner, roundly accused Grimani of want of patriotism and faint-heartedness, and declared if he had done his duty, the whole Turkish fleet would have fallen into their hands surely as God was God, and that, owing to want of discipline among the Venetian sailors, the French had retired disgusted from the operations. "We have lost eight hundred men, and the reputation of Venice." Grimani was sent home in irons. As he landed, his son, Cardinal Domenico, fought his way through the crowd, and lifted his father's chains to lighten his burden as he was led to prison. At the trial Grimani defended himself eloquently, and was banished to Dalmatia. The operations on land were not less humiliating. Such was the paralysing terror inspired by the Turk, that the native militia in Friuli refused to take the field, and the commander of the Stradiote mercenaries struck not a blow. Venice sued for peace. She weakly tried to inculcate Sforza for the outbreak of hostilities, but was told that the Duke of Milan had no power to move the Sultan; the depredations of her own subjects were the cause of her chastisement. On trying to soften the

hard conditions exacted, her envoy was advised to bid the Signory hasten to accept the Sultan's terms: "Tell your Doge," said the Pacha, "that up to the present he has wedded the sea; it will be our turn in future, for we own more of the sea than he does." The Signory rejected the terms offered by the Porte. Allies were sought, and a league was made with the King of Hungary and the Pope. The King of Portugal promised help; Spain sent a fleet; France a small contingent of men. Some small successes failed to compensate for the loss of Lepanto, Modone, Corone and Navarino. Practically Venice was left, as usual, to fight single-handed, and ultimately peace was made with the Sultan, at the price of further territory in the Morea. Before the treaty was concluded, Agostino Barbarigo, who had succeeded his brother Marco in 1486, died. In October 1501, Leonardo Loredano, whose shrewd, clear-cut and ascetic features in Giovanni Bellini's portrait, are so familiar to visitors to the National Gallery of London, was preferred to the Dogeship. Owing to poor health, says Sanudo, he lived abstemiously. He was kindly, though of uneven temper, wise in counsel, very skilful in the conduct of public business, and his opinion generally prevailed with the Council.

In August 1503 the death of Pope Alexander VI. had foiled the plans of his bastard son, Cesare Borgia, to recover Romagna for the Papacy. Venice had been closely watching events, and on the advent of the feeble Pius III., determined to slice up the Papal States. Instructions were sent to the *podestà* of Ravenna, informing him of certain negotiations between the Signory and some cities of Romagna. He was to confer with the military commanders, in order to bring the negotiations quickly to a successful issue; but he was to act cautiously and secretly. The chief cities, by promise of remission of taxation, placed themselves under Venetian protection. The Duke of Urbino followed their lead, and was promised an annual subsidy.



CURIOSITY SHOP NEAR PIAZZA.

During the short twenty-six days of Pius III.'s reign, and the interval between his death and the election of a successor, Venice had occupied Bertinoro, Fano and Montefiore, and was hastening to seize Rimini and Imola. Julius II., at first favourably inclined to Venice, was in a few weeks made her enemy by the occupation of Rimini and the capture of Faenza. To Julius' angry protests and his threat of winning back Romagna, cost what it might, Venice urged her devotion to holy Church and the benevolence of her motives in trying to free Italy of the tyranny of Cesare Borgia. "*Signor Oratore*," cried the Pope, "your words are good, but your Signory's deeds are evil. We have neither men nor money to make war, but we will complain to the Christian princes, and invoke divine aid."¹ To Julius' demand for restitution, the Signory answered, "We will never restore the territory, even though we have to sell the very foundations of our houses."

"I tell you," wrote De Comines, after his return from Venice in 1495, "that I have found Venetian statesmen so wise and so bent upon increasing their Signory that if it be not soon provided against, all their neighbours will curse the hour." The provisions made by the most Christian princes were characteristic. "By an unprincipled treaty of spoliation," says Rawdon Brown, "the Great Powers of the Continent bound themselves together to fall upon Venice by surprise in a time of profound peace, and, in despite of the most solemn obligations, to despoil her of her territories." After much treatying and protocolling there met on a November day in 1508 in a secret chamber at Cambrai, the Cardinal d'Amboise acting for the King of France, and Margaret of Austria for the Holy Roman Emperor. The papal nuncio and the King of Spain's envoy were near, but their views were known, and for greater safety they were not allowed to enter. After many difficulties, says Romanin,

¹ The firm, resolute features of this grand old Pontiff look out to us from Raphael's portrait of him in the National Gallery of London.

and such altercations that they wellnigh tore out each other's hair (*s'acciuffassero pei capegli*) the plenipotentiaries decided "that it was not only useful and honourable but necessary to call upon all the Powers of Europe to take a just vengeance, and quench, as they would a general conflagration, the insatiable greed of the Venetians and their thirst of dominion." The modest reward which the Powers proposed to themselves for "making an end of the rapine and injury wrought by the Venetians and their tyrannical usurpation of the possessions of others," was as follows. His Holiness the Pope was to have Ravenna, Cervia, Faenza, Rimini and all the territory held by the Venetians in Romagna; the Emperor, Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Roveredo, the Trevisano, the Friuli and Istria; the King of France, Brescia, Bergamo, Crema, Cremona, the Ghiaradadda and all the dependencies of the Duke of Milan; the King of Spain and of Naples, Trani, Brindisi, Otranto, Gallipoli and other cities held in pledge by Venice for an unpaid loan to his cousin whom he had deprived of the kingdom of Naples. The King of Hungary, if he joined, was to have Dalmatia; the Duke of Savoy, Cyprus. Some offal was reserved for the jackals of the minor states, if they ran at the heels of the royal beasts of prey. Florence later on informed the Sultan of Turkey and invited him to seize the oriental possessions of Venice when she was down. The Pope was to reinforce the temporal weapons of the confederates by the use of the spiritual arm.

But the Lion of St Mark, though his claws were a little blunted and his joints stiffened, had not lost his cunning. Moreover, he was forewarned. A dramatic story of the premature disclosure of the plot is told in the Venetian State papers. Spinola, an emissary of Gonsalvo of Cordova, came secretly to Cornaro, the Venetian ambassador, at Valladolid, in February 1509, and asked him to meet the great captain at mass in an unfrequented church at the far end of the town. He went and the secret was revealed to him. He refused

to believe it, but later Spinola showed him a copy of a letter from Gonsalvo's wife at Genoa in which the details of the proposed partition were given, and offered his master's services to the Signory. Cornaro informed the Ten. They, too, hesitated to believe in any cause for attack, advised caution, and asked for further proof. Secret information from England soon brought confirmation and the Ten sat day and night to prepare for the coming storm. The weakness of the league lay in the fact that each spoiler was to seize his own share of the prey. Self-interest was its motive power. Self-interest would lead individual members to abandon the hunt if their portion were thrown to them. This the Ten quickly saw and acted upon with consummate art and patience while pushing on with all speed defensive military operations. The aged and infirm Doge Loredano, so overwrought by emotion that it was piteous to see, addressed the Great Council begging them to turn to righteousness and offer their lives and substance in defence of the fatherland. Himself would give an example by sending his silver plate to the mint. On April 27, 1509, Julius flung a bull of excommunication couched in almost savage terms against the Republic. The Ten forbade its publication and sent officers to take down any copies posted on churches or on the walls. They consulted learned canonists; drew up an appeal to a future council of the Church and sent emissaries to Rome who nailed a copy on the doors of St Peter's. The secular arm swiftly followed. Sanudo tells us that while he and two other Senators were examining a map of Italy painted on the walls of the Senate hall, a courier arrived with the news that the French had crossed the Adda, fallen on the fine army of the Republic at Agnadello and utterly routed it with a loss of four thousand in killed alone. Faces gathered gloom and despair. "Give me my cloak, wife," said Paolo Barbo, one of the most experienced of the fathers, "that I may go to the Senate, speak a couple of words and die." One disaster trod on the heels of another. Bergamo and

Brescia fell and before the month was ended nearly the whole of Lombardy was lost. Preparations were even made to defend and victual Venice. Envoys were sent to treat with the Kings of France and Spain. The Pope was tempted by an offer of partial restitution and help towards a crusade against the Turks. Meanwhile the Imperial Eagle swooped down from Trent. The Signory, by ceding Verona and Vicenza, hoped to conciliate the Emperor and save Padua. In vain were the civil commissioners with the army entreated to make a stand, "lest the whole of our cities surrender in an hour." Padua fell and Treviso alone stood by the Republic. At bay she now turned to the Sultan of Turkey and begged for money and men, especially men. If his Highness would advance them one hundred thousand ducats and would agree to buy no more cloth of the Genoese and Florentines, who only used his money to help a League that sought his hurt, the Signory would send him fifty thousand ducats' worth of cloth, and jewels worth fifty thousand more, as security. The Venetian consul at Alexandria was instructed to incite the Sultan of Egypt to ruin Genoese and Florentine commerce in his dominions. The good offices of the Kings of England and Scotland were sought.

But the gloom was wearing away. One day in July two tall, mysterious, armed men were observed leaving Fusina in the gondola of the Ten. Arrived at Venice they remained closeted with the Ten and the Doge far into the night, then were rowed back whence they came. On the night of the 16th there was a hurrying to and fro of transports and armed vessels between the islands. The Doge's two sons and two hundred noble youths, fully armed, left for the mainland. The police boats of the Ten allowed no one to go out of Venice without permission. Next day Padua, disgusted by the insolence and exactions of the Imperialists, was won back for Venice before the laggard Emperor could reach the city. Sanudo remembered the 17th of July, for did he not buy a Hebrew Bible worth twenty

ducats for a few pence as he was going home? Two attacks by the Emperor were successfully resisted, and the foiled Cæsar retired to Vicenza in October with anger in his heart against the French. In February 1510, after long and tough negotiations, the Pope was given his prey and detached from the league, but at the price of a bitter abasement of Venice. Time had avenged the Empire. It was now the Queen of the Adriatic who, in the person of her ambassadors, bowed the neck before the enthroned Pope in the atrium of St Peter's, surrendered her ecclesiastical privileges, admitted the justice of the excommunication, craved pardon for having provoked it, and was at length absolved and bidden to do the penance of the seven churches. The Ten, however, entered in their register a protest of nullity, declaring that the conditions had been extracted from the Republic by violence. The Pope who, as he told Venice, had no pleasure in seeing the ruin of her State to the aggrandisement of the barbarians, now became her ally. Soon other cities, sickened by the atrocities of the invaders, returned to their allegiance, and by skilful playing of King against Emperor, and Pope against both, Venice was able to regain the bulk of her territory.