

SECTION XIX

S. Nicolo del Lido

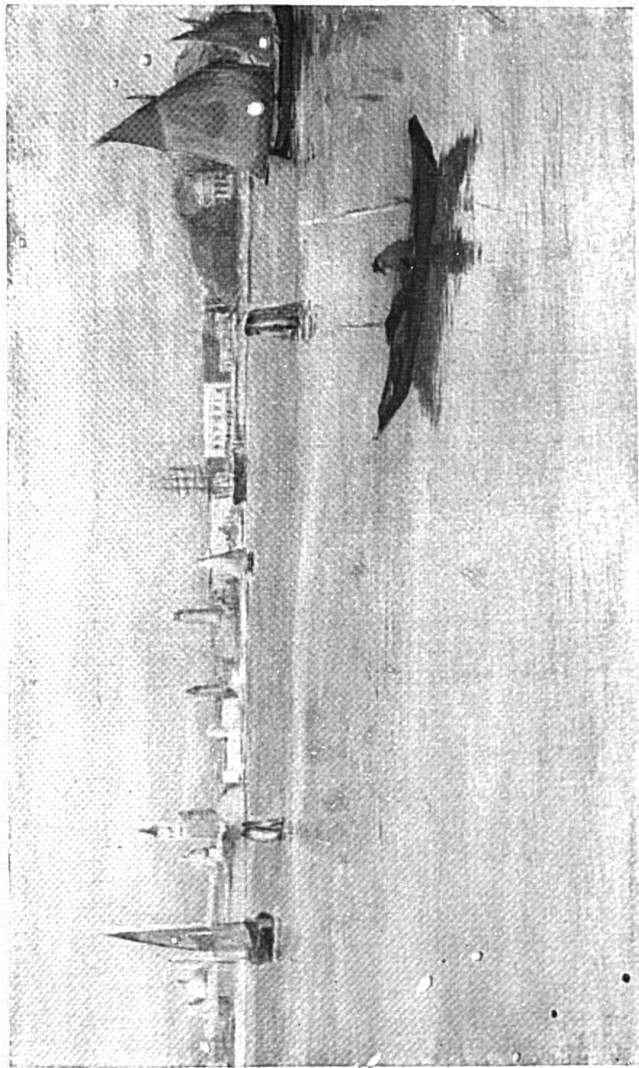
FROM the Riva degli Schiavoni, and from any pier on the Grand Canal, steamers at frequent intervals will carry the traveller to the *Lido di Malamocco*, popularly known as *the lido*, one of the narrow sandbanks which, aided by the wit and industry of man, have preserved Venice from destruction by the patiently eroding, and at times, fiercely aggressive waves of the Adriatic. In earliest times it was covered with pine forest, and many an ancient Doge went hawking there. The Adriatic side, a line of bare, desolate sand dunes, visited only by a few lone fishermen when Byron used to take his daily rides on horseback to and fro between the fort and Malamocco, is now the most frequented bathing-station in North Italy. Along the shore "more barren than the billows of the ocean," Byron and Shelley rode one evening, and as the sun was sinking held that pregnant talk

"Concerning God, Freewill and Destiny,"

which is immortalised in *Julian and Maddalo*.

As the vessel steams along St Mark's Channel, will be seen on the left the once fair island of S. Elena, where the ashes of the mother of Constantine, the discoverer of the True Cross, are reputed to rest, and where many famous scions of the Giustiniani and Loredano families lie buried. But Vulcan has now laid his sooty hand upon it. The old monastery walls with their romantic investiture of the *erba della Madonna* and other mural plants, the cloister with its gardens and tangle of rose-bushes, are now demolished to give place to an iron-foundry; the church, once so magnificent within that it seemed a miracle of sumptuous decoration,¹ is now a machine-room (*magazzino da macchine*) and tall smoke-stacks smirch the sky.

¹ *Italix Brevis Descriptio*.



VENICE FROM THE LIDO.

The waldèrèr who cares for the more silent and intimate charm of Venice will, on the arrival of the steamer, turn aside from the thronged and dusty road to the bathing pavilion, follow to the N.E. the Via S. Nicolo, and walk¹ along the shore by meadows bright in spring-time with blue salvia and the star of Bethlehem to the restored eleventh-century church of S. Nicolo inside the fort. The tomb of the founder (Doge Dom. Contarini) stands over the portal, and in a small chamber in the L. transept, now used as a lumber room, a short inscription of a dozen words tells that there lie the ashes of the stout old Imperial Vicar, "Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole i' the world,"² who for seven months held Ferrara (p. 77) for his master, the great Frederick, against the allied forces of the Venetians and of the Lombard League. Here in olden times the galleys and argosies of the Republic called to take in sweet water for the voyage and to pray for protection to the mariners' patron saint, and here stood a fair and costly lighthouse. We retrace our steps to the Jewish cemetery and turn L. down a country lane which we follow as far as the Villa la Favorita; we turn again L. and reach the shore of the open Adriatic, saturated with indescribable tones of blue, from palest turquoise to deepest ultramarine, and dotted with the rich yellow and orange sails of fishing craft.

The walk may be pursued along the grass-grown ram-parts of the old Austrian fort to the left, or we may turn to the more material seductions of the Stabilimento dei Bagni to the right.

¹ The walk may be shortened by taking the direct steamer to S. Nicolo which leaves the Riva hourly.

² See Browning's "Sordello," *passim*.