

## CHAPTER IV

### *Enrico Dandolo and the Capture of Constantinople*

“ August pleasant Dandolo  
Worshipping hearts about him for a wall,  
Conducted blind eyes hundred years and all  
Through vanquished Byzant, where friends note for him  
What pillar, marble massive, sardius slim,  
’Twere fittest to transport to Venice’ square.”

—*Browning.*

THE fourth crusade afforded Venice an opportunity of rising to a commanding position in Europe. She seized it with resolution yet with the cautious deliberation so characteristic of her temper. Amid the fervent enthusiasm of the crusaders she kept a cool head, ever intent on directing the movement to the attainment of her secular policy—the extension of her commerce and of her dominion in the East.

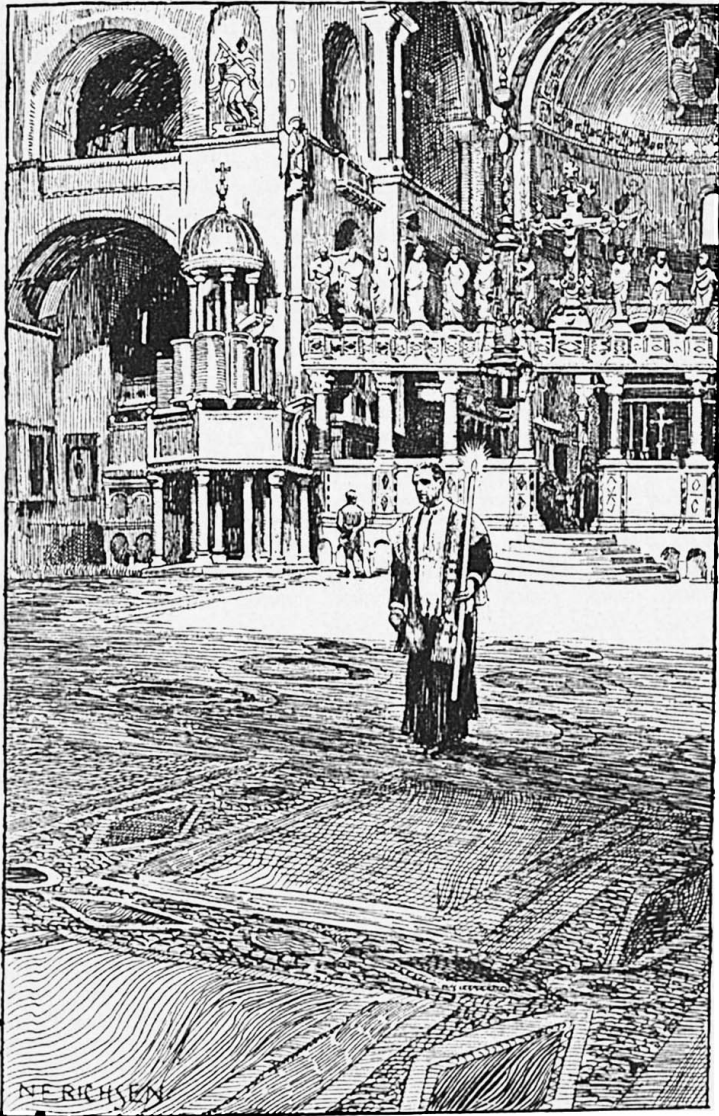
The story of the Conquest of Constantinople has been told for us by one who played a leading rôle in the drama, Jeffrey of Villehardouin, Marshall of Champagne, who was one of the six envoys sent by the organisers of the crusade to Venice to treat for the transport of the army to the East. He was a man of simple piety and singleness of purpose, a heroic soldier and capable administrator, but like his fellows no match for the shrewd old Doge who then directed the policy of the republic. It is difficult to say how far the almost cynical exploitation of the crusaders’ enthusiasm, charged upon Venice by some historians, was redeemed by nobler motives. The policy of making the best of both worlds is not a modern invention, and states as well as individuals are moved by mixed impulses. To the Doge and his councillors it may well have seemed that the

expansion of the Venetian Republic and the, cause of Christendom were not incompatible. Certain it is that this, the finest armament that ever set sail to wrest the Holy Land over seas from the infidel, was diverted by Venetian policy to an attack on the possessions of a Christian prince, himself a crusader, and after wasting a precious year melted away in a wanton conquest and spoliation of the capital of Eastern Christendom, and in the attempt to maintain there a Franco-Venetian Empire.

In February 1201 the envoys reached Venice and laid their request before the Doge. A delay of three days was asked. On the fourth day they entered the ducal palace, *qui mult ere riches et biaux* (which was very rich and beautiful), and found the Doge seated in the midst of his Council. They prayed his help on behalf of the high barons of France who had taken the cross to revenge the shame of Jesus and to reconquer Jerusalem, for no people were so mighty on sea or so powerful to further their cause. They entreated him in the name of God to have pity on the land beyond the sea and on the shame of Jesus Christ, and lend them warships and transports. "This," replied the Doge, "is a great thing you ask," and begged eight days' interval for reflection. In due time the terms on which help would be forthcoming were stated. Venice would furnish transports for 4500 horses and 9000 esquires, ships for 4500 knights and 20,000 footmen, with provisions for nine months. The sum asked was 85,000 marks in silver of the standard of Cologne. The terms were to hold good for one year from the day of the departure of the Armata, "to do the service of God and of Christianity in whatsoever place it may befall." The Republic would add on her own part fifty armed galleys on condition that of the conquests "which we shall make on land or sea, we shall have the one half and you the other." The envoys requested a day's delay. They took counsel by night and in the morning came before the Doge, and agreed to the

terms. "The Doge summoned the Senate and Great Council, and by his great wisdom and clear wit disposed them to do his will and praise his purpose. Then he assembled in the Chapel of St Mark 10,000 of his people and bade them hear mass and pray God for counsel concerning the envoy's request, and so did they most willingly. When mass was ended the Doge begged the envoys to come before the people and humbly entreat them to agree to the conditions. There was great curiosity to see the barons, and they were much gazed at. Jeffrey spoke for them, and said: 'Sirs! the highest and most powerful among the barons of France have sent us before you. They crave that ye may take pity on Jerusalem, which is in bondage to the infidel, and that for God's sake you be willing to aid therein to avenge the shame of Jesus Christ, for they know no other nation so mighty as yours on the sea, and they command us to fall at your feet and not to rise again till you have granted their prayer and had pity on the Holy Land *oltremer*.' Then the six fell upon their knees with many tears at the feet of the multitude, and the Doge and all his people burst into tears of pity and cried aloud with one voice—'We consent, we consent.' Great was the tumult, so that the very ground did shake. When the noise was calmed and that great pity assuaged, the good Doge ascended the pulpit and said: 'Sirs! behold the honour that God hath shown you, in that the best nation in the world has scorned all the other nations and chosen your company to effect together a thing of such high import as the deliverance of our Lord.' All the fair words the Doge spoke to them I cannot relate."

Sealed contracts were exchanged with more weeping and genuflections, the parties to the contract on either side swearing on the bodies of the saints to well and loyally keep their bond. It was secretly agreed that Babylonia (Old Cairo) should be the objective of the expedition. Publicly it was given out that it was bound for beyond the sea. On the Feast of St John, 1202, the



S. MARCO—INTERIOR, WITH PULPIT

Frankish host was to assemble at San Nicolo on the Lido, and the vessels were to be ready. Every detail was specified; the amount of bread and wine per man, and corn per horse. A court of arbitration was formed to settle matters of dispute that might arise. But selfish and worldly motives swayed the actions of too many among the warriors of the cross and whole armies were fore-sworn. A rich and powerful detachment set sail from Bruges after swearing on the gospels to join at Venice, but engaged transports at Marseilles and Genoa.

Walter of Brienne,<sup>1</sup> with many another great knight, went off to Apulia to subdue the inheritance of his wife and promised to meet the army at Venice. "But adventures befall as it pleaseth God," and at the trysting-place they were found wanting. Many others, including the Bishop of Autun, broke their oaths.

Great was the consternation of the leaders of the crusade. The Venetians had honourably, indeed generously, done their part. Never had such a fleet been beheld by Christian men. But the crusaders were too few to fill it or to meet the payment due. The barons spared neither entreaties to their erring companions nor their own possessions and credit. Time went on: the day for meeting their obligations was past; the Venetians demanded payment; 30,000 marks were still wanting, perchance to the secret satisfaction of the Republic, for the Venetians had no keen desire to dislocate their remunerative trade with the East. The Sultan of Egypt was their good friend. Commercial privileges had been granted them while the crusaders were gathering at Venice. Two envoys, Marino Dandolo and Dom. Michieli<sup>2</sup> set sail for Egypt, and in May

<sup>1</sup> It was to join the standard of this renowned knight that St Francis, fired by stories of his prowess, set forth in 1204 and saw at Spoleto that vision which determined him to return to Assisi and devote himself to the service of another Lord.

<sup>2</sup> See "The Fall of Constantinople," by Edwin Pears, p. 263. This allegation is, however, much canvassed by authorities,

1202 had concluded a secret treaty between the Republic and the Caliph, by which in return for increased and substantial commercial privileges the Venetians implicitly agreed to divert the fleet from any attack on Egypt.

The Doge was not slow to make the most of the crusaders' hard case. For the fifth time Zara had revolted and was held for the King of Hungary. The Frankish leaders were eating their hearts out at the delay; inaction was demoralising their forces. The Doge offered a compromise. The contract had been broken, and legally the amount paid was forfeited, but if the barons would help the Venetians to subdue Zara on the way, the *Armata* might sail and payment of the balance of money be deferred. The papal legate, Peter of Capua, indignantly declaimed against the bargain, but the barons were in a cleft stick. They could do no other than accept, and the chance of winning from the spoils of Zara enough to pay the balance of their debt was a potent factor in their decision.

All was now ready; the people were assembled in St Mark's on Sunday, the barons being present, and says Villehardouin *ere mult gran feste* (there was a very great festival). "Before Mass began the Doge ascended the pulpit and said: 'Sirs, ye are companions of the best nation in the world for the highest emprise that ever man attempted. I am old and feeble and have need of repose, nor am I whole in body; but I perceive that none can guide nor command you so well as I who am your lord. If ye will grant that I take the sign of the cross and watch over you and direct you, and that my son remain in my stead to guard the land then will I go to live or die with you and the pilgrims.' When the people heard him they all cried out, 'We beseech you in God's name that ye do even as ye say.' Then great pity melted the hearts of the people of the city and of the pilgrims, and many tears were shed for this valiant man who had so much cause to remain at home, being old, and though his eyes were beautiful he saw not, because he had lost his



§ MARCO, CHOIR.

sight through a wound. But he was of exceeding great courage. He left the pulpit and fell on his knees before the altar, and the cross was sewn on the front of a great silken biretta that it might be seen of all. Then the Venetians began to put on the cross in great numbers, for up to that day few were they who joined."

At length on the octave of the Feast of the Holy Incarnation of Jesus Christ the host took ship and set forth. Never did so great a fleet sail from any port. "Ah! dear God," exclaimed Jeffrey, "how many a good steed was there, and great ships charged with arms and gallant knights and squires and banners so fair."

It was indeed a gorgeous and thrilling spectacle. Three chief Venetian galleys, the *Peregrina*, the *Paradiso* and the *Aquila* towered above the rest of the fleet. The vessels were one mass of glittering steel and magnificently coloured banners, that of St Mark, a golden lion on crimson ground, waved proudly in the wind. The air trembled at the blast of trumpets. In swelling chorus the host burst forth into the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, and the mighty fleet turned its prows—for Zara.

On the way a punitive call was made at Trieste, which agreed to pay tribute to Venice. Another call was made at Omago and an oath of allegiance exacted. Zara was reached on St Martin's Eve, the 10th of November. The stronghold so impressed the Marshal of Champagne that he exclaims: "How shall such a city be taken except God be with us!" On the 18th, after a stubborn fight the city yielded, pillage followed and half the booty went to each ally. The Pope was scandalised. He had tried to tamper with the French: he now demanded the restitution of the pillage of a city that belonged to a Christian king and crusader. The barons excused themselves as best they might; the Venetians boldly told the papal nuncio that the Holy See had no concern with the affairs of the Republic.



The season was now far advanced, and the fleet wintered at Zara. The chief of the Crusaders, Boniface, Marquis of Montferrat, who had stayed at Venice, took up his command after the capture. The problem of the fate of the expedition faced the allies. Already a bloody fray had embittered the feeling between Venetian and Frank. Boniface, too, was tempted by his own ambition. He claimed the kingdom of Salonika, and hoped to subdue it with the help of the *Armata*.

And events seemed to beckon away from duty. The sickening drama of bloodshed and treachery that stained the palace of the Greek Emperors during the Comnenian dynasty had, in 1185, reached the point when Isaac Angelos Comnenos, having stabbed his kinsman Andronicus (himself a usurper), was enthroned at Constantinople. But a throne whose steps are drenched with blood affords but a slippery foothold. In 1195 Isaac in his turn was dethroned, cast into prison, and his sight destroyed by his brother Alexius Angelos, who unaccountably spared Isaac's son Alexius. He was a bright lad twelve years of age when his father fell, and was forced by his uncle to attend the court and exalt the usurper's state. He escaped, and after many vicissitudes reached the court of Philip of Swabia, who had married his sister Irene. The fleet was on the point of leaving Zara when the young Alexius arrived to implore the help of Boniface on behalf of himself and his father Isaac. King Philip promised in his nephew's name tempting rewards. The moment was well chosen, Boniface with an eye to Salonika lent a willing ear to his plaint: Dandolo, too, apart from the 100,000 marks to be gained by another year's hire of the fleet, had politic reasons for giving the wronged prince a sympathetic audience. Egypt would be safe from attack, and the Venetians had an old score to settle with the Greeks, for a large part of the indemnity promised by the Emperor Manuel for the wanton spoliation of the Venetians in 1171 was still unpaid. Isaac, first repudiating, then yielding to threats, had promised to

pay the 200,000 marks due. When Alexius Angelos seized the throne the account was still unsettled. He, too, was evasive, though ready enough to grant commercial favours. The young Alexius, therefore, was told that the leaders would receive him at Corfù, whither the fleet was bound.

But what of the unhappy infidel-ridden land over the sea? Many of the more conscientious knights, mindful of their high purpose and of the holy zeal with which they had set forth, loudly demanded to be led to Syria. The Pope, who had just received news of the most wretched state of the Christians in Palestine, wrote warning the crusaders that they had taken the cross not to avenge the wrongs of princes but of God: he refused his benediction, and menaced them with the curses of heaven. But it was of no avail, present gain was more potent than a far call to duty. At an opportune moment the young Alexius arrived. The chivalrous natures of the crusaders were wrought upon: the recalcitrant knights were swept away in a wave of enthusiasm for the wronged prince's cause.

After much negotiation the start was made from Corfù on the eve of Pentecost 1203. "There were all the transports and galleys of the host and many a merchant ship. The day was fair and clear; the wind gentle and mild; the sails were set to the breeze. And Jeffrey de Villehardouin doth truly witness, who never lied in one word to his knowledge, and who was present at every Council, that never was so fair a sight. And verily it seemed that the fleet must subdue the land, for so far as the eye could reach nought could be seen save the sails of ships and of vessels, so that men's hearts did much rejoice." Once again the avenging host set forth, and not against Saracen or Turk but against the capital of Eastern Christendom.

To follow the incidents of the capture and re-capture of Constantinople would take us too far. Venetian and Frank fought with desperate courage. Dandolo by his local knowledge (for he had already been ambassador there), by

his iron will, his ready wit and dauntless spirit became leader. It was a stupendous venture. The apparently impregnable city of a million souls<sup>1</sup> was girt by a double rampart of walls and towers, and a moat wide and deep. The attacking force could have barely exceeded 20,000 men. Dandolo was the hero of the siege. At a critical moment the brave old sea-dog was seen erect in his armour on the prow of his galley, the gonfalon of St Mark unfurled before him. His men had wavered; with entreaties and threats he urged them on. The galley was driven ashore and the old fellow<sup>1</sup> leapt on to the beach, the gonfalon being borne before him. From shame and humiliation the Venetians followed. Twenty towers soon fell into the hands of the Venetians. Meantime news came that the French were in danger. Alexius Angelos at the head of sixty squadrons was about to fall upon them. Dandolo, with characteristic chivalry, let the prize fall from his grasp and hastened to relieve his allies. The very rumour of his coming was enough to scare the craven heart of the Greek prince. He returned within the walls, and having gathered a great treasure of gold and jewels, sought safety and won disgrace by flight. Isaac was led from a dungeon to a throne: his wife recalled to his side: his son restored to him. But his joy was tempered by a hard and one-sided bargain. Fulfilment of the promise made by Philip in the name of young Alexius at Zara was demanded by the allies.

Twenty thousand marks were to be paid to the Venetians; the Greek Church was to recant her heresy and submit to Rome: 10,000 men were to be raised for the Holy Land. Young Alexius as he entered the city in triumph by his bearing and presence won the hearts of the people. But the bond lay heavily on the restored family.

<sup>1</sup> The alleged blindness of Dandolo is one of the enigmas of history. The chroniclers are hopelessly at variance. Villehardouin, his constant associate, says he *ne voit goutte* (couldn't see a bit). Others ignore the blindness, and it is difficult to explain his career on that theory.

Holy vessels and images of the saints were seized and melted; private fortunes were impounded. Yet sacrilege and extortion combined did no more than meet in part the demands of the allies. Disaffection began to show itself. Young Alexius, fearing lest the departure of the crusaders would leave him at the mercy of his fickle subjects, urged his deliverers to winter at Constantinople, and promised to pay the Venetians for the extended hire of the fleet. The more restive barons, chafing at the delay, were overruled by the authority of the Doge. The young Prince gained his purpose. Boniface was bribed by the promise of 1600 pieces of gold to head him (now joint-Emperor with his father) on a tour of the provinces to test the loyalty of his subjects and attempt the capture of his uncle. But his popularity at the capital, already waning, was quenched by the fanatical license of the Latins, who, in destroying a mosque and in spoiling the Jews, wrought the destruction by fire of a whole quarter of the city. On his return, young Alexius had to choose between his subjects and the hatred of the Latins. He was weak and angered both. The allies sternly demanded the execution of his bond. Their envoys with almost incredible daring penetrated to the very throne-room of the palace, passing lines of sullen and angry Greeks eager to leap at their throats. They saw Isaac enthroned, between his wife and son and surrounded by all the luxury and pomp of an Eastern court. In a peremptory voice they delivered their ultimatum, strode proudly from the imperial presence, leaped on their horses, and rode to camp. They were but six, three Venetians and three Franks, who braved the fierce passions of a treacherous populace and the armed retainers of a despotic court. The rage of the Greeks at this insult reacted on the restored family. Alexius Ducas, dubbed Murzuphles from his black and shaggy eyebrows, led the revolt. The Venetian fleet was saved from destruction only by the vigilance of a sentry and the address of the sailors.

The instrument of the popular vengeance was a Prince of far different calibre from his namesake. His unscrupulous ambition was served by energy, resolution and capacity. He first fawned on the young Alexius, then seized his person and saw him strangled. At once grasping the sceptre, the opportune death of Isaac spared him another crime. He sent an envoy with a plausible story to the French camp and an invitation to the chiefs of the army to dine at the palace, but the sagacity of the Doge saved them from the fate that awaited them had they accepted.

After some parley the second siege of Constantinople was decided upon. A plan of operations and the principles on which the booty was to be shared were arranged. It was a tougher job than before. Murzuphles was a resourceful leader; the Greeks were hot with the passion for revenge. Early on the morning of the 9th of April 1204 the assault began. The French made desperate though unsuccessful efforts to scale the walls. But stout old Dandolo heartened his Venetians by an oration thus given by Da Canale:—

“Sirs, marvel not that the French have failed to take the city, for though they be brave men and wise they are not used to climb ships’ ladders as you are. Remember what your forefathers did at Tyre, and through Syria and Dalmatia and Romania, where verily no fortress could withstand their onslaught. I know well that ye be of such lineage that no city can be defended against you. And I promise you, by the faith I hold in God, that I will share among you the great treasure within the city; and to the first who shall plant the ensign of Monsignor S. Marco on the walls I will give 1000 perperi; to the second, 800; to the third, 500; to the fourth, 300; to the fifth, 200; and 100 to every one who shall mount the walls. Now, be valiant, that the blood of your forefathers, whose issue ye are, may be proven in you, so that by the help of Jesus Christ and of S. Marco, and by the prowess of your bodies, ye be masters of the city and may enjoy the riches thereof.”

On the 12th the second assault was made; and after varying fortune, by a happy change of wind, the huge galleys, the *Pellegrino* and the *Paradiso*, the flagships of the bishops of Soissons and Troyes, firmly locked together, were brought under one of the principal towers of the city. The ladders just reached the summit. Two whose names are preserved to us, Pietro Alberti of Venice and André d'Artoise of France, were the first to win a foothold; their fellows swarmed up, and the tower was won. Meanwhile three gates were battered down. Panic seized the Greeks, and the besiegers rushed in. They stood by their arms all night, and in the morning the enormous riches of the city lay before the victors. It was forbidden to slay, but free scope was allowed to rapine. The sack of the town began, and lasted through Holy Week. "Humanity reddens with shame," says Romanin, "and the mind recoils from telling the story of the horrors committed." The Crusaders' lust was unrestrained even by the sanctity of virgin vows. Nothing was spared. Palaces and houses were ransacked; churches and sanctuaries stripped; priceless statues were melted down; pictures torn to shreds. The Latin Christians wrought more havoc in those few days than Hun, Slav or Arab had done in as many centuries. The Venetians, says Romanin, *che animo più gentile avcano* (who were a more cultured people), exerted themselves to save as many as possible of the wondrous works of art from destruction.

It had been decided that all the loot should be placed in three churches set apart for that purpose, but large spoils of jewels and of smaller objects of value were secreted by individuals. The worth of the French plunder, after deducting the 50,000 marks due to the Venetians, amounted to the magnificent sum of 400,000 marks. All over Western Europe the monasteries and churches were enriched by reliquaries and precious stones, some of them finding their way as far as Norfolk. The plunder of the city, says Jeffrey, exceeded all that has been wit-

nessed since the creation of the world. The four famous bronze horses of St Mark's formed part of the Venetian spoil. It is related that a hind foot of one of the horses was broken during the transit, and Morosini, the owner of the galley that was freighted with them, begged permission to retain the foot as a memorial. The Senate agreed, and had another foot cast and fitted to the horse. "And," says Sanudo, "I have seen the said foot at the front of Morosini's house in S. Agostino, whence it was afterwards removed to the corner of a house in the SS. Apostoli."

Two master passions dominated the Venetians—to possess living commerce; and dead saints. As a centre of hagiolatry, Venice now became second to Rome. She acquired the bodies of St Simeon the Apostle and of St Lucy, part of the wood of the Holy Cross, some of the Holy Blood, part of the body of St John the Baptist, the arm of St George the Martyr, and the famous image of the Virgin, which still remains the object of Venetian devotion in St Mark's.

The political results were incalculable, for the chief bulwark of the Cross against the growing power of the Crescent was shattered. Six electors were appointed by each of the allies to choose an Emperor. Dandolo by his commanding genius was the obvious choice, but he refused the proffered honour and threw his weight on the side of Baldwin, Count of Flanders, who became the first Latin Emperor of the East. Of the territorial spoils St Mark took indeed the Lion's share. One-fourth formed the Emperor's domain; another fourth was shared among the Frankish lords, Boniface's reward being the sovereignty of Crete and of Salonika. To Venice went one-half—a rich possession, including the Morea, the Ionian islands, the islands of the Archipelago, a large slice of Thessaly, among other cities those of Adrianople, Trajanople and Durazzo, the province of Servia and the coasts of the Hellespont. But the Lion of St Mark had a greedy maw. Like the *Lupa* in the "Inferno," after a meal he was hungrier than before. Crete, the largest and

most fertile of Mediterranean islands, was a trading centre of tempting value and covetous eyes were set upon it. Boniface was approached, and for a sum of 10,000 marks the island was transferred to Venice which at one bound rose to be the dominant power in the Levant. To the title of Doge of Venice, Croatia and Dalmatia was now added that of Despot and Lord of one-fourth and one-half of the Roman Empire. A Venetian—Tomaso Morosini—was appointed to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the Chapter filled with his nominees.

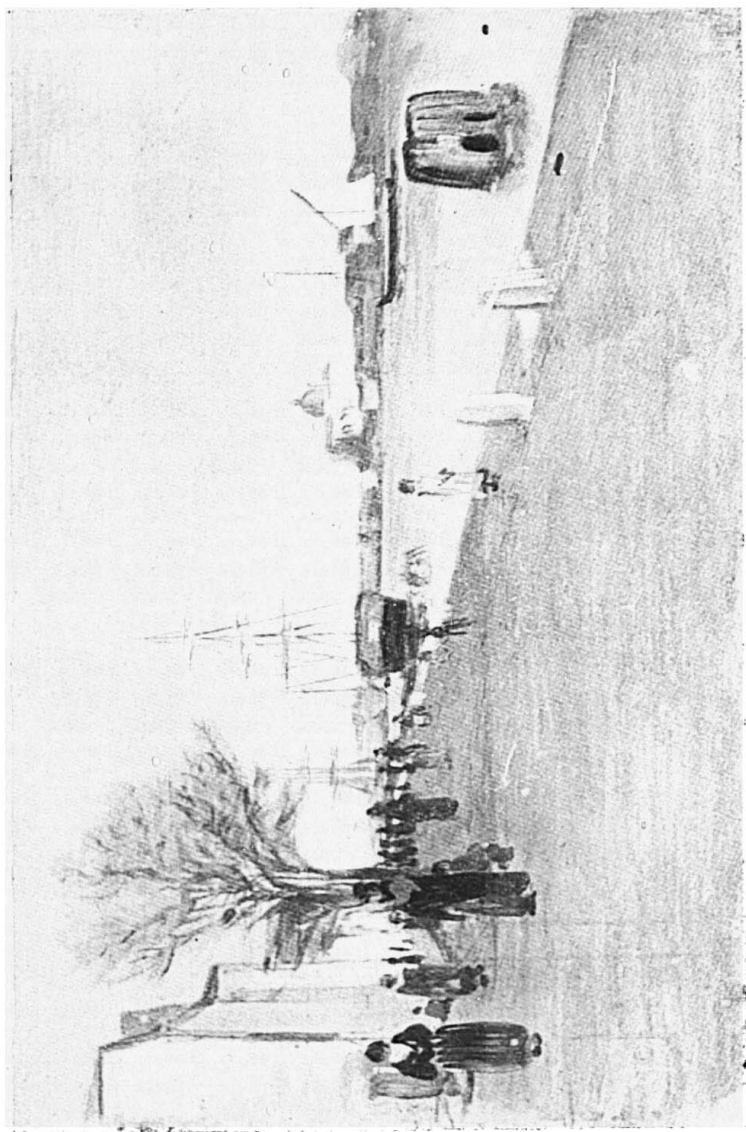
But to carve out territory on a map is one thing; effective possession another. Adrianople was recalcitrant. In April 1205, while the united forces of Baldwin and Dandolo were attempting to subdue it, the King of Bulgaria, once spurned by the haughty Latins, appeared with a powerful army to raise the siege. The Latins, attacking with their usual impetuosity, were snared by the enemy's light cavalry; the Emperor and many knights taken prisoners; the main body put to flight. Jeffrey gives a graphic picture of the disaster. The old Doge, infirm but unbroken in spirit, advised a retreat to Constantinople and led the van. The retreat was successfully accomplished but the Latins were in evil plight; their Emperor was a prisoner; Boniface slain; the whole country swarming with the Bulgarian light horse; an Armenian reinforcement wiped out. And now the great Doge, their chief counsellor and leader, worn by disease and privation, died. His long span of life was but two years short of a century. He was buried in June 1205, with due pomp and honours, at St Sophia in a private chapel belonging to the Venetians, "for even the church was divided."

The magnificent tomb erected to perpetuate his memory was destroyed by Mahomet II. and the old hero's breast-plate, helmet, spurs and sword were afterwards given to Gentile Bellini, who brought them back to Venice on his return from the Turkish court. To this day a marble slab remains in the south gallery of the great mosque of S. Sofia



with the inscription—*Henricus Dandolo*. His best epitaph is the simple phrase of Jeffrey, *mult ere sages et proz* (he was very wise and brave).

It was on the 20th of July that a post galley brought the sad news to Venice that her greatest Doge lay dead. Pietro Ziani, a wealthy noble, experienced in Venetian statecraft, was chosen to second him. The Republic had now in fact become an empire. From the mother city along the Gulf of Trieste over Dalmatia, Croatia, the Morea, the islands of Corfù, Crete and the Archipelago from Greece to Constantinople, even up to Syria, the standard of St Mark was planted. Most of the islands were granted in fief to such of the leading Venetian nobles who engaged to secure and maintain effective possession. Crete was made a great feudal colony. Many vassals of the Greek Empire swore allegiance to their new masters and promised tribute. But the cost of empire was soon felt. A new loan was raised. A fleet of forty-three galleys and thirty ships was placed under the joint-command of Premarino and of Dandolo's son Renier, for the seas were swarming with Genoese pirates and a heavy task remained to consolidate and occupy the new possessions. The fleet sailed eastwards and in its way captured the Genoese corsair Liovecchio, an old enemy of the Republic, and twelve galleys; another, Arrigo Bellapolo, with five galleys, met the same fate. The Venetians swept the sea. Da Canale describes them as swooping down like hawks on their quarry. They reached Corfù, hanged Liovecchio and planted a garrison there. Crete, ever a stubborn and rebellious vassal, gave more trouble. Renier Dandolo was slain, and many a stout Venetian bit the dust or died a sailor's death ere the dominion of Venice was made good. The Latins meanwhile had recovered themselves at Constantinople, but their empire was a shadow; the real masters were the Venetian governor and his ubiquitous officials. Baldwin I. did not long survive his captivity. The story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife was



SUNSET ON THE ZATTERE.

enacted in his person and that of the Bulgarian queen. He met a horrible death at the hands of the abused king and his successor and brother, Henry 'of Flanders, held unquiet possession of the Empire for ten years, continually fighting against stubborn vassals. Henry's sister, Yolande, and her consort, Peter of Courtenay, next sat on the unstable throne. Their son Robert, a feeble prince, succeeded. His incapacity and the anarchic state of the Empire, raised the most vital problem that ever Venetian statesmen were called to face. Events seemed inevitably tending to one solution—that they who were masters in fact of the new Latin Empire should proclaim themselves so in name. Doge Ziani called a meeting of the Great Council and put forward a proposition, fraught with tremendous issues, that the seat of the Government should be transferred from Venice to Constantinople. The orations made by Ziani for and by the venerable Angelo Faliero against the revolutionary motion are given at great length by the chroniclers. A curious passage in the speech attributed to Faliero recalls Macaulay's famous New Zealander: "A few years hence perchance," cried the old statesman, "some Venetian traveller calling at these islands will find our canals choked, our dykes levelled, and our dwellings razed. He will see a few pilgrims wandering amid the ruins of our rich monasteries, a scanty and fever-stricken population; and a foreign ruler will be sitting in this very hall dictating laws to what was once Venice." When the motion was put to the vote the ballots for and against were found to be equal, and a casting vote decided the fate of Venice. It was known afterwards as the vote of Providence.