

CHAPTER VI

The Duel with Genoa—The Closing of the Great Council

“The dire aspect
Of civil wounds ploughed up with neighbours' swords.”

—*Shakespeare.*

BUT Venice was yet in the full vigour and buoyancy of lusty manhood, and nerved herself to regain her lost position. Alone among the Italian states she was able to evoke a fervent, whole-hearted patriotism. Rich and poor, patrician and plebeian were stirred. To the amazement of her enemies, fleet after fleet was expedited against the Genoese. Some minor engagements were fought with varying success, and at length the two powers met off Trapani in 1264 for a final battle. The Genoese were superior in numbers, and had the wind in their favour. The Venetians, having intoned the gospel for the day and called for help on Christ and Monsignor S. Marco, began the attack. A fierce struggle ensued on the interlocked vessels, which formed a vast battlefield. The carnage was terrible. At length Venetian courage and Venetian skill inflicted a crushing defeat on the Genoese, who lost the whole of their fleet.

The affection of the Greek Emperor for the Genoese was now chilled; he sued for terms, and after much debate, in which the forward party in Venice vainly pushed their policy of founding a new empire, with its centre at Constantinople, a treaty was signed in 1268, by which Venice recovered her commercial standing in the capital, though she creaked under the necessity of tolerating the presence of her rivals.

In 1265 the banner of the Cross was again raised in

Venice, this time against an Italian prince, Eccelino da Romano, the black-browed monster of Padua, who for his infamous cruelty, was immersed by Dante up to his eyes among the tyrants in the river of boiling blood. A platform was erected in the Piazza, from which the papal legate, the Archbishop of Ravenna, inveighed against the atrocities committed by the *serverissimo tiranno* whom the Pope had excommunicated, declaring that if he were permitted to live longer it would be to the shame of Christendom. The Doge made an oration in support of the crusade, and Venice joined the league against the tyrant. Eventually Padua was stormed and captured, Eccelino's victims released, himself in a later engagement mortally wounded by a bowshot. He fell, asking the name of the place where he was struck. "Sire," replied his attendant, "it is called Cassano." An astrologer had foretold that he should die at Bassano. "Bassano, Cassano," the dying lord was heard to mutter, "small difference is there between Bassano and Cassano." He plucked the arrow from the wound, thrust aside a friar who sought to confess him and died impenitent. Never was such joy in Italy, says Da Canale, as when the news came that the tyrant, more cruel than Pharaoh or Herod, was slain. The bells were rung all over Venice in praise of God, even as they do on saints' days. In the evening all the towers were illuminated with candles and torches so that it was a great marvel to see. The same annalist, writing of Venice with all the enthusiasm of an Elizabethan singing the praises of England, gives a vivid picture of his native city as it appeared towards the end of the thirteenth century. "In the year of the Incarnation of our Lord 1267, I, Martin da Canale, toiled and travailed so that I found the ancient story of the Venetians and how they made the fairest, noblest and pleasantest city in the world, filled with all beauty and excellency. And I have set me to translate this story for the honour of that city men call Vinigia from Latin into French, for that language hath



S. MARCO—FACADE AND CAMPANILE

course throughout the whole world and is more 'delightful to read and to hear than any other. For I would have all men to know, who may travel thither, how the noble city is built; how filled with all good things and how mighty is the lord of the Venetians, the most noble Doge; how powerful are her nobles; how full of prowess her people and how all are perfect in the faith of Jesus and to Holy Church obedient, for within that noble Venice neither heretic, nor usurer, nor murderer, nor thief, nor robber dares dwell. And I pray Jesus Christ and His sweet mother, St Mary, and Monsignor St Mark, the Evangelist (in whom after Jesus Christ we have put our trust), that they may grant health and long life to Monsignor the Doge and to the Venetians. From all places come merchants and merchandise, and goods run through that city even as waters do from fountains. Provisions in abundance men find there, and bread and wine and land-fowl and water-fowl, meat, fresh and salt, and great fish from the sea and from the rivers. You shall find within that fair city a multitude of old men and youths, who, for their nobleness, are much praised; merchants, and bankers, and craftsmen, and sailors of all kinds, and ships to carry to all places, and great galleys to the hurt of her enemies. There, too, are fair ladies, youths and maidens adorned most richly." The chronicler describes the Piazza much as we see it in Gentile Bellini's picture (p. 262). "St Mark's is the most beautiful square in the world. Towards the east is the fairest church in the whole world, the Church of Monsignor St Mark, and next is the palace of Monsignor the Doge, great and most marvellously beautiful. Towards the south is the end of the Piazza over the sea, and on the side of that Piazza (the Piazzetta) is the palace of Monsignor the Doge, and on the other side are palaces to house the commoners, and these hold as far as the Campanile of St Mark, which is so great and high that the like could not be found. And there, next the Campanile, is a hospital which Madonna the

Dogaressa has built to receive the sick, and men call it the Hospital of St Mark. Next are the palaces of the treasurers, whom the Venetians call the procurators of St Mark, and next to their mansions are the palaces to lodge nobles, and these houses go far along the Piazza up to a church (S. Geminiano). On the other side (N.) are noble buildings for high barons and gentlemen, and these reach as far as the church of St Mark."

The firm hand kept by the aristocracy on civil government was felt during Zeno's reign. The Genoese were too high-spirited to submit to terms while under the shame of defeat and a new naval war was imminent. To meet the cost the corn tax was increased and a bread riot took place on the Piazza. The Doge tried in vain to reason with the mob, and at last was driven to resort to force. Troops were levied; the sedition was crushed; the ring-leaders were beheaded between the red columns. But when order was restored the obnoxious tax was quietly withdrawn. The Government was severe to aristocratic brawlers. Two of the Dandolo family sided with the people, and Lorenzo Tiepolo, son of Doge Giacomo, headed the Government party. The rival leaders met in the streets and Tiepolo was assaulted. The Dandoli were at once heavily fined and a law was passed forbidding the people to have the escutcheons of any nobles painted on their houses or to wear any of their emblems. The Doge died in 1268 and was honoured with a sumptuous State funeral in S. Zanipolo.

Before the election of a successor the most complicated machinery ever devised by the wit of man for the election of a chief magistrate was elaborated by the Venetian aristocracy.

The youngest of the Privy Councillors having invoked the divine blessing in St Mark's, issued forth and laid hands on the first boy he met on the Piazza. Meantime the Great Council met and having excluded all members who were

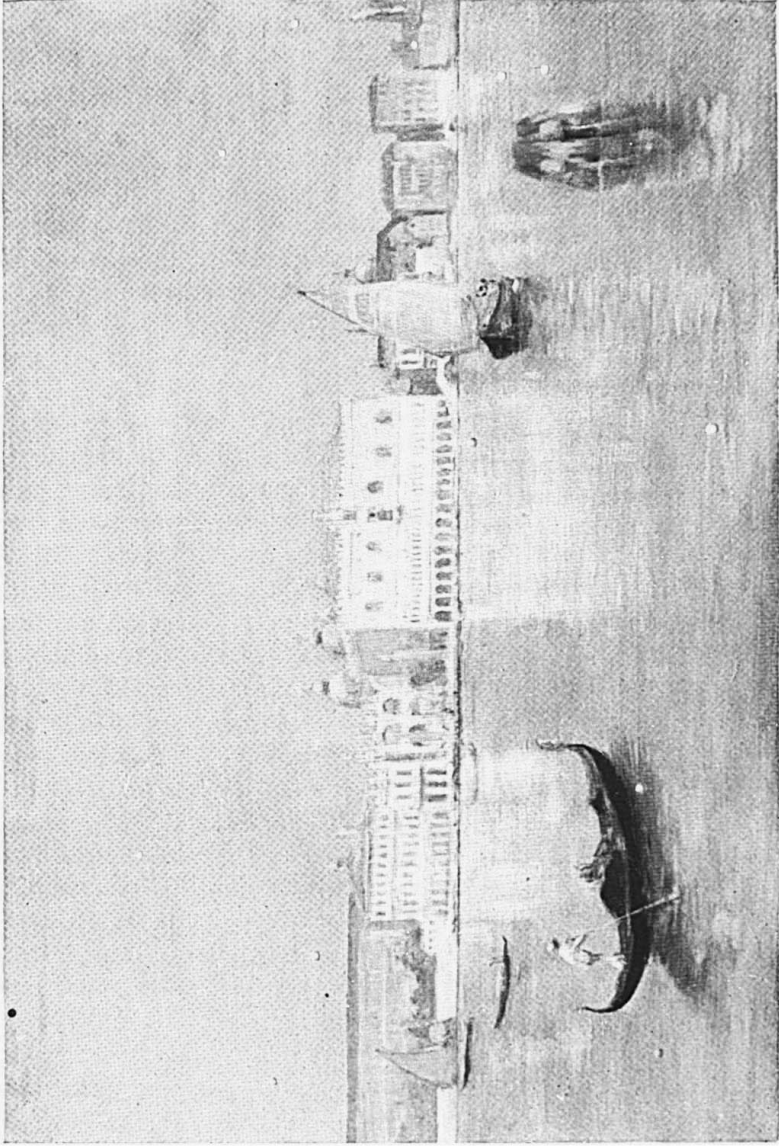
under thirty years of age, those that remained were counted. Ballots equal in number to the purged Council were then prepared, into thirty of which was inserted a piece of parchment inscribed with the word "*lector*." The ballots¹ were placed in a hat; the captured boy was introduced and bidden to draw out the ballots and hand one to each Councillor. The ballots were then opened and the thirty who held the parchment stayed in the chamber; the others left. The thirty reduced themselves to nine by the same process; which nine sat in close conclave until they had chosen forty, each by a majority of at least seven votes. These forty were reduced by lot to twelve. The twelve elected twenty-five, each by a majority of at least nine votes. The twenty-five were again reduced to nine, who chose forty-five, each by at least seven votes. The forty-five reduced themselves to eleven who made the final choice of forty-one by at least nine votes each. The electoral college of forty-one thus formed, having heard the Mass of the Holy Ghost, met and chose three presidents and two secretaries. Each elector in turn placed the name of his candidate in an urn. The secretaries unfolded the papers and read out the names. The papers were again folded and placed in the urn and one was extracted. If the candidate thus selected were in the room, he was ordered to withdraw, and each elector invited to state his objections to him. The candidate was then called in to refute any charges made against him, and a last vote was taken for or against the candidate. If he obtained twenty-five ballots he was declared Doge. The election was proclaimed, and a deputation led the Doge-elect to the Ducal Palace, and then by the ducal staircase to St Mark's. He ascended the marble pulpit to the left of the choir and showed himself to the people. Having heard mass, he swore fealty to the State and to observe its laws. The Primicerio then solemnly invested him with the ducal mantle and handed

¹ Hollow balls of wax were first used, afterwards the thirty were made of gold and the others of silver.

him the standard of the Republic. He was then chaired and made the usual tour of the Piazza, distributing largess to the people. Afterwards he ascended the great staircase (after the Giants' Staircase was built he stood between the statues of Mars and Neptune), where the oldest Councillor placed the ducal cap on his head. A banquet given by the Doge to the electors completed the ceremony.

Such, with slight modifications, was the machinery by which the Doges were elected until the fall of the Republic. The ceremony over, public festivities followed. By Da Canale's vivid description of the rejoicings that attended the election of Lorenzo Tiepolo in 1268 we are able to gain some idea of what they were like. "On the day of S. Apollinare was such great joy in Venice that the mouth of man could not tell of it. For the Venetians had remembrance of Messer Jacopo Tiepolo, father of Lorenzo, how noble and debonnaire, how famous for good deeds he was, and great were their hopes of Messer Lorenzo." Soon as the good news was known the bells rang a glad peal, and all the people, even the little children, ran to St Mark's shouting, "Messer Lorenzo Tiepolo is made Doge!" After mass and consecration he was given the gonfalon of St Mark all of gold. Having ascended the palace stairs he stood, gonfalon in hand, while the lauds¹ were sung, and again swore fealty to the people and spake wisely to them. Meanwhile his chaplains went to S. Agostino to fetch the Dogaressa, and to her also were praises sung. On the morrow, having made a public reconciliation with the Dandoli, a naval review was held on the Grand Canal in front of the Ducal Palace, led by Pietro Michiel, who with a great fleet of galleys was about to sail overseas. Choirs were aboard who sang the ducal lauds. The waters were alive

¹ "Christ conquereth; Christ reigneth; Christ ruleth. Salvation, honour, long life and victory to our lord, Lorenzo Tiepolo, by the grace of God renowned Doge of Venice, Dalmatia and Croatia, Dominator of one-fourth and a half of the Empire of Romania. O St Mark, lend him thine aid!"



DOGE'S PALACE FROM ISOLA S. GIORGIO.

with boats of all kinds, those of Torcello and Murano adorned with banners and shields distinguishing themselves by their splendour. A grand procession of Guilds next defiled before the Doge. First came the master smiths, two by two, each wearing a garland, accompanied by their trumpeters and other musicians and by their standard-bearers. As they came in front of the Doge they saluted him and wished him long life and victory. His serenity returned a gracious answer, and they then went their way shouting, "*Viva nostro Signor Messer Lorenzo Tiepolo*," to S. Agostino, to salute the Dogress. Then followed the furriers, dressed in ermine, calimanco and taffeta; the tanners, richly clothed in rare furs and bearing silver cups and phials filled with wine; the weavers, clad in finest cloth; the tailors, magnificently arrayed in white garments, adorned with vermilion stars and trimmed with furs, "and the great joy they made must be truly told, for they set their gonfalon in front, with trumpets and instruments of music, and gave themselves up to great gladness, singing *canzoni* and folk-songs; and having in their turn saluted their new lord right well, went their way to Madame the Dogress rejoicing exceedingly." The wool-workers bore olive branches in their hands and garlands of olive on their heads—they, too, were filled with great joy. The silk-weavers, "they that make pellisses right richly," decked their bodies all anew with coats and mantles of fustian. The makers of quilts and doublets, to honour their lord, arrayed themselves newly with cloaks of white, trimmed with *fleur-de-lys*, and each cloak had a hood richly dight with pearls set in gold; little children marched in front of them. The makers of cloth of gold were apparelled in cloth of purple and of gold, with crowns of pearls set in gold; the shoemakers and mercers in fine silk and cloth of gold; the cheesemongers and pork butchers in cloth of scarlet and purple and divers colours, wearing garlands of pearls and gold; the fishmongers and poulterers followed, "and know, sirs, that right well should Messer Lorenzo Tiepolo have

them that sold fish in remembrance as they passed, for many a fair trout and sturgeon and other great fish had he obtained from them." The glass-makers bore some of the finest of their wares in their group, and the comb-makers a cage full of birds of all kinds, and as they passed, opened the door and set the birds free to delight the Doge. And "there, sirs, you would have heard great laughter on all sides." But the barber surgeons were they that most distinguished themselves by their ingenuity. They had with them two men on horseback armed cap-à-pie, called knights-errant, who escorted four damsels, most gorgeously appared, two on fair steeds and two on foot. On reaching the Doge one of the horsemen dismounted and making obeisance, cried: "Sire, we be two knights-errant who rode to seek aventure, and enduring pains and travail have won these fair damsels. Now are we come to your Court, and if there be any knight who is minded to prove his body and win these strange damsels we are ready to defend them." "Sirs," answered the Doge, "ye are welcome, and may the Lord let you rejoice in your conquest, for I will that ye be honoured at my Court." The knight then remounted his steed and all cried, "Long live our lord, Messer Lorenzo Tiepolo," and went their way to repeat the play before the Dogressa.

How many were the Guilds that took part in the procession we know not for Da Canale stays his narrative to tell of the Genoese wars, after describing the goldsmiths wearing on their caps and cloaks, pearls and gold and silver, sapphires, emeralds, jacinths, amethysts, jaspers and carbuncles and other precious stones. After the procession an exhibition was held in the palace, of all the arts of Venice, in honour of the Dogressa.

Scarcely had the echoes of the music and shouting in the Piazza died away when the gaunt spectre of famine hovered over Venice. The wheat harvest had failed in Europe, the Crusaders had devastated Africa, and she appealed to her allies on the mainland for help. A strong state ever fighting

for its own hand may win the respect born of fear, but sympathy, never. The entreaties of Venice fell on deaf ears. Strenuous efforts were made to collect cargoes of corn from Dalmatia, Greece and even Asia. In the nick of time a small consignment came in from Dalmatia and was immediately distributed with absolute impartiality among the people. When the pressure was relieved, a corn office, consisting of three *magistrati delle Biade*, was created to control the corn trade and take measures to prevent any future possibility of famine. The bas-relief in the Ducal Palace, now known as the Cobden Madonna (p. 253), commemorates the wise means adopted by these magistrates in a time of scarcity two centuries later.

The coronation oath sworn to by Tiepolo was made even more stringent on the accession of Jacopo Contarini in 1275. The Doge was fast becoming little more than the official mouthpiece of the aristocracy. A clause binding the Doge to keep himself informed of the number of prisoners in the cells at the Ducal Palace and to see that each and every prisoner should be brought to trial within a month of his incarceration, demonstrates how careful the aristocracy were to justify power by wise principles of government. Contarini was an old man of eighty when he accepted office, and after six years retired on an annuity of 1500 lire, the first pension ever granted to a Doge. The steady pursuance of commercial aggrandisement brought Venice in the previous reign into conflict with Bologna. Duties were levied on all ships trading in the ports between Ravenna and Fiume, and a captain of the Gulf of Adria appointed to exact them by force of arms. It was only too apparent that Venice aimed at making the whole Adriatic a Venetian sea, and in 1283 the territories of the Republic in Dalmatia were menaced by a formidable coalition of Aquileia, Ancona, and the Count of Goritz.

The Republic replied by laying siege to Trieste. During the armistice granted by Morosini, the Venetian commander,

to enable the Patriarch of Aquileia to bury his nephew, fallen in battle, a certain Contestabile of Infantry, Gerard of the Long Lances, was found to have corresponded with the enemy by means of slips of paper attached to his arrows. He confessed under torture and was shot from a mangonel into the enemy's camp, a mangled mass of treachery. The siege was, however, a failure, and Morosini on his return was disgraced and imprisoned. The victorious allies marched on Caorle, captured the *podestà* and burned his palace: they even singed the very mane of the Lion of St Mark by a descent on Malamocco. The executive, endowed with unlimited powers, made a levy *en masse* on the whole able-bodied population, another armament was fitted out and at length Trieste fell. The Pope, anxious to buttress the tottering fabric of the Latin dominion in the East, effected a peace, and a huge bonfire in the Piazza made of the surrendered Triestine artillery satisfied Venetian pride, though her attempt to dominate the Adriatic was but partially successful.

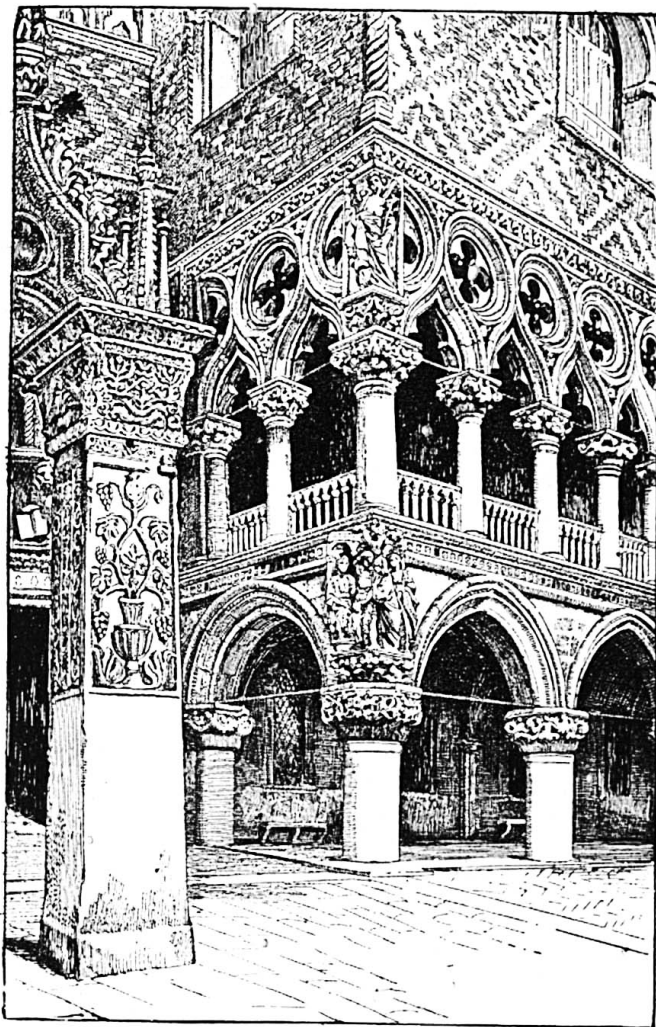
The sleepless eyes of Venetian statesmen were now turned southwards. Constance of Swabia, unhappy Manfred's

“bella figlia, genitrice
dell' onor di Cicilia e d' Aragona,”¹

by her marriage brought the strong arm of Peter of Aragon to enforce her claims to the throne of the Two Sicilies, which the Pope's darling, Charles of Anjou, had won by the defeat of Manfred and the destruction of the Ghibelline cause at Benevento.

The Republic, still smarting under the commercial condominium of the Genoese at Constantinople, and enticed by the prospect of regaining her former ascendancy, was drawn into an offensive and defensive alliance with the Pope and Charles against the Greeks. But on Easter Eve, in 1282, an insult offered to a noble Sicilian damsel by a French soldier fired the rage of the Sicilians, and before the dawn

¹ Purgatorio, iii. 115.



DOGE'S PALACE—THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON CORNER

of Easter Day the blood of eight thousand French in Palermo alone had glutted their vengeance. The Sicilian Vespers wrecked Charles's fortunes, and the Republic turned to renew her former understanding with the Greek Emperor. Martin IV., enraged at the defection of his ally, laid Venice under the ban of the Church, but his opportune death soon made reconciliation possible.

Visitors to Venice may have noticed a traditional motto written in brass nails on some of the gondolas that ply for hire which admirably sums up the old popular Venetian idea of government: *Pane in Piazza: Giustizia in Palazzo* (Bread in the market-place: Justice in the palace). This principle always inspired the rule of the aristocracy. In 1284, during Giovanni Dandolo's reign, a calamitous inundation had plunged the people into misery. To meet their urgent needs a loan was raised on Government security, and ten thousand bushels of wheat were distributed at a nominal cost among the people.

In October of the same year the mint issued the first gold ducat of Venice, which for centuries was famous for its purity, fineness and weight throughout the whole commercial world. Orders were given that it was to be similar to and even purer than the golden florin of Florence, which had been coined thirty-two years before. Sanudo remembers to have seen an inscription on marble in the mint, dated 1285, commemorating the first striking of the gold ducat of the Venetians in honour of the Blessed Mark the Evangelist and of all saints, in the reign of the renowned Doge of the Venetians, Giovanni Dandolo. This beautiful zecchino (sequin) was worth about nine shillings and sixpence in English money, and admirably illustrates the dress of the Doges during a period of five hundred and thirteen years. The evolution of the *cornio* or horn on the ducal bonnet may be clearly traced on the coins issued between the reigns of Francesco Foscari and Leonardo Loredano.

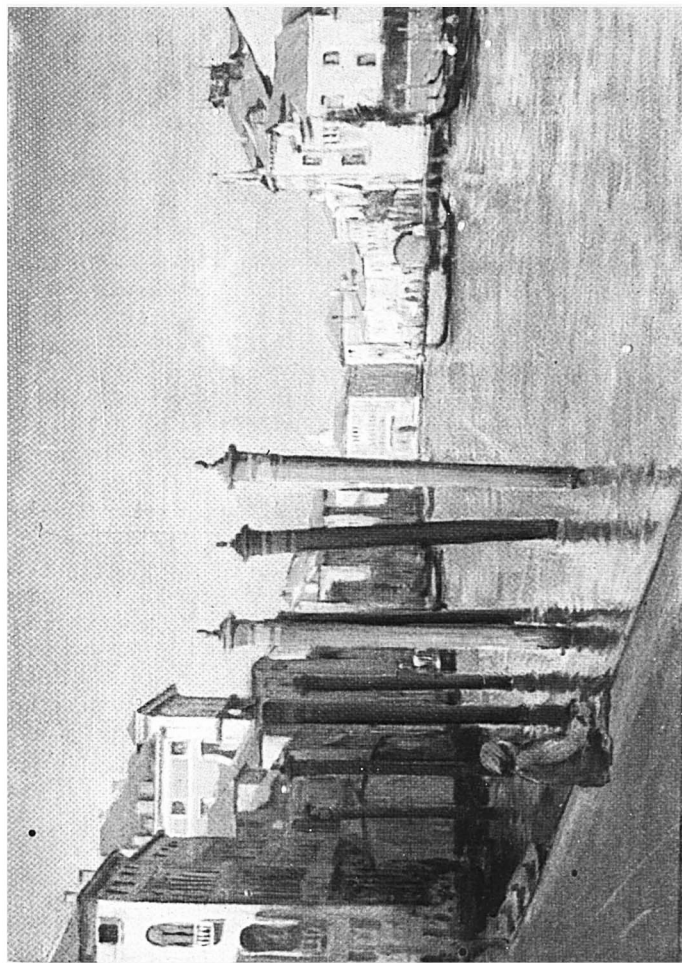
The sepulchre had hardly received the body of Giovanni

Dandolo in 1289 when a formidable demonstration in favour of Giacomo, son of Doge Lorenzo Tiepolo, put the new constitution to a severe test. Giacomo, son and grandson of Doges, was known to have popular leanings, and so threatening was the attitude of the crowd on the Piazza that the Privy Council personally urged him to disclaim any intention of accepting the proffered honour.

Tiepolo, preferring his country's peace to the gratification of his own ambition, exhorted the crowd to respect the law, and left for the mainland till the crisis should be past. But the delicate electoral machinery was never for a moment put out of gear. The provisional Government was appointed; through all the tumult the electors calmly rattled their ballots in the Ducal Palace, and to the sullen displeasure of the popular party a prominent aristocrat, Pietro Gradenigo, was proclaimed Doge twenty-three days after the death of his predecessor. For the first time the officer who recited the formula: *Quest' è il vostro doge si vi piacerà*, turned aside without staying to receive the approbation of the people.

The long reign of Gradenigo (1289-1311) is one of the most important in the annals of Venice. By the fall of Acre in 1291 the doom of the Christian power in the Holy Land was sealed, and Venice, whose interest in the Crusades and in the Latin dominion over Syria was frankly a commercial one, turned the new situation to her own advantage. Her policy was to frustrate her rivals, the Genoese. To the scandal of Christendom a treaty was concluded with the infidel in 1299, and ere long slaves and materials of war were openly sold by the Venetians in their ports. The Sultan declared in the charter his steadfast will that the Venetians should be protected and honoured beyond all people in the world, and entitled to the sole right of a Saracen escort for Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem. The Genoese found themselves squeezed out of the coast towns, and Venice in exclusive possession of the Syrian trade.

The Pope, anxiously revolving the sad vicissitudes of the



ON THE GRAND CANAL.

Christians in the east, turned to Venice and Genoa, praying them for the love of Christ to combine and save the fair island of Cyprus, still unpolluted by the presence of the infidels. But the lion of St Mark was a fierce yoke-fellow. The more restricted the field of influence became between Venice and Genoa the more bitter grew their jealousy. Two fleets were, however, fitted out in response to the Papal appeal. Their prows had scarcely touched Cyprian waters when a fight took place between some of the allied ships, and to the edification of the Saracen, the two greatest maritime powers of Christendom were soon engaged in mutual destruction. Unavailing efforts were made by the Church to heal the strife, for while the Dominican envoys were treating at Venice the feverish activity at the arsenal told too plainly that the time for the peacemaker was not yet come. Rumours soon reached Venice of an alliance between the Genoese and the Greeks and of the threatened closure of the Dardanelles to her ships. She delayed no longer to strike. All her seamen between sixteen and sixty were enrolled; her patrician houses were called to furnish their part of a new armament, and on October 7th, 1294, the fleet was under sail. The admiral, Marco Besegio, sighted the Genoese fleet under Nicolo Spinola off Ayas, in Asia Minor. The enemy was inferior in strength, and Besegio, too confident perhaps of victory, was out-manceuvred, defeated with heavy losses, and himself slain. The Genoese, to clinch their victory, despatched a mighty fleet of nigh two hundred sail manned by forty-five thousand men, among whom were the chiefs of their noble houses. Meanwhile Venice, shrewdly calculating that the heavy financial strain involved in the maintenance of so huge an armament would soon wear the enemy out, steadily equipped a new fleet, called out a fresh levy, and concentrated her force on the defence of the lagoons. Before a year was past the Genoese, after spoiling and slaughtering the hapless inhabitants of Canea in Crete, returned to port.

Early in 1295 news came to Venice which stung her to fury. A street row at Constantinople had developed into a general attack by the Genoese on the Venetians. The former were victorious, and after flinging the Venetian Governor out of the windows of the palace, dashing him to pieces, proceeded to an indiscriminate massacre of the inhabitants of the Venetian colony. The Greeks sent envoys to disclaim any responsibility in the outrage, but they were hectorred by the Doge, who demanded an enormous indemnity, which served but to cement their alliance with the Genoese. Late in the spring the Venetian commander, Ruggieri Morosini, with a fleet of forty galleys, forced the Dardanelles, wasted the Genoese suburb of Galata and laid siege to Constantinople. Meanwhile another fleet, under Giov. Soranzo, entered the Black Sea and sacked the Genoese settlement of Caffa; but the elements amply avenged the Genoese. Soranzo returned to Venice bearing an unheroic story of vessels disabled and men frozen to death by the rigours of an Euxine winter. The year 1297 passed in petty expeditions, and towards the end of the autumn Boniface VIII. essayed to negotiate a peace. The magnanimous Pope (Dante's pet enemy) went so far as to offer, if the Genoese paid one-half, to pay himself the other half of the claims of the Venetians, but the latter rejected all compromise, and Boniface despairing of success inculcated the pride of Venice, and washed his hands of the whole business. Each power prepared for a final struggle.

Among the wealthy Venetians whose enthusiasm took the form of offering themselves and their ships to the common cause was a certain Marco Polo but recently returned from adventurous journies in the mysterious lands of the Grand Khan of Tartary; in Persia, China, Japan, and the Indies; and who from his wonderful stories of the million peopled cities and millions of jewels and treasure he had seen in his twenty-five years' wanderings was popularly

known as Messer Marco Milione. In August 1298 all was ready and a fleet of ninety-five sail, under the command of Andrea Dandolo, set its course southwards, and came upon the Genoese squadron of eighty-five vessels, under Lamba Doria off the island of Curzola. The fleets were about evenly matched, and on September 8th the action began. Doria, by superior seamanship, got the weather gauge and the Venetians, fighting too with the sun in their eyes, were routed. Twelve galleys, whose captains, panic-stricken, had abandoned the fight, alone escaped. With abject mien they told the extent of the disaster. The fine fleet was sunken, captured or burned, the loss in killed appalling, and seven thousand of their countrymen were on their way to Genoese prisons.¹ Among the captives was Messer Marco Milione himself, who to relieve the tedium of his imprisonment, dictated in halting French to his prison comrade Rustichello the story of his wanderings and adventures. A small court, in which Marco Polo's house stood on a site now covered by the Malibran Theatre, is called to this day the Corte del Milione.



REMAINS OF MARCO POLO'S HOUSE

¹ The details of the victory are inscribed in St Matthew's, the private church of the Doria family, at Genoa. Hapless Dandolo, rather than figure in a Genoese triumph, dashed out his brains against the mast of the ship that bore him away.

Venice, conscious that her staying power was greater than her rival's, without a moment of panic set about equipping another fleet of a hundred galleys. But Genoa, exhausted by her costly victory, was willing to treat, and in 1299 the Imperial Vicar of Milan effected a peace between the Republics on honourable terms.

During the Genoese war the aristocracy had quietly matured plans for fencing off their preserves from any intrusion of the democracy. Two abortive attempts had been made in 1286 and 1296 to restrict membership of the Great Council to members of the aristocracy. Gradenigo, who was a leader of iron will and indomitable purpose, succeeded the next year in achieving the revolution in the Constitution known as the shutting of the Great Council (*Serrata del Gran Consiglio*). The *Quarantia*¹ were charged (1) to put to the ballot one by one all who for the past four years had sat in the Great Council. Those who received not less than twelve votes were to be members up to Michaelmas, when, after being subjected to a new ballot, they were to serve for a further period of one year. (2) Three electors were to be appointed who should submit further names of non-members of the Great Council for election under the same system of ballot. (3) The three were to sit in the Council until Michaelmas, when they were to be superseded by other three, who should sit for a year. (4) The law could not be repealed save with the consent of five of the six privy councillors, twenty-five of the *Quarantia*, and two-thirds of the Great Council. Such were the chief provisions of the measure which transformed the aristocracy into an oligarchy and created the *Maggior Consiglio*.

It will be seen that by the second clause an avenue was left open by which a Venetian, not a member of the favoured class, might enter the aristocratic close, but it was rendered inoperative by the principle which the three laid down for

¹ The supreme legal authority.



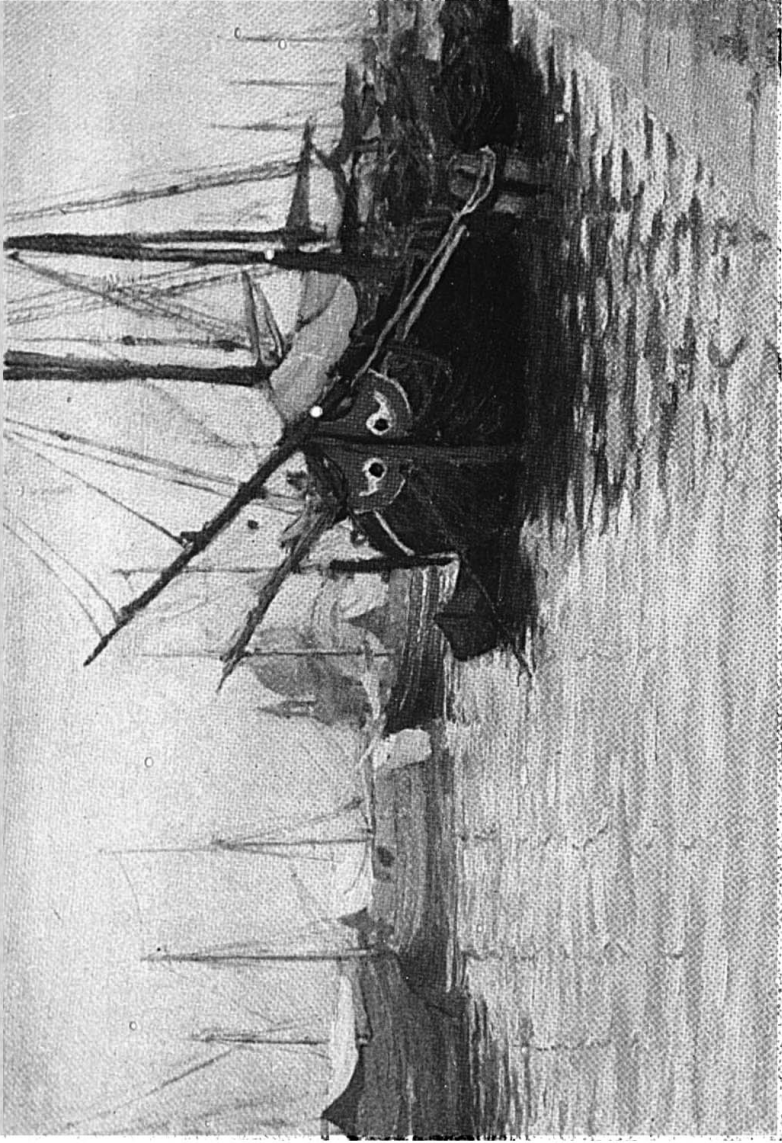
DOGE'S PALACE—SALA DEL MAGGIOR CONSIGLIO

their guidance, that only those whose paternal ancestors had been members of the Great Council between 1172 and 1297 should be eligible for ballot. The effect of the change was to increase the number of the Council. In 1296 it consisted of two hundred and ten members. In 1311 they had risen to ten hundred and seventeen; in 1340 to twelve hundred and twelve; in 1490 to fifteen hundred and seventy; and in 1510 to sixteen hundred and seventy-one.

In 1315 it was enacted that a book be kept for the inscription of the names of all persons above eighteen years of age who had the right to enter the Council. So keen was the ambition to be inscribed that in the year following a fine of thirty lire was imposed on all those whose names were unlawfully entered and who did not remove them within a month. In 1319 *Avvogadori*, a sort of heraldic officers, were appointed and charged to subject to the severest scrutiny the titles of applicants for inscription, and in order to frustrate any attempt to tamper with the electors it was ordained that as many ballots should be used as there were names inscribed, and that of these, a number equal to the candidates to be elected should be of gold. The names were read out in the order of their entry and a boy extracted a ballot as each man was called. Those to whom the gold ballots fell were declared elected. It was further ordained that after the lapse of two years all who had reached the age of twenty-five years and were in possession of the necessary qualifications should *ipso facto* be entitled to enter the Council. Thus the electors' functions ended, and any descendant of an aristocratic family who fulfilled the conditions required by the law became at that age a member of the Great Council. This was the actual and definite *Serrata* (Nov. 25th, 1319).

Every noble was bound to notify his marriage and the birth of his children at the *Avvogaria* to be entered in a book and stringent regulations were from time to time laid down to insure the purity of the family record. Owing to the association of the golden ballots with the right to enter the

Council, this book was called the *Libro d'Oro*, the Golden book. The Council elected all officers of State, imposed taxes, decreed laws, made peace and war, concluded alliances, until owing to its unwieldy growth many of its powers were delegated to the Senate, the Council retaining as its chief function the election of the officers of the Republic. The Senate was definitely established in 1230 and consisted of sixty members, nominated by four electors of the Great Council, to whom later other sixty were added called the *Zonta* or addition. The *Consiglio Minore* (Privy Council) was still composed of six members chosen from the wards of the city. They, with the Doge, presided over the Senate, and with the three chiefs of the *Quarantia* formed the *Serenissima Signoria* (Signory). They could act in the absence of the Doge but the Doge could take no action without them. They opened dispatches, received petitions, prepared the agenda for the Great Council and the Senate, read the Coronation oath every year to the Doge and if need were admonished him. The *Quarantia* (Council of forty) was the judicial authority and controlled the Mint, heard complaints from the subject cities and provinces, and gave audience to ambassadors. In the fifteenth century the civil and criminal functions of the *Quarantia* were separated and two *Quarantie* established. The Doge, the living embodiment of the Republic, presided over all these assemblies. In 1308 a small *giunta* of seven *Savii* (wise men or experts) was formed to deal with Ferrarese affairs and did its work so well that it continued in office. It was subsequently enlarged and subdivided in 1442 into three bodies, one dealing with home affairs, one with mainland affairs, the third with the arsenal. The three united formed the *Collegio* (Cabinet). By the permanent appointment of the Council of Ten in 1335 was evolved the famous constitution of Venice which for its stability and efficiency became the admiration of every statesman in Europe, and filled with envy the Italian states of the mainland.



BOATS AT ANCHOR.

CHAPTER VII

The Oligarchy—Commercial supremacy—The Bajamonte Conspiracy—The Council of the Ten—The Prisons

“O thou that art situate at the entry of the sea which art a merchant of the people for many isles, . . . thou hast said: I am of perfect beauty. Thy borders are in the midst of the seas, thy builders have perfected thy beauty. . . . Thy wise men were thy pilots. . . . All the ships of the sea were in thee to occupy thy merchandise. . . . Syria was thy merchant . . . they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple and brodered work, fine linen and coral and agate.”—*Ezekiel*.

THE fourteenth century opens the era of the oligarchy. Venice had made peace with the only rival that could challenge her maritime supremacy. She had not yet entangled herself in an aggressive continental policy. The tramp of the advancing Turk was too far away to echo in the lagoons. The wealth of the Indies and of the far East flowed through her markets. Her merchants laid the known world under contribution. “By way of the Syrian ports and of Alexandria came the cloves, nutmegs, mace and ebony of the Moluccas; the sandal wood of Timor; the costly camphor of Borneo; the benzoin of Sumatra and Java; the aloes wood of Cochin China; the perfumes, gums, spices, silks and innumerable curiosities of China, Japan and Siam; the rubies of Pegu; the fine fabrics of Coromandel; the richer stuffs of Bengal; the spikenard of Nepaul and Bhutan; the diamonds of Golconda; the Damascus steel of Nirmul; the pearls, sapphires, topazes and cinnamon of Ceylon; the pepper, ginger and satin wood of Malabar; the lac, agates and sumptuous brocades and jewelry of Cambay; the costus and graven vessels, wrought arms and brodered shawls of Cashmere; the bdellium of Scinde; the musk of Thibet; the galbanum of Khorossan; the assafœtida of Afghanistan;