

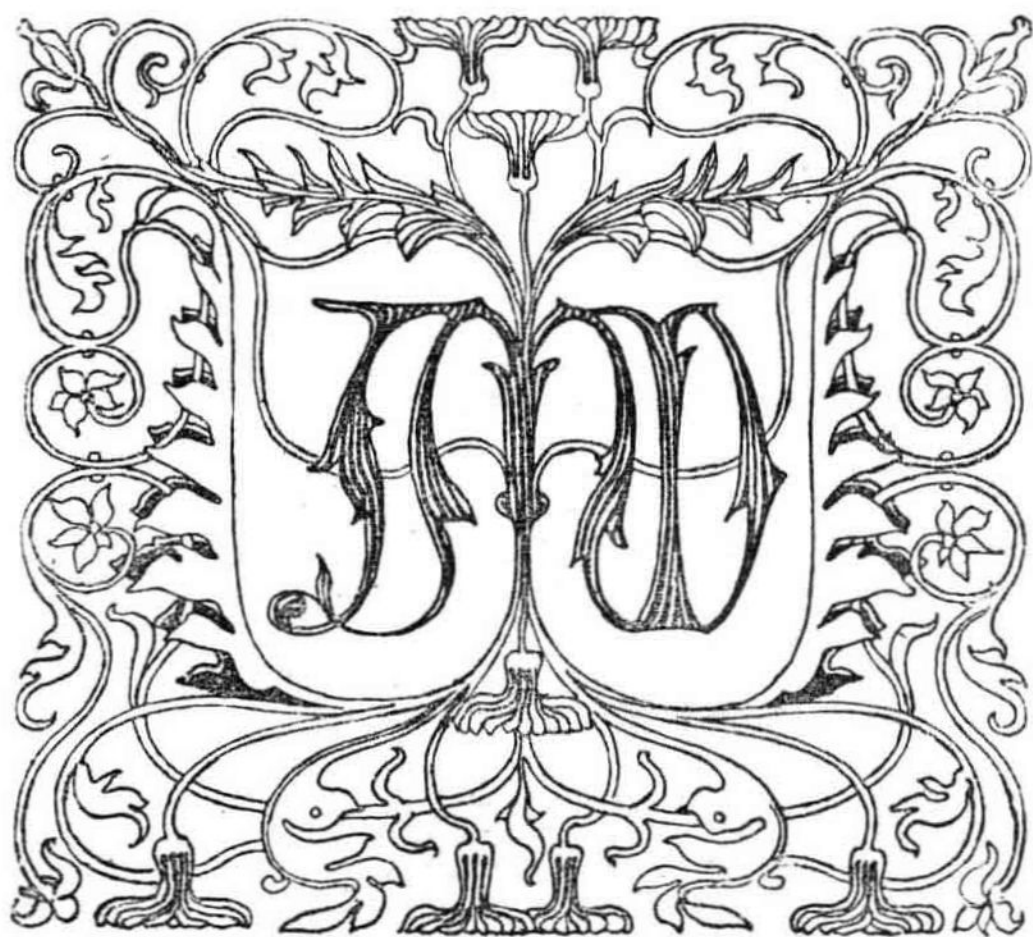
The Story of **Venice**
by Thomas Okey Illustrated
by Nelly Erichsen



London: **J. M. Dent & Co.**

Aldine House, 29 and 30 Bedford Street
Covent Garden, W.C. ♣ ♣ 1907

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“ Italia is the face of Europe : Venice the eye of Italia ”

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*In memory of old days I dedicate this book to
my friends and fellow pilgrims of the
Toynbee Travellers' Club*

T. O.

PREFACE

THE History of Venice is the history of a State unparalleled in Europe for permanence and stability. For centuries Venice occupied that position of maritime supremacy now held by Great Britain, and time was when an English king was fain to crave the loan of a few warships to vindicate his rights in France. The autonomy of the Venetian Republic so imposed on men's minds that it was regarded as in the very nature of things, and even so acute an observer as Voltaire wrote in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, less than three decades before her fall: "Venice has preserved her independence during eleven centuries, and I flatter myself will preserve it for ever."

In the course of our story we have freely drawn from the old chronicles, while not neglecting modern historians, chiefest of whom is the Triestine Hebrew scholar, Samuele Romanin. Indeed, all that has been written on Venetian history during the past forty years does but increase our admiration for the imperturbable industry and sagacious judgment of the author of the *Storia Documentata di Venezia*, to whom our heaviest debt is due.

The history, criticism and appreciation of Venetian architecture and Venetian painting are indissolubly associated with the genius of Ruskin, and notwithstanding some waywardness of judgment and spoilt-child philosophy, his writings are, and ever will be, the classic works on the subject. Among more recent authorities we are indebted to the publications of

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Berenson, Bode, Burckhardt, Ludwig, Morelli, and Saccardo.

For purposes of description we have divided the city and outlying islands of the Venetian lagoon into twenty sections, arranged rather with regard to their relative historical and artistic importance than to strict topographical considerations, although these have not been lost sight of. In our quality of *cicerone* we have drawn from an acquaintance of the city at various times extending over a period of twenty years: more detailed and practical information may be sought in the admirable guide-books of Baedeker, Grant Allen, Gsellfels and Murray.

May we be permitted a word of counsel to the returning traveller who has not restricted his movements by taking the usual circular ticket. If he voyage by the little steamer that plies between the Riva degli Schiavoni and Fusina (whence a steam tram will carry him to the S. Sofia station at Padua, near the Arena Chapel), he will pass along the old route from the mainland, and enjoy a last and certainly a fond and lingering view of the wonderful city as the boat slowly steams away from Venice through the canals of the Zattere and of Fusina. The train to Padua passes along the road that follows the course of the *Canale di Brenta*, affording glimpses of many an old patrician palace in picturesque decay. He will touch at Oriago where Jacopo del Cassero, who entreated Dante's prayers in the ante-Purgatorio, was overtaken and murdered by the assassins of the tyrant Azzo VIII. of Este, and saw among the reeds and the mire¹ "a pool growing on the ground from his veins."

At Rovato he will be amply repaid by turning aside

¹ "*Delle mie vene farsi in terra lago.*" Purgatorio, Canto v., 64-86.

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from the main line to Milan, and following the slower but infinitely more beautiful route to the St Gothard line by way of Bergamo, Lecco, Menaggio, Porlezza and Lugano. Bergamo is one of the most perfectly preserved hill cities of Italy: a city of much interest to the student of Venetian history and of Italian art, containing, as it does, the fine renaissance Colleoni Chapel, with the tombs of the great Venetian Condottiero and of his young daughter Medea, the latter a beautiful and pathetic monument by the Lombard artist Giov. Ant. Amadeo. In the lower town is the important collection of paintings left by the famous art critic Morelli to his native city. A morning, too, may well be spent in an excursion to Colleoni's old chateau at Malpaga, whose walls in the courtyard and the interior bear the remains of frescoes, mostly by Romanino, illustrating the festivities which celebrated the visit of the King of Denmark to Malpaga. They are rich in historical interest, spirited, and by no means ill-preserved. The grand old mansion is now a farmhouse, and barn-door fowls roost in halls once filled with the pomp and circumstance that attended mighty princes and warriors. The chateau is reached by taking the steam tram to Carvernago on the Soncino line that starts from the E. side of the main Bergamo Station. A walk of a mile from Carvernago through a fruitful country will bring the visitor to Malpaga.

In order not to burden our pages with many notes we have limited references to such passages as seemed specially to call for them, exigencies of space having straitened a wide subject within close bounds. If, however, the perusal of this slight and imperfect sketch may lead intending travellers to turn to richer springs¹ our pleasant labours will be amply rewarded. It is with

¹ An exhaustive bibliography will be found in "The Cambridge Modern History," Vol. I.

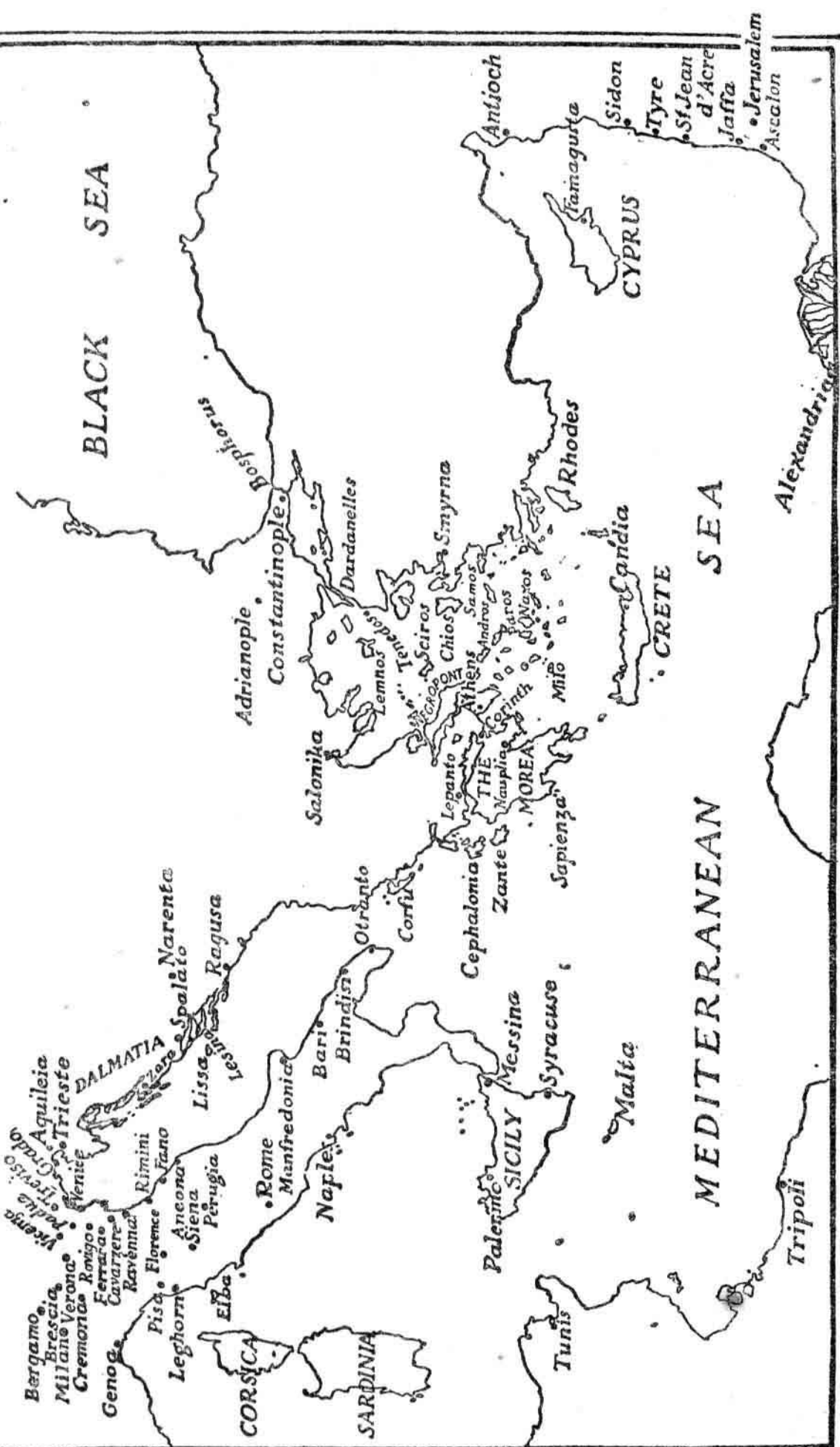
Preface

travel as with other modes of observation. The eye will see what the mind takes with it, for as the Spanish proverb quoted by Dr Johnson runs: "He who would bring home the wealth of the Indies must carry the wealth of the Indies with him."

A pleasant duty is that of expressing our gratitude for personal help and counsel, to, among others, Mr Horatio F. Brown, Signor Cantalamessa, the courteous Director of the Accademia, Mr Bolton King, Signor Alfredo Melani, Mr R. Phené Spiers, and Mr E. Pears.

NOTE.—In preparing Venice and its Story for publication in the Medieval Town Series opportunity has been taken of revising and supplementing the book, more especially in Part II., with the view of increasing its practical utility to travellers in the city.

SKETCH MAP OF ITALY & the EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN



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