



MEDICAL TOONS



PADUA

The Story of Padua
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trated by Giovanni Vianello



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PREFACE

MEDIAEVAL chroniclers of Padua evince in their writings a keen sense of the ideal importance of their native town. The love of fame remained strong among her citizens for centuries, and, as Goethe wrote, well becomes the proud hosts of one of the oldest Universities in Europe. Although not a Paduan, by reason of a long acquaintance with the legends and chronicles of mediæval Padua I have been brought by degrees to admire and to love the quiet and perhaps subdued charm of the old city. For any merit that an indulgent reader may trace in the following pages I am therefore chiefly indebted to the spell which Padua herself exercised upon me.

As no general history of Padua is known to me I have gathered her records from a careful perusal of contemporary chronicles, published and unpublished, and I have made myself acquainted with as many documentary sources as have, to my knowledge, been published. At the same time I have availed myself of such classic works as those of Scardeone, Gennari, Verci and Cittadella, and of some general histories, such as the *Storia delle Signorie* by Cipolla, or *Die Anfaenge der Signorie* by Salzer. In the serial publications of the *Archivio* and *Ateneo Veneto*, of the Academies of Padua, Venice and Turin, in the *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, and in special works, many particular events have been carefully elucidated by the erudition of Signori Beda, Bonardi, Benvenuto and Roberto Cessi, Gloria, Lazzarini, Medin, Piva, Rambaldi and Soranzo.

Preface

Artistic research has been rendered an easier task by the old but classic *Guida di Padova* of Selvatico. Former works are quite overshadowed by it, while modern research only succeeded in amplifying and correcting it. In the course of the ensuing pages I acknowledge my principal authorities and it would be tedious to add here a long bibliography. Nevertheless I must state that Volkmann's *Padua* and Ronchi's *Guida-Ricordo di Padova* have been very useful to me.

Finally, it is a pleasant duty for me to recognise my personal indebtedness to two Paduans whom I may perhaps venture to call my friends, and who assisted me with sound advice in this work—Count Claricini Dornpacher and Professor Vittorio Lazzarini.

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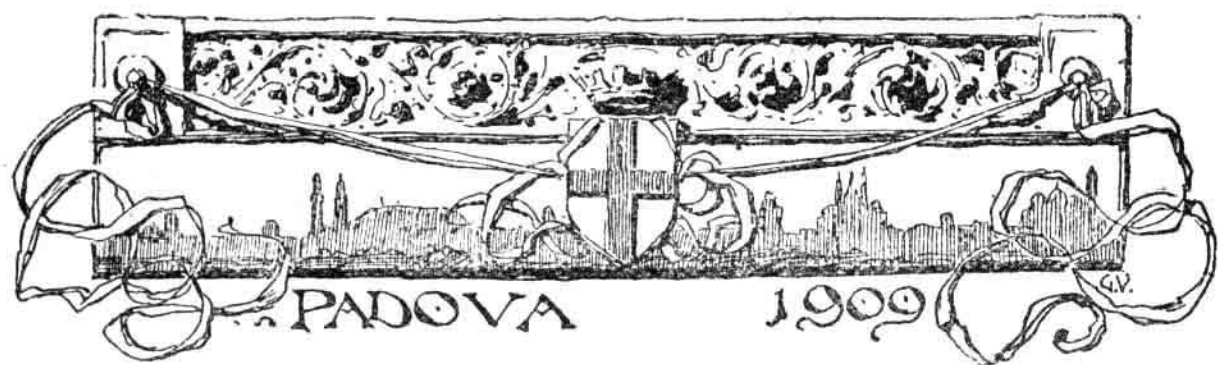
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The Story of Padua

CHAPTER I

Roman and Early Mediæval Centuries

“Antenor potuit mediis elapsus Achivis
Illyricos penetrare sinus atque intuma tutus
Regna Liburnorum et fontem superare Timavi,
Unde per ora novem vasto cum murmure montis
It mare proruptum et pelago premit arva sonanti.
Hic tamen ille urbem Patavi sedesque locavit
Teucrorum, et gentem nomen dedit armaque fixit
Troia, nunc placida compostus pace quiescit.”

VIRGIL, *Aeneis*, I. vv. 242-49.

BUT faint light has been thrown on the prehistoric settlers on the lower part of the river Bacchiglione by ancient and recent excavation. Archæologists still differ as to their origin, although they agree in calling them “Euganei.” And little more than this bare name is known to history.

Roman pride together with that natural terror of the unknown, peculiar to all ignorant nations, which in classic times filled the woods, the mountains, the rivers and the seas with gods, nymphs and the infinite variety of mythological divinities, easily succeeded in peopling the dark background of history with more or less widely-spread legends. Therefore the Paduans, who can boast but scant references in the works of

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their great citizen, Livy, and whose supposed antecedent glories were extinguished when their province was absorbed by the Roman Republic, will repeat to you now, and were able to relate in old days, a long story of commercial wealth and successful political struggles. Now although the actual monuments of Roman times are scarcely remarked by the traveller, the low murmur of voices long dead is yet heard in Padua. There is a peculiar sadness in the Paduan air, suggestive of legends and dreams. Virgil, who collected and made authoritative in his poem the sayings about the eastern, Iliac, origin of the Romans, has, by the charm of his hexameters, widely diffused these strange claims, and thus prompted the provincial towns to make similar claims. It may therefore be said that both the pre-Roman and early mediæval ages, whose history has only recently been elucidated by patient researches and masterly inferences from scanty documents, were adorned with popular legends.

Before "pius Aeneas" arrived in Latium, where Fate had long decided that the fugitive Penates of Ilion should find a glorious and eventful resting-place, another Priam (Antenor) landed not far from the mouth of the Brenta. His journey was not vouchsafed the spirited eulogy of a Roman poet-laureate; and one cannot suppose that the first settler in peaceful ancient "Patavium" underwent the same trials that fell to the lot of his great kinsman, Aeneas. Local historians of the Renaissance tell us how the young Trojan, having quickly perceived that the luscious plain which lay around the Euganean hills, fertilised by the sluggish streams of the Bacchiglione and of the Brenta, promised bountiful crops and offered rich grazing to sheep and horses, decided to found here a new home for himself and his followers, who

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were driven from their glorious old town ; that town which the gods had twice encircled with a high girdle of walls, but which now was burnt and wrecked by the hatred of the Greeks and by divine wrath.

As the little settlement was spared the trials of war, it soon became a flourishing and rich city surrounded by prosperous farms. Curiously enough, other towns on the Adriatic shore, of which Altinum was one, made claim to an identical origin, but all, after many centuries of more or less eventful history, were doomed to fall a prey to the ruinous invasion of the Huns, led by Attila, the scourge of God.

Still, if we emerge from the misty yet captivating atmosphere of legend, and endeavour to trace the real history of Padua, we do find that a peaceful people once lived here, whom the Latin historians admit to have lent a helpful hand to Rome in many a difficulty. When Brennus, the great chieftain of Gaul, shattered the Roman army and besieged the city itself, whose Capitolium was opportunely saved by vigilant geese, he was forced to retreat not only by reason of the heroic patriotism of Camillus, but principally because his own land was invaded by an army of 120,000 Paduans and their allies. The Roman protectorate was extended to Padua some time during the fourth century B.C. In 302 B.C. the Lacedæmonian king, Kleonymos, sailing with a powerful fleet along the Adriatic shores, ventured to proceed from Chioggia, where the Bacchiglione falls into the sea, up the river as far as the environs of the town. The Paduans were surprised, but quickly prepared to defend themselves. Courageous youths hurriedly donned their armour ; a severe fight ensued and the predatory expedition was checked. Paduan ardour and superior tactics soon mastered the Spartans ; only one-fifth of Kleonymos' men escaped from the

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terrible onslaught, and Livy tells us that down to his days the Paduans used yearly to commemorate this victory by a regatta and by thanksgivings in the temple of Juno, as he had witnessed himself in his youth.

During the second invasion of the Gauls in 290 B.C., when many allies deserted the Romans in their dire need, the Paduans still kept faith with them and remained neutral.

Sixty-five years later, in 225 B.C., Rome extended to them her alliance; and even during the second Punic War, when Hannibal defeated one Roman general after another, slew thousands of Roman soldiers and succeeded in organising a general rising among her enemies, while at the same time he sowed disaffection among her friends, the Paduans not merely shrank from joining in the rebellion, but fought side by side with the vanquished Romans in the battles on the Trebbia and at Cannae. Probably after this Padua became altogether a Roman province, as there are records of Roman magistrates who stayed the dissensions that had arisen between the inhabitants of Padua and those of Vicenza and Este. Lastly the wealth and natural beauty of this province are said to have saved Rome; their charm having seduced the Cymbrians, who had swept over the Alps in 102 B.C., to dally there nearly a year, thus enabling Marius to fall on them after having slain their kinsfolk at Vercelli.* Soon afterwards the Paduans began

* 100,000 of the Cymbrians were killed in this battle; 70,000 taken prisoners. For a long time the inhabitants of the "Tredici comuni" in the Veronese and those of the "Sette comuni vicentini" have been supposed to be the scions of the few that escaped from the onslaught. As a matter of fact these queer colonies of Gothic origin, which still remain amidst the Italian population, seem to be the descendants of those Alans that, defeated by the Franks in 495, were granted land and protection by King Theodoric.

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gradually to acquire Roman rights; for, having abstained from joining in the social war (90-89 B.C.), they were granted Latin citizenship, and were in 45 B.C. inscribed in the Fabian tribe.

If we may believe Lucan, the Paduans favoured Cæsar during his feud with Pompey, and, after the murder of the former, were treated mildly under the rule of Brutus as well as that of Octavian.

From other, and perhaps more trustworthy, sources we learn that Padua was a city of the first rank, rich in commerce and agriculture. When Augustus ordered a census to be taken, Padua, among the Latin towns, appeared to be second only to Rome and Cadiz in population; Strabo informs us that she numbered over 500 "Equites" among her citizens; * from the hills she received famous wines in plenty; the fertile plains yielded abundant crops of wheat; the wool-spinning industry flourished in this district throughout the middle ages; and a renowned breed of swift horses gave an added glory to the town. Padua might also be considered as a busy port, since big vessels sailed daily up the Bacchiglione from Malamocco. Livy, Valerius Flaccus and Arruntius Stella endowed her, in different centuries, with even the fame of literature. How few remains of all this pomp still survive!

The visitor who intends to enjoy the subtle and inexpressible charm of Giotto's paintings in the Cappella degli Scrovegni is admitted through a gate leading into the wrecked, but still imposing ruins of a vast Roman circus, larger in bulk than the Arena in Verona. According to Tacitus and Strabo, the Paduans celebrated every thirty years the "ludi" commemorating the foundation of their city by Antenor, in the theatre, which existed on the opposite side of

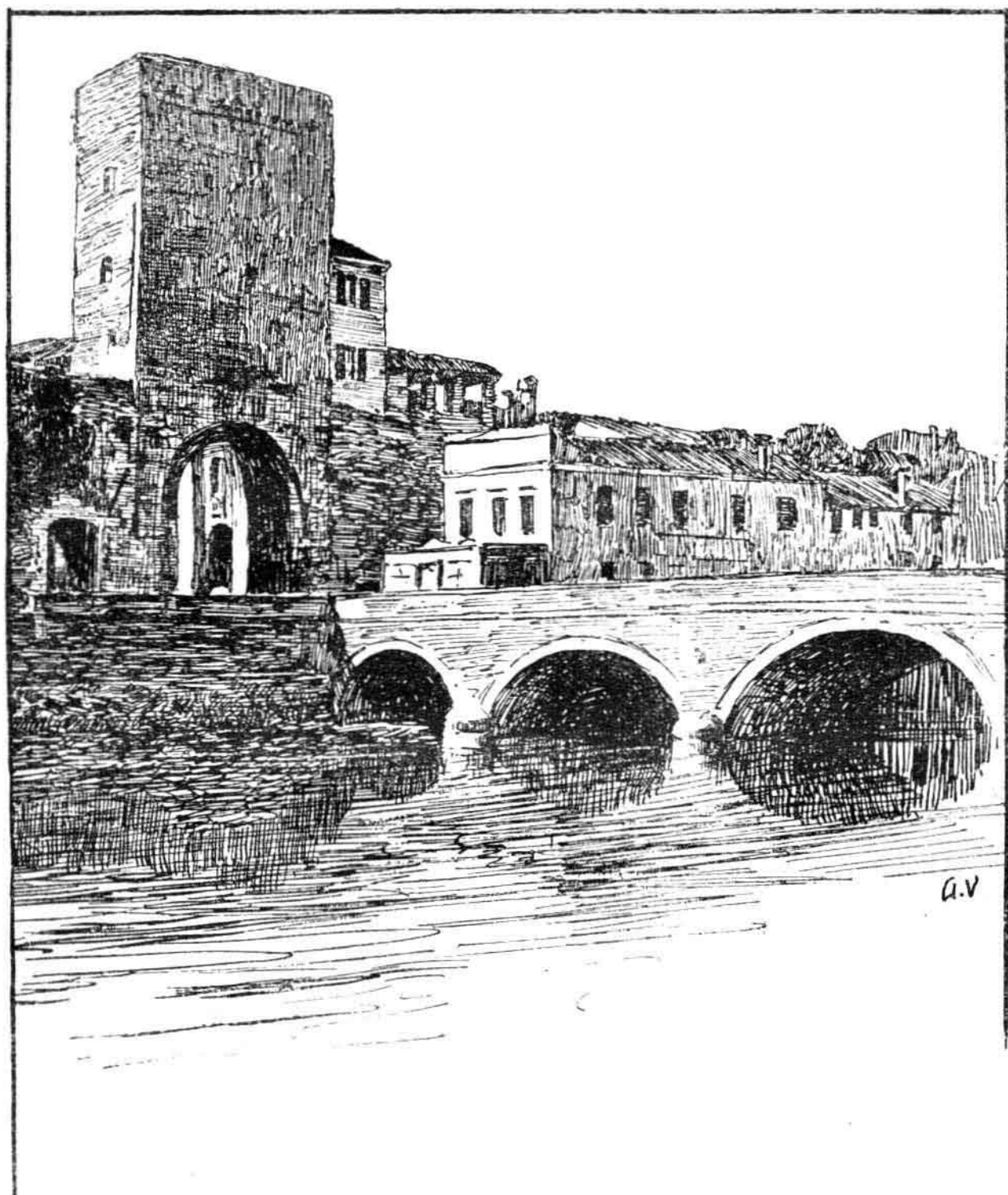
* An "Eques" had to own at least 400,000 sester tia—a sum of about £11,000

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the town, in Pra' della Valle. Some remains of the building were found during recent excavations, although the Bishops and the citizens throughout the Middle Ages had freely availed themselves of its marble blocks for building purposes. The place has been long called "Zairo," an obvious popular locution for "theatrum." At least four bridges crossed the Bacchiglione in Roman Padua (Ponte Molini, Altinate, S. Lorenzo, Corbo); all of them revealing, at least in the structure of their foundations, clear traces of Roman architecture.

During last century columns and tombs of Roman origin were dug out in various parts of the city, but by far the most significant discovery took place during the construction of the Caffè Pedrocchi, when the remains of a noble and spacious Forum were discovered. Experts declared them to belong to the period of the Julian Emperors, and affirmed that the extent of the building proved, beyond all possible doubt, the importance of the city in classic times. Near to the town were the famous "thermae" of Abano, surrounded by their springs of hot medicinal waters, whither suffering people go in crowds even now; remains of Roman buildings were excavated here also, amongst them a statue of Hercules or Nero.

Reduced to a subordinate condition during the Empire, Padua soon became but a provincial town, more or less tainted with the same corruption that was infecting Rome with rapid decay, and afforded the Gauls, Saxons, Alans, Goths and Huns many opportunities to swarm over her unguarded frontiers. In 451 Attila, who had the previous year been repulsed at Chalons by Aetius' astute tactics and the Visigoths' strenuous fighting, appeared with a huge host of his Huns before Aquileia, then a big town and an im-



THE ARCH OF PONTE DEI MOLINI

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portant fortress but now a forsaken village in the marshes. The gallant defence by the garrison proved useless; no reinforcements were sent by the futile Emperor, hiding in Ravenna. Aquileia was taken, sacked, plundered and given a prey to fire. The Huns, dark-skinned, short, hideous-looking, unparalleled horsemen, spared neither sex nor age. The population fled in terror; Concordia and Altino, then important cities, but now, the first a fishermen's hamlet, the second entirely buried under the mud of the lagoons, were soon forced to endure the same fate as Aquileia.

Padua too fell; plunderers and fire raged through buildings once adorned by art and wealth. A terrible period had begun for Italy. In rapid succession the great migrations of peoples from east to west drove one of those elemental races after the other into the garden of Europe. The timid scions of the conquerors of the world endured spoliation and destruction without finding, either in past glories or in present distress, an incitement to resistance. And it was precisely the north-east of Italy that had to suffer most, for along the Adriatic coast ran the great Roman road leading from Padua, and thence from the south and west to Altinum, Concordia, Aquileia and the pass of "Fontes frigidae." The Huns, with their overwhelming forces, had shattered every defence set up for the protection of this all-important road; the towns had, in fact, been ravaged and the inhabitants terrified into submission.

Many other invasions followed on the one led by Attila, leaving behind them the usual train of atrocities, but to the Huns was reserved the doubtful honour of being recorded in the various popular traditions so widely diffused through Italy. Attila still stands in the mind of the fishermen of the lagoons as an un-

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paralleled monster of cruelty; the farmer whose plough strikes one of the bricks that paved the "via Aemilia - Altinatis" regards it as the remains of Attila's road ("la strada di Attila"), not, as in reality it is, one of the paving stones of a great Roman road.

Perhaps during the same epoch that witnessed the birth of the legend dealing with the first settlement of the Paduans in Rialto, another was evolved charging Attila with the long devastations wrought by Goth, Hun, Lombard, Greek, Frank and Hungarian on Venetia and its inhabitants. According to these traditions, there were kings in Aquileia, Concordia, Altino and Padua; all of whom resisted manfully the overwhelming hordes of the barbarians. Chief of these kings was the Paduan Aegidius, who fought many a great battle in defence of his Emperor and of Christianity. When the condition of a town became desperate, all the wounded, the aged, the women and children were sent to the islands in the lagoons, and in this way Torcello, Rialto, Murano, Burano, Caorle and Grado were founded; Rialto by the Queen of Aegidius herself. Finally Attila was killed by King Aegidius for his treachery and his huge army routed at Rimini.

As a matter of fact these legends, which found their way into all Paduan chronicles and histories, have no more documentary support than has the tradition about the foundation of Venice in 421, which is recorded even by such careful historians as Andrea Dandolo and Sanuto. With reference to Padua it may be supposed that the inhabitants, without awaiting Attila's fury, escaped to the lagoons, the majority returning to their wrecked homes as soon as the danger had passed.

This general state of insecurity brought the whole province to a rapid decay; the town shrank within

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small limits, and even inside the girdle of the old walls there were many empty sites. Nearly all the houses were built of wood and covered with straw, although in 568 Venantius Fortunatus, the poet, alludes to the frescoes in the church of Santa Giustina.

In 601 the Lombard Agilulph, to avenge a personal insult offered him by the Greek governor, and to punish the Paduans for their loyalty to the Greeks, set fire to the town; the wooden and thatched buildings were soon ablaze, and two churches were so badly damaged that they had to be rebuilt. Thus Padua, during the fifth and sixth centuries and the beginning of the seventh, fell rapidly from the condition of a flourishing Roman municipality to the lonely seat of a poor Bishop. But in spite of widely-spread assertions, the town was not entirely abandoned after either Attila's or Agilulph's devastations; in fact, it was rebuilt exactly on the same spot. Even if the new masters made the town a dependency of the feudal county of Monselice, the traditional importance of the city remained, and the Bishop retained his old seat. In 620 an inscription was placed in the cathedral, which is still visible, proving that Tricidius was Bishop of Padua. The great importance that the episcopacy was destined to assume in a very short period, enhances the value of this witness to the uninterrupted existence of the city. Padua had, till the inroad of the Huns, enjoyed the privileges of a free Roman municipality, electing her own local magistrates. After Attila's retreat those citizens who returned came back disheartened to their burnt and plundered homes; cheap wooden houses replaced the former stately buildings. Many of the former inhabitants had been killed in battle, many more had chosen their seat by the sea, preferring a hard life of privation on the lagoons, which experience had shown to