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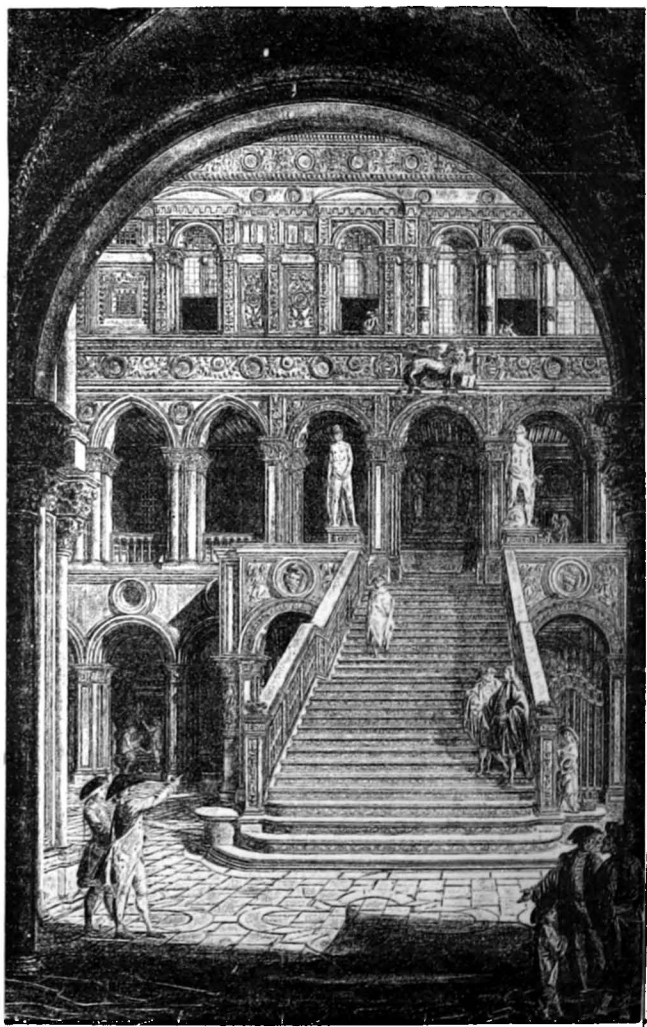
VENICE



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THE GIANT'S STAIRCASE IN THE DUCAL PALACE.
(From a drawing by G. Fancelli, in the Print Room at the British Museum.)

VENICE

BY

ALETHEA WIEL

AUTHOR OF "VITTORIA COLONNA: A STUDY"; "TWO DOGES OF VENICE"

FOURTH EDITION

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T. FISHER UNWIN
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MY MOTHER,
ELIZABETH, BARONESS WENLOCK.



PREFACE.

THE Story of Venice in its entirety and completeness has yet to be written. Even in Italian a perfect work dealing with the subject has not been accomplished, though documents and histories exist in abundance from which to compile such a work ; and the following pages only attempt an outline of a story whose vastness and diversity has rarely been equalled among the nations.

The strange geographical position occupied by Venice ; the extent of her commerce and wealth ; and the height of luxury and splendour to which she attained in comparatively early ages, gild her pages with a colour and vivacity alternately bewildering and fascinating. The special feature though in her story is the preponderance of the state, and the subservience of the citizen ; for Venice was an exacting mistress, and all who served her had to abrogate self and devote themselves heart and soul to her service. No individual was of account when weighed in the balance of the state's requirements ; and through every page of her history the same record of exaction and demand can be traced, side by side with a corres-

ponding supply of devotion and self-abnegation. Her story may be divided into three periods: the first from 697 to 1172 comprises the dawn of the ducal power, of the councils, and of the whole process of administration culminating in the formation of the Great Council. The second period from 1172 to 1457 is the period of Venice's increase of might, and the attainment of her greatest glory. It closes with the fall of Constantinople and the end of Foscari's dukedom, when a mistaken policy and ambition undermined the strength and power of the Republic by leading her from concentrating her energies on the sea, to enlarging her domains on the mainland. The third period from 1457 to 1797 records the slow downward course of the story, brightened though with occasional flashes of the old spirit and greatness making themselves felt through the gloom of decay. From then to the present time the story is merged in that of France and Austria; till finally in 1866 Venice was united to the newly-formed kingdom of Italy.

The chief source from whence I have derived most of the information recorded in this volume is, Romanin's "*Storia Documentata di Venezia*"; though Daru and other writers have helped beside to furnish whereon to descant of the "majestie of this citie who doth deserve a farre more elegant and curious pensill to paint her out in her colours than mine" (Coryat's "*Crudities*").

My cordial thanks are due to Commendatore Stefani, head of the State Archives in Venice, and to the Abate Nicoletti, of the Museo Civico, for help

and researches in connection with this work ; to Mr. Curtis (Palazzo Barbaro), for obtaining for me from Mr. Barrett Browning the use of his copy of Coryat's "Crudities." I wish further to thank Mr. Lionel Cust of the British Museum most warmly for help in reading the proofs, and for most valuable suggestions and advice throughout the work, especially with regard to art. My thanks are also due to Mr. Horatio Brown and to his publishers for their kindness and courtesy in allowing me to make use of the maps on pages 4 and 258 ; maps made by himself for his valuable work, "Venice, an historical sketch of the Republic. London, 1893." For the help given by my husband, and through him, by the Marciana Library, my thanks can only be conveyed in a silence whose meaning is deeper than words.

CÀ PISANI, SANTA MARINA, VENICE.

June, 1894.





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