RUSKIN JOHN

THE STONES OF VENICE, VOLUME 2 (OF 3)

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Содержание

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ADVERTISEMENT

It was originally intended that this Work should consist of two volumes only; the subject has extended to three. The second volume, however, will conclude the account of the ancient architecture of Venice. The third will embrace the Early, the Roman, and the Grotesque Renaissance; and an Index, which, as it gives, in alphabetical order, a brief account of all the buildings in Venice, or references to the places where they are mentioned in the text, will be found a convenient guide for the traveller. In order to make it more serviceable, I have introduced some notices of the pictures which I think most interesting in the various churches, and in the Scuola di San Rocco.

FIRST, OR BYZANTINE, PERIOD

CHAPTER I.
THE THRONE

§ I. In the olden days of travelling, now to return no more, in which distance could not be vanquished without toil, but in which that toil was rewarded, partly by the power of deliberate survey of the countries through which the journey lay, and partly by the happiness of the evening hours, when, from the top of the last hill he had surmounted, the traveller beheld the quiet village where he was to rest, scattered among the meadows beside its valley stream; or, from the long-hoped-for turn in the dusty perspective of the causeway, saw, for the first time, the towers of some famed city, faint in the rays of sunset—hours of peaceful and thoughtful pleasure, for which the rush of the arrival in the railway station is perhaps not always, or to all men, an equivalent,—in those days, I say, when there was something more to be anticipated and remembered in the first aspect of each successive halting-place, than a new arrangement of glass roofing and iron girder, there were few moments of which the recollection was more fondly cherished by the traveller than that which, as I endeavored to describe in the close of the last chapter, brought him within sight of Venice, as his gondola shot into the open lagoon from the canal of Mestre. Not but that the aspect of the city itself was generally the source of some slight disappointment, for, seen in this direction, its buildings are far less characteristic than those of the other great towns of Italy; but this inferiority was partly disguised by distance, and more than atoned for by the strange rising of its walls and towers out of the midst, as it seemed, of the deep sea, for it was impossible that the mind or the eye could at once comprehend the shallowness of the vast sheet of water which stretched away in leagues of rippling lustre to the north and south, or trace the narrow line of islets bounding it to the east. The salt breeze, the white moaning sea-birds, the masses of black weed separating and disappearing gradually, in knots of heaving shoal, under the advance of the steady tide, all proclaimed it to be indeed the ocean on whose bosom the great city rested so calmly; not such blue, soft, lake-like ocean as bathes the Neapolitan promontories, or sleeps beneath the marble rocks of Genoa, but a sea with the bleak power of our own northern waves, yet subdued into a strange spacious rest, and changed from its angry pallor into a field of burnished gold, as the sun declined behind the belfry tower of the lonely island church, fitly named “St. George of the Seaweed.” As the boat drew nearer to the city, the coast which the traveller had just left sank behind him into one long, low, sad-colored line, tufted irregularly with brushwood and willows: but, at what seemed its northern extremity, the hills of Arqua rose in a dark cluster of purple pyramids, balanced on the bright mirage of the lagoon; two or three smooth surges of inferior hill extended themselves about their roots, and beyond these, beginning with the craggy peaks above Vicenza, the chain of the Alps girded the whole horizon to the north—a wall of jagged blue, here and there showing through its clefts a wilderness of misty precipices, fading far back into the recesses of Cadore, and itself rising and breaking away eastward, where the sun struck opposite upon its snow, into mighty fragments of peaked light, standing up behind the barred clouds of evening, one after another, countless, the crown of the Adrian Sea, until the eye turned back from pursuing them, to rest upon the nearer burning of the campaniles of Murano, and on the great city, where it magnified itself along the waves, as the quick silent pacing of the gondola drew nearer and nearer. And at last, when its walls were reached, and the outmost of its untrodden streets was entered, not through towered gate or guarded rampart, but as a deep inlet between two rocks of coral in the Indian sea; when first upon the traveller’s sight opened the long ranges of columned palaces,—each with its black boat moored at the portal,—each with its image cast down, beneath its feet, upon that green pavement which every breeze broke into

new fantasies of rich tessellation; when first, at the extremity of the bright vista, the shadowy Rialto threw its colossal curve slowly forth from behind the palace of the Camerlenghi; that strange curve, so delicate, so adamantine, strong as a mountain cavern, graceful as a bow just bent; when first, before its moonlike circumference was all risen, the gondolier's cry, "Ah! Stalí,"[1] struck sharp upon the ear, and the prow turned aside under the mighty cornices that half met over the narrow canal, where the plash of the water followed close and loud, ringing along the marble by the boat's side; and when at last that boat darted forth upon the breadth of silver sea, across which the front of the Ducal palace, flushed with its sanguine veins, looks to the snowy dome of Our Lady of Salvation,[2] it was no marvel that the mind should be so deeply entranced by the visionary charm of a scene so beautiful and so strange, as to forget the darker truths of its history and its being. Well might it seem that such a city had owed her existence rather to the rod of the enchanter, than the fear of the fugitive; that the waters which encircled her had been chosen for the mirror of her state, rather than the shelter of her nakedness; and that all which in nature was wild or merciless,—Time and Decay, as well as the waves and tempests,—had been won to adorn her instead of to destroy, and might still spare, for ages to come, that beauty which seemed to have fixed for its throne the sands of the hour-glass as well as of the sea.

§ II. And although the last few eventful years, fraught with change to the face of the whole earth, have been more fatal in their influence on Venice than the five hundred that preceded them; though the noble landscape of approach to her can now be seen no more, or seen only by a glance, as the engine slackens its rushing on the iron line; and though many of her palaces are for ever defaced, and many in desecrated ruins, there is still so much of magic in her aspect, that the hurried traveller, who must leave her before the wonder of that first aspect has been worn away, may still be led to forget the humility of her origin, and to shut his eyes to the depth of her desolation. They, at least, are little to be envied, in whose hearts the great charities of the imagination lie dead, and for whom the fancy has no power to repress the importunity of painful impressions, or to raise what is ignoble, and disguise what is discordant, in a scene so rich in its remembrances, so surpassing in its beauty. But for this work of the imagination there must be no permission during the task which is before us. The impotent feelings of romance, so singularly characteristic of this century, may indeed gild, but never save the remains of those mightier ages to which they are attached like climbing flowers; and they must be torn away from the magnificent fragments, if we would see them as they stood in their own strength. Those feelings, always as fruitless as they are fond, are in Venice not only incapable of protecting, but even of discerning, the objects to which they ought to have been attached. The Venice of modern fiction and drama is a thing of yesterday, a mere efflorescence of decay, a stage dream which the first ray of daylight must dissipate into dust. No prisoner, whose name is worth remembering, or whose sorrow deserved sympathy, ever crossed that "Bridge of Sighs," which is the centre of the Byronic ideal of Venice; no great merchant of Venice ever saw that Rialto under which the traveller now passes with breathless interest: the statue which Byron makes Faliero address as of one of his great ancestors was erected to a soldier of fortune a hundred and fifty years after Faliero's death; and the most conspicuous parts of the city have been so entirely altered in the course of the last three centuries, that if Henry Dandolo or Francis Foscari could be summoned from their tombs, and stood each on the deck of his galley at the entrance of the Grand Canal, that renowned entrance, the painter's favorite subject, the novelist's favorite scene, where the water first narrows by the steps of the Church of La Salute,—the mighty Doges would not know in what spot of the world they stood, would literally not recognize one stone of the great city, for whose sake, and by whose ingratitude, their grey hairs had been brought down with bitterness to the grave. The remains of *their* Venice lie hidden behind the cumbrous masses which were the delight of the nation in its dotage; hidden in many a grass-grown court, and silent pathway, and lightless canal, where the slow

[1] Appendix 1, "The Gondolier's Cry."

[2] Appendix 2, "Our Lady of Salvation."

waves have sapped their foundations for five hundred years, and must soon prevail over them for ever. It must be our task to glean and gather them forth, and restore out of them some faint image of the lost city, more gorgeous a thousand-fold than that which now exists, yet not created in the day-dream of the prince, nor by the ostentation of the noble, but built by iron hands and patient hearts, contending against the adversity of nature and the fury of man, so that its wonderfulness cannot be grasped by the indolence of imagination, but only after frank inquiry into the true nature of that wild and solitary scene, whose restless tides and trembling sands did indeed shelter the birth of the city, but long denied her dominion.

§ III. When the eye falls casually on a map of Europe, there is no feature by which it is more likely to be arrested than the strange sweeping loop formed by the junction of the Alps and Apennines, and enclosing the great basin of Lombardy. This return of the mountain chain upon itself causes a vast difference in the character of the distribution of its débris on its opposite sides. The rock fragments and sediment which the torrents on the north side of the Alps bear into the plains are distributed over a vast extent of country, and, though here and there lodged in beds of enormous thickness, soon permit the firm substrata to appear from underneath them; but all the torrents which descend from the southern side of the High Alps, and from the northern slope of the Apennines, meet concentrically in the recess or mountain bay which the two ridges enclose; every fragment which thunder breaks out of their battlements, and every grain of dust which the summer rain washes from their pastures, is at last laid at rest in the blue sweep of the Lombardic plain; and that plain must have risen within its rocky barriers as a cup fills with wine, but for two contrary influences which continually depress, or disperse from its surface, the accumulation of the ruins of ages.

§ IV. I will not tax the reader's faith in modern science by insisting on the singular depression of the surface of Lombardy, which appears for many centuries to have taken place steadily and continually; the main fact with which we have to do is the gradual transport, by the Po and its great collateral rivers, of vast masses of the finer sediment to the sea. The character of the Lombardic plains is most strikingly expressed by the ancient walls of its cities, composed for the most part of large rounded Alpine pebbles alternating with narrow courses of brick; and was curiously illustrated in 1848, by the ramparts of these same pebbles thrown up four or five feet high round every field, to check the Austrian cavalry in the battle under the walls of Verona. The finer dust among which these pebbles are dispersed is taken up by the rivers, fed into continual strength by the Alpine snow, so that, however pure their waters may be when they issue from the lakes at the foot of the great chain, they become of the color and opacity of clay before they reach the Adriatic; the sediment which they bear is at once thrown down as they enter the sea, forming a vast belt of low land along the eastern coast of Italy. The powerful stream of the Po of course builds forward the fastest; on each side of it, north and south, there is a tract of marsh, fed by more feeble streams, and less liable to rapid change than the delta of the central river. In one of these tracts is built Ravenna, and in the other Venice.

§ V. What circumstances directed the peculiar arrangement of this great belt of sediment in the earliest times, it is not here the place to inquire. It is enough for us to know that from the mouths of the Adige to those of the Piave there stretches, at a variable distance of from three to five miles from the actual shore, a bank of sand, divided into long islands by narrow channels of sea. The space between this bank and the true shore consists of the sedimentary deposits from these and other rivers, a great plain of calcareous mud, covered, in the neighborhood of Venice, by the sea at high water, to the depth in most places of a foot or a foot and a half, and nearly everywhere exposed at low tide, but divided by an intricate network of narrow and winding channels, from which the sea never retires. In some places, according to the run of the currents, the land has risen into marshy islets, consolidated, some by art, and some by time, into ground firm enough to be built upon, or fruitful enough to be cultivated: in others, on the contrary, it has not reached the sea-level; so that, at the average low water, shallow lakelets glitter among its irregularly exposed fields of seaweed. In the midst of the largest of these, increased in importance by the confluence of several large river channels towards one of

the openings in the sea bank, the city of Venice itself is built, on a crowded cluster of islands; the various plots of higher ground which appear to the north and south of this central cluster, have at different periods been also thickly inhabited, and now bear, according to their size, the remains of cities, villages, or isolated convents and churches, scattered among spaces of open ground, partly waste and encumbered by ruins, partly under cultivation for the supply of the metropolis.

§ VI. The average rise and fall of the tide is about three feet (varying considerably with the seasons[3]); but this fall, on so flat a shore, is enough to cause continual movement in the waters, and in the main canals to produce a reflux which frequently runs like a mill stream. At high water no land is visible for many miles to the north or south of Venice, except in the form of small islands crowned with towers or gleaming with villages: there is a channel, some three miles wide, between the city and the mainland, and some mile and a half wide between it and the sandy breakwater called the Lido, which divides the lagoon from the Adriatic, but which is so low as hardly to disturb the impression of the city's having been built in the midst of the ocean, although the secret of its true position is partly, yet not painfully, betrayed by the clusters of piles set to mark the deep-water channels, which undulate far away in spotty chains like the studded backs of huge sea-snakes, and by the quick glittering of the crisped and crowded waves that flicker and dance before the strong winds upon the unlifted level of the shallow sea. But the scene is widely different at low tide. A fall of eighteen or twenty inches is enough to show ground over the greater part of the lagoon; and at the complete ebb the city is seen standing in the midst of a dark plain of seaweed, of gloomy green, except only where the larger branches of the Brenta and its associated streams converge towards the port of the Lido. Through this salt and sombre plain the gondola and the fishing-boat advance by tortuous channels, seldom more than four or five feet deep, and often so choked with slime that the heavier keels furrow the bottom till their crossing tracks are seen through the clear sea water like the ruts upon a wintry road, and the oar leaves blue gashes upon the ground at every stroke, or is entangled among the thick weed that fringes the banks with the weight of its sullen waves, leaning to and fro upon the uncertain sway of the exhausted tide. The scene is often profoundly oppressive, even at this day, when every plot of higher ground bears some fragment of fair building: but, in order to know what it was once, let the traveller follow in his boat at evening the windings of some unfrequented channel far into the midst of the melancholy plain; let him remove, in his imagination, the brightness of the great city that still extends itself in the distance, and the walls and towers from the islands that are near; and so wait, until the bright investiture and sweet warmth of the sunset are withdrawn from the waters, and the black desert of their shore lies in its nakedness beneath the night, pathless, comfortless, infirm, lost in dark languor and fearful silence, except where the salt runlets plash into the tideless pools, or the sea-birds flit from their margins with a questioning cry; and he will be enabled to enter in some sort into the horror of heart with which this solitude was anciently chosen by man for his habitation. They little thought, who first drove the stakes into the sand, and strewed the ocean reeds for their rest, that their children were to be the princes of that ocean, and their palaces its pride; and yet, in the great natural laws that rule that sorrowful wilderness, let it be remembered what strange preparation had been made for the things which no human imagination could have foretold, and how the whole existence and fortune of the Venetian nation were anticipated or compelled, by the setting of those bars and doors to the rivers and the sea. Had deeper currents divided their islands, hostile navies would again and again have reduced the rising city into servitude; had stronger surges beaten their shores, all the richness and refinement of the Venetian architecture must have been exchanged for the walls and bulwarks of an ordinary sea-port. Had there been no tide, as in other parts of the Mediterranean, the narrow canals of the city would have become noisome, and the marsh in which it was built pestiferous. Had the tide been only a foot or eighteen inches higher in its rise, the water-access to the doors of the palaces would have been impossible: even as it is, there is sometimes a little difficulty, at the ebb,

[3] Appendix 3, "Tides of Venice."

in landing without setting foot upon the lower and slippery steps: and the highest tides sometimes enter the courtyards, and overflow the entrance halls. Eighteen inches more of difference between the level of the flood and ebb would have rendered the doorsteps of every palace, at low water, a treacherous mass of weeds and limpets, and the entire system of water-carriage for the higher classes, in their easy and daily intercourse, must have been done away with. The streets of the city would have been widened, its network of canals filled up, and all the peculiar character of the place and the people destroyed.

§ VII. The reader may perhaps have felt some pain in the contrast between this faithful view of the site of the Venetian Throne, and the romantic conception of it which we ordinarily form; but this pain, if he have felt it, ought to be more than counterbalanced by the value of the instance thus afforded to us at once of the inscrutableness and the wisdom of the ways of God. If, two thousand years ago, we had been permitted to watch the slow settling of the slime of those turbid rivers into the polluted sea, and the gaining upon its deep and fresh waters of the lifeless, impassable, unvoyageable plain, how little could we have understood the purpose with which those islands were shaped out of the void, and the torpid waters enclosed with their desolate walls of sand! How little could we have known, any more than of what now seems to us most distressful, dark, and objectless, the glorious aim which was then in the mind of Him in whose hand are all the corners of the earth! how little imagined that in the laws which were stretching forth the gloomy margins of those fruitless banks, and feeding the bitter grass among their shallows, there was indeed a preparation, and *the only preparation possible*, for the founding of a city which was to be set like a golden clasp on the girdle of the earth, to write her history on the white scrolls of the sea-surges, and to word it in their thunder, and to gather and give forth, in worldwide pulsation, the glory of the West and of the East, from the burning heart of her Fortitude and Splendor.

CHAPTER II.
TORCELLO

§ I. Seven miles to the north of Venice, the banks of sand, which near the city rise little above low-water mark, attain by degrees a higher level, and knit themselves at last into fields of salt morass, raised here and there into shapeless mounds, and intercepted by narrow creeks of sea. One of the feeblest of these inlets, after winding for some time among buried fragments of masonry, and knots of sunburnt weeds whitened with webs of fucus, stays itself in an utterly stagnant pool beside a plot of greener grass covered with ground ivy and violets. On this mound is built a rude brick campanile, of the commonest Lombardic type, which if we ascend towards evening (and there are none to hinder us, the door of its ruinous staircase swinging idly on its hinges), we may command from it one of the most notable scenes in this wide world of ours. Far as the eye can reach, a waste of wild sea moor, of a lurid ashen grey; not like our northern moors with their jet-black pools and purple heath, but lifeless, the color of sackcloth, with the corrupted sea-water soaking through the roots of its acrid weeds, and gleaming hither and thither through its snaky channels. No gathering of fantastic mists, nor coursing of clouds across it; but melancholy clearness of space in the warm sunset, oppressive, reaching to the horizon of its level gloom. To the very horizon, on the north-east; but, to the north and west, there is a blue line of higher land along the border of it, and above this, but farther back, a misty band of mountains, touched with snow. To the east, the paleness and roar of the Adriatic, louder at momentary intervals as the surf breaks on the bars of sand; to the south, the widening branches of the calm lagoon, alternately purple and pale green, as they reflect the evening clouds or twilight sky; and almost beneath our feet, on the same field which sustains the tower we gaze from, a group of four buildings, two of them little larger than cottages (though built of stone, and one adorned by a quaint belfry), the third an octagonal chapel, of which we can see but little more than the flat red roof with its rayed tiling, the fourth, a considerable church with nave and aisles, but of which, in like manner, we can see little but the long central ridge and lateral slopes of roof, which the sunlight separates in one glowing mass from the green field beneath and grey moor beyond. There are no living creatures near the buildings, nor any vestige of village or city round about them. They lie like a little company of ships becalmed on a far-away sea.

§ II. Then look farther to the south. Beyond the widening branches of the lagoon, and rising out of the bright lake into which they gather, there are a multitude of towers, dark, and scattered among square-set shapes of clustered palaces, a long and irregular line fretting the southern sky.

Mother and daughter, you behold them both in their widowhood,—Torcello and Venice.

Thirteen hundred years ago, the grey moorland looked as it does this day, and the purple mountains stood as radiantly in the deep distances of evening; but on the line of the horizon, there were strange fires mixed with the light of sunset, and the lament of many human voices mixed with the fretting of the waves on their ridges of sand. The flames rose from the ruins of Altinum; the lament from the multitude of its people, seeking, like Israel of old, a refuge from the sword in the paths of the sea.

The cattle are feeding and resting upon the site of the city that they left; the mower's scythe swept this day at dawn over the chief street of the city that they built, and the swathes of soft grass are now sending up their scent into the night air, the only incense that fills the temple of their ancient worship. Let us go down into that little space of meadow land.

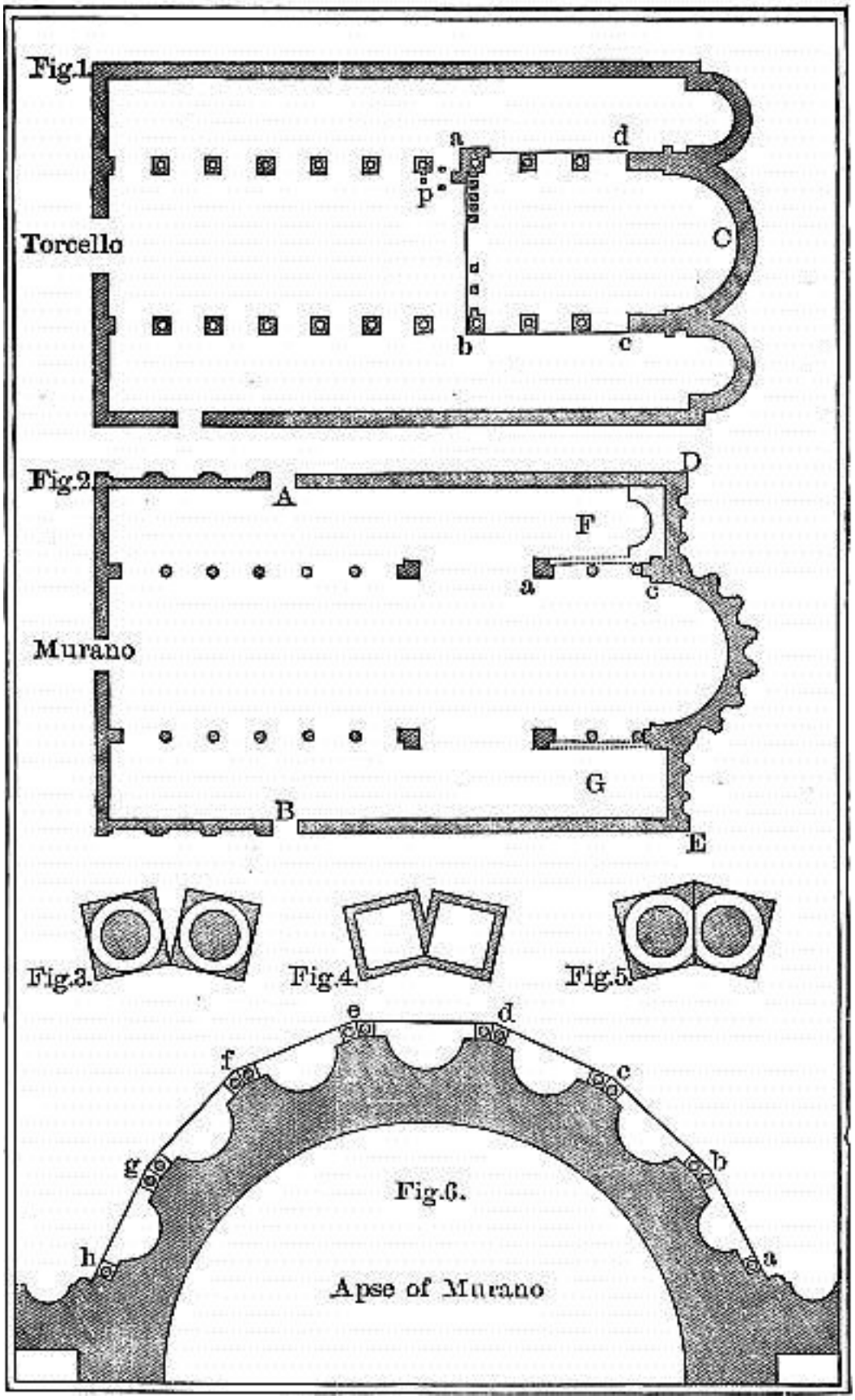
§ III. The inlet which runs nearest to the base of the campanile is not that by which Torcello is commonly approached. Another, somewhat broader, and overhung by alder copse, winds out of the main channel of the lagoon up to the very edge of the little meadow which was once the Piazza of the city, and there, stayed by a few grey stones which present some semblance of a quay, forms its boundary at one extremity. Hardly larger than an ordinary English farmyard, and roughly enclosed

on each side by broken palings and hedges of honeysuckle and briar, the narrow field retires from the water's edge, traversed by a scarcely traceable footpath, for some forty or fifty paces, and then expanding into the form of a small square, with buildings on three sides of it, the fourth being that which opens to the water. Two of these, that on our left and that in front of us as we approach from the canal, are so small that they might well be taken for the out-houses of the farm, though the first is a conventual building, and the other aspires to the title of the "Palazzo publico," both dating as far back as the beginning of the fourteenth century; the third, the octagonal church of Santa Fosca, is far more ancient than either, yet hardly on a larger scale. Though the pillars of the portico which surrounds it are of pure Greek marble, and their capitals are enriched with delicate sculpture, they, and the arches they sustain, together only raise the roof to the height of a cattle-shed; and the first strong impression which the spectator receives from the whole scene is, that whatever sin it may have been which has on this spot been visited with so utter a desolation, it could not at least have been ambition. Nor will this impression be diminished as we approach, or enter, the larger church to which the whole group of building is subordinate. It has evidently been built by men in flight and distress,[4] who sought in the hurried erection of their island church such a shelter for their earnest and sorrowful worship as, on the one hand, could not attract the eyes of their enemies by its splendor, and yet, on the other, might not awaken too bitter feelings by its contrast with the churches which they had seen destroyed. There is visible everywhere a simple and tender effort to recover some of the form of the temples which they had loved, and to do honor to God by that which they were erecting, while distress and humiliation prevented the desire, and prudence precluded the admission, either of luxury of ornament or magnificence of plan. The exterior is absolutely devoid of decoration, with the exception only of the western entrance and the lateral door, of which the former has carved sideposts and architrave, and the latter, crosses of rich sculpture; while the massy stone shutters of the windows, turning on huge rings of stone, which answer the double purpose of stanchions and brackets, cause the whole building rather to resemble a refuge from Alpine storm than the cathedral of a populous city; and, internally, the two solemn mosaics of the eastern and western extremities,—one representing the Last Judgment, the other the Madonna, her tears falling as her hands are raised to bless,—and the noble range of pillars which enclose the space between, terminated by the high throne for the pastor and the semicircular raised seats for the superior clergy, are expressive at once of the deep sorrow and the sacred courage of men who had no home left them upon earth, but who looked for one to come, of men "persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed."

§ IV. I am not aware of any other early church in Italy which has this peculiar expression in so marked a degree; and it is so consistent with all that Christian architecture ought to express in every age (for the actual condition of the exiles who built the cathedral of Torcello is exactly typical of the spiritual condition which every Christian ought to recognize in himself, a state of homelessness on earth, except so far as he can make the Most High his habitation), that I would rather fix the mind of the reader on this general character than on the separate details, however interesting, of the architecture itself. I shall therefore examine these only so far as is necessary to give a clear idea of the means by which the peculiar expression of the building is attained.

I.

[4] Appendix 4, "Date of the Duomo of Torcello."



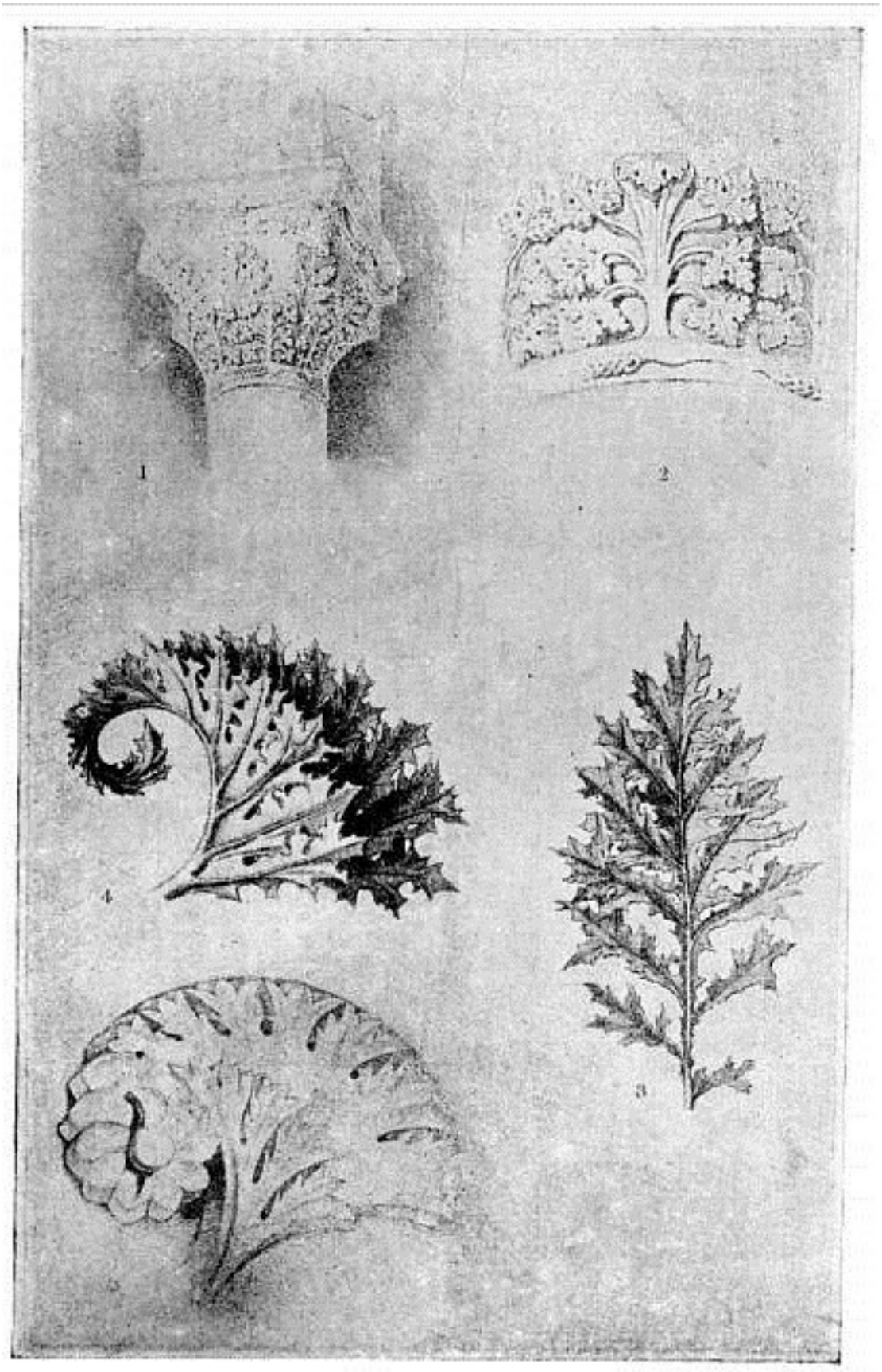
PLANS OF TORCELLO AND MURANO.

§ V. On the opposite page, the uppermost figure, 1, is a rude plan of the church. I do not answer for the thickness and external disposition of the walls, which are not to our present purpose, and which I have not carefully examined; but the interior arrangement is given with sufficient accuracy. The church is built on the usual plan of the Basilica[5] that is to say, its body divided into a nave and aisles by two rows of massive shafts, the roof of the nave being raised high above the aisles by walls sustained on two ranks of pillars, and pierced with small arched windows. At Torcello the aisles are also lighted in the same manner, and the nave is nearly twice their breadth.[6]

II.

[5] For a full account of the form and symbolical meaning of the Basilica, see Lord Lindsay's "Christian Art," vol. i. p. 12. It is much to be regretted that the Chevalier Bunsen's work on the Basilicas of Rome is not translated into English.

[6] The measures are given in Appendix 3.



THE ACANTHUS OF TORCELLO.

The capitals of all the great shafts are of white marble, and are among the best I have ever seen, as examples of perfectly calculated effect from every touch of the chisel. Mr. Hope calls them "indifferently imitated from the Corinthian:"[7] but the expression is as inaccurate as it is unjust; every one of them is different in design, and their variations are as graceful as they are fanciful. I could not, except by an elaborate drawing, give any idea of the sharp, dark, deep penetrations of the chisel into their snowy marble, but a single example is given in the opposite plate, fig. 1, of the nature of the changes effected in them from the Corinthian type. In this capital, although a kind of acanthus (only with rounded lobes) is indeed used for the upper range of leaves, the lower range is not acanthus at all, but a kind of vine, or at least that species of plant which stands for vine in all early Lombardic and Byzantine work (vide Vol. I. Appendix 8); the leaves are trefoiled, and the stalks cut clear so that they might be grasped with the hand, and cast sharp dark shadows, perpetually changing, across the bell of the capital behind them. I have drawn one of these vine plants larger in fig. 2, that the reader may see how little imitation of the Corinthian there is in them, and how boldly the stems of the leaves are detached from the ground. But there is another circumstance in this ornament still more noticeable. The band which encircles the shaft beneath the spring of the leaves is copied from the common classical wreathed or braided fillet, of which the reader may see examples on almost every building of any pretensions in modern London. But the mediæval builders could not be content with the dead and meaningless scroll: the Gothic energy and love of life, mingled with the early Christian religious symbolism, were struggling daily into more vigorous expression, and they turned the wreathed band into a serpent of three times the length necessary to undulate round the shaft, which, knotting itself into a triple chain, shows at one side of the shaft its tail and head, as if perpetually gliding round it beneath the stalks of the vines. The vine, as is well known, was one of the early symbols of Christ, and the serpent is here typical either of the eternity of his dominion, or of the Satanic power subdued.

Fig. 1.

§ VI. Nor even when the builder confines himself to the acanthus leaf (or to that representation of it, hereafter to be more particularly examined, constant in Romanesque work) can his imagination allow him to rest content with its accustomed position. In a common Corinthian capital the leaves nod forward only, thrown out on every side from the bell which they surround: but at the base of one of the capitals on the opposite side of the nave from this of the vines,[8] two leaves are introduced set with their sides outwards, forming spirals by curling back, half-closed, in the position shown in fig. 4 in Plate II., there represented as in a real acanthus leaf; for it will assist our future inquiries into the ornamentation of capitals that the reader should be acquainted with the form of the acanthus leaf itself. I have drawn it, therefore, in the two positions, figs. 3 and 4 in Plate II.; while fig. 5 is the translation of the latter form into marble by the sculptor of Torcello. It is not very like the acanthus, but much liker than any Greek work; though still entirely conventional in its cinquefoiled lobes. But these are disposed with the most graceful freedom of line, separated at the roots by deep drill holes, which tell upon the eye far away like beads of jet; and changed, before they become too crowded to be effective, into a vigorous and simple zigzagged edge, which saves the designer some embarrassment in the perspective of the terminating spiral. But his feeling of nature was greater than his knowledge

[7] Hope's "Historical Essay on Architecture" (third edition, 1840), chap. ix. p. 95. In other respects Mr. Hope has done justice to this building, and to the style of the early Christian churches in general.

[8] A sketch has been given of this capital in my folio work.

of perspective; and it is delightful to see how he has rooted the whole leaf in the strong rounded understem, the indication of its closing with its face inwards, and has thus given organization and elasticity to the lovely group of spiral lines; a group of which, even in the lifeless sea-shell, we are never weary, but which becomes yet more delightful when the ideas of elasticity and growth are joined to the sweet succession of its involution.

§ VII. It is not, however, to be expected that either the mute language of early Christianity (however important a part of the expression of the building at the time of its erection), or the delicate fancies of the Gothic leafage springing into new life, should be read, or perceived, by the passing traveller who has never been taught to expect anything in architecture except five orders: yet he can hardly fail to be struck by the simplicity and dignity of the great shafts themselves; by the frank diffusion of light, which prevents their severity from becoming oppressive; by the delicate forms and lovely carving of the pulpit and chancel screen; and, above all, by the peculiar aspect of the eastern extremity of the church, which, instead of being withdrawn, as in later cathedrals, into a chapel dedicated to the Virgin, or contributing by the brilliancy of its windows to the splendor of the altar, and theatrical effect of the ceremonies performed there, is a simple and stern semicircular recess, filled beneath by three ranks of seats, raised one above the other, for the bishop and presbyters, that they might watch as well as guide the devotions of the people, and discharge literally in the daily service the functions of bishops or *overseers* of the flock of God.

§ VIII. Let us consider a little each of these characters in succession; and first (for of the shafts enough has been said already), what is very peculiar to this church, its luminousness. This perhaps strikes the traveller more from its contrast with the excessive gloom of the Church of St. Mark's; but it is remarkable when we compare the Cathedral of Torcello with any of the contemporary basilicas in South Italy or Lombardic churches in the North. St. Ambrogio at Milan, St. Michele at Pavia, St. Zeno at Verona, St. Frediano at Lucca, St. Miniato at Florence, are all like sepulchral caverns compared with Torcello, where the slightest details of the sculptures and mosaics are visible, even when twilight is deepening. And there is something especially touching in our finding the sunshine thus freely admitted into a church built by men in sorrow. They did not need the darkness; they could not perhaps bear it. There was fear and depression upon them enough, without a material gloom. They sought for comfort in their religion, for tangible hopes and promises, not for threatenings or mysteries; and though the subjects chosen for the mosaics on the walls are of the most solemn character, there are no artificial shadows cast upon them, nor dark colors used in them: all is fair and bright, and intended evidently to be regarded in hopefulness, and not with terror.

§ IX. For observe this choice of subjects. It is indeed possible that the walls of the nave and aisles, which are now whitewashed, may have been covered with fresco or mosaic, and thus have supplied a series of subjects, on the choice of which we cannot speculate. I do not, however, find record of the destruction of any such works; and I am rather inclined to believe that at any rate the central division of the building was originally decorated, as it is now, simply by mosaics representing Christ, the Virgin, and the apostles, at one extremity, and Christ coming to judgment at the other. And if so, I repeat, observe the significance of this choice. Most other early churches are covered with imagery sufficiently suggestive of the vivid interest of the builders in the history and occupations of the world. Symbols or representations of political events, portraits of living persons, and sculptures of satirical, grotesque, or trivial subjects are of constant occurrence, mingled with the more strictly appointed representations of scriptural or ecclesiastical history; but at Torcello even these usual, and one should have thought almost necessary, successions of Bible events do not appear. The mind of the worshipper was fixed entirely upon two great facts, to him the most precious of all facts,—the present mercy of Christ to His Church, and His future coming to judge the world. That Christ's mercy was, at this period, supposed chiefly to be attainable through the pleading of the Virgin, and that therefore beneath the figure of the Redeemer is seen that of the weeping Madonna in the act of intercession, may indeed be matter of sorrow to the Protestant beholder, but ought not to blind him

to the earnestness and singleness of the faith with which these men sought their sea-solitudes; not in hope of founding new dynasties, or entering upon new epochs of prosperity, but only to humble themselves before God, and to pray that in His infinite mercy He would hasten the time when the sea should give up the dead which were in it, and Death and Hell give up the dead which were in them, and when they might enter into the better kingdom, “where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.”

§ X. Nor were the strength and elasticity of their minds, even in the least matters, diminished by thus looking forward to the close of all things. On the contrary, nothing is more remarkable than the finish and beauty of all the portions of the building, which seem to have been actually executed for the place they occupy in the present structure. The rudest are those which they brought with them from the mainland; the best and most beautiful, those which appear to have been carved for their island church: of these, the new capitals already noticed, and the exquisite panel ornaments of the chancel screen, are the most conspicuous; the latter form a low wall across the church between the six small shafts whose places are seen in the plan, and serve to enclose a space raised two steps above the level of the nave, destined for the singers, and indicated also in the plan by an open line *a b c d*. The bas-reliefs on this low screen are groups of peacocks and lions, two face to face on each panel, rich and fantastic beyond description, though not expressive of very accurate knowledge either of leonine or pavonine forms. And it is not until we pass to the back of the stair of the pulpit, which is connected with the northern extremity of this screen, that we find evidence of the haste with which the church was constructed.

§ XI. The pulpit, however, is not among the least noticeable of its features. It is sustained on the four small detached shafts marked at *p* in the plan, between the two pillars at the north side of the screen; both pillars and pulpit studiously plain, while the staircase which ascends to it is a compact mass of masonry (shaded in the plan), faced by carved slabs of marble; the parapet of the staircase being also formed of solid blocks like paving-stones, lightened by rich, but not deep, exterior carving. Now these blocks, or at least those which adorn the staircase towards the aisle, have been brought from the mainland; and, being of size and shape not easily to be adjusted to the proportions of the stair, the architect has cut out of them pieces of the size he needed, utterly regardless of the subject or symmetry of the original design. The pulpit is not the only place where this rough procedure has been permitted: at the lateral door of the church are two crosses, cut out of slabs of marble, formerly covered with rich sculpture over their whole surfaces, of which portions are left on the surface of the crosses; the lines of the original design being, of course, just as arbitrarily cut by the incisions between the arms, as the patterns upon a piece of silk which has been shaped anew. The fact is, that in all early Romanesque work, large surfaces are covered with sculpture for the sake of enrichment only; sculpture which indeed had always meaning, because it was easier for the sculptor to work with some chain of thought to guide his chisel, than without any; but it was not always intended, or at least not always hoped, that this chain of thought might be traced by the spectator. All that was proposed appears to have been the enrichment of surface, so as to make it delightful to the eye; and this being once understood, a decorated piece of marble became to the architect just what a piece of lace or embroidery is to a dressmaker, who takes of it such portions as she may require, with little regard to the places where the patterns are divided. And though it may appear, at first sight, that the procedure is indicative of bluntness and rudeness of feeling, we may perceive, upon reflection, that it may also indicate the redundance of power which sets little price upon its own exertion. When a barbarous nation builds its fortress-walls out of fragments of the refined architecture it has overthrown, we can read nothing but its savageness in the vestiges of art which may thus chance to have been preserved; but when the new work is equal, if not superior, in execution, to the pieces of the older art which are associated with it, we may justly conclude that the rough treatment to which the latter have been subjected is rather a sign of the hope of doing better things, than of want of feeling for those already accomplished. And, in general, this careless fitting of ornament is, in very truth, an evidence of life

in the school of builders, and of their making a due distinction between work which is to be used for architectural effect, and work which is to possess an abstract perfection; and it commonly shows also that the exertion of design is so easy to them, and their fertility so inexhaustible, that they feel no remorse in using somewhat injuriously what they can replace with so slight an effort.

§ XII. It appears however questionable in the present instance, whether, if the marbles had not been carved to his hand, the architect would have taken the trouble to enrich them. For the execution of the rest of the pulpit is studiously simple, and it is in this respect that its design possesses, it seems to me, an interest to the religious spectator greater than he will take in any other portion of the building. It is supported, as I said, on a group of four slender shafts; itself of a slightly oval form, extending nearly from one pillar of the nave to the next, so as to give the preacher free room for the action of the entire person, which always gives an unaffected impressiveness to the eloquence of the southern nations. In the centre of its curved front, a small bracket and detached shaft sustain the projection of a narrow marble desk (occupying the place of a cushion in a modern pulpit), which is hollowed out into a shallow curve on the upper surface, leaving a ledge at the bottom of the slab, so that a book laid upon it, or rather into it, settles itself there, opening as if by instinct, but without the least chance of slipping to the side, or in any way moving beneath the preacher's hands.[9] Six balls, or rather almonds, of purple marble veined with white are set round the edge of the pulpit, and form its only decoration. Perfectly graceful, but severe and almost cold in its simplicity, built for permanence and service, so that no single member, no stone of it, could be spared, and yet all are firm and uninjured as when they were first set together, it stands in venerable contrast both with the fantastic pulpits of mediæval cathedrals and with the rich furniture of those of our modern churches. It is worth while pausing for a moment to consider how far the manner of decorating a pulpit may have influence on the efficiency of its service, and whether our modern treatment of this, to us all-important, feature of a church be the best possible.

§ XIII. When the sermon is good we need not much concern ourselves about the form of the pulpit. But sermons cannot always be good; and I believe that the temper in which the congregation set themselves to listen may be in some degree modified by their perception of fitness or unfitness, impressiveness or vulgarity, in the disposition of the place appointed for the speaker,—not to the same degree, but somewhat in the same way, that they may be influenced by his own gestures or expression, irrespective of the sense of what he says. I believe, therefore, in the first place, that pulpits ought never to be highly decorated; the speaker is apt to look mean or diminutive if the pulpit is either on a very large scale or covered with splendid ornament, and if the interest of the sermon should flag the mind is instantly tempted to wander. I have observed that in almost all cathedrals, when the pulpits are peculiarly magnificent, sermons are not often preached from them; but rather, and especially if for any important purpose, from some temporary erection in other parts of the building: and though this may often be done because the architect has consulted the effect upon the eye more than the convenience of the ear in the placing of his larger pulpit, I think it also proceeds in some measure from a natural dislike in the preacher to match himself with the magnificence of the rostrum, lest the sermon should not be thought worthy of the place. Yet this will rather hold of the colossal sculptures, and pyramids of fantastic tracery which encumber the pulpits of Flemish and German churches, than of the delicate mosaics and ivory-like carving of the Romanesque basilicas, for when the form is kept simple, much loveliness of color and costliness of work may be introduced, and yet the speaker not be thrown into the shade by them.

§ XIV. But, in the second place, whatever ornaments we admit ought clearly to be of a chaste, grave, and noble kind; and what furniture we employ, evidently more for the honoring of God's word than for the ease of the preacher. For there are two ways of regarding a sermon, either as a human composition, or a Divine message. If we look upon it entirely as the first, and require our clergymen

[9] Appendix 5, "Modern Pulpits."

to finish it with their utmost care and learning, for our better delight whether of ear or intellect, we shall necessarily be led to expect much formality and stateliness in its delivery, and to think that all is not well if the pulpit have not a golden fringe round it, and a goodly cushion in front of it, and if the sermon be not fairly written in a black book, to be smoothed upon the cushion in a majestic manner before beginning; all this we shall duly come to expect: but we shall at the same time consider the treatise thus prepared as something to which it is our duty to listen without restlessness for half an hour or three quarters, but which, when that duty has been decorously performed, we may dismiss from our minds in happy confidence of being provided with another when next it shall be necessary. But if once we begin to regard the preacher, whatever his faults, as a man sent with a message to us, which it is a matter of life or death whether we hear or refuse; if we look upon him as set in charge over many spirits in danger of ruin, and having allowed to him but an hour or two in the seven days to speak to them; if we make some endeavor to conceive how precious these hours ought to be to him, a small vantage on the side of God after his flock have been exposed for six days together to the full weight of the world's temptation, and he has been forced to watch the thorn and the thistle springing in their hearts, and to see what wheat had been scattered there snatched from the wayside by this wild bird and the other, and at last, when breathless and weary with the week's labor they give him this interval of imperfect and languid hearing, he has but thirty minutes to get at the separate hearts of a thousand men, to convince them of all their weaknesses, to shame them for all their sins, to warn them of all their dangers, to try by this way and that to stir the hard fastenings of those doors where the Master himself has stood and knocked yet none opened, and to call at the openings of those dark streets where Wisdom herself hath stretched forth her hands and no man regarded,—thirty minutes to raise the dead in,—let us but once understand and feel this, and we shall look with changed eyes upon that frippery of gay furniture about the place from which the message of judgment must be delivered, which either breathes upon the dry bones that they may live, or, if ineffectual, remains recorded in condemnation, perhaps against the utterer and listener alike, but assuredly against one of them. We shall not so easily bear with the silk and gold upon the seat of judgment, nor with ornament of oratory in the mouth of the messenger: we shall wish that his words may be simple, even when they are sweetest, and the place from which he speaks like a marble rock in the desert, about which the people have gathered in their thirst.

§ XV. But the severity which is so marked in the pulpit at Torcello is still more striking in the raised seats and episcopal throne which occupy the curve of the apse. The arrangement at first somewhat recalls to the mind that of the Roman amphitheatres; the flight of steps which lead up to the central throne divides the curve of the continuous steps or seats (it appears in the first three ranges questionable which were intended, for they seem too high for the one, and too low and close for the other), exactly as in an amphitheatre the stairs for access intersect the sweeping ranges of seats. But in the very rudeness of this arrangement, and especially in the want of all appliances of comfort (for the whole is of marble, and the arms of the central throne are not for convenience, but for distinction, and to separate it more conspicuously from the undivided seats), there is a dignity which no furniture of stalls nor carving of canopies ever could attain, and well worth the contemplation of the Protestant, both as sternly significative of an episcopal authority which in the early days of the Church was never disputed, and as dependent for all its impressiveness on the utter absence of any expression either of pride or self-indulgence.

§ XVI. But there is one more circumstance which we ought to remember as giving peculiar significance to the position which the episcopal throne occupies in this island church, namely, that in the minds of all early Christians the Church itself was most frequently symbolized under the image of a ship, of which the bishop was the pilot. Consider the force which this symbol would assume in the imaginations of men to whom the spiritual Church had become an ark of refuge in the midst of a destruction hardly less terrible than that from which the eight souls were saved of old, a destruction in which the wrath of man had become as broad as the earth and as merciless as the sea, and who saw

the actual and literal edifice of the Church raised up, itself like an ark in the midst of the waters. No marvel if with the surf of the Adriatic rolling between them and the shores of their birth, from which they were separated for ever, they should have looked upon each other as the disciples did when the storm came down on the Tiberias Lake, and have yielded ready and loving obedience to those who ruled them in His name, who had there rebuked the winds and commanded stillness to the sea. And if the stranger would yet learn in what spirit it was that the dominion of Venice was begun, and in what strength she went forth conquering and to conquer, let him not seek to estimate the wealth of her arsenals or number of her armies, nor look upon the pageantry of her palaces, nor enter into the secrets of her councils; but let him ascend the highest tier of the stern ledges that sweep round the altar of Torcello, and then, looking as the pilot did of old along the marble ribs of the goodly temple ship, let him repeople its veined deck with the shadows of its dead mariners, and strive to feel in himself the strength of heart that was kindled within them, when first, after the pillars of it had settled in the sand, and the roof of it had been closed against the angry sky that was still reddened by the fires of their homesteads,—first, within the shelter of its knitted walls, amidst the murmur of the waste of waves and the beating of the wings of the sea-birds round the rock that was strange to them,—rose that ancient hymn, in the power of their gathered voices:

The sea is His, and He made it:
And His hands prepared the dry land.

CHAPTER III.
MURANO

§ I. The decay of the city of Venice is, in many respects, like that of an outwearied and aged human frame; the cause of its decrepitude is indeed at the heart, but the outward appearances of it are first at the extremities. In the centre of the city there are still places where some evidence of vitality remains, and where, with kind closing of the eyes to signs, too manifest even there, of distress and declining fortune, the stranger may succeed in imagining, for a little while, what must have been the aspect of Venice in her prime. But this lingering pulsation has not force enough any more to penetrate into the suburbs and outskirts of the city; the frost of death has there seized upon it irrevocably, and the grasp of mortal disease is marked daily by the increasing breadth of its belt of ruin. Nowhere is this seen more grievously than along the great north-eastern boundary, once occupied by the smaller palaces of the Venetians, built for pleasure or repose; the nobler piles along the grand canal being reserved for the pomp and business of daily life. To such smaller palaces some garden ground was commonly attached, opening to the water-side; and, in front of these villas and gardens, the lagoon was wont to be covered in the evening by gondolas: the space of it between this part of the city and the island group of Murano being to Venice, in her time of power, what its parks are to London; only gondolas were used instead of carriages, and the crowd of the population did not come out till towards sunset, and prolonged their pleasures far into the night, company answering to company with alternate singing.

§ II. If, knowing this custom of the Venetians, and with a vision in his mind of summer palaces lining the shore, and myrtle gardens sloping to the sea, the traveller now seeks this suburb of Venice, he will be strangely and sadly surprised to find a new but perfectly desolate quay, about a mile in length, extending from the arsenal to the Sacca della Misericordia, in front of a line of miserable houses built in the course of the last sixty or eighty years, yet already tottering to their ruin; and not less to find that the principal object in the view which these houses (built partly in front and partly on the ruins of the ancient palaces) now command is a dead brick wall, about a quarter of a mile across the water, interrupted only by a kind of white lodge, the cheerfulness of which prospect is not enhanced by his finding that this wall encloses the principal public cemetery of Venice. He may, perhaps, marvel for a few moments at the singular taste of the old Venetians in taking their pleasure under a churchyard wall: but, on further inquiry, he will find that the building on the island, like those on the shore, is recent, that it stands on the ruins of the Church of St. Cristoforo della Pace; and that with a singular, because unintended, moral, the modern Venetians have replaced the Peace of the Christ-bearer by the Peace of Death, and where they once went, as the sun set daily, to their pleasure, now go, as the sun sets to each of them for ever, to their graves.

§ III. Yet the power of Nature cannot be shortened by the folly, nor her beauty altogether saddened by the misery, of man. The broad tides still ebb and flow brightly about the island of the dead, and the linked conclave of the Alps know no decline from their old pre-eminence, nor stoop from their golden thrones in the circle of the horizon. So lovely is the scene still, in spite of all its injuries, that we shall find ourselves drawn there again and again at evening out of the narrow canals and streets of the city, to watch the wreaths of the sea-mists weaving themselves like mourning veils around the mountains far away, and listen to the green waves as they fret and sigh along the cemetery shore.

§ IV. But it is morning now: we have a hard day's work to do at Murano, and our boat shoots swiftly from beneath the last bridge of Venice, and brings us out into the open sea and sky.

The pure cumuli of cloud lie crowded and leaning against one another, rank beyond rank, far over the shining water, each cut away at its foundation by a level line, trenchant and clear, till they sink to the horizon like a flight of marble steps, except where the mountains meet them, and are lost

in them, barred across by the grey terraces of those cloud foundations, and reduced into one crestless bank of blue, spotted here and there with strange flakes of wan, aerial, greenish light, strewed upon them like snow. And underneath is the long dark line of the mainland, fringed with low trees; and then the wide-waving surface of the burnished lagoon trembling slowly, and shaking out into forked bands of lengthening light the images of the towers of cloud above. To the north, there is first the great cemetery wall, then the long stray buildings of Murano, and the island villages beyond, glittering in intense crystalline vermilion, like so much jewellery scattered on a mirror, their towers poised apparently in the air a little above the horizon, and their reflections, as sharp and vivid and substantial as themselves, thrown on the vacancy between them and the sea. And thus the villages seem standing on the air; and, to the east, there is a cluster of ships that seem sailing on the land; for the sandy line of the Lido stretches itself between us and them, and we can see the tall white sails moving beyond it, but not the sea, only there is a sense of the great sea being indeed there, and a solemn strength of gleaming light in sky above.

§ V. The most discordant feature in the whole scene is the cloud which hovers above the glass furnaces of Murano; but this we may not regret, as it is one of the last signs left of human exertion among the ruinous villages which surround us. The silent gliding of the gondola brings it nearer to us every moment; we pass the cemetery, and a deep sea-channel which separates it from Murano, and finally enter a narrow water-street, with a paved footpath on each side, raised three or four feet above the canal, and forming a kind of quay between the water and the doors of the houses. These latter are, for the most part, low, but built with massy doors and windows of marble or Istrian stone, square-set and barred with iron; buildings evidently once of no mean order, though now inhabited only by the poor. Here and there an ogee window of the fourteenth century, or a doorway deeply enriched with cable mouldings, shows itself in the midst of more ordinary features; and several houses, consisting of one story only carried on square pillars, forming a short arcade along the quay, have windows sustained on shafts of red Verona marble, of singular grace and delicacy. All now in vain: little care is there for their delicacy or grace among the rough fishermen sauntering on the quay with their jackets hanging loose from their shoulders, jacket and cap and hair all of the same dark-greenish sea-grey. But there is some life in the scene, more than is usual in Venice: the women are sitting at their doors knitting busily, and various workmen of the glass-houses sifting glass dust upon the pavement, and strange cries coming from one side of the canal to the other, and ringing far along the crowded water, from venders of figs and grapes, and gourds and shell-fish; cries partly descriptive of the eatables in question, but interspersed with others of a character unintelligible in proportion to their violence, and fortunately so if we may judge by a sentence which is stencilled in black, within a garland, on the whitewashed walls of nearly every other house in the street, but which, how often soever written, no one seems to regard: “Bestemme non più. Lodate Gesù.”

§ VI. We push our way on between large barges laden with fresh water from Fusina, in round white tubs seven feet across, and complicated boats full of all manner of nets that look as if they could never be disentangled, hanging from their masts and over their sides; and presently pass under a bridge with the lion of St. Mark on its archivolt, and another on a pillar at the end of the parapet, a small red lion with much of the puppy in his face, looking vacantly up into the air (in passing we may note that, instead of feathers, his wings are covered with hair, and in several other points the manner of his sculpture is not uninteresting). Presently the canal turns a little to the left, and thereupon becomes more quiet, the main bustle of the water-street being usually confined to the first straight reach of it, some quarter of a mile long, the Cheapside of Murano. We pass a considerable church on the left, St. Pietro, and a little square opposite to it with a few acacia trees, and then find our boat suddenly seized by a strong green eddy, and whirled into the tide-way of one of the main channels of the lagoon, which divides the town of Murano into two parts by a deep stream some fifty yards over, crossed only by one wooden bridge. We let ourselves drift some way down the current, looking at the low line of cottages on the other side of it, hardly knowing if there be more cheerfulness or melancholy in the

way the sunshine glows on their ruinous but whitewashed walls, and sparkles on the rushing of the green water by the grass-grown quay. It needs a strong stroke of the oar to bring us into the mouth of another quiet canal on the farther side of the tide-way, and we are still somewhat giddy when we run the head of the gondola into the sand on the left-hand side of this more sluggish stream, and land under the east end of the Church of San Donato, the "Matrice" or "Mother" Church of Murano.

§ VII. It stands, it and the heavy campanile detached from it a few yards, in a small triangular field of somewhat fresher grass than is usual near Venice, traversed by a paved walk with green mosaic of short grass between the rude squares of its stones, bounded on one side by ruinous garden walls, on another by a line of low cottages, on the third, the base of the triangle, by the shallow canal from which we have just landed. Near the point of the triangular space is a simple well, bearing date 1502; in its widest part, between the canal and campanile, is a four-square hollow pillar, each side formed by a separate slab of stone, to which the iron hasps are still attached that once secured the Venetian standard.

The cathedral itself occupies the northern angle of the field, encumbered with modern buildings, small outhouse-like chapels, and wastes of white wall with blank square windows, and itself utterly defaced in the whole body of it, nothing but the apse having been spared; the original plan is only discoverable by careful examination, and even then but partially. The whole impression and effect of the building are irretrievably lost, but the fragments of it are still most precious.

We must first briefly state what is known of its history.

§ VIII. The legends of the Romish Church, though generally more insipid and less varied than those of Paganism, deserve audience from us on this ground, if on no other, that they have once been sincerely believed by good men, and have had no ineffective agency in the foundation of the existent European mind. The reader must not therefore accuse me of trifling, when I record for him the first piece of information I have been able to collect respecting the cathedral of Murano: namely, that the emperor Otho the Great, being overtaken by a storm on the Adriatic, vowed, if he were preserved, to build and dedicate a church to the Virgin, in whatever place might be most pleasing to her; that the storm thereupon abated; and the Virgin appearing to Otho in a dream showed him, covered with red lilies, that very triangular field on which we were but now standing, amidst the ragged weeds and shattered pavement. The emperor obeyed the vision; and the church was consecrated on the 15th of August, 957.

§ IX. Whatever degree of credence we may feel disposed to attach to this piece of history, there is no question that a church was built on this spot before the close of the tenth century: since in the year 999 we find the incumbent of the Basilica (note this word, it is of some importance) di Santa Maria Plebania di Murano taking an oath of obedience to the Bishop of the Altinat church, and engaging at the same time to give the said bishop his dinner on the Domenica in Albis, when the prelate held a confirmation in the mother church, as it was then commonly called, of Murano. From this period, for more than a century, I can find no records of any alterations made in the fabric of the church, but there exist very full details of the quarrels which arose between its incumbents and those of San Stefano, San Cipriano, San Salvatore, and the other churches of Murano, touching the due obedience which their less numerous or less ancient brotherhoods owed to St. Mary's.

These differences seem to have been renewed at the election of every new abbot by each of the fraternities, and must have been growing serious when the patriarch of Grado, Henry Dandolo, interfered in 1102, and, in order to seal a peace between the two principal opponents, ordered that the abbot of St. Stephen's should be present at the service in St. Mary's on the night of the Epiphany, and that the abbot of St. Mary's should visit him of St. Stephen's on St. Stephen's day; and that then the two abbots "should eat apples and drink good wine together, in peace and charity."[10]

[10] "Mela, e buon vino, con pace e carità," Memorie Storiche de' Veneti Primi e Secondi, di Jacopo Filiasi (Padua, 1811), tom. iii. cap. 23. Perhaps, in the choice of the abbot's cheer, there was some occult reference to the verse of Solomon's Song: "Stay me

§ X. But even this kindly effort seems to have been without result: the irritated pride of the antagonists remained unsoothed by the love-feast of St. Stephen's day; and the breach continued to widen until the abbot of St. Mary's obtained a timely accession to his authority in the year 1125. The Doge Domenico Michele, having in the second crusade secured such substantial advantages for the Venetians as might well counterbalance the loss of part of their trade with the East, crowned his successes by obtaining possession in Cephalonia of the body of St. Donato, bishop of Eurœa; which treasure he having presented on his return to the Murano basilica, that church was thenceforward called the church of Sts. Mary and Donato. Nor was the body of the saint its only acquisition: St. Donato's principal achievement had been the destruction of a terrible dragon in Epirus; Michele brought home the bones of the dragon as well as of the saint; the latter were put in a marble sarcophagus, and the former hung up over the high altar.

§ XI. But the clergy of St. Stefano were indomitable. At the very moment when their adversaries had received this formidable accession of strength, they had the audacity "ad onta de' replicati giuramenti, e dell'inveterata consuetudine,"[11] to refuse to continue in the obedience which they had vowed to their mother church. The matter was tried in a provincial council; the votaries of St. Stephen were condemned, and remained quiet for about twenty years, in wholesome dread of the authority conferred on the abbot of St. Donate, by the Pope's legate, to suspend any o the clergy of the island from their office if they refused submission. In 1172, however, they appealed to Pope Alexander III, and were condemned again: and we find the struggle renewed at every promising opportunity, during the course of the 12th and 13th centuries; until at last, finding St. Donate and the dragon together too strong for him, the abbot of St. Stefano "discovered" in his church the bodies of two hundred martyrs at once!—a discovery, it is to be remembered, in some sort equivalent in those days to that of California in ours. The inscription, however, on the façade of the church, recorded it with quiet dignity:– "MCCCLXXIV. a di XIV. di Aprile. Furono trovati nella presente chiesa del protomartire San Stefano, duecento e più corpi de' Santi Martiri, dal Ven. Prete Matteo Fradello, piovano della chiesa."[12] Corner, who gives this inscription, which no longer exists, goes on to explain with infinite gravity, that the bodies in question, "being of infantile form and stature, are reported by tradition to have belonged to those fortunate innocents who suffered martyrdom under King Herod; but that when, or by whom, the church was enriched with so vast a treasure, is not manifested by any document."[13]

§ XII. The issue of the struggle is not to our present purpose. We have already arrived at the fourteenth century without finding record of any effort made by the clergy of St. Mary's to maintain their influence by restoring or beautifying their basilica; which is the only point at present of importance to us. That great alterations were made in it at the time of the acquisition of the body of St. Donato is however highly probable, the mosaic pavement of the interior, which bears its date inscribed, 1140, being probably the last of the additions. I believe that no part of the ancient church can be shown to be of more recent date than this; and I shall not occupy the reader's time by any inquiry respecting the epochs or authors of the destructive modern restorations; the wreck of the old fabric, breaking out beneath them here and there, is generally distinguishable from them at a glance; and it is enough for the reader to know that none of these truly ancient fragments can be assigned to a more recent date than 1140, and that some of them may with probability be looked upon as remains of the shell of the first church, erected in the course of the latter half of the tenth century. We shall perhaps obtain some further reason for this belief as we examine these remains themselves.

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with flagons, comfort me with apples."

[11] Notizie Storiche delle Chiese di Venezia, illustrate da Flaminio Corner (Padua, 1758), p. 615.

[12] "On the 14th day of April, 1374, there were found, in this church of the first martyr St. Stefano, two hundred and more bodies of holy martyrs, by the venerable priest, Matthew Fradello, incumbent of the church."

[13] Notizie Storiche, p. 620.

§ XIII. Of the body of the church, unhappily, they are few and obscure; but the general form and extent of the building, as shown in the plan, Plate I. fig. 2, are determined, first, by the breadth of the uninjured east end D E; secondly, by some remains of the original brickwork of the clerestory, and in all probability of the side walls also, though these have been refaced; and finally by the series of nave shafts, which are still perfect. The doors A and B may or may not be in their original positions; there must of course have been always, as now, a principal entrance at the west end. The ground plan is composed, like that of Torcello, of nave and aisles only, but the clerestory has transepts extending as far as the outer wall of the aisles. The semicircular apse, thrown out in the centre of the east end, is now the chief feature of interest in the church, though the nave shafts and the eastern extremities of the aisles, outside, are also portions of the original building; the latter having been modernized in the interior, it cannot now be ascertained whether, as is probable, the aisles had once round ends as well as the choir. The spaces F G form small chapels, of which G has a straight terminal wall behind its altar, and F a curved one, marked by the dotted line; the partitions which divide these chapels from the presbytery are also indicated by dotted lines, being modern work.

§ XIV. The plan is drawn carefully to scale, but the relation in which its proportions are disposed can hardly be appreciated by the eye. The width of the nave from shaft to opposite shaft is 32 feet 8 inches: of the aisles, from the shaft to the wall, 16 feet 2 inches, or allowing 2 inches for the thickness of the modern wainscot, 16 feet 4 inches, half the breadth of the nave exactly. The intervals between the shafts are exactly one fourth of the width of the nave, or 8 feet 2 inches, and the distance between the great piers which form the pseudo-transept is 24 feet 6 inches, exactly three times the interval of the shafts. So the four distances are accurately in arithmetical proportion; i.e.

	Ft.	In.
Interval of shafts	8	2
Width of aisle	16	4
Width of transept	24	6
Width of nave	32	8

The shafts average 5 feet 4 inches in circumference, as near the base as they can be got at, being covered with wood; and the broadest sides of the main piers are 4 feet 7 inches wide, their narrowest sides 3 feet 6 inches. The distance *a c* from the outmost angle of these piers to the beginning of the curve of the apse is 25 feet, and from that point the apse is nearly semicircular, but it is so encumbered with renaissance fittings that its form cannot be ascertained with perfect accuracy. It is roofed by a concha, or semi-dome; and the external arrangement of its walls provides for the security of this dome by what is, in fact, a system of buttresses as effective and definite as that of any of the northern churches, although the buttresses are obtained entirely by adaptations of the Roman shaft and arch, the lower story being formed by a thick mass of wall lightened by ordinary semicircular round-headed niches, like those used so extensively afterwards in renaissance architecture, each niche flanked by a pair of shafts standing clear of the wall, and bearing deeply moulded arches thrown over the niche. The wall with its pillars thus forms a series of massy buttresses (as seen in the ground plan), on the top of which is an open gallery, backed by a thinner wall, and roofed by arches whose shafts are set above the pairs of shafts below. On the heads of these arches rests the roof. We have, therefore, externally a heptagonal apse, chiefly of rough and common brick, only with marble shafts and a few marble ornaments; but for that very reason all the more interesting, because it shows us

what may be done, and what was done, with materials such as are now at our own command; and because in its proportions, and in the use of the few ornaments it possesses, it displays a delicacy of feeling rendered doubly notable by the roughness of the work in which laws so subtle are observed, and with which so thoughtful ornamentation is associated.

§ XV. First, for its proportions: I shall have occasion in Chapter V. to dwell at some length on the peculiar subtlety of the early Venetian perception for ratios of magnitude; the relations of the sides of this heptagonal apse supply one of the first and most curious instances of it. The proportions above given of the nave and aisles might have been dictated by a mere love of mathematical precision; but those of the apse could only have resulted from a true love of harmony.

In fig. 6, Plate I. the plan of this part of the church is given on a large scale, showing that its seven external sides are arranged on a line less than a semicircle, so that if the figure were completed, it would have sixteen sides; and it will be observed also, that the seven sides are arranged in four magnitudes, the widest being the central one. The brickwork is so much worn away, that the measures of the arches are not easily ascertainable, but those of the plinth on which they stand, which is nearly uninjured, may be obtained accurately. This plinth is indicated by the open line in the ground plan, and its sides measure respectively:

		Ft.	In.
1st.	*a b* in plan	6	7
2nd.	*b c*	7	7
3rd.	*c d*	7	5
4th.	*d e* (central)	7	10
5th.	*e f*	7	5
6th	*f g*	7	8
7th.	*g h*	6	10

§ XVI. Now observe what subtle feeling is indicated by this delicacy of proportion. How fine must the perceptions of grace have been in those builders who could not be content without *some* change between the second and third, the fifth and sixth terms of proportion, such as should oppose the general direction of its cadence, and yet *were* content with a diminution of two inches on a breadth of seven feet and a half! For I do not suppose that the reader will think the curious lessening of the third and fifth arch a matter of accident, and even if he did so, I shall be able to prove to him hereafter that it was not, but that the early builders were always desirous of obtaining some alternate proportion of this kind. The relations of the numbers are not easily comprehended in the form of feet and inches, but if we reduce the first four of them into inches, and then subtract some constant number, suppose 75, from them all, the remainders 4, 16, 14, 19, will exhibit the ratio of proportion in a clearer, though exaggerated form.

§ XVII. The pairs of circular spots at *b*, *c*, *d*, etc., on the ground plan fig. 6, represent the bearing shafts, which are all of solid marble as well as their capitals. Their measures and various other particulars respecting them are given in Appendix 6. “Apse of Murano;” here I only wish the reader to note the coloring of their capitals. Those of the two single shafts in the angles (*a*, *h*) are both of deep purple marble; the two next pairs, *b* and *g*, are of white marble; the pairs *c* and *f* are

of purple, and *d* and *e* are of white: thus alternating with each other on each side; two white meeting in the centre. Now observe, *the purple capitals are all left plain; the white are all sculptured*. For the old builders knew that by carving the purple capitals they would have injured them in two ways: first, they would have mixed a certain quantity of grey shadow with the surface hue, and so adulterated the purity of the color; secondly, they would have drawn away the thoughts from the color, and prevented the mind from fixing upon it or enjoying it, by the degree of attention which the sculpture would have required. So they left their purple capitals full broad masses of color; and sculptured the white ones, which would otherwise have been devoid of interest.

§ XVIII. But the feature which is most to be noted in this apse is a band of ornament, which runs round it like a silver girdle, composed of sharp wedges of marble, preciously inlaid, and set like jewels into the brickwork; above it there is another band of triangular recesses in the bricks, of nearly similar shape, and it seems equally strange that all the marbles should have fallen from it, or that it should have been originally destitute of them. The reader may choose his hypothesis; but there is quite enough left to interest us in the lower band, which is fortunately left in its original state, as is sufficiently proved by the curious niceties in the arrangement of its colors, which are assuredly to be attributed to the care of the first builder. A word or two, in the first place, respecting the means of color at his disposal.

§ XIX. I stated that the building was, for the most part, composed of yellow brick. This yellow is very nearly pure, much more positive and somewhat darker than that of our English light brick, and the material of the brick is very good and hard, looking, in places, almost vitrified, and so compact as to resemble stone. Together with this brick occurs another of a deep full red, and more porous substance, which is used for decoration chiefly, while all the parts requiring strength are composed of the yellow brick. Both these materials are *cast into any shape and size* the builder required, either into curved pieces for the arches, or flat tiles for filling the triangles; and, what is still more curious, the thickness of the yellow bricks used for the walls varies considerably, from two inches to four; and their length also, some of the larger pieces used in important positions being a foot and a half long.

With these two kinds of brick, the builder employed five or six kinds of marble: pure white, and white veined with purple; a brecciated marble of white and black; a brecciated marble of white and deep green; another, deep red, or nearly of the color of Egyptian porphyry; and a grey and black marble, in fine layers.

§ XX. The method of employing these materials will be understood at once by a reference to the opposite plate (Plate III.), which represents two portions of the lower band. I could not succeed in expressing the variation and chequering of color in marble, by real tints in the print; and have been content, therefore, to give them in line engraving. The different triangles are, altogether, of ten kinds:

a. Pure white marble with sculptured surface (as the third and fifth in the upper series of Plate III.).

b. Cast triangle of red brick with a sculptured round-headed piece of white marble inlaid (as the first and seventh of the upper series, Plate III.).

c. A plain triangle of greenish black marble, now perhaps considerably paler in color than when first employed (as the second and sixth of the upper series of Plate III.).

d. Cast red brick triangle, with a diamond inlaid of the above-mentioned black marble (as the fourth in the upper series of Plate III.).

e. Cast white brick, with an inlaid round-headed piece of marble, variegated with black and yellow, or white and violet (not seen in the plate).

f. Occurs only once, a green-veined marble, forming the upper part of the triangle, with a white piece below.

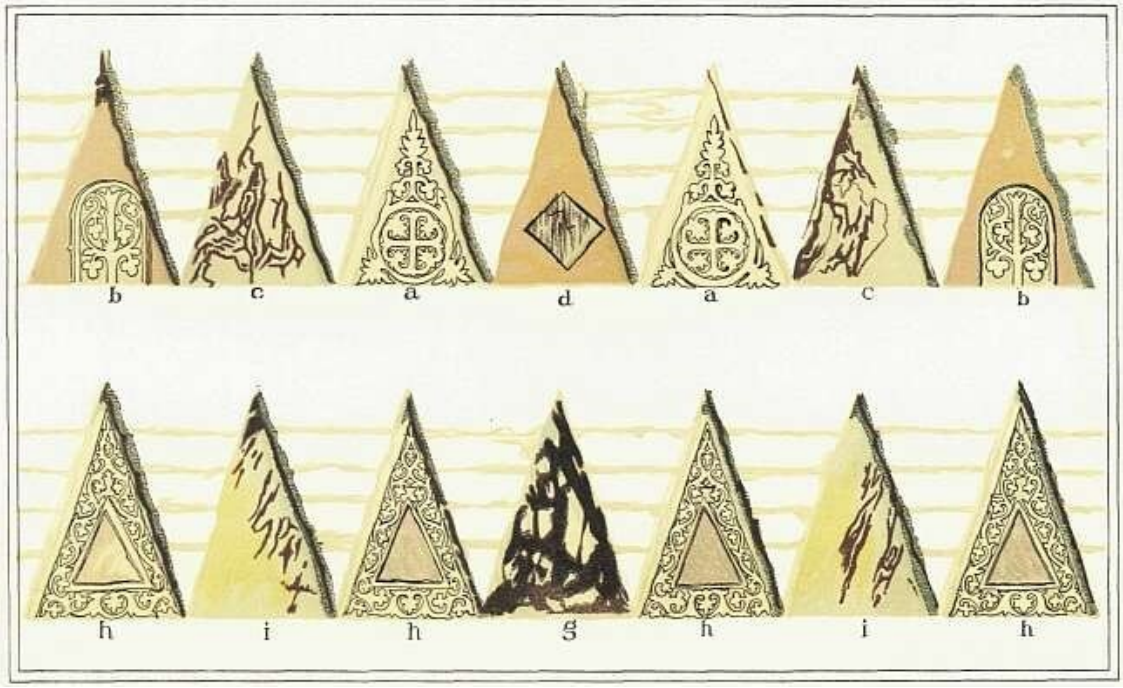
g. Occurs only once. A brecciated marble of intense black and pure white, the centre of the lower range in Plate III.

h. Sculptured white marble with a triangle of veined purple marble inserted (as the first, third, fifth, and seventh of the lower range in Plate III.).

i. Yellow or white marble veined with purple (as the second and sixth of the lower range in Plate III.).

k. Pure purple marble, not seen in this plate.

III.

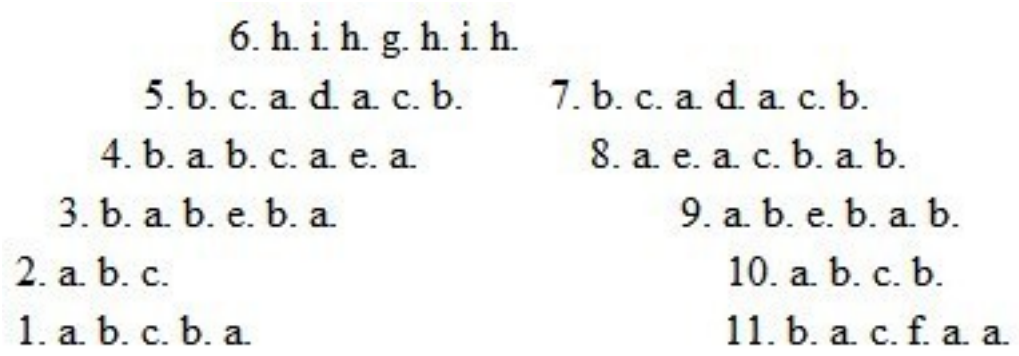


Inlaid Bands of Murano.

§ XXI. The band, then, composed of these triangles, set close to each other in varied but not irregular relations, is thrown, like a necklace of precious stones, round the apse and along the ends of the aisles; each side of the apse taking, of course, as many triangles as its width permits. If the reader will look back to the measures of the sides of the apse, given before, p. 42, he will see that the first and seventh of the series, being much narrower than the rest, cannot take so many triangles in their band. Accordingly, they have only six each, while the other five sides have seven. Of these groups of seven triangles each, that used for the third and fifth sides of the apse is the uppermost in Plate III.; and that used for the centre of the apse, and of the whole series, is the lowermost in the same plate; *the piece of black and white marble being used to emphasize the centre of the chain*, exactly as a painter would use a dark touch for a similar purpose.

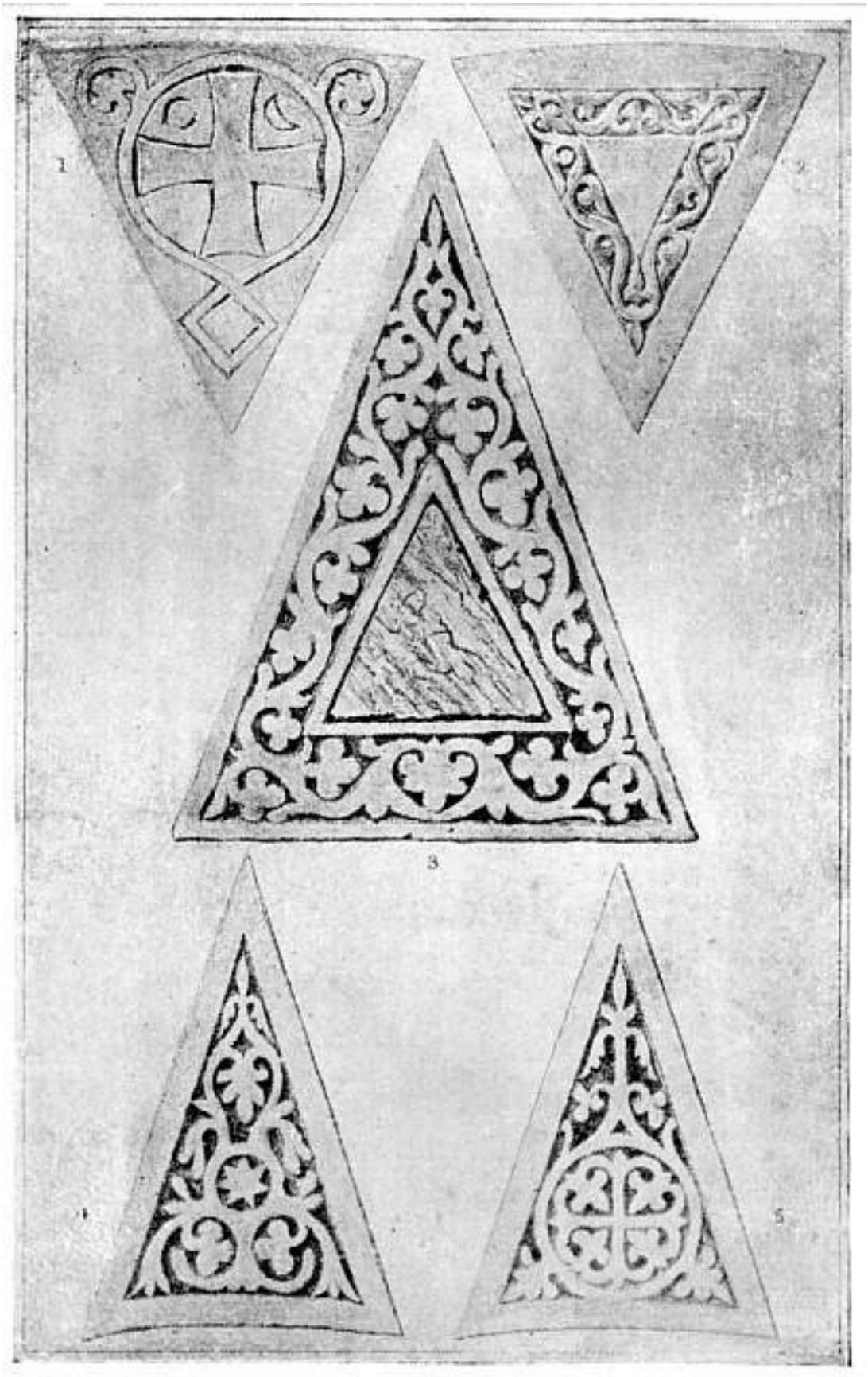
§ XXII. And now, with a little trouble, we can set before the reader, at a glance, the arrangement of the groups along the entire extremity of the church.

There are thirteen recesses, indicative of thirteen arches, seen in the ground plan, fig. 2, Plate I. Of these, the second and twelfth arches rise higher than the rest; so high as to break the decorated band; and the groups of triangles we have to enumerate are, therefore, only eleven in number; one above each of the eleven low arches. And of these eleven, the first and second, tenth and eleventh, are at the ends of the aisles; while the third to the ninth, inclusive, go round the apse. Thus, in the following table, the numerals indicate the place of each entire group (counting from the south to the north side of the church, or from left to right), and the letters indicate the species of triangle of which it is composed, as described in the list given above.



The central group is put first, that it may be seen how the series on the two sides of the apse answer each other. It was a very curious freak to insert the triangle e, in the outermost place *but one* of both the fourth and eighth sides of the apse, and in the outermost *but two* in the third and ninth; in neither case having any balance to it in its own group, and the real balance being only effected on the other side of the apse, which it is impossible that any one should see at the same time. This is one of the curious pieces of system which so often occur in mediæval work, of which the key is now lost. The groups at the ends of the transepts correspond neither in number nor arrangement; we shall presently see why, but must first examine more closely the treatment of the triangles themselves, and the nature of the floral sculpture employed upon them.

IV.



SCULPTURES OF MURANO.

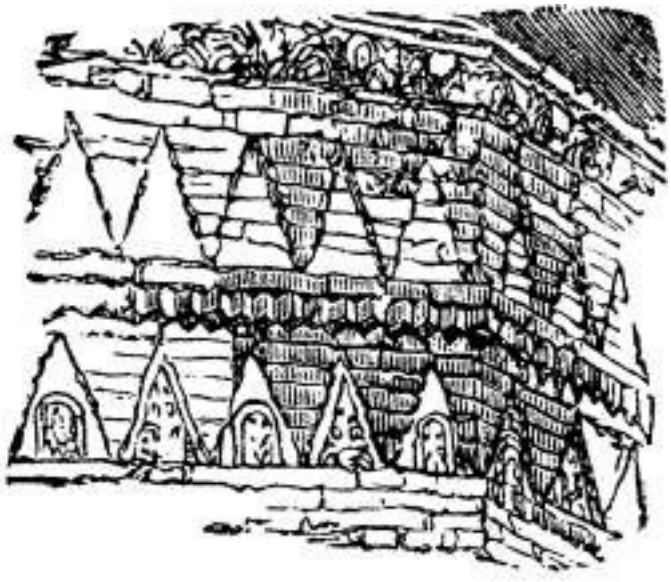
§ XXIII. As the scale of Plate III. is necessarily small, I have given three of the sculptured triangles on a larger scale in Plate IV. opposite. Fig. 3 is one of the four in the lower series of Plate IV., and figs. 4 and 5 from another group. The forms of the trefoils are here seen more clearly; they, and all the other portions of the design, are thrown out in low and flat relief, the intermediate spaces being cut out to the depth of about a quarter of an inch. I believe these vacant spaces were originally filled with a black composition, which is used in similar sculptures at St. Mark's, and of which I found some remains in an archivolt moulding here, though not in the triangles. The surface of the whole would then be perfectly smooth, and the ornamental form relieved by a ground of dark grey; but, even though this ground is lost, the simplicity of the method insures the visibility of all its parts at the necessary distance (17 or 18 feet), and the quaint trefoils have a crispness and freshness of effect which I found it almost impossible to render in a drawing. Nor let us fail to note in passing how strangely delightful to the human mind the trefoil always is. We have it here repeated five or six hundred times in the space of a few yards, and yet are never weary of it. In fact, there are two mystical feelings at the root of our enjoyment of this decoration: the one is the love of trinity in unity, the other that of the sense of fulness with order; of every place being instantly filled, and yet filled with propriety and ease; the leaves do not push each other, nor put themselves out of their own way, and yet whenever there is a vacant space, a leaf is always ready to step in and occupy it.

§ XXIV. I said the trefoil was five or six hundred times repeated. It is so, but observe, it is hardly ever twice of the same size; and this law is studiously and resolutely observed. In the carvings *a* and *b* of the upper series, Plate III., the diminution of the leaves might indeed seem merely representative of the growth of the plant. But look at the lower: the triangles of inlaid purple marble are made much more nearly equilateral than those of white marble, into whose centres they are set, so that the leaves may continually diminish in size as the ornament descends at the sides. The reader may perhaps doubt the accuracy of the drawing on the smaller scale, but in that given larger, fig. 3, Plate IV., the angles are all measured, and the *purposeful* variation of width in the border therefore admits of no dispute.[14] Remember how absolutely this principle is that of nature; the same leaf continually repeated, but never twice of the same size. Look at the clover under your feet, and then you will see what this Murano builder meant, and that he was not altogether a barbarian.

§ XXV. Another point I wish the reader to observe is, the importance attached to *color* in the mind of the designer. Note especially—for it is of the highest importance to see how the great principles of art are carried out through the whole building—that, as only the white capitals are sculptured below, only the white triangles are sculptured above. No colored triangle is touched with sculpture; note also, that in the two principal groups of the apse, given in Plate III., the centre of the group is color, not sculpture, and the eye is evidently intended to be drawn as much to the chequers of the stone, as to the intricacies of the chiselling. It will be noticed also how much more precious the lower series, which is central in the apse, is rendered, than the one above it in the plate, which flanks it: there is no brick in the lower one, and three kinds of variegated marble are used in it, whereas the upper is composed of brick, with black and white marble only; and lastly—for this is especially delightful—see how the workman made his chiselling finer where it was to go with the variegated marbles, and used a bolder pattern with the coarser brick and dark stone. The subtlety and perfection of artistical feeling in all this are so redundant, that in the building itself the eye can rest upon this colored chain with the same kind of delight that it has in a piece of the embroidery of Paul Veronese.

Fig. II.

[14] The intention is farther confirmed by the singular variation in the breadth of the small fillet which encompasses the inner marble. It is much narrower at the bottom than at the sides, so as to recover the original breadth in the lower border.



§ XXVI. Such being the construction of the lower band, that of the upper is remarkable only for the curious change in its proportions. The two are separated, as seen in the little woodcut here at the side, by a string-course composed of two layers of red bricks, of which the uppermost projects as a cornice, and is sustained by an intermediate course of irregular brackets, obtained by setting the thick yellow bricks edgeways, in the manner common to this day. But the wall above is carried up perpendicularly from this projection, so that the whole upper band is advanced to the thickness of a brick over the lower one. The result of this is, of course, that each side of the apse is four or five inches broader above than below; so that the same number of triangles which filled a whole side of the lower band, leave an inch or two blank at each angle in the upper. This would have looked awkward, if there had been the least appearance of its being an accidental error; so that, in order to draw the eye to it, and show that it is done on purpose, the upper triangles are made about two inches higher than the lower ones, so as to be much more acute in proportion and effect, and actually to look considerably narrower, though of the same width at the base. By this means they are made lighter in effect, and subordinated to the richly decorated series of the lower band, and the two courses, instead of repeating, unite with each other, and become a harmonious whole.

V.

Archivolt in the Duomo of Murano.

In order, however, to make still more sure that this difference in the height of the triangles should not escape the eye, another course of plain bricks is added above their points, increasing the width of the band by another two inches. There are five courses of bricks in the lower band, and it measures 1 ft. 6 in. in height: there are seven courses in the upper (of which six fall between the triangles), and it measures 1 ft. 10 in. in height, except at the extremity of the northern aisle, where for some mysterious reason the intermediate cornice is sloped upwards so as to reduce the upper triangles to the same height as those below. And here, finally, observe how determined the builder was that the one series should not be a mere imitation of the other; he could not now make them acute by additional height—so he here, and here only, *narrowed their bases*, and we have seven of them above, to six below.

§ XXVII. We come now to the most interesting portion of the whole east end, the archivolt at the end of the northern aisle.

It was above stated, that the band of triangles was broken by two higher arches at the ends of the aisles. That, however, on the northern side of the apse does not entirely interrupt, but lifts it, and thus forms a beautiful and curious archivolt, drawn opposite, in Plate V. The upper band of triangles cannot rise together with the lower, as it would otherwise break the cornice prepared to receive the second story; and the curious zigzag with which its triangles die away against the sides of the arch, exactly as waves break upon the sand, is one of the most curious features in the structure.

It will be also seen that there is a new feature in the treatment of the band itself when it turns the arch. Instead of leaving the bricks projecting between the sculptured or colored stones, reversed triangles of marble are used, inlaid to an equal depth with the others in the brickwork, but projecting beyond them so as to produce a sharp dark line of zigzag at their junctions. Three of these supplementary stones have unhappily fallen out, so that it is now impossible to determine the full harmony of color in which they were originally arranged. The central one, corresponding to the keystone in a common arch, is, however, most fortunately left, with two lateral ones on the right hand, and one on the left.

§ XXVIII. The keystone, if it may be so called, is of white marble, the lateral voussoirs of purple; and these are the only colored stones in the whole building which are sculptured; but they are

sculptured in a way which, more satisfactorily proves that the principle above stated was understood by the builders, than if they had been left blank. The object, observe, was to make the archivolt as rich as possible; eight of the white sculptured marbles were used upon it in juxtaposition. Had the purple marbles been left altogether plain, they would have been out of harmony with the elaboration of the rest. It became necessary to touch them with sculpture as a mere sign of carefulness and finish, but at the same time destroying their colored surface as little as possible. *The ornament is merely outlined upon them with a fine incision*, as if it had been etched out on their surface preparatory to being carved. In two of them it is composed merely of three concentric lines, parallel with the sides of the triangle; in the third, it is a wreath of beautiful design, which I have drawn of larger size in fig. 2, Plate V., that the reader may see how completely the surface is left undestroyed by the delicate incisions of the chisel, and may compare the method of working with that employed on the white stones, two of which are given in that plate, figs. 4 and 5. The keystone, of which we have not yet spoken, is the only white stone worked with the light incision; its design not being capable of the kind of workmanship given to the floral ornaments, and requiring either to be carved in complete relief, or left as we see it. It is given at fig. 1 of Plate IV. The sun and moon on each side of the cross are, as we shall see in the fifth Chapter, constantly employed on the keystones of Byzantine arches.

§ XXIX. We must not pass without notice the grey and green pieces of marble inserted at the flanks of the arch. For, observe, there was a difficulty in getting the forms of the triangle into anything like reconciliation at this point, and a mediæval artist always delights in a difficulty: instead of concealing it, he boasts of it; and just as we saw above that he directed the eye to the difficulty of filling the expanded sides of the upper band by elongating his triangles, so here, having to put in a piece of stone of awkward shape, he makes that very stone the most conspicuous in the whole arch, on both sides, by using in one case a dark, cold grey; in the other a vigorous green, opposed to the warm red and purple and white of the stones above and beside it. The green and white piece on the right is of a marble, as far as I know, exceedingly rare. I at first thought the white fragments were inlaid, so sharply are they defined upon their ground. They are indeed inlaid, but I believe it is by nature; and that the stone is a calcareous breccia of great mineralogical interest. The white spots are of singular value in giving piquancy to the whole range of more delicate transitional hues above. The effect of the whole is, however, generally injured by the loss of the three large triangles above. I have no doubt they were purple, like those which remain, and that the whole arch was thus one zone of white, relieved on a purple ground, encircled by the scarlet cornices of brick, and the whole chord of color contrasted by the two precious fragments of grey and green at either side.

§ XXX. The two pieces of carved stone inserted at each side of the arch, as seen at the bottom of Plate V., are of different workmanship from the rest; they do not match each other, and form part of the evidence which proves that portions of the church had been brought from the mainland. One bears an inscription, which, as its antiquity is confirmed by the shapelessness of its letters, I was much gratified by not being able to read; but M. Lazari, the intelligent author of the latest and best Venetian guide, with better skill, has given as much of it as remains, thus:

T SCEMARIEDIGENETRICISETBEATIESTEFANIMART

IRIECOINDIGNVSETPECCATVRDOMENICVST

I have printed the letters as they are placed in the inscription, in order that the reader may form some idea of the difficulty of reading such legends when the letters, thus thrown into one heap, are themselves of strange forms, and half worn away; any gaps which at all occur between them coming in the wrong places. There is no doubt, however, as to the reading of this fragment:—"T … Sancte Marie Domini Genetricis et beati Estefani martiri ego indignus et peccator Domenicus T." On these two initial and final T's, expanding one into Templum, the other into Torcellanus, M. Lazari founds

an ingenious conjecture that the inscription records the elevation of the church under a certain bishop Dominic of Torcello (named in the Altinat Chronicle), who flourished in the middle of the ninth century. If this were so, as the inscription occurs broken off on a fragment inserted scornfully in the present edifice, this edifice must be of the twelfth century, worked with fragments taken from the ruins of that built in the ninth. The two T's are, however, hardly a foundation large enough to build the church upon, a hundred years before the date assigned to it both by history and tradition (see above, § VIII.): and the reader has yet to be made aware of the principal fact bearing on the question.

§ XXXI. Above the first story of the apse runs, as he knows already, a gallery under open arches, protected by a light balustrade. This balustrade is worked on the *outside* with mouldings, of which I shall only say at present that they are of exactly the same school as the greater part of the work of the existing church. But the great horizontal pieces of stone which form the top of this balustrade are fragments of an older building turned inside out. They are covered with sculptures on the back, only to be seen by mounting into the gallery. They have once had an arcade of low wide arches traced on their surface, the spandrils filled with leafage, and archivolts enriched with studded chainwork and with crosses in their centres. These pieces have been used as waste marble by the architect of the existing apse. The small arches of the present balustrade are cut mercilessly through the old work, and the profile of the balustrade is cut out of what was once the back of the stone; only some respect is shown for the crosses in the old design, the blocks are cut so that these shall be not only left uninjured, but come in the centre of the balustrades.

§ XXXII. Now let the reader observe carefully that this balustrade of Murano is a fence of other things than the low gallery round the deserted apse. It is a barrier between two great schools of early architecture. On one side it was cut by Romanesque workmen of the early Christian ages, and furnishes us with a distinct type of a kind of ornament which, as we meet with other examples of it, we shall be able to describe in generic terms, and to throw back behind this balustrade, out of our way. The *front* of the balustrade presents us with a totally different condition of design, less rich, more graceful, and here shown in its simplest possible form. From the outside of this bar of marble we shall commence our progress in the study of existing Venetian architecture. The only question is, do we begin from the tenth or from the twelfth century?

§ XXXIII. I was in great hopes once of being able to determine this positively; but the alterations in all the early buildings of Venice are so numerous, and the foreign fragments introduced so innumerable, that I was obliged to leave the question doubtful. But one circumstance must be noted, bearing upon it closely.

In the woodcut on page 50, Fig. III., *b* is an archivolt of Murano, *a* one of St. Mark's; the latter acknowledged by all historians and all investigators to be of the twelfth century.

All the twelfth century archivolts in Venice, without exception, are on the model of *a*, differing only in their decorations and sculpture. There is not one which resembles that of Murano.

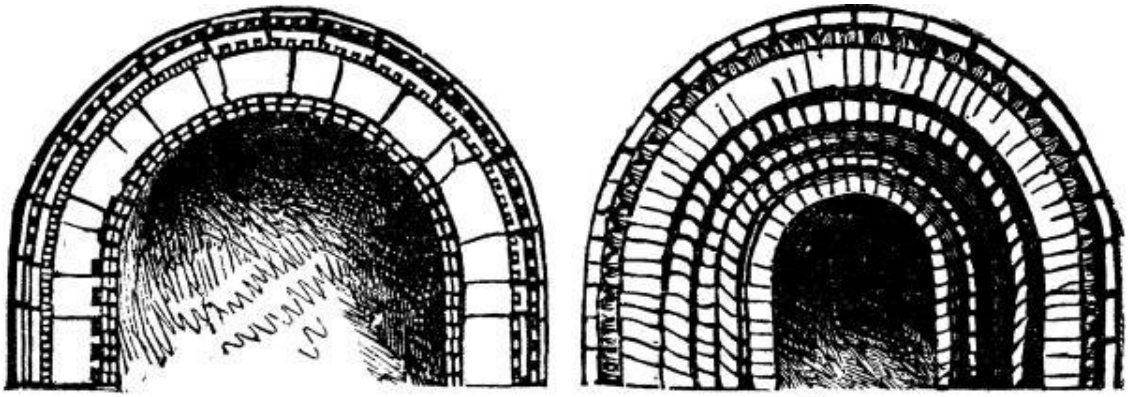
But the deep mouldings of Murano are almost exactly similar to those of St. Michele of Pavia, and other Lombard churches built, some as early as the seventh, others in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries.

On this ground it seems to me probable that the existing apse of Murano is part of the original earliest church, and that the inscribed fragments used in it have been brought from the mainland. The balustrade, however, may still be later than the rest; it will be examined, hereafter, more carefully.[15]

I have not space to give any farther account of the exterior of the building, though one half of what is remarkable in it remains untold. We must now see what is left of interest within the walls.

Fig. III.

[15] Its elevation is given to scale in fig. 4, Plate XIII., below.



a *b*

§ XXXIV. All hope is taken away by our first glance; for it falls on a range of shafts whose bases are concealed by wooden panelling, and which sustain arches decorated in the most approved style of Renaissance upholstery, with stucco roses in squares under the soffits, and egg and arrow mouldings on the architraves, gilded, on a ground of spotty black and green, with a small pink-faced and black-eyed cherub on every keystone; the rest of the church being for the most part concealed either by dirty hangings, or dirtier whitewash, or dim pictures on warped and wasting canvas; all vulgar, vain, and foul. Yet let us not turn back, for in the shadow of the apse our more careful glance shows us a Greek Madonna, pictured on a field of gold; and we feel giddy at the first step we make on the pavement, for it, also, is of Greek mosaic waved like the sea, and dyed like a dove's neck.

§ XXXV. Nor are the original features of the rest of the edifice altogether indecipherable; the entire series of shafts marked in the ground plan on each side of the nave, from the western entrance to the apse, are nearly uninjured; and I believe the stilted arches they sustain are those of the original fabric, though the masonry is covered by the Renaissance stucco mouldings. Their capitals, for a wonder, are left bare, and appear to have sustained no farther injury than has resulted from the insertion of a large brass chandelier into each of their abaci, each chandelier carrying a sublime wax candle two inches thick, fastened with wire to the wall above. The due arrangement of these appendages, previous to festal days, can only be effected from a ladder set against the angle of the abacus; and ten minutes before I wrote this sentence, I had the privilege of watching the candlelighter at his work, knocking his ladder about the heads of the capitals as if they had given him personal offence. He at last succeeded in breaking away one of the lamps altogether, with a bit of the marble of the abacus; the whole falling in ruin to the pavement, and causing much consultation and clamor among a tribe of beggars who were assisting the sacristan with their wisdom respecting the festal arrangements.

§ XXXVI. It is fortunate that the capitals themselves, being somewhat rudely cut, can bear this kind of treatment better than most of those in Venice. They are all founded on the Corinthian type, but the leaves are in every one different: those of the easternmost capital of the southern range are the best, and very beautiful, but presenting no feature of much interest, their workmanship being inferior to most of the imitations of Corinthian common at the period; much more to the rich fantasies which we have seen at Torcello. The apse itself, to-day (12th September, 1851), is not to be described; for just in front of it, behind the altar, is a magnificent curtain of new red velvet with a gilt edge and two golden tassels, held up in a dainty manner by two angels in the upholsterer's service; and above all, for concentration of effect, a star or sun, some five feet broad, the spikes of which conceal the whole of the figure of the Madonna except the head and hands.

§ XXXVII. The pavement is however still left open, and it is of infinite interest, although grievously distorted and defaced. For whenever a new chapel has been built, or a new altar erected, the pavement has been broken up and readjusted so as to surround the newly inserted steps or stones

with some appearance of symmetry; portions of it either covered or carried away, others mercilessly shattered or replaced by modern imitations, and those of very different periods, with pieces of the old floor left here and there in the midst of them, and worked round so as to deceive the eye into acceptance of the whole as ancient. The portion, however, which occupies the western extremity of the nave, and the parts immediately adjoining it in the aisles, are, I believe, in their original positions, and very little injured: they are composed chiefly of groups of peacocks, lions, stags, and griffins,—two of each in a group, drinking out of the same vase, or shaking claws together,—enclosed by interlacing bands, and alternating with chequer or star patterns, and here and there an attempt at representation of architecture, all worked in marble mosaic. The floors of Torcello and of St. Mark's are executed in the same manner; but what remains at Murano is finer than either, in the extraordinary play of color obtained by the use of variegated marbles. At St. Mark's the patterns are more intricate, and the pieces far more skilfully set together; but each piece is there commonly of one color: at Murano every fragment is itself variegated, and all are arranged with a skill and feeling not to be caught, and to be observed with deep reverence, for that pavement is not dateless, like the rest of the church; it bears its date on one of its central circles, 1140, and is, in my mind, one of the most precious monuments in Italy, showing thus early, and in those rude chequers which the bared knee of the Murano fisher wears in its daily bending, the beginning of that mighty spirit of Venetian color, which was to be consummated in Titian.

§ XXXVIII. But we must quit the church for the present, for its garnishings are completed; the candles are all upright in their sockets, and the curtains drawn into festoons, and a paste-board crescent, gay with artificial flowers, has been attached to the capital of every pillar, in order, together with the gilt angels, to make the place look as much like Paradise as possible. If we return to-morrow, we shall find it filled with woful groups of aged men and women, wasted and fever-struck, fixed in paralytic supplication, half-kneeling, half-couched upon the pavement; bowed down, partly in feebleness, partly in a fearful devotion, with their grey clothes cast far over their faces, ghastly and settled into a gloomy animal misery, all but the glittering eyes and muttering lips.

Fit inhabitants, these, for what was once the Garden of Venice, "a terrestrial paradise,—a place of nymphs and demi-gods!"[16]

§ XXXIX. We return, yet once again, on the following day. Worshippers and objects of worship, the sickly crowd and gilded angels, all are gone; and there, far in the apse, is seen the sad Madonna standing in her folded robe, lifting her hands in vanity of blessing. There is little else to draw away our thoughts from the solitary image. An old wooden tablet, carved into a rude effigy of San Donato, which occupies the central niche in the lower part of the tribune, has an interest of its own, but is unconnected with the history of the older church. The faded frescoes of saints, which cover the upper tier of the wall of the apse, are also of comparatively recent date, much more the piece of Renaissance workmanship, shaft and entablature, above the altar, which has been thrust into the midst of all, and has cut away part of the feet of the Madonna. Nothing remains of the original structure but the semi-dome itself, the cornice whence it springs, which is the same as that used on the exterior of the church, and the border and face-arch which surround it. The ground of the dome is of gold, unbroken except by the upright Madonna, and usual inscription, M R Θ V. The figure wears a robe of blue, deeply fringed with gold, which seems to be gathered on the head and thrown back on the shoulders, crossing the breast, and falling in many folds to the ground. The under robe, shown beneath it where it opens at the breast, is of the same color; the whole, except the deep gold fringe, being simply the dress of the women of the time. "Le donne, anco elle del 1100, vestivano *di turchino con manti in spalla*, che le coprivano dinanzi e di dietro."[17]

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[16] "Luogo de' ninfe e de' semidei."—*M. Andrea Calmo*, quoted by Mutinelli, Annali Urbani di Venezia (Venice, 1841), p. 362.

[17] "The women, even as far back as 1100, wore dresses of blue, with mantles on the shoulder, which clothed them before and behind."—*Sansorino*.It would be difficult to imagine a dress more modest and beautiful. See Appendix 7.

Round the dome there is a colored mosaic border; and on the edge of its arch, legible by the whole congregation, this inscription:

> "quos Eva contrivit, pia virgo Maria redemit;
> hanc cuncti laudent, qui Cristi munere gaudent."[18]

The whole edifice is, therefore, simply a temple to the Virgin: to her is ascribed the fact of Redemption, and to her its praise.

§ XL. "And is this," it will be asked of me, "the time, is this the worship, to which you would have us look back with reverence and regret?" Inasmuch as redemption is ascribed to the Virgin, No. Inasmuch as redemption is a thing desired, believed, rejoiced in, Yes,—and Yes a thousand times. As far as the Virgin is worshipped in place of God, No; but as far as there is the evidence of worship itself, and of the sense of a Divine presence, Yes. For there is a wider division of men than that into Christian and Pagan: before we ask what a man worships, we have to ask whether he worships at all. Observe Christ's own words on this head: "God is a spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit, *and* in truth." The worshipping in spirit comes first, and it does not necessarily imply the worshipping in truth. Therefore, there is first the broad division of men into Spirit worshippers and Flesh worshippers; and then, of the Spirit worshippers, the farther division into Christian and Pagan,—worshippers in Falsehood or in Truth. I therefore, for the moment, omit all inquiry how far the Mariolatry of the early church did indeed eclipse Christ, or what measure of deeper reverence for the Son of God was still felt through all the grosser forms of Madonna worship. Let that worship be taken at its worst; let the goddess of this dome of Murano be looked upon as just in the same sense an idol as the Athene of the Acropolis, or the Syrian Queen of Heaven; and then, on this darkest assumption, balance well the difference between those who worship and those who worship not;—that difference which there is in the sight of God, in all ages, between the calculating, smiling, self-sustained, self-governed man, and the believing, weeping, wondering, struggling, Heaven-governed man;—between the men who say in their hearts "there is no God," and those who acknowledge a God at every step, "if haply they might feel after Him and find Him." For that is indeed the difference which we shall find, in the end, between the builders of this day and the builders on that sand island long ago. They *did* honor something out of themselves; they did believe in spiritual presence judging, animating, redeeming them; they built to its honor and for its habitation; and were content to pass away in nameless multitudes, so only that the labor of their hands might fix in the sea-wilderness a throne for their guardian angel. In this was their strength, and there was indeed a Spirit walking with them on the waters, though they could not discern the form thereof, though the Masters voice came not to them, "It is I." What their error cost them, we shall see hereafter; for it remained when the majesty and the sincerity of their worship had departed, and remains to this day. Mariolatry is no special characteristic of the twelfth century; on the outside of that very tribune of San Donato, in its central recess, is an image of the Virgin which receives the reverence once paid to the blue vision upon the inner dome. With rouged cheeks and painted brows, the frightful doll stands in wretchedness of rags, blackened with the smoke of the votive lamps at its feet; and if we would know what has been lost or gained by Italy in the six hundred years that have worn the marbles of Murano, let us consider how far the priests who set up this to worship, the populace who have this to adore, may be nobler than the men who conceived that lonely figure standing on the golden field, or than those to whom it seemed to receive their prayer at evening, far away, where they only saw the blue clouds rising out of the burning sea.

[18] "Whom Eve destroyed, the pious Virgin Mary redeemed;All praise her, who rejoice in the Grace of Christ."Vide Appendix 8.

CHAPTER IV.
ST. MARK'S

§ I. "And so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus." If as the shores of Asia lessened upon his sight, the spirit of prophecy had entered into the heart of the weak disciple who had turned back when his hand was on the plough, and who had been judged, by the chiefest of Christ's captains, unworthy thenceforward to go forth with him to the work,[19] how wonderful would he have thought it, that by the lion symbol in future ages he was to be represented among men! how woful, that the war-cry of his name should so often reanimate the rage of the soldier, on those very plains where he himself had failed in the courage of the Christian, and so often dye with fruitless blood that very Cypriot Sea, over whose waves, in repentance and shame, he was following the Son of Consolation!

§ II. That the Venetians possessed themselves of his body in the ninth century, there appears no sufficient reason to doubt, nor that it was principally in consequence of their having done so, that they chose him for their patron saint. There exists, however, a tradition that before he went into Egypt he had founded the Church at Aquileia, and was thus, in some sort, the first bishop of the Venetian isles and people. I believe that this tradition stands on nearly as good grounds as that of St. Peter having been the first bishop of Rome;[20] but, as usual, it is enriched by various later additions and embellishments, much resembling the stories told respecting the church of Murano. Thus we find it recorded by the Santo Padre who compiled the "Vite de' Santi spettanti alle Chiese di Venezia,"[21] that "St. Mark having seen the people of Aquileia well grounded in religion, and being called to Rome by St. Peter, before setting off took with him the holy bishop Hermagoras, and went in a small boat to the marshes of Venice. There were at that period some houses built upon a certain high bank called Rialto, and the boat being driven by the wind was anchored in a marshy place, when St. Mark, snatched into ecstasy, heard the voice of an angel saying to him: 'Peace be to thee, Mark; here shall thy body rest.'" The angel goes on to foretell the building of "una stupenda, ne più veduta Città;" but the fable is hardly ingenious enough to deserve farther relation.

§ III. But whether St. Mark was first bishop of Aquileia or not, St. Theodore was the first patron of the city; nor can he yet be considered as having entirely abdicated his early right, as his statue, standing on a crocodile, still companions the winged lion on the opposing pillar of the piazzetta. A church erected to this Saint is said to have occupied, before the ninth century, the site of St. Mark's; and the traveller, dazzled by the brilliancy of the great square, ought not to leave it without endeavoring to imagine its aspect in that early time, when it was a green field cloister-like and quiet,[22] divided by a small canal, with a line of trees on each side; and extending between the two churches of St. Theodore and St. Geminian, as the little piazza of Torcello lies between its "palazzo" and cathedral.

§ IV. But in the year 813, when the seat of government was finally removed to the Rialto, a Ducal Palace, built on the spot where the present one stands, with a Ducal Chapel beside it,[23] gave a very different character to the Square of St. Mark; and fifteen years later, the acquisition of the body of the Saint, and its deposition in the Ducal Chapel, perhaps not yet completed, occasioned the investiture of that chapel with all possible splendor. St. Theodore was deposed from his patronship,

[19] Acts, xiii. 13; xv. 38, 39.

[20] The reader who desires to investigate it may consult Galliciolli, "Delle Memorie Venete" (Venice, 1795), tom. ii. p. 332, and the authorities quoted by him.

[21] Venice, 1761, tom. i. p. 126.

[22] St. Mark's Place, "partly covered by turf, and planted with a few trees; and on account of its pleasant aspect called Brollo or Broglio, that is to say, Garden." The canal passed through it, over which is built the bridge of the Malpassi, Galliciolli, lib. i. cap. viii.

[23] My authorities for this statement are given below, in the chapter on the Ducal Palace.

and his church destroyed, to make room for the aggrandizement of the one attached to the Ducal Palace, and thenceforward known as "St. Mark's."[24]

§ V. This first church was however destroyed by fire, when the Ducal Palace was burned in the revolt against Candiano, in 976. It was partly rebuilt by his successor, Pietro Orseolo, on a larger scale; and, with the assistance of Byzantine architects, the fabric was carried on under successive Doges for nearly a hundred years; the main building being completed in 1071, but its incrustation with marble not till considerably later. It was consecrated on the 8th of October, 1085,[25] according to Sansovino and the author of the "Chiesa Ducale di S. Marco," in 1094 according to Lazari, but certainly between 1084 and 1096, those years being the limits of the reign of Vital Falier; I incline to the supposition that it was soon after his accession to the throne in 1085, though Sansovino writes, by mistake, Ordelafo instead of Vital Falier. But, at all events, before the close of the eleventh century the great consecration of the church took place. It was again injured by fire in 1106, but repaired; and from that time to the fall of Venice there was probably no Doge who did not in some slight degree embellish or alter the fabric, so that few parts of it can be pronounced boldly to be of any given date. Two periods of interference are, however, notable above the rest: the first, that in which the Gothic school, had superseded the Byzantine towards the close of the fourteenth century, when the pinnacles, upper archivolts, and window traceries were added to the exterior, and the great screen, with various chapels and tabernacle-work, to the interior; the second, when the Renaissance school superseded the Gothic, and the pupils of Titian and Tintoret substituted, over one half of the church, their own compositions for the Greek mosaics with which it was originally decorated;[26] happily, though with no good will, having left enough to enable us to imagine and lament what they destroyed. Of this irreparable loss we shall have more to say hereafter; meantime, I wish only to fix in the reader's mind the succession of periods of alteration as firmly and simply as possible.

§ VI. We have seen that the main body of the church may be broadly stated to be of the eleventh century, the Gothic additions of the fourteenth, and the restored mosaics of the seventeenth. There is no difficulty in distinguishing at a glance the Gothic portions from the Byzantine; but there is considerable difficulty in ascertaining how long, during the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, additions were made to the Byzantine church, which cannot be easily distinguished from the work of the eleventh century, being purposely executed in the same manner. Two of the most important pieces of evidence on this point are, a mosaic in the south transept, and another over the northern door of the façade; the first representing the interior, the second the exterior, of the ancient church.

§ VII. It has just been stated that the existing building was consecrated by the Doge Vital Falier. A peculiar solemnity was given to that act of consecration, in the minds of the Venetian people, by what appears to have been one of the best arranged and most successful impostures ever attempted by the clergy of the Romish church. The body of St. Mark had, without doubt, perished in the conflagration of 976; but the revenues of the church depended too much upon the devotion excited by these relics to permit the confession of their loss. The following is the account given by Corner, and believed to this day by the Venetians, of the pretended miracle by which it was concealed.

"After the repairs undertaken by the Doge Orseolo, the place in which the body of the holy Evangelist rested had been altogether forgotten; so that the Doge Vital Falier was entirely ignorant of the place of the venerable deposit. This was no light affliction, not only to the pious Doge, but to all the citizens and people; so that at last, moved by confidence in the Divine mercy, they determined to

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[24] In the Chronicles, "Sancti Marci Ducalis Cappella."

[25] "To God the Lord, the glorious Virgin Annunciate, and the Protector St. Mark."—*Corner*, p. 14. It is needless to trouble the reader with the various authorities for the above statements: I have consulted the best. The previous inscription once existing on the church itself:"Anno milleno transacto bisque trigenoDesuper undecimo fuit facta primo,"is no longer to be seen, and is conjectured by Corner, with much probability, to have perished "in qualche ristauro."

[26] Signed Bartolomeus Bozza, 1634, 1647, 1656, &c.

implore, with prayer and fasting, the manifestation of so great a treasure, which did not now depend upon any human effort. A general fast being therefore proclaimed, and a solemn procession appointed for the 25th day of June, while the people assembled in the church interceded with God in fervent prayers for the desired boon, they beheld, with as much amazement as joy, a slight shaking in the marbles of a pillar (near the place where the altar of the Cross is now), which, presently falling to the earth, exposed to the view of the rejoicing people the chest of bronze in which the body of the Evangelist was laid."

§ VIII. Of the main facts of this tale there is no doubt. They were embellished afterwards, as usual, by many fanciful traditions; as, for instance, that, when the sarcophagus was discovered, St. Mark extended his hand out of it, with a gold ring on one of the fingers, which he permitted a noble of the Dolfin family to remove; and a quaint and delightful story was further invented of this ring, which I shall not repeat here, as it is now as well known as any tale of the Arabian Nights. But the fast and the discovery of the coffin, by whatever means effected, are facts; and they are recorded in one of the best-preserved mosaics of the north transept, executed very certainly not long after the event had taken place, closely resembling in its treatment that of the Bayeux tapestry, and showing, in a conventional manner, the interior of the church, as it then was, filled by the people, first in prayer, then in thanksgiving, the pillar standing open before them, and the Doge, in the midst of them, distinguished by his crimson bonnet embroidered with gold, but more unmistakably by the inscription "Dux" over his head, as uniformly is the case in the Bayeux tapestry, and most other pictorial works of the period. The church is, of course, rudely represented, and the two upper stories of it reduced to a small scale in order to form a background to the figures; one of those bold pieces of picture history which we in our pride of perspective, and a thousand things besides, never dare attempt. We should have put in a column or two of the real or perspective size, and subdued it into a vague background: the old workman crushed the church together that he might get it all in, up to the cupolas; and has, therefore, left us some useful notes of its ancient form, though any one who is familiar with the method of drawing employed at the period will not push the evidence too far. The two pulpits are there, however, as they are at this day, and the fringe of mosaic flower-work which then encompassed the whole church, but which modern restorers have destroyed, all but one fragment still left in the south aisle. There is no attempt to represent the other mosaics on the roof, the scale being too small to admit of their being represented with any success; but some at least of those mosaics had been executed at that period, and their absence in the representation of the entire church is especially to be observed, in order to show that we must not trust to any negative evidence in such works. M. Lazari has rashly concluded that the central archivolt of St. Mark's *must* be posterior to the year 1205, because it does not appear in the representation of the exterior of the church over the northern door;[27] but he justly observes that this mosaic (which is the other piece of evidence we possess respecting the ancient form of the building) cannot itself be earlier than 1205, since it represents the bronze horses which were brought from Constantinople in that year. And this one fact renders it very difficult to speak with confidence respecting the date of any part of the exterior of St. Mark's; for we have above seen that it was consecrated in the eleventh century, and yet here is one of its most important exterior decorations assuredly retouched, if not entirely added, in the thirteenth, although its style would have led us to suppose it had been an original part of the fabric. However, for all our purposes, it will be enough for the reader to remember that the earliest parts of the building belong to the eleventh, twelfth, and first part of the thirteenth century; the Gothic portions to the fourteenth; some of the altars and embellishments to the fifteenth and sixteenth; and the modern portion of the mosaics to the seventeenth.

§ IX. This, however, I only wish him to recollect in order that I may speak generally of the Byzantine architecture of St. Mark's, without leading him to suppose the whole church to have been

[27] Guida di Venezia, p. 6.

built and decorated by Greek artists. Its later portions, with the single exception of the seventeenth century mosaics, have been so dexterously accommodated to the original fabric that the general effect is still that of a Byzantine building; and I shall not, except when it is absolutely necessary, direct attention to the discordant points, or weary the reader with anatomical criticism. Whatever in St. Mark's arrests the eye, or affects the feelings, is either Byzantine, or has been modified by Byzantine influence; and our inquiry into its architectural merits need not therefore be disturbed by the anxieties of antiquarianism, or arrested by the obscurities of chronology.

§ X. And now I wish that the reader, before I bring him into St. Mark's Place, would imagine himself for a little time in a quiet English cathedral town, and walk with me to the west front of its cathedral. Let us go together up the more retired street, at the end of which we can see the pinnacles of one of the towers, and then through the low grey gateway, with its battlemented top and small latticed window in the centre, into the inner private-looking road or close, where nothing goes in but the carts of the tradesmen who supply the bishop and the chapter, and where there are little shaven grass-plots, fenced in by neat rails, before old-fashioned groups of somewhat diminutive and excessively trim houses, with little oriel and bay windows jutting out here and there, and deep wooden cornices and eaves painted cream color and white, and small porches to their doors in the shape of cockle-shells, or little, crooked, thick, indescribable wooden gables warped a little on one side; and so forward till we come to larger houses, also old-fashioned, but of red brick, and with gardens behind them, and fruit walls, which show here and there, among the nectarines, the vestiges of an old cloister arch or shaft, and looking in front on the cathedral square itself, laid out in rigid divisions of smooth grass and gravel walk, yet not uncheerful, especially on the sunny side where the canons' children are walking with their nurserymaids. And so, taking care not to tread on the grass, we will go along the straight walk to the west front, and there stand for a time, looking up at its deep-pointed porches and the dark places between their pillars where there were statues once, and where the fragments, here and there, of a stately figure are still left, which has in it the likeness of a king, perhaps indeed a king on earth, perhaps a saintly king long ago in heaven; and so higher and higher up to the great mouldering wall of rugged sculpture and confused arcades, shattered, and grey, and grisly with heads of dragons and mocking fiends, worn by the rain and swirling winds into yet unseemlier shape, and colored on their stony scales by the deep russet-orange lichen, melancholy gold; and so, higher still, to the bleak towers, so far above that the eye loses itself among the bosses of their traceries, though they are rude and strong, and only sees like a drift of eddying black points, now closing, now scattering, and now settling suddenly into invisible places among the bosses and flowers, the crowed of restless birds that fill the whole square with that strange clangor of theirs, so harsh and yet so soothing, like the cries of birds on a solitary coast between the cliffs and sea.

§ XI. Think for a little while of that scene, and the meaning of all its small formalisms, mixed with its serene sublimity. Estimate its secluded, continuous, drowsy felicities, and its evidence of the sense and steady performance of such kind of duties as can be regulated by the cathedral clock; and weigh the influence of those dark towers on all who have passed through the lonely square at their feet for centuries, and on all who have seen them rising far away over the wooded plain, or catching on their square masses the last rays of the sunset, when the city at their feet was indicated only by the mist at the bend of the river. And then let us quickly recollect that we are in Venice, and land at the extremity of the Calle Lunga San Moisè, which may be considered as there answering to the secluded street that led us to our English cathedral gateway.

§ XII. We find ourselves in a paved alley, some seven feet wide where it is widest, full of people, and resonant with cries of itinerant salesmen,—a shriek in their beginning, and dying away into a kind of brazen ringing, all the worse for its confinement between the high houses of the passage along which we have to make our way. Over-head an inextricable confusion of rugged shutters, and iron balconies and chimney flues pushed out on brackets to save room, and arched windows with projecting sills of Istrian stone, and gleams of green leaves here and there where a fig-tree branch

escapes over a lower wall from some inner cortile, leading the eye up to the narrow stream of blue sky high over all. On each side, a row of shops, as densely set as may be, occupying, in fact, intervals between the square stone shafts, about eight feet high, which carry the first floors: intervals of which one is narrow and serves as a door; the other is, in the more respectable shops, wainscoted to the height of the counter and glazed above, but in those of the poorer tradesmen left open to the ground, and the wares laid on benches and tables in the open air, the light in all cases entering at the front only, and fading away in a few feet from the threshold into a gloom which the eye from without cannot penetrate, but which is generally broken by a ray or two from a feeble lamp at the back of the shop, suspended before a print of the Virgin. The less pious shop-keeper sometimes leaves his lamp unlighted, and is contented with a penny print; the more religious one has his print colored and set in a little shrine with a gilded or figured fringe, with perhaps a faded flower or two on each side, and his lamp burning brilliantly. Here at the fruiterer's, where the dark-green water-melons are heaped upon the counter like cannon balls, the Madonna has a tabernacle of fresh laurel leaves; but the pewterer next door has let his lamp out, and there is nothing to be seen in his shop but the dull gleam of the studded patterns on the copper pans, hanging from his roof in the darkness. Next comes a "Vendita Frittole e Liquori," where the Virgin, enthroned in a very humble manner beside a tallow candle on a back shelf, presides over certain ambrosial morsels of a nature too ambiguous to be defined or enumerated. But a few steps farther on, at the regular wine-shop of the calle, where we are offered "Vino Nostrani a Soldi 28·32," the Madonna is in great glory, enthroned above ten or a dozen large red casks of three-year-old vintage, and flanked by goodly ranks of bottles of Maraschino, and two crimson lamps; and for the evening, when the gondoliers will come to drink out, under her auspices, the money they have gained during the day, she will have a whole chandelier.

§ XIII. A yard or two farther, we pass the hostelry of the Black Eagle, and, glancing as we pass through the square door of marble, deeply moulded, in the outer wall, we see the shadows of its pergola of vines resting on an ancient well, with a pointed shield carved on its side; and so presently emerge on the bridge and Campo San Moisè, whence to the entrance into St. Mark's Place, called the Bocca di Piazza (mouth of the square), the Venetian character is nearly destroyed, first by the frightful façade of San Moisè, which we will pause at another time to examine, and then by the modernizing of the shops as they near the piazza, and the mingling with the lower Venetian populace of lounging groups of English and Austrians. We will push fast through them into the shadow of the pillars at the end of the "Bocca di Piazza," and then we forget them all; for between those pillars there opens a great light, and, in the midst of it, as we advance slowly, the vast tower of St. Mark seems to lift itself visibly forth from the level field of chequered stones; and, on each side, the countless arches prolong themselves into ranged symmetry, as if the rugged and irregular houses that pressed together above us in the dark alley had been struck back into sudden obedience and lovely order, and all their rude casements and broken walls had been transformed into arches charged with goodly sculpture, and fluted shafts of delicate stone.

§ XIV. And well may they fall back, for beyond those troops of ordered arches there rises a vision out of the earth, and all the great square seems to have opened from it in a kind of awe, that we may see it far away;—a multitude of pillars and white domes, clustered into a long low pyramid of colored light; a treasure-heap, it seems, partly of gold, and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl, hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches, ceiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculpture of alabaster, clear as amber and delicate as ivory,—sculpture fantastic and involved, of palm leaves and lilies, and grapes and pomegranates, and birds clinging and fluttering among the branches, all twined together into an endless network of buds and plumes; and, in the midst of it, the solemn forms of angels, sceptred, and robed to the feet, and leaning to each other across the gates, their figures indistinct among the gleaming of the golden ground through the leaves beside them, interrupted and dim, like the morning light as it faded back among the branches of Eden, when first its gates were angel-guarded long ago. And round the walls of the porches there are set pillars of variegated stones,

jasper and porphyry, and deep-green serpentine spotted with flakes of snow, and marbles, that half refuse and half yield to the sunshine, Cleopatra-like, “their bluest veins to kiss”—the shadow, as it steals back from them, revealing line after line of azure undulation, as a receding tide leaves the waved sand; their capitals rich with interwoven tracery, rooted knots of herbage, and drifting leaves of acanthus and vine, and mystical signs, all beginning and ending in the Cross; and above them, in the broad archivolts, a continuous chain of language and of life—angels, and the signs of heaven, and the labors of men, each in its appointed season upon the earth; and above these, another range of glittering pinnacles, mixed with white arches edged with scarlet flowers,—a confusion of delight, amidst which the breasts of the Greek horses are seen blazing in their breadth of golden strength, and the St. Mark’s Lion, lifted on a blue field covered with stars, until at last, as if in ecstasy, the crests of the arches break into a marble foam, and toss themselves far into the blue sky in flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray, as if the breakers on the Lido shore had been frost-bound before they fell, and the sea-nymphs had inlaid them with coral and amethyst.

Between that grim cathedral of England and this, what an interval! There is a type of it in the very birds that haunt them; for, instead of the restless crowd, hoarse-voiced and sable-winged, drifting on the bleak upper air, the St. Mark’s porches are full of doves, that nestle among the marble foliage, and mingle the soft iridescence of their living plumes, changing at every motion, with the tints, hardly less lovely, that have stood unchanged for seven hundred years.

§ XV. And what effect has this splendor on those who pass beneath it? You may walk from sunrise to sunset, to and fro, before the gateway of St. Mark’s, and you will not see an eye lifted to it, nor a countenance brightened by it. Priest and layman, soldier and civilian, rich and poor, pass by it alike regardlessly. Up to the very recesses of the porches, the meanest tradesmen of the city push their counters; nay, the foundations of its pillars are themselves the seats—not “of them that sell doves” for sacrifice, but of the vendors of toys and caricatures. Round the whole square in front of the church there is almost a continuous line of cafés, where the idle Venetians of the middle classes lounge, and read empty journals; in its centre the Austrian bands play during the time of vespers, their martial music jarring with the organ notes,—the march drowning the miserere, and the sullen crowd thickening round them,—a crowd, which, if it had its will, would stiletto every soldier that pipes to it. And in the recesses of the porches, all day long, knots of men of the lowest classes, unemployed and listless, lie basking in the sun like lizards; and unregarded children,—every heavy glance of their young eyes full of desperation and stony depravity, and their throats hoarse with cursing,—gamble, and fight, and snarl, and sleep, hour after hour, clashing their bruised centesimi upon the marble ledges of the church porch. And the images of Christ and His angels look down upon it continually.

That we may not enter the church out of the midst of the horror of this, let us turn aside under the portico which looks towards the sea, and passing round within the two massive pillars brought from St. Jean d’Acre, we shall find the gate of the Baptistery; let us enter there. The heavy door closes behind us instantly, and the light, and the turbulence of the Piazzetta, are together shut out by it.

§ XVI. We are in a low vaulted room; vaulted, not with arches, but with small cupolas starred with gold, and chequered with gloomy figures: in the centre is a bronze font charged with rich bas-reliefs, a small figure of the Baptist standing above it in a single ray of light that glances across the narrow room, dying as it falls from a window high in the wall, and the first thing that it strikes, and the only thing that it strikes brightly, is a tomb. We hardly know if it be a tomb indeed; for it is like a narrow couch set beside the window, low-roofed and curtained, so that it might seem, but that it has some height above the pavement, to have been drawn towards the window, that the sleeper might be wakened early;—only there are two angels who have drawn the curtain back, and are looking down upon him. Let us look also, and thank that gentle light that rests upon his forehead for ever, and dies away upon his breast.

The face is of a man in middle life, but there are two deep furrows right across the forehead, dividing it like the foundations of a tower: the height of it above is bound by the fillet of the ducal

cap. The rest of the features are singularly small and delicate, the lips sharp, perhaps the sharpness of death being added to that of the natural lines; but there is a sweet smile upon them, and a deep serenity upon the whole countenance. The roof of the canopy above has been blue, filled with stars; beneath, in the centre of the tomb on which the figure rests, is a seated figure of the Virgin, and the border of it all around is of flowers and soft leaves, growing rich and deep, as if in a field in summer.

It is the Doge Andrea Dandolo, a man early great among the great of Venice; and early lost. She chose him for her king in his 36th year; he died ten years later, leaving behind him that history to which we owe half of what we know of her former fortunes.

§ XVII. Look round at the room in which he lies. The floor of it is of rich mosaic, encompassed by a low seat of red marble, and its walls are of alabaster, but worn and shattered, and darkly stained with age, almost a ruin,—in places the slabs of marble have fallen away altogether, and the rugged brickwork is seen through the rents, but all beautiful; the ravaging fissures fretting their way among the islands and channelled zones of the alabaster, and the time-stains on its translucent masses darkened into fields of rich golden brown, like the color of seaweed when the sun strikes on it through deep sea. The light fades away into the recess of the chamber towards the altar, and the eye can hardly trace the lines of the bas-relief behind it of the baptism of Christ: but on the vaulting of the roof the figures are distinct, and there are seen upon it two great circles, one surrounded by the “Principalities and powers in heavenly places,” of which Milton has expressed the ancient division in the single massy line,

“Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers,”

and around the other, the Apostles; Christ the centre of both; and upon the walls, again and again repeated, the gaunt figure of the Baptist, in every circumstance of his life and death; and the streams of the Jordan running down between their cloven rocks; the axe laid to the root of a fruitless tree that springs upon their shore. “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire.” Yes, verily: to be baptized with fire, or to be cast therein; it is the choice set before all men. The march-notes still murmur through the grated window, and mingle with the sounding in our ears of the sentence of judgment, which the old Greek has written on that Baptistery wall. Venice has made her choice.

§ XVIII. He who lies under that stony canopy would have taught her another choice, in his day, if she would have listened to him; but he and his counsels have long been forgotten by her, and the dust lies upon his lips.

Through the heavy door whose bronze network closes the place of his rest, let us enter the church itself. It is lost in still deeper twilight, to which the eye must be accustomed for some moments before the form of the building can be traced; and then there opens before us a vast cave, hewn out into the form of a Cross, and divided into shadowy aisles by many pillars. Round the domes of its roof the light enters only through narrow apertures like large stars; and here and there a ray or two from some far away casement wanders into the darkness, and casts a narrow phosphoric stream upon the waves of marble that heave and fall in a thousand colors along the floor. What else there is of light is from torches, or silver lamps, burning ceaselessly in the recesses of the chapels; the roof sheeted with gold, and the polished walls covered with alabaster, give back at every curve and angle some feeble gleaming to the flames; and the glories round the heads of the sculptured saints flash out upon us as we pass them, and sink again into the gloom. Under foot and over head, a continual succession of crowded imagery, one picture passing into another, as in a dream; forms beautiful and terrible mixed together; dragons and serpents, and ravening beasts of prey, and graceful birds that in the midst of them drink from running fountains and feed from vases of crystal; the passions and the pleasures of human life symbolized together, and the mystery of its redemption; for the mazes of interwoven lines and changeful pictures lead always at last to the Cross, lifted and carved in every place and upon every stone; sometimes with the serpent of eternity wrapt round it, sometimes with doves beneath its arms, and sweet herbage growing forth from its feet; but conspicuous most of all on the great rood

that crosses the church before the altar, raised in bright blazonry against the shadow of the apse. And although in the recesses of the aisles and chapels, when the mist of the incense hangs heavily, we may see continually a figure traced in faint lines upon their marble, a woman standing with her eyes raised to heaven, and the inscription above her, "Mother of God," she is not here the presiding deity. It is the Cross that is first seen, and always, burning in the centre of the temple; and every dome and hollow of its roof has the figure of Christ in the utmost height of it, raised in power, or returning in judgment.

§ XIX. Nor is this interior without effect on the minds of the people. At every hour of the day there are groups collected before the various shrines, and solitary worshippers scattered through the darker places of the church, evidently in prayer both deep and reverent, and, for the most part, profoundly sorrowful. The devotees at the greater number of the renowned shrines of Romanism may be seen murmuring their appointed prayers with wandering eyes and unengaged gestures; but the step of the stranger does not disturb those who kneel on the pavement of St. Mark's; and hardly a moment passes, from early morning to sunset, in which we may not see some half-veiled figure enter beneath the Arabian porch, cast itself into long abasement on the floor of the temple, and then rising slowly with more confirmed step, and with a passionate kiss and clasp of the arms given to the feet of the crucifix, by which the lamps burn always in the northern aisle, leave the church, as if comforted.

§ XX. But we must not hastily conclude from this that the nobler characters of the building have at present any influence in fostering a devotional spirit. There is distress enough in Venice to bring many to their knees, without excitement from external imagery; and whatever there may be in the temper of the worship offered in St. Mark's more than can be accounted for by reference to the unhappy circumstances of the city, is assuredly not owing either to the beauty of its architecture or to the impressiveness of the Scripture histories embodied in its mosaics. That it has a peculiar effect, however slight, on the popular mind, may perhaps be safely conjectured from the number of worshippers which it attracts, while the churches of St. Paul and the Frari, larger in size and more central in position, are left comparatively empty.[28] But this effect is altogether to be ascribed to its richer assemblage of those sources of influence which address themselves to the commonest instincts of the human mind, and which, in all ages and countries, have been more or less employed in the support of superstition. Darkness and mystery; confused recesses of building; artificial light employed in small quantity, but maintained with a constancy which seems to give it a kind of sacredness; preciousness of material easily comprehended by the vulgar eye; close air loaded with a sweet and peculiar odor associated only with religious services, solemn music, and tangible idols or images having popular legends attached to them,—these, the stage properties of superstition, which have been from the beginning of the world, and must be to the end of it, employed by all nations, whether openly savage or nominally civilized, to produce a false awe in minds incapable of apprehending the true nature of the Deity, are assembled in St. Mark's to a degree, as far as I know, unexampled in any other European church. The arts of the Magus and the Brahmin are exhausted in the animation of a paralyzed Christianity; and the popular sentiment which these arts excite is to be regarded by us with no more respect than we should have considered ourselves justified in rendering to the devotion of the worshippers at Eleusis, Ellora, or Edfou.[29]

§ XXI. Indeed, these inferior means of exciting religious emotion were employed in the ancient Church as they are at this day, but not employed alone. Torchlight there was, as there is now; but the torchlight illumined Scripture histories on the walls, which every eye traced and every heart

[28] The mere warmth of St. Mark's in winter, which is much greater than that of the other two churches above named, must, however, be taken into consideration, as one of the most efficient causes of its being then more frequented.

[29] I said above that the larger number of the devotees entered by the "Arabian" porch; the porch, that is to say, on the north side of the church, remarkable for its rich Arabian archivolt, and through which access is gained immediately to the northern transept. The reason is, that in that transept is the chapel of the Madonna, which has a greater attraction for the Venetians than all the rest of the church besides. The old builders kept their images of the Virgin subordinate to those of Christ; but modern Romanism has retrograded from theirs, and the most glittering portions of the whole church are the two recesses behind this lateral altar, covered with silver hearts dedicated to the Virgin.

comprehended, but which, during my whole residence in Venice, I never saw one Venetian regard for an instant. I never heard from any one the most languid expression of interest in any feature of the church, or perceived the slightest evidence of their understanding the meaning of its architecture; and while, therefore, the English cathedral, though no longer dedicated to the kind of services for which it was intended by its builders, and much at variance in many of its characters with the temper of the people by whom it is now surrounded, retains yet so much of its religious influence that no prominent feature of its architecture can be said to exist altogether in vain, we have in St. Mark's a building apparently still employed in the ceremonies for which it was designed, and yet of which the impressive attributes have altogether ceased to be comprehended by its votaries. The beauty which it possesses is unfelt, the language it uses is forgotten; and in the midst of the city to whose service it has so long been consecrated, and still filled by crowds of the descendants of those to whom it owes its magnificence, it stands, in reality, more desolate than the ruins through which the sheep-walk passes unbroken in our English valleys; and the writing on its marble walls is less regarded and less powerful for the teaching of men, than the letters which the shepherd follows with his finger, where the moss is lightest on the tombs in the desecrated cloister.

§ XXII. It must therefore be altogether without reference to its present usefulness, that we pursue our inquiry into the merits and meaning of the architecture of this marvellous building; and it can only be after we have terminated that inquiry, conducting it carefully on abstract grounds, that we can pronounce with any certainty how far the present neglect of St. Mark's is significative of the decline of the Venetian character, or how far this church is to be considered as the relic of a barbarous age, incapable of attracting the admiration, or influencing the feelings of a civilized community.

The inquiry before us is twofold. Throughout the first volume, I carefully kept the study of *expression* distinct from that of abstract architectural perfection; telling the reader that in every building we should afterwards examine, he would have first to form a judgment of its construction and decorative merit, considering it merely as a work of art; and then to examine farther, in what degree it fulfilled its expressional purposes. Accordingly, we have first to judge of St. Mark's merely as a piece of architecture, not as a church; secondly, to estimate its fitness for its special duty as a place of worship, and the relation in which it stands, as such, to those northern cathedrals that still retain so much of the power over the human heart, which the Byzantine domes appear to have lost for ever.

§ XXIII. In the two succeeding sections of this work, devoted respectively to the examination of the Gothic and Renaissance buildings in Venice, I have endeavored to analyze and state, as briefly as possible, the true nature of each school,—first in Spirit, then in Form. I wished to have given a similar analysis, in this section, of the nature of Byzantine architecture; but could not make my statements general, because I have never seen this kind of building on its native soil. Nevertheless, in the following sketch of the principles exemplified in St. Mark's, I believe that most of the leading features and motives of the style will be found clearly enough distinguished to enable the reader to judge of it with tolerable fairness, as compared with the better known systems of European architecture in the middle ages.

§ XXIV. Now the first broad characteristic of the building, and the root nearly of every other important peculiarity in it, is its confessed *incrustation*. It is the purest example in Italy of the great school of architecture in which the ruling principle is the incrustation of brick with more precious materials; and it is necessary before we proceed to criticise any one of its arrangements, that the reader should carefully consider the principles which are likely to have influenced, or might legitimately influence, the architects of such a school, as distinguished from those whose designs are to be executed in massive materials.

It is true, that among different nations, and at different times, we may find examples of every sort and degree of incrustation, from the mere setting of the larger and more compact stones by preference at the outside of the wall, to the miserable construction of that modern brick cornice, with its coating of cement, which, but the other day, in London, killed its unhappy workmen in its

fall.[30] But just as it is perfectly possible to have a clear idea of the opposing characteristics of two different species of plants or animals, though between the two there are varieties which it is difficult to assign either to the one or the other, so the reader may fix decisively in his mind the legitimate characteristics of the incrusted and the massive styles, though between the two there are varieties which confessedly unite the attributes of both. For instance, in many Roman remains, built of blocks of tufa and incrusted with marble, we have a style, which, though truly solid, possesses some of the attributes of incrustation; and in the Cathedral of Florence, built of brick and coated with marble, the marble facing is so firmly and exquisitely set, that the building, though in reality incrusted, assumes the attributes of solidity. But these intermediate examples need not in the least confuse our generally distinct ideas of the two families of buildings: the one in which the substance is alike throughout, and the forms and conditions of the ornament assume or prove that it is so, as in the best Greek buildings, and for the most part in our early Norman and Gothic; and the other, in which the substance is of two kinds, one internal, the other external, and the system of decoration is founded on this duplicity, as pre-eminently in St. Mark's.

§ XXV. I have used the word duplicity in no depreciatory sense. In chapter ii. of the "Seven Lamps," § 18, I especially guarded this incrusted school from the imputation of insincerity, and I must do so now at greater length. It appears insincere at first to a Northern builder, because, accustomed to build with solid blocks of freestone, he is in the habit of supposing the external superficies of a piece of masonry to be some criterion of its thickness. But, as soon as he gets acquainted with the incrusted style, he will find that the Southern builders had no intention to deceive him. He will see that every slab of facial marble is fastened to the next by a confessed *rivet*, and that the joints of the armor are so visibly and openly accommodated to the contours of the substance within, that he has no more right to complain of treachery than a savage would have, who, for the first time in his life seeing a man in armor, had supposed him to be made of solid steel. Acquaint him with the customs of chivalry, and with the uses of the coat of mail, and he ceases to accuse of dishonesty either the panoply or the knight.

These laws and customs of the St. Mark's architectural chivalry it must be our business to develope.

§ XXVI. First, consider the natural circumstances which give rise to such a style. Suppose a nation of builders, placed far from any quarries of available stone, and having precarious access to the mainland where they exist; compelled therefore either to build entirely with brick, or to import whatever stone they use from great distances, in ships of small tonnage, and for the most part dependent for speed on the oar rather than the sail. The labor and cost of carriage are just as great, whether they import common or precious stone, and therefore the natural tendency would always be to make each shipload as valuable as possible. But in proportion to the preciousness of the stone, is the limitation of its possible supply; limitation not determined merely by cost, but by the physical conditions of the material, for of many marbles, pieces above a certain size are not to be had for money. There would also be a tendency in such circumstances to import as much stone as possible ready sculptured, in order to save weight; and therefore, if the traffic of their merchants led them to places where there were ruins of ancient edifices, to ship the available fragments of them home. Out of this supply of marble, partly composed of pieces of so precious a quality that only a few tons of them could be on any terms obtained, and partly of shafts, capitals, and other portions of foreign buildings, the island architect has to fashion, as best he may, the anatomy of his edifice. It is at his choice either to lodge his few blocks of precious marble here and there among his masses of brick, and to cut out of the sculptured fragments such new forms as may be necessary for the observance of fixed proportions in the new building; or else to cut the colored stones into thin pieces, of extent sufficient to face the whole surface of the walls, and to adopt a method of construction

[30] Vide "Builder," for October, 1851.

irregular enough to admit the insertion of fragmentary sculptures; rather with a view of displaying their intrinsic beauty, than of setting them to any regular service in the support of the building.

An architect who cared only to display his own skill, and had no respect for the works of others, would assuredly have chosen the former alternative, and would have sawn the old marbles into fragments in order to prevent all interference with his own designs. But an architect who cared for the preservation of noble work, whether his own or others', and more regarded the beauty of his building than his own fame, would have done what those old builders of St. Mark's did for us, and saved every relic with which he was entrusted.

§ XXVII. But these were not the only motives which influenced the Venetians in the adoption of their method of architecture. It might, under all the circumstances above stated, have been a question with other builders, whether to import one shipload of costly jaspers, or twenty of chalk flints; and whether to build a small church faced with porphyry and paved with agate, or to raise a vast cathedral in freestone. But with the Venetians it could not be a question for an instant; they were exiles from ancient and beautiful cities, and had been accustomed to build with their ruins, not less in affection than in admiration: they had thus not only grown familiar with the practice of inserting older fragments in modern buildings, but they owed to that practice a great part of the splendor of their city, and whatever charm of association might aid its change from a Refuge into a Home. The practice which began in the affections of a fugitive nation, was prolonged in the pride of a conquering one; and beside the memorials of departed happiness, were elevated the trophies of returning victory. The ship of war brought home more marble in triumph than the merchant vessel in speculation; and the front of St. Mark's became rather a shrine at which to dedicate the splendor of miscellaneous spoil, than the organized expression of any fixed architectural law, or religious emotion.

§ XXVIII. Thus far, however, the justification of the style of this church depends on circumstances peculiar to the time of its erection, and to the spot where it arose. The merit of its method, considered in the abstract, rests on far broader grounds.

In the fifth chapter of the "Seven Lamps," § 14, the reader will find the opinion of a modern architect of some reputation, Mr. Wood, that the chief thing remarkable in this church "is its extreme ugliness;" and he will find this opinion associated with another, namely, that the works of the Caracci are far preferable to those of the Venetian painters. This second statement of feeling reveals to us one of the principal causes of the first; namely, that Mr. Wood had not any perception of color, or delight in it. The perception of color is a gift just as definitely granted to one person, and denied to another, as an ear for music; and the very first requisite for true judgment of St. Mark's, is the perfection of that color-faculty which few people ever set themselves seriously to find out whether they possess or not. For it is on its value as a piece of perfect and unchangeable coloring, that the claims of this edifice to our respect are finally rested; and a deaf man might as well pretend to pronounce judgment on the merits of a full orchestra, as an architect trained in the composition of form only, to discern the beauty of St. Mark's. It possesses the charm of color in common with the greater part of the architecture, as well as of the manufactures, of the East; but the Venetians deserve especial note as the only European people who appear to have sympathized to the full with the great instinct of the Eastern races. They indeed were compelled to bring artists from Constantinople to design the mosaics of the vaults of St. Mark's, and to group the colors of its porches; but they rapidly took up and developed, under more masculine conditions, the system of which the Greeks had shown them the example: while the burghers and barons of the North were building their dark streets and grisly castles of oak and sandstone, the merchants of Venice were covering their palaces with porphyry and gold; and at last, when her mighty painters had created for her a color more priceless than gold or porphyry, even this, the richest of her treasures, she lavished upon walls whose foundations were beaten by the sea; and the strong tide, as it runs beneath the Rialto, is reddened to this day by the reflection of the frescoes of Giorgione.

§ XXIX. If, therefore, the reader does not care for color, I must protest against his endeavor to form any judgment whatever of this church of St. Mark's. But, if he both cares for and loves it, let him remember that the school of incrusted architecture is *the only one in which perfect and permanent chromatic decoration is possible*; and let him look upon every piece of jasper and alabaster given to the architect as a cake of very hard color, of which a certain portion is to be ground down or cut off, to paint the walls with. Once understand this thoroughly, and accept the condition that the body and availing strength of the edifice are to be in brick, and that this under muscular power of brickwork is to be clothed with the defence and the brightness of the marble, as the body of an animal is protected and adorned by its scales or its skin, and all the consequent fitnesses and laws of the structure will be easily discernible: These I shall state in their natural order.

§ XXX. Law I. *That the plinths and cornices used for binding the armor are to be light and delicate.* A certain thickness, at least two or three inches, must be required in the covering pieces (even when composed of the strongest stone, and set on the least exposed parts), in order to prevent the chance of fracture, and to allow for the wear of time. And the weight of this armor must not be trusted to cement; the pieces must not be merely glued to the rough brick surface, but connected with the mass which they protect by binding cornices and string courses; and with each other, so as to secure mutual support, aided by the rivetings, but by no means dependent upon them. And, for the full honesty and straight-forwardness of the work, it is necessary that these string courses and binding plinths should not be of such proportions as would fit them for taking any important part in the hard work of the inner structure, or render them liable to be mistaken for the great cornices and plinths already explained as essential parts of the best solid building. They must be delicate, slight, and visibly incapable of severer work than that assigned to them.

§ XXXI. Law II. *Science of inner structure is to be abandoned.* As the body of the structure is confessedly of inferior, and comparatively incoherent materials, it would be absurd to attempt in it any expression of the higher refinements of construction. It will be enough that by its mass we are assured of its sufficiency and strength; and there is the less reason for endeavoring to diminish the extent of its surface by delicacy of adjustment, because on the breadth of that surface we are to depend for the better display of the color, which is to be the chief source of our pleasure in the building. The main body of the work, therefore, will be composed of solid walls and massive piers; and whatever expression of finer structural science we may require, will be thrown either into subordinate portions of it, or entirely directed to the support of the external mail, where in arches or vaults it might otherwise appear dangerously independent of the material within.

§ XXXII. Law III. *All shafts are to be solid.* Wherever, by the smallness of the parts, we may be driven to abandon the incrusted structure at all, it must be abandoned altogether. The eye must never be left in the least doubt as to what is solid and what is coated. Whatever appears *probably* solid, must be *assuredly* so, and therefore it becomes an inviolable law that no shaft shall ever be incrusted. Not only does the whole virtue of a shaft depend on its consolidation, but the labor of cutting and adjusting an incrusted coat to it would be greater than the saving of material is worth. Therefore the shaft, of whatever size, is always to be solid; and because the incrusted character of the rest of the building renders it more difficult for the shafts to clear themselves from suspicion, they must not, in this incrusted style, be in any place jointed. No shaft must ever be used but of one block; and this the more, because the permission given to the builder to have his walls and piers as ponderous as he likes, renders it quite unnecessary for him to use shafts of any fixed size. In our Norman and Gothic, where definite support is required at a definite point, it becomes lawful to build up a tower of small stones in the shape of a shaft. But the Byzantine is allowed to have as much support as he wants from the walls in every direction, and he has no right to ask for further license in the structure of his shafts. Let him, by generosity in the substance of his pillars, repay us for the permission we have given him to be superficial in his walls. The builder in the chalk valleys of France and England may be blameless

in kneading his clumsy pier out of broken flint and calcined lime; but the Venetian, who has access to the riches of Asia and the quarries of Egypt, must frame at least his shafts out of flawless stone.

§ XXXIII. And this for another reason yet. Although, as we have said, it is impossible to cover the walls of a large building with color, except on the condition of dividing the stone into plates, there is always a certain appearance of meanness and niggardliness in the procedure. It is necessary that the builder should justify himself from this suspicion; and prove that it is not in mere economy or poverty, but in the real impossibility of doing otherwise, that he has sheeted his walls so thinly with the precious film. Now the shaft is exactly the portion of the edifice in which it is fittest to recover his honor in this respect. For if blocks of jasper or porphyry be inserted in the walls, the spectator cannot tell their thickness, and cannot judge of the costliness of the sacrifice. But the shaft he can measure with his eye in an instant, and estimate the quantity of treasure both in the mass of its existing substance, and in that which has been hewn away to bring it into its perfect and symmetrical form. And thus the shafts of all buildings of this kind are justly regarded as an expression of their wealth, and a form of treasure, just as much as the jewels or gold in the sacred vessels; they are, in fact, nothing else than large jewels,[31] the block of precious serpentine or jasper being valued according to its size and brilliancy of color, like a large emerald or ruby; only the bulk required to bestow value on the one is to be measured in feet and tons, and on the other in lines and carats. The shafts must therefore be, without exception, of one block in all buildings of this kind; for the attempt in any place to incrust or joint them would be a deception like that of introducing a false stone among jewellery (for a number of joints of any precious stone are of course not equal in value to a single piece of equal weight), and would put an end at once to the spectator's confidence in the expression of wealth in any portion of the structure, or of the spirit of sacrifice in those who raised it.

§ XXXIV. Law IV. *The shafts may sometimes be independent of the construction.* Exactly in proportion to the importance which the shaft assumes as a large jewel, is the diminution of its importance as a sustaining member; for the delight which we receive in its abstract bulk, and beauty of color, is altogether independent of any perception of its adaptation to mechanical necessities. Like other beautiful things in this world, its end is to *be* beautiful; and, in proportion to its beauty, it receives permission to be otherwise useless. We do not blame emeralds and rubies because we cannot make them into heads of hammers. Nay, so far from our admiration of the jewel shaft being dependent on its doing work for us, it is very possible that a chief part of its preciousness may consist in a delicacy, fragility, and tenderness of material, which must render it utterly unfit for hard work; and therefore that we shall admire it the more, because we perceive that if we were to put much weight upon it, it would be crushed. But, at all events, it is very clear that the primal object in the placing of such shafts must be the display of their beauty to the best advantage, and that therefore all imbedding of them in walls, or crowding of them into groups, in any position in which either their real size or any portion of their surface would be concealed, is either inadmissible altogether, or objectionable in proportion to their value; that no symmetrical or scientific arrangements of pillars are therefore ever to be expected in buildings of this kind, and that all such are even to be looked upon as positive errors and misapplications of materials: but that, on the contrary, we must be constantly prepared to see, and to see with admiration, shafts of great size and importance set in places where their real service is little more than nominal, and where the chief end of their existence is to catch the sunshine upon their polished sides, and lead the eye into delighted wandering among the mazes of their azure veins.

§ XXXV. Law V. *The shafts may be of variable size.* Since the value of each shaft depends upon its bulk, and diminishes with the diminution of its mass, in a greater ratio than the size itself diminishes, as in the case of all other jewellery, it is evident that we must not in general expect perfect

[31] "Quivi presso si vedi una colonna di tanta bellezza e finezza che e riputato *piutosto gioia che pietra*."—*Sansovino*, of the verd-antique pillar in San Jacomo dell' Orio. A remarkable piece of natural history and moral philosophy, connected with this subject, will be found in the second chapter of our third volume, quoted from the work of a Florentine architect of the fifteenth century.

symmetry and equality among the series of shafts, any more than definiteness of application; but that, on the contrary, an accurately observed symmetry ought to give us a kind of pain, as proving that considerable and useless loss has been sustained by some of the shafts, in being cut down to match with the rest. It is true that symmetry is generally sought for in works of smaller jewellery; but, even there, not a perfect symmetry, and obtained under circumstances quite different from those which affect the placing of shafts in architecture. First: the symmetry is usually imperfect. The stones that seem to match each other in a ring or necklace, appear to do so only because they are so small that their differences are not easily measured by the eye; but there is almost always such difference between them as would be strikingly apparent if it existed in the same proportion between two shafts nine or ten feet in height. Secondly: the quantity of stones which pass through a jeweller's hands, and the facility of exchange of such small objects, enable the tradesman to select any number of stones of approximate size; a selection, however, often requiring so much time, that perfect symmetry in a group of very fine stones adds enormously to their value. But the architect has neither the time nor the facilities of exchange. He cannot lay aside one column in a corner of his church till, in the course of traffic, he obtain another that will match it; he has not hundreds of shafts fastened up in bundles, out of which he can match sizes at his ease; he cannot send to a brother-tradesman and exchange the useless stones for available ones, to the convenience of both. His blocks of stone, or his ready hewn shafts, have been brought to him in limited number, from immense distances; no others are to be had; and for those which he does not bring into use, there is no demand elsewhere. His only means of obtaining symmetry will therefore be, in cutting down the finer masses to equality with the inferior ones; and this we ought not to desire him often to do. And therefore, while sometimes in a Baldacchino, or an important chapel or shrine, this costly symmetry may be necessary, and admirable in proportion to its probable cost, in the general fabric we must expect to see shafts introduced of size and proportion continually varying, and such symmetry as may be obtained among them never altogether perfect, and dependent for its charm frequently on strange complexities and unexpected rising and falling of weight and accent in its marble syllables; bearing the same relation to a rigidly chiselled and proportioned architecture that the wild lyric rhythm of Æschylus or Pindar bears to the finished measures of Pope.

§ XXXVI. The application of the principles of jewellery to the smaller as well as the larger blocks, will suggest to us another reason for the method of incrustation adopted in the walls. It often happens that the beauty of the veining in some varieties of alabaster is so great, that it becomes desirable to exhibit it by dividing the stone, not merely to economize its substance, but to display the changes in the disposition of its fantastic lines. By reversing one of two thin plates successively taken from the stone, and placing their corresponding edges in contact, a perfectly symmetrical figure may be obtained, which will enable the eye to comprehend more thoroughly the position of the veins. And this is actually the method in which, for the most part, the alabasters of St. Mark are employed; thus accomplishing a double good,—directing the spectator, in the first place, to close observation of the nature of the stone employed, and in the second, giving him a farther proof of the honesty of intention in the builder: for wherever similar veining is discovered in two pieces, the fact is declared that they have been cut from the same stone. It would have been easy to disguise the similarity by using them in different parts of the building; but on the contrary they are set edge to edge, so that the whole system of the architecture may be discovered at a glance by any one acquainted with the nature of the stones employed. Nay, but, it is perhaps answered me, not by an ordinary observer; a person ignorant of the nature of alabaster might perhaps fancy all these symmetrical patterns to have been found in the stone itself, and thus be doubly deceived, supposing blocks to be solid and symmetrical which were in reality subdivided and irregular. I grant it; but be it remembered, that in all things, ignorance is liable to be deceived, and has no right to accuse anything but itself as the source of the deception. The style and the words are dishonest, not which are liable to be misunderstood if subjected to no inquiry, but which are deliberately calculated to lead inquiry astray. There are perhaps

no great or noble truths, from those of religion downwards, which present no mistakeable aspect to casual or ignorant contemplation. Both the truth and the lie agree in hiding themselves at first, but the lie continues to hide itself with effort, as we approach to examine it; and leads us, if undiscovered, into deeper lies; the truth reveals itself in proportion to our patience and knowledge, discovers itself kindly to our pleading, and leads us, as it is discovered, into deeper truths.

§ XXXVII. Law VI. *The decoration must be shallow in cutting.* The method of construction being thus systematized, it is evident that a certain style of decoration must arise out of it, based on the primal condition that over the greater part of the edifice there can be *no deep cutting*. The thin sheets of covering stones do not admit of it; we must not cut them through to the bricks; and whatever ornaments we engrave upon them cannot, therefore, be more than an inch deep at the utmost. Consider for an instant the enormous differences which this single condition compels between the sculptural decoration of the incrusted style, and that of the solid stones of the North, which may be hacked and hewn into whatever cavernous hollows and black recesses we choose; struck into grim darknesses and grotesque projections, and rugged ploughings up of sinuous furrows, in which any form or thought may be wrought out on any scale,—mighty statues with robes of rock and crowned foreheads burning in the sun, or venomous goblins and stealthy dragons shrunk into lurking-places of untraceable shade: think of this, and of the play and freedom given to the sculptor's hand and temper, to smite out and in, hither and thither, as he will; and then consider what must be the different spirit of the design which is to be wrought on the smooth surface of a film of marble, where every line and shadow must be drawn with the most tender pencilling and cautious reserve of resource,—where even the chisel must not strike hard, lest it break through the delicate stone, nor the mind be permitted in any impetuosity of conception inconsistent with the fine discipline of the hand. Consider that whatever animal or human form is to be suggested, must be projected on a flat surface; that all the features of the countenance, the folds of the drapery, the involutions of the limbs, must be so reduced and subdued that the whole work becomes rather a piece of fine drawing than of sculpture; and then follow out, until you begin to perceive their endlessness, the resulting differences of character which will be necessitated in every part of the ornamental designs of these incrusted churches, as compared with that of the Northern schools. I shall endeavor to trace a few of them only.

§ XXXVIII. The first would of course be a diminution of the builder's dependence upon human form as a source of ornament: since exactly in proportion to the dignity of the form itself is the loss which it must sustain in being reduced to a shallow and linear bas-relief, as well as the difficulty of expressing it at all under such conditions. Wherever sculpture can be solid, the nobler characters of the human form at once lead the artist to aim at its representation, rather than at that of inferior organisms; but when all is to be reduced to outline, the forms of flowers and lower animals are always more intelligible, and are felt to approach much more to a satisfactory rendering of the objects intended, than the outlines of the human body. This inducement to seek for resources of ornament in the lower fields of creation was powerless in the minds of the great Pagan nations, Ninevite, Greek, or Egyptian: first, because their thoughts were so concentrated on their own capacities and fates, that they preferred the rudest suggestion of human form to the best of an inferior organism; secondly, because their constant practice in solid sculpture, often colossal, enabled them to bring a vast amount of science into the treatment of the lines, whether of the low relief, the monochrome vase, or shallow hieroglyphic.

§ XXXIX. But when various ideas adverse to the representation of animal, and especially of human, form, originating with the Arabs and iconoclast Greeks, had begun at any rate to direct the builders' minds to seek for decorative materials in inferior types, and when diminished practice in solid sculpture had rendered it more difficult to find artists capable of satisfactorily reducing the high organisms to their elementary outlines, the choice of subject for surface sculpture would be more and more uninterruptedly directed to floral organisms, and human and animal form would become diminished in size, frequency, and general importance. So that, while in the Northern solid

architecture we constantly find the effect of its noblest features dependent on ranges of statues, often colossal, and full of abstract interest, independent of their architectural service, in the Southern incrusted style we must expect to find the human form for the most part subordinate and diminutive, and involved among designs of foliage and flowers, in the manner of which endless examples had been furnished by the fantastic ornamentation of the Romans, from which the incrusted style had been directly derived.

§ XL. Farther. In proportion to the degree in which his subject must be reduced to abstract outline will be the tendency in the sculptor to abandon naturalism of representation, and subordinate every form to architectural service. Where the flower or animal can be hewn into bold relief, there will always be a temptation to render the representation of it more complete than is necessary, or even to introduce details and intricacies inconsistent with simplicity of distant effect. Very often a worse fault than this is committed; and in the endeavor to give vitality to the stone, the original ornamental purpose of the design is sacrificed or forgotten. But when nothing of this kind can be attempted, and a slight outline is all that the sculptor can command, we may anticipate that this outline will be composed with exquisite grace; and that the richness of its ornamental arrangement will atone for the feebleness of its power of portraiture. On the porch of a Northern cathedral we may seek for the images of the flowers that grow in the neighboring fields, and as we watch with wonder the grey stones that fret themselves into thorns, and soften into blossoms, we may care little that these knots of ornament, as we retire from them to contemplate the whole building, appear unconsidered or confused. On the incrusted building we must expect no such deception of the eye or thoughts. It may sometimes be difficult to determine, from the involutions of its linear sculpture, what were the natural forms which originally suggested them: but we may confidently expect that the grace of their arrangement will always be complete; that there will not be a line in them which could be taken away without injury, nor one wanting which could be added with advantage.

§ XLI. Farther. While the sculptures of the incrusted school will thus be generally distinguished by care and purity rather than force, and will be, for the most part, utterly wanting in depth of shadow, there will be one means of obtaining darkness peculiarly simple and obvious, and often in the sculptor's power. Wherever he can, without danger, leave a hollow behind his covering slabs, or use them, like glass, to fill an aperture in the wall, he can, by piercing them with holes, obtain points or spaces of intense blackness to contrast with the light tracing of the rest of his design. And we may expect to find this artifice used the more extensively, because, while it will be an effective means of ornamentation on the exterior of the building, it will be also the safest way of admitting light to the interior, still totally excluding both rain and wind. And it will naturally follow that the architect, thus familiarized with the effect of black and sudden points of shadow, will often seek to carry the same principle into other portions of his ornamentation, and by deep drill-holes, or perhaps inlaid portions of black color, to refresh the eye where it may be wearied by the lightness of the general handling.

§ XLII. Farther. Exactly in proportion to the degree in which the force of sculpture is subdued, will be the importance attached to color as a means of effect or constituent of beauty. I have above stated that the incrusted style was the only one in which perfect or permanent color decoration was *possible*. It is also the only one in which a true system of color decoration was ever likely to be invented. In order to understand this, the reader must permit me to review with some care the nature of the principles of coloring adopted by the Northern and Southern nations.

§ XLIII. I believe that from the beginning of the world there has never been a true or fine school of art in which color was despised. It has often been imperfectly attained and injudiciously applied, but I believe it to be one of the essential signs of life in a school of art, that it loves color; and I know it to be one of the first signs of death in the Renaissance schools, that they despised color.

Observe, it is not now the question whether our Northern cathedrals are better with color or without. Perhaps the great monotone grey of Nature and of Time is a better color than any that the human hand can give; but that is nothing to our present business. The simple fact is, that the builders

of those cathedrals laid upon them the brightest colors they could obtain, and that there is not, as far as I am aware, in Europe, any monument of a truly noble school which has not been either painted all over, or vigorously touched with paint, mosaic, and gilding in its prominent parts. Thus far Egyptians, Greeks, Goths, Arabs, and mediæval Christians all agree: none of them, when in their right senses, ever think of doing without paint; and, therefore, when I said above that the Venetians were the only people who had thoroughly sympathized with the Arabs in this respect, I referred, first, to their intense love of color, which led them to lavish the most expensive decorations on ordinary dwelling-houses; and, secondly, to that perfection of the color-instinct in them, which enabled them to render whatever they did, in this kind, as just in principle as it was gorgeous in appliance. It is this principle of theirs, as distinguished from that of the Northern builders, which we have finally to examine.

§ XLIV. In the second chapter of the first volume, it was noticed that the architect of Bourges Cathedral liked hawthorn, and that the porch of his cathedral was therefore decorated with a rich wreath of it; but another of the predilections of that architect was there unnoticed, namely, that he did not at all like *grey* hawthorn, but preferred it green, and he painted it green accordingly, as bright as he could. The color is still left in every sheltered interstice of the foliage. He had, in fact, hardly the choice of any other color; he might have gilded the thorns, by way of allegorizing human life, but if they were to be painted at all, they could hardly be painted any tiling but green, and green all over. People would have been apt to object to any pursuit of abstract harmonies of color, which might have induced him to paint his hawthorn blue.

§ XLV. In the same way, whenever the subject of the sculpture was definite, its color was of necessity definite also; and, in the hands of the Northern builders, it often became, in consequence, rather the means of explaining and animating the stories of their stone-work, than a matter of abstract decorative science. Flowers were painted red, trees green, and faces flesh-color; the result of the whole being often far more entertaining than beautiful. And also, though in the lines of the mouldings and the decorations of shafts or vaults, a richer and more abstract method of coloring was adopted (aided by the rapid development of the best principles of color in early glass-painting), the vigorous depths of shadow in the Northern sculpture confused the architect's eye, compelling him to use violent colors in the recesses, if these were to be seen as color at all, and thus injured his perception of more delicate color harmonies; so that in innumerable instances it becomes very disputable whether monuments even of the best times were improved by the color bestowed upon them, or the contrary. But, in the South, the flatness and comparatively vague forms of the sculpture, while they appeared to call for color in order to enhance their interest, presented exactly the conditions which would set it off to the greatest advantage; breadth of surface displaying even the most delicate tints in the lights, and faintness of shadow joining with the most delicate and pearly greys of color harmony; while the subject of the design being in nearly all cases reduced to mere intricacy of ornamental line, might be colored in any way the architect chose without any loss of rationality. Where oak-leaves and roses were carved into fresh relief and perfect bloom, it was necessary to paint the one green and the other red; but in portions of ornamentation where there was nothing which could be definitely construed into either an oak-leaf or a rose, but a mere labyrinth of beautiful lines, becoming here something like a leaf, and there something like a flower, the whole tracery of the sculpture might be left white, and grounded with gold or blue, or treated in any other manner best harmonizing with the colors around it. And as the necessarily feeble character of the sculpture called for and was ready to display the best arrangements of color, so the precious marbles in the architect's hands give him at once the best examples and the best means of color. The best examples, for the tints of all natural stones are as exquisite in quality as endless in change; and the best means, for they are all permanent.

§ XLVI. Every motive thus concurred in urging him to the study of chromatic decoration, and every advantage was given him in the pursuit of it; and this at the very moment when, as presently to be noticed, the *naïveté* of barbaric Christianity could only be forcibly appealed to by the help of colored pictures: so that, both externally and internally, the architectural construction became partly

merged in pictorial effect; and the whole edifice is to be regarded less as a temple wherein to pray, than as itself a Book of Common Prayer, a vast illuminated missal, bound with alabaster instead of parchment, studded with porphyry pillars instead of jewels, and written within and without in letters of enamel and gold.

§ XLVII. Law VII. *That the impression of the architecture is not to be dependent on size.* And now there is but one final consequence to be deduced. The reader understands, I trust, by this time, that the claims of these several parts of the building upon his attention will depend upon their delicacy of design, their perfection of color, their preciousness of material, and their legendary interest. All these qualities are independent of size, and partly even inconsistent with it. Neither delicacy of surface sculpture, nor subtle gradations of color, can be appreciated by the eye at a distance; and since we have seen that our sculpture is generally to be only an inch or two in depth, and that our coloring is in great part to be produced with the soft tints and veins of natural stones, it will follow necessarily that none of the parts of the building can be removed far from the eye, and therefore that the whole mass of it cannot be large. It is not even desirable that it should be so; for the temper in which the mind addresses itself to contemplate minute and beautiful details is altogether different from that in which it submits itself to vague impressions of space and size. And therefore we must not be disappointed, but grateful, when we find all the best work of the building concentrated within a space comparatively small; and that, for the great cliff-like buttresses and mighty piers of the North, shooting up into indiscernible height, we have here low walls spread before us like the pages of a book, and shafts whose capitals we may touch with our hand.

§ XLVIII. The due consideration of the principles above stated will enable the traveller to judge with more candor and justice of the architecture of St. Mark's than usually it would have been possible for him to do while under the influence of the prejudices necessitated by familiarity with the very different schools of Northern art. I wish it were in my power to lay also before the general reader some exemplification of the manner in which these strange principles are developed in the lovely building. But exactly in proportion to the nobility of any work, is the difficulty of conveying a just impression of it; and wherever I have occasion to bestow high praise, there it is exactly most dangerous for me to endeavor to illustrate my meaning, except by reference to the work itself. And, in fact, the principal reason why architectural criticism is at this day so far behind all other, is the impossibility of illustrating the best architecture faithfully. Of the various schools of painting, examples are accessible to every one, and reference to the works themselves is found sufficient for all purposes of criticism; but there is nothing like St. Mark's or the Ducal Palace to be referred to in the National Gallery, and no faithful illustration of them is possible on the scale of such a volume as this. And it is exceedingly difficult on any scale. Nothing is so rare in art, as far as my own experience goes, as a fair illustration of architecture; *perfect* illustration of it does not exist. For all good architecture depends upon the adaptation of its chiselling to the effect at a certain distance from the eye; and to render the peculiar confusion in the midst of order, and uncertainty in the midst of decision, and mystery in the midst of trenchant lines, which are the result of distance, together with perfect expression of the peculiarities of the design, requires the skill of the most admirable artist, devoted to the work with the most severe conscientiousness, neither the skill nor the determination having as yet been given to the subject. And in the illustration of details, every building of any pretensions to high architectural rank would require a volume of plates, and those finished with extraordinary care. With respect to the two buildings which are the principal subjects of the present volume, St. Mark's and the Ducal Palace, I have found it quite impossible to do them the slightest justice by any kind of portraiture; and I abandoned the endeavor in the case of the latter with less regret, because in the new Crystal Palace (as the poetical public insist upon calling it, though it is neither a palace, nor of crystal) there will be placed, I believe, a noble cast of one of its angles. As for St. Mark's, the effort was hopeless from the beginning. For its effect depends not only upon the most delicate sculpture in every part, but, as we have just stated, eminently on its color also, and that the most subtle, variable, inexpressible color in the world,—the

color of glass, of transparent alabaster, of polished marble, and lustrous gold. It would be easier to illustrate a crest of Scottish mountain, with its purple heather and pale harebells at their fullest and fairest, or a glade of Jura forest, with its floor of anemone and moss, than a single portico of St. Mark's. The fragment of one of its archivolts, given at the bottom of the opposite Plate, is not to illustrate the thing itself, but to illustrate the impossibility of illustration.

§ XLIX. It is left a fragment, in order to get it on a larger scale; and yet even on this scale it is too small to show the sharp folds and points of the marble vine-leaves with sufficient clearness. The ground of it is gold, the sculpture in the spandrils is not more than an inch and a half deep, rarely so much. It is in fact nothing more than an exquisite sketching of outlines in marble, to about the same depth as in the Elgin frieze; the draperies, however, being filled with close folds, in the manner of the Byzantine pictures, folds especially necessary here, as large masses could not be expressed in the shallow sculpture without becoming insipid; but the disposition of these folds is always most beautiful, and often opposed by broad and simple spaces, like that obtained by the scroll in the hand of the prophet, seen in the plate.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.