

Venice

dens, sleeping grey among the waters round her, unfolded rosy petals upon the surface of the lagoon.

It is this power of living communion with the daily pageant in which sun and moon are doge and emperor, and the stars and the clouds their retinue—this it is which, finding expression once at Venice in a temporal glory that has passed away, is the abiding assurance of her immortality. This is the spirit which, if once it helped to make her great, still makes her great to-day, the spirit that endures. For Venice is not a dead body: she is a living soul. Overflowing all moulds in which we may think to contain her, she reveals herself continually in new mystery, new wonder. We spoke of Venice as being paved with sky, and every day there is cast upon her pavement a fresh revelation of changefulness and beauty. A thousand forms and patterns move in procession over the water, passing each instant into something "rich and strange," a fleeting succession of aerial designs drawn with tremulous pencil in colours which never lived on the palette of a mortal artist. There is a body of truth at the root of the old fancy which gifted water-maidens with subtler, more perilously powerful allurements than their sisters of the land. Their element is mutability, but they are not soulless, as men have said: it is only that their soul is as the soul of water—luminous, flowing, mutable, reflective, musical, profound: for, though they are mutable, they are not shallow; it is a part of their being that they should be susceptible of change. They cannot tire their victims, they whose beauty is continually renewed; and yet it may be that men do well to fear them, for they have secret communings with things men do not dream of. Venice has held men, she holds them still, with the fascination of a water spirit; they yield to her, they grasp her, but she is still before them, never mastered, never fully known. Let those, for whom conquest is the ideal in love, beware of