

the poor. The twinkling lights from the lattices quivered on the waves, and the boatman devoutly crossed himself where the lamp burned before the rude shrine of the Madonna. As we traversed the narrow canals, the cries of the gondoliers to pass to the right or left—*prème*, or *stali*—were heard amid the darkness, and great skill was exhibited in avoiding collision. During the night, in the strange stillness of that silent city, without sound of hoarse or carriage, the distant strains of music, as some belated gondolier sang a snatch, perchance from Tasso or Ariosto, penetrated even the drowsy land of sleep, till I scarce knew whether my strange experience were real or but the figment of a dream.

THE PIAZZA OF ST. MARK.

The great centre and focus of Venetian life is the Piazza of St. Mark. It is a large stone-paved square, surrounded by the marble palaces of the ancient Republic. The only place in Venice large enough for a public promenade, it is crowded in the evening by a well-dressed throng of diverse nationalities, many of them in picturesque foreign costumes, listening to the military band, sipping coffee at the cafes, or lounging under the arcades. Among the throng may be seen jet-black Tunisians with their snowy robes; Turks with their fez and embroidered vests; Albanians, Greeks and Armenians; English, French, German, Russian, Austrian, and American tourists. The women of Venice have very regular features and fine classic profiles, a circumstance which I attribute to the large infusion of Greek blood arising from the intimate relations for centuries of the Republic with Greece and the Levant. They wear a graceful mantilla over their heads, in quite an oriental manner; and a dark bodice, scarlet kerchief, and frequently a yellow skirt and blue apron—a bright symphony of colour that would delight an artist's eye.

THE PIGEONS OF ST. MARK'S.

A curious illustration is here given of the permanence of European institutions and customs. An extraordinary number of pigeons will be seen nestling in the nooks and crannies of the surrounding buildings, perched on the facade of St. Mark, billing and cooing, and tamely hopping about almost under the feet of the promenaders. At two o'clock every day a large bell is rung, and instantly the whirr of wings is heard, and hundreds of snowy pigeons are seen flocking from all directions to an opening near the roof of the municipal palace, where they are fed by public dole. This beautiful custom, recalling the expression of Scripture, "flying as doves to their windows," has been observed during six stormy and changeful centuries. According to tradition, the old doge, Dandolo, in the thirteenth century, sent the tidings of the conquest of Candia by carrier pigeons to Venice, and by a decree of the Republic their descendants were ordered forever to be maintained at the expense of the State.

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARK.

The glory of this stately square, however, is the grand historic church of St. Mark. All words of description must be tame and commonplace after Ruskin's glowing pen-picture of this glorious pile:—"A multitude of pillars

and white domes, clustered into a long, low pyramid of coloured light; a treasure heap it seems, partly of gold, and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl, hallowed beneath into five great vaulted porches, coiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculptures of alabaster, clear as amber and delicate as ivory. 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 life—angels and the sigus of heaven, and the labours 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 amid 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."*

Above the great portal ramp the Greek bronze horses brought by Constantine to Byzantium, by Dandolo to Venice, by Napoleon to Paris, and restored to their present position by the Emperor Francis

"They strike the ground resounding with their feet,
And from their nostrils breathe eternal flame."

As we cross the portico we step upon a porphyry slab, on which, seven centuries ago, the Emperor Barbarossa knelt and received upon his neck the foot of Pope Alexander III., who chanted the while the versicle, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot." "To Saint Peter I kneel, not to thee," said the Emperor, stung with the humiliation. "To me and to Saint Peter," replied the haughty Pontiff, pressing once more his foot upon his vassal's neck. The proud monarch was then obliged to hold the stirrup of the priest as he mounted his ass, not "meek and lowly," like his master, but more haughty than earth's mightiest monarchs.

In that same porch the doge, Dandolo—"near his hundredth year, and blind—his eyes put out—stood with his armour on," ere with five hundred gallant ships he sailed away, in his hand the gonfalon of Venice, which was soon to float in victory over the

* The Vandal like proposal has recently been made to "restore" this matchless facade in modern workmanship. Such a vigorous protest, however, is raised against the scheme, that it will hardly be carried into execution.

mosques and minarets of proud Byzantium. Here

"In an after time, beside the doge,
Sat one yet greater, one whose verse shall live
When the wave rolls o'er Venice—
The tuneful Petrarch crowned with laurel."

Let us enter the church. A vast and shadowy vault opens before us. The mosaic pavement heaves and falls in marble waves upon the floor. "The roof sheathed with gold, and the polished wall covered with alabaster," reflect the light of the altar lamps "and the glories around the heads of the saints flash upon us as we pass them and sink into the gloom." The austere mosaics, some dating back to the tenth century, made the old church during long ages a great illuminated Bible—its burden the abiding truth, "Christ is risen!" "Christ shall come!" "Not in the wantonness of wealth," writes Ruskin, "were those marbles hewn into transparents length, and those arches arrayed in the colours of the iris. There is a message written in the dyes of them that once was written in blood; and a sound in the echoes of their vaults that one day shall fill the vault of heaven—He shall return to do judgment and justice." The old church was to the unlettered people a visible "image of the Bride, all gloricous within, her raiment of wrought gold."

I lingered for hours, spell-bound, studying the antique frescoes of patriarchs, prophets, kings, apostles, martyrs, angels and dragons, forms beautiful and terrible, the whole story of the Old and New Testament, the life and miracles of Christ, and the final glories and terrors of the Apocalypse; and listening the while to the chanting of the priests and the solemn cadences of the organ and choir. On the high altar are reliefs of the eleventh century, containing nearly three hundred figures; and alabaster columns, according to tradition, from the temple of Solomon, through which the light of a taper shines; and underneath are the so-called tomb and relics of St. Mark. I stood in the ancient pulpit, descended into the dim weird crypts, and climbed to the corridor that goes around the building within and without, and felt to the full the spell of this old historic church.

THE CAMPANILE.

In the piazza rises, to the height of over three hundred feet, the isolated square campanile of St. Mark, from which I enjoyed a magnificent sunset view of the city, the lagunes, the curving shore of the Adriatic, and the distant Tyrolean and Julian Alps. A tourist, with an artist's eye, and poet's pen, thus describes the beauty of the scene. "The burning sunset turns all the sky to opal, all the churches to pearl, all the sea to crimson and gold. The distant mountains glow like lines of lapis lazuli washed with gold; the islands are bowers of greenery, springing from the bosom of the purple waves. Great painted saffron and crimson sails come out from the distance, looking in the sunlight like the wings of some gigantic tropical bird, flowers and glittering ornaments hang at the mast head; everywhere you hear music and song, the splash of swift oars, the hum of human voices; everywhere you drink in the charm, the subtle intoxication, the glory of this beloved queen among the nations." For six centuries and more the grey old tower, which Galileo used to climb,

has looked down upon the square, the scene of so many stately pageants. It has witnessed the doges borne in their chairs of state, and borne upon their biers; triumphal fetes and funeral processions; the madness of the masquerade and carnival; and the tragedy of the scaffold and the headsman's axe.

NOTE.—The cuts above given are specimens of numerous engravings which will be given in the *Methodist Magazine* for 1885, illustrating descriptive articles on the city of Venice.

LICENSED TO SELL.

We are growing weary of the meaningless sign, "Licensed to retail spirituous liquors." Would not the rum-seller give us a true idea of what his license grants him, and what the true nature of his business? To help him towards this end I would suggest the following as a correct translation of the common and seemingly harmless inscription which we see over the doors of "Our Family Vaults:"—

LICENSED to hush the voice of right,
Licensed to bid all honour flee;
Licensed to make a sin seem light;
Licensed to make lives disagree,
Licensed to kill the maiden's blush,
Licensed to dull the fear of shame,
Licensed to bid her conscience hush,
Licensed to give a tarnished name;
Licensed to lead our youth astray,
Licensed to coax him from his toil,
Licensed to give his passions sway,
Licensed to lead him into brawl;
Licensed to take the workman's hoard,
Licensed to make his arm grow weak,
Licensed to rob the children's board,
Licensed to blanch the mother's cheek;
Licensed to make us need police;
Licensed to tax our house and land;
Licensed to bid all crime increase;
Licensed to form the robber's band;
Licensed to crush the drunkard low,
Licensed to leave him in the mire,
Licensed to bid his mad talk flow,
Licensed to set his brain on fire;
Licensed to fill a drunkard's grave;
Licensed to bring a widow woe;
Licensed to make a woman a slave,
Licensed to be the children's foe;
Licensed to give a prison life;
Licensed to bid a felon lurk;
Licensed to whet assassin's knife;
Licensed to give the hangman work;
Licensed to work in sin like heaven;
Licensed to live a ne'er-do-well;
Licensed to shut men out of Heaven;
Licensed to shut men up in Hell.

—Selected.

ONE WAY IN WHICH THE GOOD LORD OF HEAVEN SPEAKS TO HIS CHILDREN.

A FEW Sundays since, in the very hot weather I lay down on a couch to take a little rest. My little boy, whose name is Willie, and who always kisses me good-bye in the morning and is the first to greet me home in the evening, came to lie beside me. He went to sleep, and in a short time he awoke as in a troubled dream, and began to cry. I tried to soothe and comfort him, and just as I was thinking I would give anything or do anything to comfort the dear little boy, it seemed as if an angel from heaven spoke in my ear these words: "Like as a father pitieth or loveth his children, so the Lord loveth them that fear him." And so after some months of murmuring and repining at the Lord's strange dealings with me, I was led to see and feel something of the infinite tenderness and compassion and lovingness of my Almighty Father, and so once again I cried from the lowest depths of my heart, "Thy ways are not as my ways," but, "Though thou slay me yet will I trust in thee."—*W. K. H.*