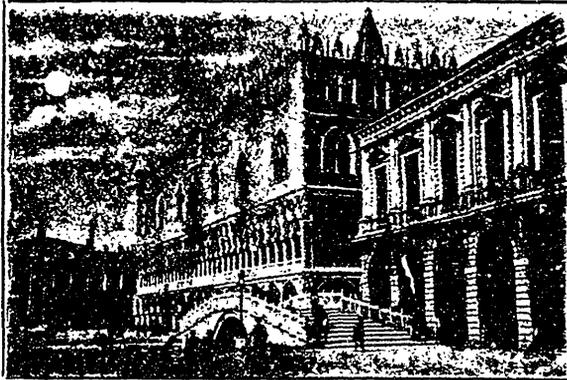


porches and among their domes, the huge antique bronze horses of Byzantium. They reared a mighty palace upon pillars whose carvings seem wrought by workmen in some opiate dream that made them reckless of the cost of time. They dammed back the sea to build their city in its place. In the lagoon, to the sound of strange workmen's choruses, they buried the oaks of Istria and Dalmatia, of Albania and the Julian Alps. They transformed the climate of the Illyrian peninsula, leaving plains instead of mountains, and sunburnt deserts in the place of green and grateful

without territory, and after a few brief trials and some scenes of blood, from which no people at its beginning can escape, struck out that form of government—the aristocratic republic—which they maintained for fourteen centuries. Faithful to its form, they astonished the world by their sagacity, power, and stability, and by their genius for commerce, exchange, and industry. At their origin they lived by the fruits of the sea as fishermen, and from the salt which nature deposited on the coast. This was their first article of exchange. By degrees they con-



DOGE'S PALACE.

forests; for all the hills have become palaces, as at the touch of a wand; and deep in the salt sea the old oaks stand imbedded, supporting the city of St. Mark.

They were a people of fugitives, forty thousand strong, driven from their homes by the barbarians in the fifth century. They took refuge in the lagoon, and there, on the shifting soil, in a salt marsh where they had neither ground to till nor stone to cut, nor iron to forge, nor wood to shelter, nor even water that could be drunk—they founded the port of the Rialto. They made their own soil, contrived to found a state

constructed flat-bottomed boats, then galleys, and at last fleets, and entering Byzantium as conquerors, overthrew the Eastern Empire.

The whole Adriatic was their domain; they laid claim to its sovereignty by the right of a word spoken by Alexander III., when, pursued by Barbarossa, he took refuge in their territory. They symbolized that authority by the espousals of the Doge with the sea, and the legend of the gold ring brought back to the sovereign by the fisherman. From that time they held the whole coast from Ravenna to Albania. Kings had to ask leave of the Senate to ply