

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

24 APRIL—29 MAY 1911.

WITH

Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY

EASTER TERM 1911.

No. LX.

BEING No. 3 OF THE FIFTEENTH VOLUME.

(NINTH VOLUME OF THE NEW SERIES.)



Cambridge :

DEIGHTON, BELL & CO.; BOWES & BOWES.

LONDON: G. BELL AND SONS, LTD.

1911

Price 5s. net.

ON THE LIBRARY OF S. MARK, VENICE.

By J. W. CLARK, M.A.

PREFATORY NOTE.

During the last few years of his life Mr Clark frequently expressed a desire to publish a book on the Library of S. Mark at Venice. For this he had some notes and the manuscript of a lecture delivered before the Cambridge Antiquarian Society on May 28, 1906. Other work, however, and increasing weakness, prevented him from putting his materials in order; and at last it became apparent that he would never be able to complete his task. During his last illness he asked me to examine his lecture- and note-books with a view to publication. Mr Clark died October 10, 1910. On reading the manuscript I found that to remove all trace of its having been delivered as a lecture would necessitate re-writing it entirely. This I was unwilling to do; and it is, therefore, printed substantially as delivered, with a few alterations and corrections.

With regard to the note-books, I found that the documents which Mr Clark had copied, or caused to be copied, in Venice were, for the most part, in print in easily accessible books. I have contented myself, therefore, with giving references to the books in which the documents mentioned in the text may be found; and I have added a few notes. It should be remembered that the description of the adaptation of the Zecca at Venice to library purposes had a special interest in Cambridge at the time of the lecture; for though the scheme for roofing in the East Court of the University Library was thrown out by the Senate, after an animated controversy, on November 21, 1901, it was still fresh in the minds of both its supporters and its opponents.

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr G. Coggiola of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (late of the Marciana Library) for his kindness in lending me the photographs from which Plates XXIII, XXIV, and XXV have been made.

A. T. BARTHOLOMEW.

June, 1911.

I.

It is an article in the creed of every true Venetian that the Library of S. Mark was founded by Petrarch. I will begin, therefore, by investigating the evidence on which this belief rests. Petrarch returned to Italy in 1353, and, after trying Milan, Padua, and other cities, he determined to settle at Venice, which he hails, in one of his letters, as "the only home, in these days, of freedom, peace, and justice; the only refuge of the virtuous; the only harbour where those who would lead useful lives can find shelter for their vessels, shattered as they are elsewhere by tyranny and war¹." He resided in Venice from 1362 to 1368; but, before establishing himself and his books, without which he never travelled, he made a prudent bargain with the Republic. The Grand Council, by a formal vote taken 4 September, 1362, undertook to provide him with a house—the Palazzo delle due Torri on the Riva degli Schiavoni—for the term of his natural life; and the body called the Proctors of S. Mark undertook to find the money required for a place in which the books could be deposited². Petrarch, on the other hand, in a document of the greatest interest, appended to the above minute of the Grand Council, expresses his own intentions in clear and definite language. Saint Mark is to inherit the books which he now has, or one day may have, on condition that they are neither sold nor

¹ *Epistolae de rebus senilibus*, iv. 2. Fran. Petrarca Petro Bononiensi Rhetori. Cp. P. de Nolhac: *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme*, i. 78-79 (Nouvelle éd. Paris, 1907).

² Nolhac, i. 80, 94. The document is published in facsimile in the volume issued 27 April, 1905 to commemorate the removal of the Library to the Zecca.

alienated, but kept for ever in some place where they will be safe from fire and water, to the honour of the Saint, the perpetual memory of himself, and the help and refreshment of all studious and noble persons in that State who may chance to take pleasure in such things. This preamble is succeeded by a passage of supreme interest, in which the poet, rising above considerations of the moment and of himself, gives utterance to his desire that out of this gift of his there may grow a great library, which, had his idea been realised, would have been the first public library of Italy. These are his words:

“He—Francis Petrarch—does not impose these conditions because his books are either very numerous or very valuable, but in the hope that hereafter not only will that renowned State add other books to his from time to time out of the public funds, but that noble citizens who love their country, and even strangers, following their example, will in their last directions bequeath some portion of their books to the aforesaid Church; so that it will not be hard to arrive at last at a single great and famous library, equal to one of those in the ancient world; and what reputation will thereby be conferred upon the State no man can surely ignore, whether he belong to the profession of letters, or whether he be only a simple citizen. On which subject, should the matter go forward, he, Petrarch, will write more at large. But, in order to make it clear that he is not limiting himself to words in so great a matter, he is willing to carry out what he has undertaken to do, etc.¹”

This is a noble passage, and it is sad to have to relate that no library connected with the name of Petrarch exists at Venice; and, sadder still, that none was ever established there. What happened? Was Petrarch insincere, and, after accepting the hospitality of Venice for at least six years, did he change his mind, and give his books to another State? Not so; I hope that he may be acquitted of any crime more heinous than carelessness. As time went on he seems to have tired of

¹ This document is printed by Nolhac, i. 94, and published in facsimile in the Commemorative volume, see p. 301, note 2.

Venice; perhaps it proved to be not quite so tranquil a place as he had imagined, for the Riva degli Schiavoni is even now one of the noisiest spots in the city, and in the days of the maritime ascendancy of Venice must have been far noisier. So Petrarch betook himself to Padua, where he found more congenial society at the court of Francesco Carrara; while at Arquà, a small town in the Euganean Hills, he met with a rural simplicity which recalled the Vaucluse of his earlier years, and which was impossible at Venice. So he stayed on there till the end came, quite unexpectedly and peacefully, 18 July, 1374. He had retired, as usual, to his study, and there he was found in the morning, lifeless, his forehead resting on an open book.

What became of the library¹? In virtue of the arrangement of 1362 it was the property of Venice; and that Petrarch acknowledged this may explain the absence of all reference to it in his Will, dated at Padua 4 April, 1370. But, when he died, the relations between Padua and Venice were strained, and presently a war broke out, in the course of which the Venetians had to consider other matters more important than the fate of a library. What that fate was can easily be traced. At some period after 1379, when we find the library still at Padua, and intact, it was sold. "Francis Petrarch," said Poggio, "had a vast quantity of books; but after his death they were sold, and dispersed among various persons." It has been shown that there are 36 manuscripts still in existence which undoubtedly belonged to Petrarch; and that the greater number of these once formed part of the library of the Visconti at Pavia². That family had doubtless obtained them when the independence of the reigning house of the Carrara at Padua came to an end, and Carrara was probably one of the "various persons" who had enriched his own collection when the library was sold by Petrarch's executors. By a curious freak of fortune only one has found a home at Venice.

I have told the plain truth about Petrarch's books, but I strongly suspect that there are not a few romantic and

¹ Nolhac, pp. 87 sqq.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 103-4.

patriotic souls who believe that they have been hid away in some secret recess, like Montezuma's treasure, and that one day they will reveal their existence to a fortunate researcher. The attempt to find them has been made once already, by one Jacopo Filippo Tomasini, whose *Petrarcha Redivivus* saw the light in 1650; but alas! the failure was as conspicuous as the effort was daring. He was told, in 1634, that in the upper part of the façade of S. Mark's Church, close to the bronze horses, there was a small room; and that in this room he would find Petrarch's books. He obtained leave to enter, and, sure enough, there lay some eighty mouldering volumes. Petrarch had given his books to S. Mark's; books had been found in a secret chamber there; they were evidently the long-lost manuscripts. "Ours the treasure," cried Tomasini and his friends; and, as the world of Venice wished to believe, believe it did¹. Some few critics, more enlightened than the rest, dared to doubt; but it was reserved for M. de Nolhac, some fifteen years ago, to point out that several of the manuscripts were written in a hand of the fifteenth century, and therefore could not have belonged to Petrarch; while, as for the rest, there was no evidence whatever to justify the theory that he had once owned them².

II.

The real founder of the Library of S. Mark was Cardinal Bessarion, who, just a century after the acceptance of Petrarch's offer, approached the State of Venice with a similar proposal. Bessarion, a native of Trebizond, came to Italy in the train of the Emperor John Paleologus, and distinguished himself at the Council of Florence in 1439 as the advocate of the union of the Greek and Latin Churches. The Council having adopted the union, Bessarion was made a Cardinal by Pope Eugenius the Fourth, and took up his abode in Rome, where he became

¹ The question was re-opened in 1739 when by a decree of 14 September it was decided to include the MSS. found in S. Mark's in the catalogue in course of preparation.

² *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme*, p. 98.

the friend and counsellor of four successive Popes, Eugenius the Fourth, Nicholas the Fifth, Calixtus the Third, and Pius the Second. But affairs of State, though he was thoroughly conversant with men and courts, and frequently employed on delicate and difficult negotiations, were not allowed to interfere with the dominant passion of his life, the formation of a library. The letter which he wrote to the Doge of Venice, with the offer of his books, 31 May, 1468, is a living document, describing the way in which the collection had been got together, and the feelings which prompted him to select Venice as the permanent home of his treasures¹. I will give a free translation of a few sentences:

“From my earliest childhood, books on every subject have been my delight; as a boy and as a young man I copied a large number with my own hand; and every small piece of money that I could with the utmost frugality set apart, I spent upon their purchase....A large number of books was not so much my object, as books of the first quality....I have always devoted my best energies to this pursuit, but I redoubled my efforts after the destruction of Greece, and the sad captivity of Byzantium: Then I exhausted all my care, my energy, and my means in the acquisition of Greek books, for I feared that works of the highest order of merit, which had long illuminated the world, would speedily and utterly perish.... These it is my desire to deposit, during my life-time, under such conditions that even after my death they may not be scattered or alienated, but be kept together in a place at once safe and convenient, for the common use of Greeks as well as Latins.”

He concludes by telling the Doge that he had thought of many cities of Italy, but that he had finally made choice of Venice, partly by reason of the excellence of the government and the high character of the people, but still more because of the number of Greeks who land there, and find it a second Byzantium.

Bessarion, as a Greek, was doubtless moved by the considerations here set down; but it appears from some of the documents that his dispositions in favour of Venice were strengthened by Paolo Morosini, Venetian envoy at the Papal

¹ Printed by G. Valentinelli in the history of the Library of S. Mark prefixed to his *Bibliotheca manuscripta ad S. Marci Venetiarum*, pp. 16-19, and by H. Omont in his paper on Bessarion's gift published in the *Revue des Bibliothèques*, Mai—Juin, 1894, pp. 138-140.

Court, and possibly by the Pope himself, who was a Venetian. Further, he had himself been received at Venice with more than usual splendour, when he came there on a special embassy from Rome, the Doge meeting him in the State Galley as if he had been a Sovereign Prince.

Bessarion's first idea had been to give his Greek books only to the Benedictine House of San Giorgio Maggiore; but as it was represented to him that it would not be easy to consult them, if placed on an island, he obtained a Bull (dated 16 September, 1467) from Pope Paul the Second, allowing him to cancel the gift to San Giorgio, and to give all his books, Greek as well as Latin, to the Church of S. Mark, on condition that they were placed "in some safe library near S. Mark, with right of public entry to all who wished to study or to read¹."

Bessarion's gift was ratified by a formal conveyance, dated from the Baths of Viterbo, 14 May, 1468²; and on 30 August, 1468, 100 ducats were voted towards the expenses connected with the gift, to be charged to the salt tax³. The manuscripts, 746 in number, whereof 482 were Greek and 264 Latin, were sent off soon afterwards, in 48 cases; for early in the following year (21 April, 1469) the Senate decides that the Cardinal's major domo, in consideration of his trouble and expense in bringing the books from Rome to Venice, with 15 mules and servants, shall receive 400 ducats. This liberality did not please all the members of the Council, for 15 votes against it are recorded⁴.

Let us now imagine the books in Venice in their cases—out of which they were not taken, as we shall see, for many a long year—and the Senate gazing helplessly at them, quite unable to decide what to do with them or where to bestow them. Sansovino did not begin to build the Library till 1537, or about 70 years after Bessarion's gift. What was being done in the interval?

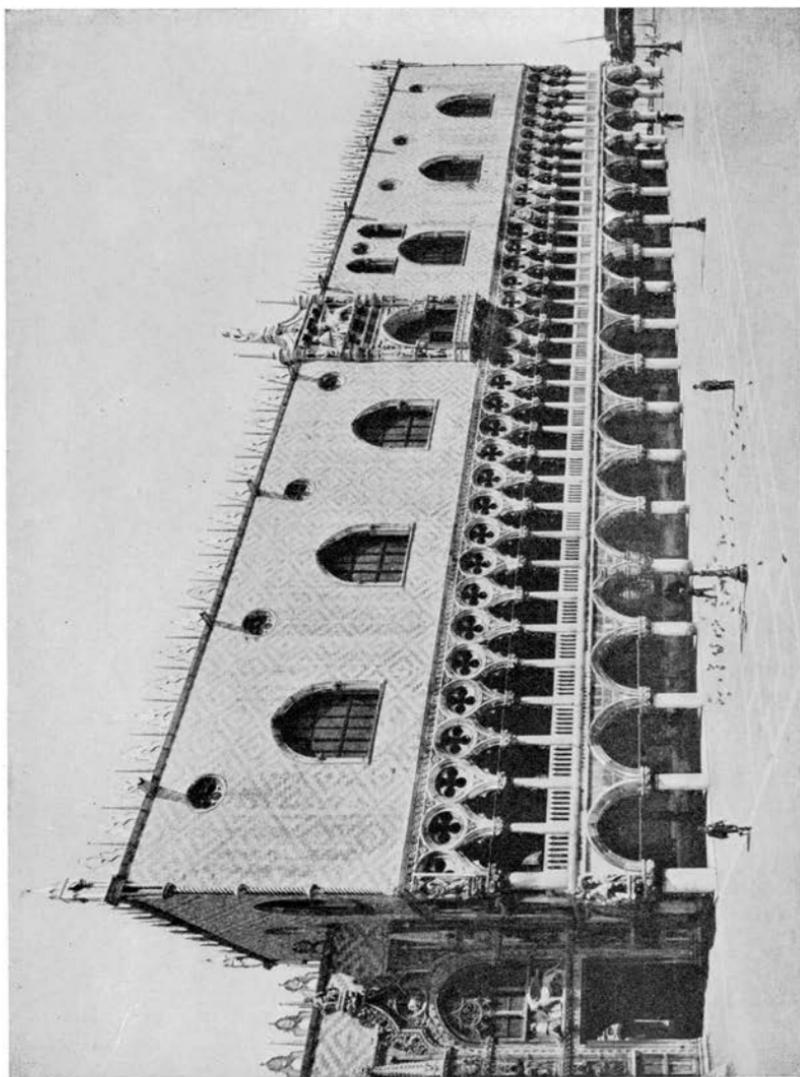
The answer is to be found in a number of curious minutes

¹ Omont, pp. 140-143.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 145-148.

³ Valentinelli, p. 22; Omont, p. 135.

⁴ Omont, p. 135.



Venice. The Ducal Palace, West facade

of the Senate or of the Proctors of S. Mark which have been preserved, like the other public records of Venice, in excellent order.

The first of these minutes is dated 23 March, 1468. The conditions of the coming gift are quoted at length, and it is agreed unanimously that the Cardinal must be thanked and a suitable room provided¹. The Council meets again 2 May, 1468, and agrees that no better place can be found than "the newly built hall of our palace (*sala novissima palatii nostri*)²," that is the room in the Ducal Palace now known as the Sala dello Scrutinio (Plate XXI). The hall in question is a magnificent apartment, 164 feet long by 65 feet wide; and no more dignified or suitable abiding-place for books could be imagined; but it was in a building that was being used for a totally different purpose, and from the first the books were intruders.

Bessarion died at Ravenna, 19 November, 1472; and, after his death, much time and energy were devoted to recovering what is called in the next minute (dated 23 July, 1473) "the rest of his books (*residuum librorum*)," probably those which he had bought after his gift to Venice had been signed, or those which had been lent³.

Now begins a right merry comedy—I can really call it nothing else—glimpses of which are revealed to us by the minutes to which I have already alluded. Would that we could get behind the scenes, and learn the names of the players, and the motives which actuated them! There was evidently a party of action and a party of obstruction. The former, every few years, indites a minute, in which frequently an indignant, not to say a scolding tone is employed, and immediate action is carried by an overwhelming majority⁴. But nothing is done for five, or ten, or even twenty years; and then another minute in a similar style is indited! Possibly the political difficulties of Venice may have had something to

¹ Valentinelli, pp. 14-15; Omont, pp. 132-133. The Doge's letter of thanks is dated 10 August, 1468 (Omont, p. 134).

² Valentinelli, p. 15; Omont, p. 133.

³ Valentinelli, p. 33.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

do with her inaction; certainly she must have been very short of money till after the Peace of Cambrai in 1529.

As regards the fate of the books I gather that they reposed in their cases, in the Sala dello Scrutinio, or in some other room in the Ducal Palace, till the beginning of the 16th century; that in 1494 the General of the Dominicans offered them a home, to be called the Library of S. Mark, in his convent; that his offer was accepted by 161 to 19, but not carried out for some reason long since forgotten¹; that in 1515 the Proctors of S. Mark assigned a place to the library "in the Square, and in the New Building (*in Foro ipso apud Novam Fabricam*)," in consideration of which it is proposed to allow them 80 ducats a year (about £16!)²; and that before 1535 the books were transferred, still in their cases, to some room or rooms in the Church of S. Mark, for in that year the Sala della Libreria in the Ducal Palace is being adapted to some other use, which proves that the books were no longer in it³.

Meanwhile, in 1529, the Proctors of S. Mark had lost their presiding architect, and they elected in his room Jacopo Sansovino, a Florentine architect who had worked successfully in Rome. He is said to have been born in 1486, and if this be true he would have been 59 years of age when he came to Venice.

He made his *début* in Venice with certain important repairs of the Church of S. Mark; in 1535 he built the Mint or Zecca; and lastly the long-talked-of Library of S. Mark, the commencement of which cannot have taken place before 1537, in which year it was agreed to "build the library, on the site of the one lately begun, according to the model made or to be made by Signor Jacopo Sansovino⁴." The "library lately

¹ Valentinelli, pp. 37-38.

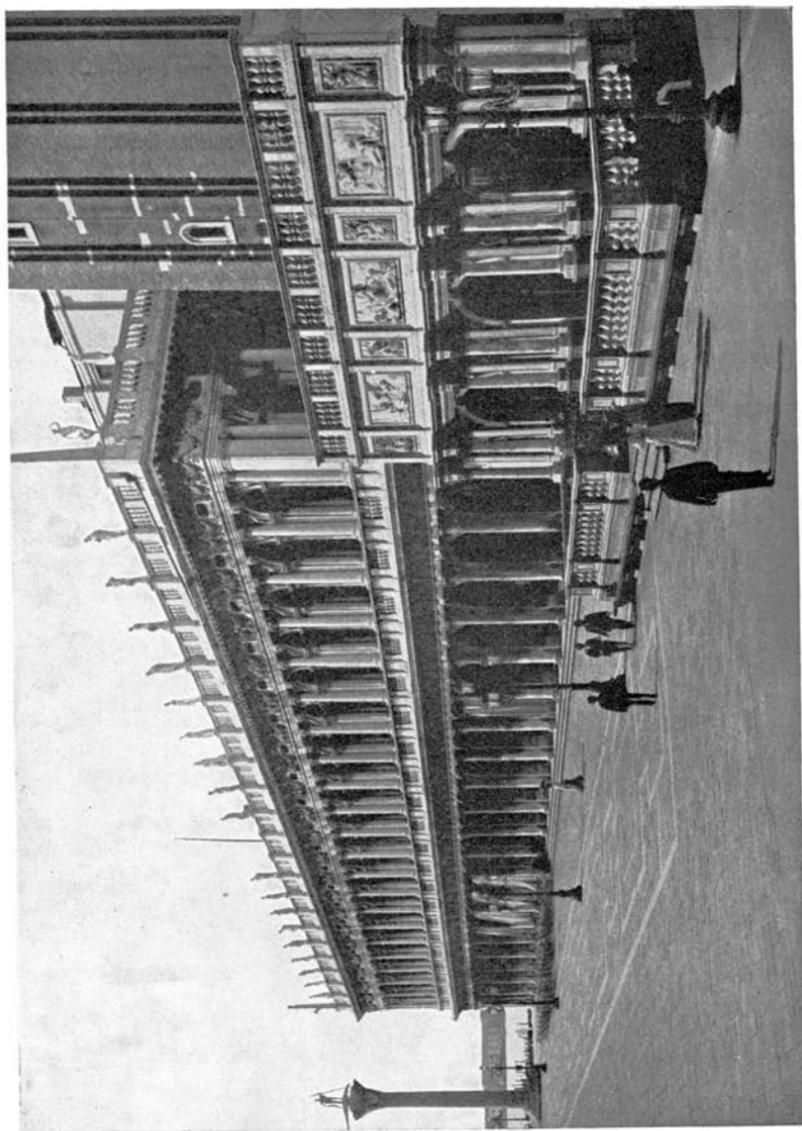
² *Ibid.*, p. 39.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

⁴

Die Sexto Martij 1537

Celsissimi Domini Petrus Lando, et Colleghe Procuratores de Supra Ecclesie S^{ti} Marci, absente tantum Celsissimo Domino Joanne de Lege eorum Collega, Cupientes et intendentes exequi et adimplere voluntatem Illustrissimi Domini nostri circa fabricam librarie edificandi pro collocandis libris q. Reverendissimi



Venice. The Library of Sansovino, East façade

begun" may be that to which reference has been already made in the Minute of 1515; for "the new building" would seem to be the Procuratie Nuove on the south side of the Square of S. Mark.

Sansovino's building (Plate XXII) occupies the whole of the west side of the Piazzetta; but it was not finished during his life-time, and the present extent of it is due to alterations made after his death. On the other hand his son tells us that it was intended to carry his father's building not only along the Piazzetta, but round the whole of the Piazza as well. However this may be, the work was interrupted in 1553, after the completion of 21 arches, counting from the corner next the Campanile (the base of which is shown in Plate II). Possibly funds ran short.

The lower story is Doric, the upper Ionic, with a heavy frieze and cornice, surmounted by a balustrade supporting statues. These details are best seen from the corner next the mole. The library occupies the first seven arches counting from the Piazza. The room thus formed is 87 feet 6 inches long, by 34 feet 8 inches wide. The windows at the north end are said to have been always closed. Whether this be true or not the proximity of the Campanile would effectually block their light. The library is succeeded by an ante-chamber occupying the three next arches. This was at first used for

Domini D. Cardinalis Niceni deliberaverunt ballotari debere infrascriptam opinionem propositam circa dictam librariam; Tenoris infrascripti; V^t.

Quod fieri debeat libraria pro collocandis et gubernandis libris Grecis et Latinis bone memorie q̄ Reverendissimi Domini Cardinalis Niceni super loco fabricæ noviter inchoate, ubi erant appoteche panatarie appellate super platea Sancti Marci, secundum formam, et modum modeli facti seu fiendi per Dominum Jacobum Sansovinum Protum Procuratie nostre, et quod pro fabrica dicte librariæ expendi, neque tangi possint, neque debeant ullo pacto pecunie existentes, et exacte, ac que in futurum exigentur, per Procuratiam nostram de ratione, tam Capitalis Montis noui conditionati, quam committiarum in Procuratia nostra existentium

Suffragata, et approbata per omnia suffragia de sic.

Testes { D. Petrus de Ludovicis Tattaldio
 { D. Sanctus Barbadiaco.

Januarius de Nigris
Coad' Notij.

lectures, but subsequently became a Museum. Beyond this again is the staircase, occupying three more arches. The destination of the rooms between the staircase and the south end is obscure. Sansovino probably carried out his instructions so far as the library proper was concerned; and completed his model with an eye to architectural beauty rather than to the use to be made of the rooms behind its façade.

How was it fitted up? On this subject I find important information in the reports which successive librarians addressed to the Seignory when they entered upon their office.

The first of these is by Silvestro Valier who afterwards became Doge. It is dated 11 September, 1680—about a century after the completion of the building:

“I will begin,” he says, “if your serene worships will allow me, by clearing away the desks which block up the whole room. Arranged as they are in numerous narrow rows, they hinder study instead of assisting it, they furnish opportunities for the stealing of leaves, and do damage to the books, which are exposed to continuous dust. Four large tables placed at the corners of the room will render reading easy, and invite to study.... The addition of certain presses for the storage of the books to be detached from the desks will make order more complete and subdivide the room more gracefully.”

At this time, then, the library must have been arranged as that of the Vatican was at the same period. The librarian says nothing about chains, but it is obvious that they must have been in use—and in fact the librarian Mocenigo mentions them in 1762, as does Morelli¹.

The Senate gave leave to order the presses asked for the very next day (12 September, 1680)². These are probably the same which still exist in the Ducal Palace.

In 1719 a second series of presses was ordered to contain the manuscripts and printed books bequeathed by Bertuccio Contarini. They were copied from the previous set, but were made rather plainer.

These pieces of furniture having arrived, we can picture to

¹ Jacopo Morelli was librarian of S. Mark's from 1778 until 1819, when he died. He wrote *Della pubblica libreria di San Marco in Venezia. Dissertazione storica* (Venezia, 1774).

² Valentinelli, p. 67.

ourselves the splendid room, with its coved ceiling in the most approved style of Venetian work of that class, adorned with symbolic paintings set in frames of heavy gold ornaments. On the walls above the presses are said to have been portraits by Titian, Veronese, and other less famous artists of the Venetian school; while busts, after the manner of the ancients, stood upon the presses.

Gradually, as the number of books increased, a few rooms opening out of the library, or near it, were allowed to be used for storage.

III.

In 1812, when Eugène de Beauharnais was Viceroy of Italy, the Procuratie Nuove on the south side of the Piazza, which had been built after Sansovino's death, were adapted for his use; the Church of S. Geminiano, at the west end of the square, opposite to S. Mark's, was pulled down, and that end of the square was built as a set of reception rooms and added to the palace; and, lastly, the books were carried across the Piazzetta, and accommodated in the Ducal Palace, whence, as we have seen, they had been removed rather less than three centuries before.

No step could have been more disastrous for the well-being of the library. The books were scattered over the vast halls, to the great inconvenience of those who had charge of them, while the readers were confined to a small and badly lighted room at the west end of the Sala del Collegio. Moreover, the presence of bookcases spoilt the appearance of the rooms; while the weight of their contents either was, or was thought to be, dangerous.

Soon after 1866, when Venice became Italian, various librarians made suggestions for the removal of the books to various palaces or convents more or less suitable. Finally, in 1885, Signor Carlo Castellani, librarian, suggested the Mint, or Zecca; but he proposed to keep some of the books in the Ducal Palace. The question, however, was not considered urgent by official Italy; and as it has been pleasantly said

"the marriage of the Marciana with the Ducal Palace" would never have been dissolved, had not the authorities got thoroughly alarmed on the question of danger. These points were debated at length in 1898 and 1899, and finally a bill was got through the Chamber in 1900 authorising an expenditure of 275,000 lire (about £11,000) for the adaptation of the Zecca to library purposes¹.

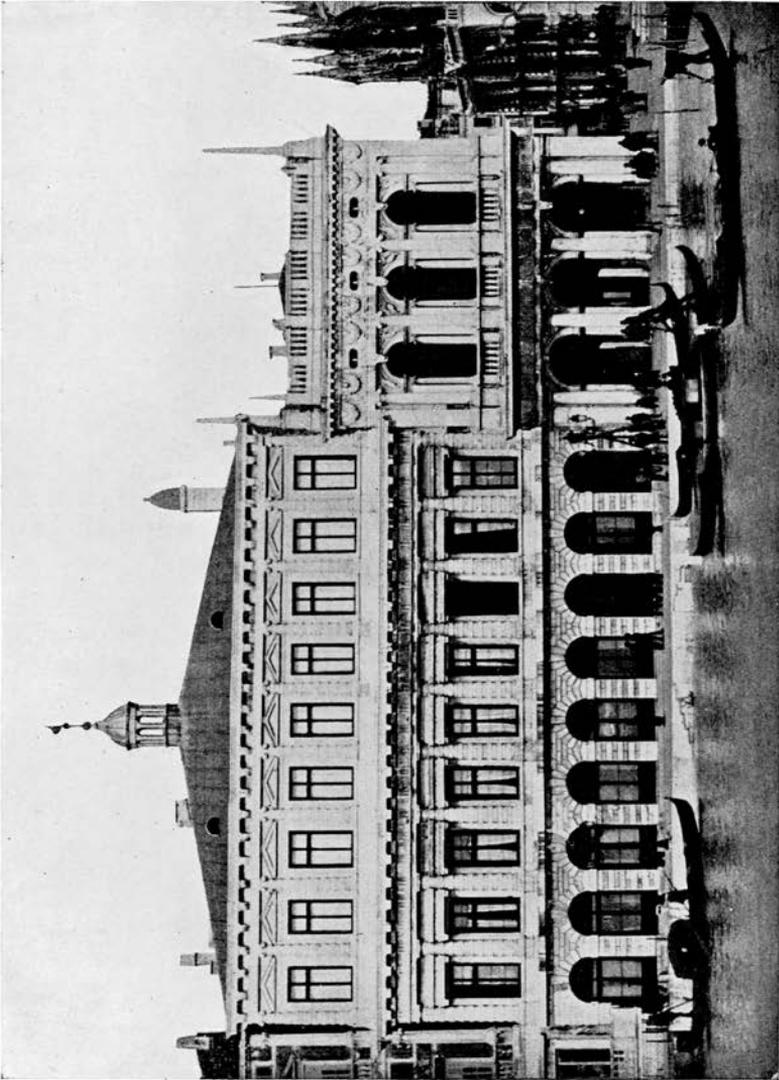
The building divides itself naturally into two parts—a massive, four-square construction (Plate XXIII), with façade facing south towards the sea, in four floors, or three floors and a mezzanine; and behind this, three narrow galleries in three floors, disposed round a court. The building to the left as you look at the façade is extremely shallow and does not obstruct light on that side.

Speaking generally, the front building is occupied by the rooms devoted to manuscripts and rare printed books, the rooms in which to study them, and the rooms for the librarian and sub-librarian; while the general library of printed books occupies the galleries on three sides of the court.

The building is entered from the Piazzetta, through a door opposite to the fifth arch of Sansovino's library, counting from the south end. This door gives access to a vestibule, out of which a student turns to the right to consult the catalogue. This is a card-catalogue, and it is arranged on the ground floor of the right-hand gallery. When he has found his book he hands his ticket to one of the clerks at the desk at the end of the vestibule. From this desk and the rooms behind it the distributing clerks have ready access to the galleries on the west and north sides of the court, while the court itself, of which more will be said later, and which serves as a reading-room, is entered immediately from the vestibule.

On this floor the centre of the front building is occupied by the room in which manuscripts and rare printed books are studied; and adjoining this is a second room for similar purposes. Here is the systematic catalogue, and the catalogue of manuscripts; and when a manuscript is wanted, there is easy

¹ The Campanile fell 14 July, 1902, and the work at the Zecca was hurried on.



Venice. The Zecca (Mint) and South facade of the Library of Sansovino

communication with the upper floors by means of a telephone and a lift. The rest of this floor contains the rooms for the resident caretaker and the furnaces.

Between the room described above and the vestibule is the staircase leading to the upper floors. Let us now mount to the first floor.

In the centre of this floor—the place of honour—is the room in which Bessarion's manuscripts and the rest of the manuscript collections, including the famous Grimani Breviary¹, are preserved; and adjoining it is another room for manuscripts. The rest of the floor is occupied by the librarian, the sub-librarian, and the staff; and especially by those members of it who have charge of the manuscripts in any way. If a manuscript requires to be copied, it is copied on this floor. All these rooms are admirably lighted from the south and west—on which side is the garden of the Royal Palace—and perfectly quiet. North of them is the second flight of stairs leading down and up; and the vestibule leading to the store-galleries already described.

The floor above this—a mezzanine—is contrived, so far as the front building is concerned, above the staircases, and the vestibule behind them; and it extends also over the galleries. All these rooms are devoted to the storage of books.

The last floor—the fourth in the main building, and the third in the building round the court—contains also rooms for storage; a room for the photographer; and a room for the bookbinder. It should be recorded that all the bookcases are of iron, on a German system.

The distinguishing feature of the library however is the ingenious device by which, without altering the building in any way, the court has been turned into a reading-room for students. Francesco Sansovino, son to the architect, whose description of Venice was published in 1581, tells us that round the court on the ground floor “were the shops or forges where the money was coined”; and certainly the heavy stone bench alternating with an open arch indicates a stall or shop of some kind. In the centre was the well, which is

¹ Valentinelli, p. 59.

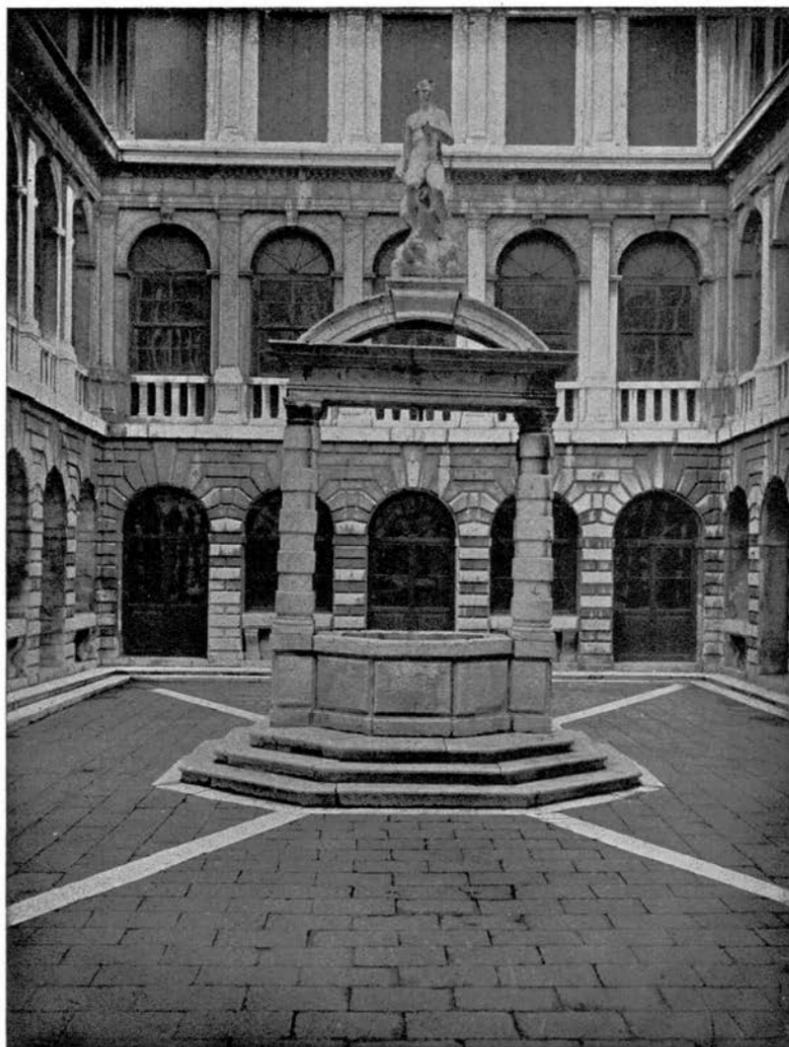
so frequently seen in Venetian courts, surmounted in this instance by a statue of Apollo executed by Danese Cattaneo (Plate XXIV).

As adapted to library purposes (Plate XXV) no architectural feature has been in the least altered or interfered with, but the well with its statue has disappeared, and in its stead we have a wooden floor with tables and chairs sufficient for the accommodation of from 100 to 120 students, should so large a number present themselves. The room measures 79 feet 6 inches by 39 feet. The central niche on the ground floor, facing the entrance, is now occupied by a half-length figure of Petrarch, on a pedestal, bearing a suitable inscription. By this happy device the reading-room and library round it recall the poet's intention, while the building between it and the sea commemorates Bessarion's benefaction.

The roof rests on the cornice which surmounts the upper story of the court. It is made of wood and glass, of the simplest construction. Special care has also been taken to provide for the shovelling away of snow, and to prevent rain from penetrating. Up to the present time it has answered perfectly. The ventilation and warming are also entirely satisfactory; and, lofty as the hall is, the light is amply sufficient.

The work began at the Zecca in March, 1902. It was finished, and the books were moved in, in December, 1904. The library was opened to the public privately, 19 December in that year; and publicly, with a fitting ceremonial, 27 April, 1905.

It should be commemorated that the crowning feat of adaptation, the enclosure of the court, was decided by the vote of the Minister of Public Instruction, Signor Nasi.



Venice. The Court of the Zecca before alteration



Venice. The Court of the Zecca as adapted to library purposes

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