

G. CIARDI: The Giudecca Canal - GALLERY OF MODERN ART

THE LAGOON AND THE ISLANDS IN THE LAGOON.

From the top of the Campanile of San Marco the view embraces the whole of Venice and its Lagoon. Enclosed by the thin strips of sea-coast which are joined to the wide arc of the mainland, Venice stands almost in the centre. It is surrounded by innumerable scattered islands which the inhabitants have adapted to their needs through the centuries, turning them into bulwarks of defence against the sea, fishermen's villages, lonely places of hermitage for monks, places of asylum for the sick and burial grounds for the dead. There are those also which have been made to flourish as vineyards and vegetable gardens through the tireless industry of the Venetian people, and others in which they have created and given splendour to the wonderful industries of glass and lace which even today have made their name famous throughout the world.

The Lagoon of Venice, a small enclosed sea nearly 40 kms. long, covers an area of more than 500 kms. It is fed today by the constant ebb and flow of water from the open sea, the Adriatic, principally through two mouths at the ports of San Nicolò di Lido and Malamocco to which can be added at the present time another, more southerly, at Chioggia with powerful hydraulic installations kept in full working order.

THE LAGOON AND THE ISLANDS IN THE LAGOON

Through these three opening which give access to Venice from the sea, merchant ships and men-of-war come and go. Having entered the Lagoon, in order to reach the Pool of San Marco or the docks, they follow deep navigable canals where an uninterrupted series of "*bricole*," wooden piles (recently only too well substituted for the most part by posts of reinforced concrete) and lights, provide easy means of identification to steer by.

Beyond these canals extend enormous areas of "*velme*," of "*pantiere*," and of "*barene*," shallows crossed only by the shallow canals, the "*gheb-bi*," by *sandoli*, light fishing craft. Here the water is very shallow and the mud emerges at low tide. The work of man is hard and tenacious to prevent the whole lagoon from becoming a shallow and the canals that furrow it (the arteries through which the water is renewed) from disappearing, and so that they may not be silted up by the continuous encroachment of the mud carried in by the water courses from the mainland and the sand from the sea.

The Venetians have understood from the most remote times that all their efforts must be concentrated on keeping in existence this water on which their city has risen and which, for them, represents the essential element of life, health and prosperity; for the new Venice had a warning of the most vivid kind when the nearby lagoon of Eraclea was dried up through the forming and widening of the delta of the Piave. In order that the lagoon of the new *Realtine* centre would not have to undergo the same fate, it was necessary to fight the perennial insidious menace of the two fatal enemies ceaselessly. These were the fluvial waters of the Brenta and the destructive encroaching action of the open sea. They had to provide, on the one hand, for the Brenta to flow out as far away as possible from the immediate vicinity of the city; and this, after centuries of trial, struggle and study, was achieved at the beginning of the 19th century with the cutting of the most recent canal of Strà. On the other hand they had to ensure that the fury of the sea was held in check and broken with palisades, breakwaters and dykes, until at last, proof of true greatness, the colossal work of the Murazzi was conceived.

Finally, neither could the efficiency of the ports or the ways of communication between the sea and the waters of the lagoon be neglected and since the Venetians had always to consider the port of San Nicolò di Lido as their natural direct outlet the most attentive care was exercised in keeping this port in existence, abandoning the others to the mercy of natural events. It is known, in fact, that at the middle of the XIV century the port of Sant'Erasmo was already entirely obstructed: that at the end of the same century no precautions had been taken to prevent the ancient port of Albiola (since called Portosecco) from being blocked by silt, carried by a canal from the Brenta; and that two centuries later the most northerly mouth of the lagoon, the port of Treporti could be considered lost. At the middle of the XVth century it was even thought of restricting and closing the port of Malamocco; however the enormous difficulties involved in keeping the Lido port fully efficient were perceived and the necessity of not neglecting the others understood. In conclusion, after the great works

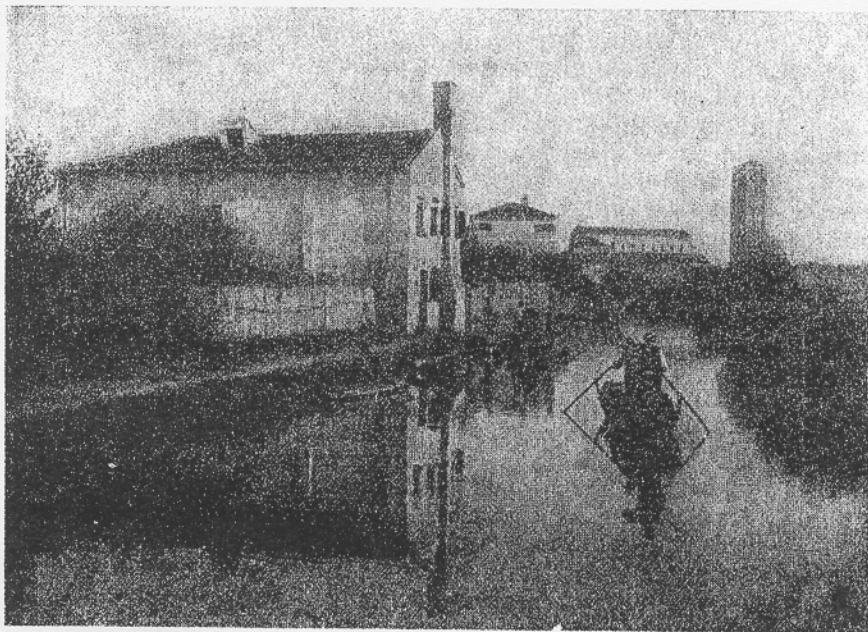
THE LAGOON AND THE ISLANDS IN THE LAGOON

of protection and maintenance undertaken finally by Austria for the port of Malamocco and by Italy for the Lido mouth Venice can now be sure of these two convenient and safe outlets to the sea.

In order to provide for this complex and arduous work of maintenance of the lagoon waters, an appropriate *Magistrato delle acque* (Water Board) was soon instituted. This was a sacred duty and a work of religious defence! Michele Sanmicheli referred to it in 1534 with simple, heartfelt words while offering his skill to the Council of the Ten. The Magistrates themselves acknowledged it, when, in the famous inscription (composed in the XVIth century by the humanist Egnazio and subsequently cut in the marble and set in the wall in their office as a perpetual warning), they proclaimed: "enemy of the fatherland (was) he who damaged in any manner whatsoever the public waters, as one who violated the sacred wall of the divine city that, risen on the water, in the water found her eternal defence",.

Reconstituted today with modern standards this ancient magistracy attends to the protection and defence of the continuing existence of our Lagoon waters with intensive work and, through this activity, to the existence of the islands as well. These were once much more numerous, especially in the Lagoon to the north between Murano and Burano.

Facing the Riva degli Schiavoni and practically disposed in a chain one after the other, the GIUDECCA, SAN GIORGIO MAGGIORE, SAN SERVILIO, SAN LAZZARO DEGLI ARMENI enclose the Pool of San Marco, whilst the long thin strip of the Lido stretches farther off in a curve towards the east, forming the extreme defence against the sea from SAN NICOLÒ DI LIDO to CHIOGGIA. To the north, on the other hand, from the shore of the Fondamenta Nuove, one behind the other, forming a nucleus on their own, are: SAN MICHELE, MURANO, MAZZORBO, BURANO, TORCELLO and SAN FRANCESCO DEL DESERTO. These are once joined to the vanished lagoon of Era-
clea and the lands of Altino.



TORCELLO - View of the Canal and Devil's Bridge

BURANO - TORCELLO

Venice for Burano-Torcello leaving from the Fondamente Nuove - Excursions in Motor-boats stopping at Murano, Burano, and Torcello leaving from the Riva degli Schiavoni.

A trip to Burano and Torcello will take up a whole day if you have not a motorboat to yourself, but a whole day spent in the lagoons, besides allowing you to get to know people who still lead their own characteristic life, also allow you to enjoy the infinite, varied and incomparable beauty of the lagoon landscape and gives you the pleasure of several hours of complete freedom.

We leave the *Fondamente Nuove* and go along the *Canal dei Marani*, and between Murano and the Island of the Cemetery out into the open Lagoon with the extreme point of Venice towards *Castello*, the *Lido* mouth, and nearer, almost in front of us, the islands of the *Certosa*, *Sant'Erasmo* and *Le Vignole* thick with verdure, all on our right. We go beyond Murano and the little islands of *San Giacomo di Paulo* and the *Madonna del Monte*, always forward in this most northern and loneliest stretch of the Lagoon. - It is only here, however, between the water

ISLAND OF MAZORBO - CHURCH OF SANTA CATERINA

and the sky and more than anything, if one can have the pleasure of a trip in a sailing boat, can one feel and enjoy the unusually subtle and sad charm of this lagoon landscape of ours. Yet today, where this still mirror of limitless water lies, where fishermen and peasants live by their rough work in these dried-up marsh lands or on soil now once more fertile, populous towns once stood, the homes of our long ago ancestors who came here in those dark and dangerous times of struggle, between the V and VII centuries. Expelled from their towns on the mainland under the impact of the barbaric hordes, they were able to prepare, slowly and laboriously, the future splendour of that more powerful Venice. Later still, fallen from their ancient wealth, they were supported by the profits of their natural beauties and the produce of their lands.

Bur besides the well-known and often repeated names of *Torcello*, *Burano* and *San Francesco del Deserto*, many other islands once stood here, the homes of monasteries and churches, rich in ancient historic memories, treasures and prosperous with flourishing trade and work; today nothing remains of them but the memory. *Costanziaca*, the most famous of these was populated, in the most far-off times, by people from Altino; in the XVII century it was already abandoned and marshy to such an extent as to be used for receiving the poor mortal remains from the Venetian Cemeteries. Today it slumbers with its monasteries and churches under the waters. Nearly was *Ammiana*, rich with its eight churches, becoming in the end a dreary salt farm with every trace of its antique splendour obliterated. Today man's activity has brought back wholesomeness and rich vegetation to these places which are reawakening in a new impulse of work.

We continue our journey with the robust square tower of *Torcello* on our left and on the right the leaning tower of *Burano*; still further to the right is the dark and picturesque mass of the cypresses of *San Francesco del Deserto*. We enter the canal of the island of MAZZORBO, the ancient *Maiurbium*, rich in vineyards and orchards, just as at one time it was with houses and country mansions. On the r. almost at the entrance to the canal the lonely **LITTLE CHURCH OF SANTA CATERINA** can be seen; it is a Romanic-gothic church (XIV cent.) with a convent attached, suppressed in 1806.

To reach it get off at the Mazzorbo stop or at Burano and to r. over the wooden bridge, skirting the cemetery (picturesque tower covered with ivy); the 1925 restorations have given the Church a more decorous aspect, rescuing the few remains which had survived.

EXTERIOR. - Over the Doorway: *The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine*, with a kneeling abbess and a procurator present; Gothic marble relief (1368). In the little ATRIUM in brickwork with characteristic her-ring-bone floor, on l.: *The Virgin and Child*, a crude relief (end of XIII-XIV cent.); in an adjacent courtyard there are interesting fragments of ancient sculpture, *cornices*, *paterae* etc. (XII-XIII cent.) probably remains of the demolished convent of Benedictine nuns.

BURANO — THE ART OF LACE-MAKING

The *INTERIOR* still preserves in its main design the type of the little conventual Gothic churches of the early XV cent. although more ancient traces still appear in the little windows on the r. wall and in the little hanging arches and shallow pilasters of the same wall on the outside. Added later in the 2nd half of the XVI cent. are the four marble ALTARS and the GREAT CHAPEL with the fine *Tombstone of the Michiel family*; on the altar: *The Baptism of Christ with the Magdalen and St. Catherine*, by GIUS. LA PORTA called IL SALVIATI. — L. WALL: *St. Joseph*, a small painting (XVIII cent.). — ALTAR on l. of Chancel: *St. Catherine*, a fragment of marble relief (XIV cent.). — SACRISTY: several paintings: *Marriage of St. Catherine* (end of XVI cent.) in a bad state but XVI cent. frame fine. — The fine beams in the vestibule which support the BARCO (Choir Gallery) and the CEILING *a carena di nave* (ship's keel) a characteristic kind of ceiling found in other Venetian churches, belong to the building of the XV century. The CAMPANILE is an interesting work with a small dome; it has a bell dated 1318.

Going back along the embankment we cross once more the bridge which connects *Mazzorbo* with *Burano* which is the most important place in this distant part of the lagoon.

BURANO was once included in the town area of Torcello and had periods of great prosperity, mostly owing to its lace industry which made its name famous all over the world. But with the decay of every kind of activity in Venice about the end of the XVIII century the people of Burano suffered for the whole of the XIX century years of poverty and hard life. Now this little town of fishermen, farmers and lace-makers is gradually acquiring new wealth through a more intensive cultivation of its fields, its sea and its needles. A breath of healthier life has blown into the poor little houses, into the pretty clean kitchens shining with polished copperware and gay with bright pinks and blues, where young women with beautiful hands bend over their *tombolo* (cushion) patient and intent on their fine lace work. — Today, in fact, the ART OF LACE MAKING is flourishing once more and bringing a new source of profit to the island. Thanks to the generous initiative of Paolo Fambri and the wise and kindly care of the Countess Adriana Marcello at the end of the last century, a SCHOOL and a LABORATORY OF LACE arose round the figure of CENCIA SCARPARIOLA, the seventy-year old woman of Burano who still kept the secret and the skill of the *punto buranese*, so that today the Burano and Venetian point laces are exported all over the world and the fortunes of the school are always increasing.

The craft of lace making, which is a direct and natural derivation of embroidery, with white thread on white material, began to appear in the early years of the XVI century and Venice at once became an important centre for it. At first the craft was limited to the cloisters and the aristocratic houses, but when the use of lace developed and spread as a decoration for domestic furnishings and womens' clothes it entered the poorest homes and Burano women especially soon acquired a surprising skill in the creation of this marvel of patience and exquisite elegance. Through the various points, a *filo tirato* (drawn thread) and a *reticello* (mesh work), with the help of the many series of patterns and designs almost all produced by Venetians in Venice for the whole of the XVI century, the so-called *punto in aria* was born about the middle of this same century in Venice, a creation exclusively ours, "*la più nobile e la più italiana delle trine*," (the noblest and most Italian

BURANO — THE CHURCH OF SAN MARTINO

of all laces). This amazing creation of slow and patient work with very fine thread in which the needle follows with an exquisite feeling of art and skill the fanciful shapes is done without the basis of the canvas or of any other material. The designs are not only limited to geometrical shapes but are also inspired from flowers, animals, volutes, and fruit. This special point soon rose to great fame in the XVII century and acquired new grace by the addition of these characteristic *roselline*, tiny starry round pieces dotted here and there with grace and a fine variety of effects on the background of lace. — This *punto a rosette* and the other one called *controtagliato* which is heavier and more solemn with its wide volutes in relief and the thick cording of the borders, were the two types of lace most in fashion which spread, in the XVII century, from Venice all over Italy and beyond the boundaries of the peninsula, fetching, at times, fabulous prices. But about the middle of the century, France, under the government of Colbert, became worried by its economic and artistic dependence on our country even in this field, and began to resist, at first with prohibitive tariffs, and then with a new competitive output, the lace industry. In this way the so-called *point d'Alençon* and *Argentan*, by the very hands of the Burano lace-makers, called to France to imitate the Venetian points, came into being; they were protected by the Government and the French Court, and, entrusted to the genius of artists like Lebrun, adapted to suit the taste of Paris fashion. In the end they imposed themselves, first in France and then everywhere in Europe. Nevertheless in spite of their perfect technical imitation, the XVI and XVII century Venetian laces, the Venetian designs which took their inspiration from coral and lichen, show greater delicacy and taste. The two altar cloths for the duomo of Burano with sacred designs in seventeenth century *punto controtagliato*, now in the Correr Civic Museum in Venice, are two magnificent specimens of Burano lace.

The MUSEUM OF BURANO LACE will be arranged under the direction of the Town Council as a section of the Correr Civic Museum, in the premises of the Lace School. In the adjoining Town Hall the prize winning paintings from the various years of the "Burano Prize", instituted by the Town Council of Venice to promote the interests of the island by inviting artists to paint its landscape, will also be shown in a permanent Exhibition as a section of the Civic Gallery of Modern Art.

The few artistic and historic records that the island still possesses are gathered in the spacious CHURCH OF SAN MARTINO. There are also a few Veneto-byzantine panels of the XII and XIII century set in the façade of a house at the end of the most important street on the island, the VIA BALDASSARRE GALUPPI (1703-85) from the famous musician called *il Buranello* and pride of his native home, and also on the façade of the Gothic palace, the ancient *Palazzo del Podestà*, now the premises of the Town Hall. The church is a XVI cent. building, perhaps also restored and enlarged in times past; it is built on a Latin cross plan with nave and side aisles and transepts, great chapel and two side chapels, and the vaulted ceiling supported by piers.

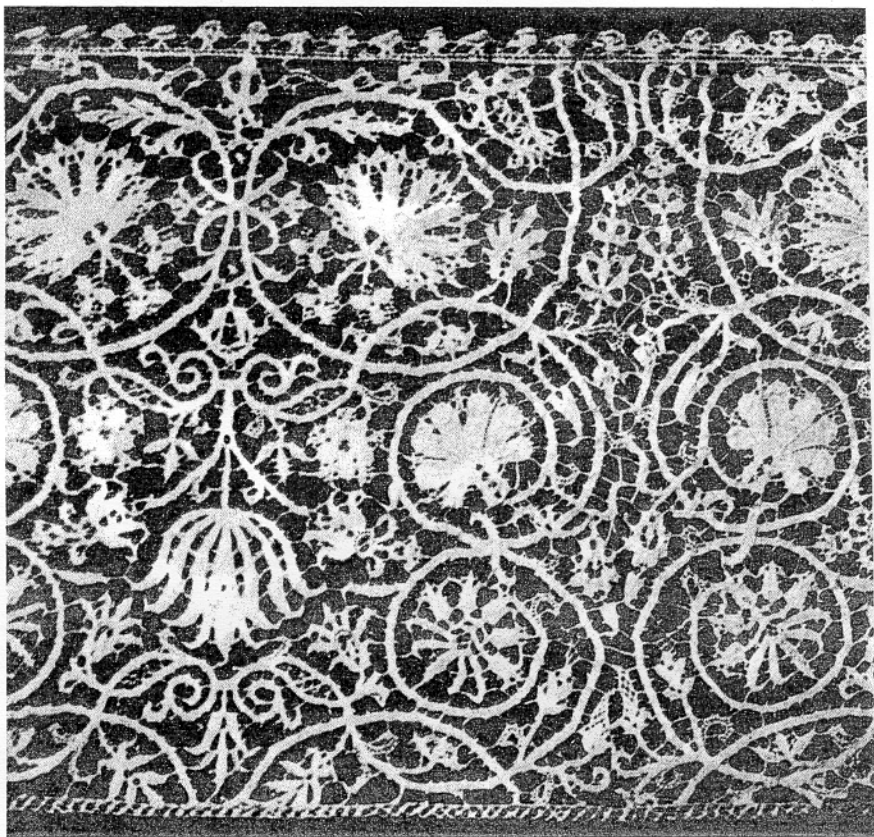
INTERIOR: CHAPEL TO R. OF CHANCEL: *Adoration of the Shepherds*, attrib. to FRANC. FONTEBASSO (XVIII cent.). CHAPEL TO L. OF CHANCEL: *St. Alban Bishop and two Saints* (XVI cent.). ON L. WALL: *Miracle of St. Alban*; in the background view of the Piazza of Burano: attrib. to ANT. ZANCHI. I ALTAR ON L.: *San Rocco, San Sebastiano and Sant' Antonio Abate*, attrib. to PALMA IL GIOVANE (recently restored).

ISLAND OF SAN FRANCESCO DEL DESERTO - TORCELLO

The most important paintings, once kept in the Sacristy, have been put in the nearby ORATORY OF SANTA BARBARA, after their recent restoration; the oratory, after restoration, has been dedicated to the Fallen. Façade plain (XVII cent.); beautiful wrought iron grilles at the windows. In the interior: on the altar: *St. Mark and other Saints*, by GEROLAMO DA SANTA CROCE (1541), On the walls: *The Flight into Egypt, the Adoration of the Magi, the Marriage of the Virgin*, with influences of Bellini and Carpaccio, by GIOVANNI MANSUETI (end of XV cent.). *The Crucifixion*, a huge canvas by the youthful G. B. TIEPOLO (c. 1775); affinities can be seen in it with the colour of Piazzetta and Ricci; the composition is on a grand scale, with *the Portrait of the Donor* inserted, "Portrait of a *speziale*," (G. A. Moschini) of great vivacity; the dramatic group of three Maries is fine too. (Recently restored 1953).

After the visit to the Lace School and lunch at "Romano's," characteristic trattoria, famed for its good fish and much frequented by artists and foreign visitors, we can get ourselves taken to the ISLAND OF SAN FRANCESCO DEL DESERTO nearby, by one of the *sandoli* (small boat) moored by the steam-ferry landing-stage (the boatmen row in the *valesana* or *buranella* style). The beauty of nature and the serene peace of this spot make a deep impression on all who come to this island. Among the dark mass of cypresses there is a SMALL CHURCH with a pointed campanile and close by the poor hermitage with two silent LITTLE CLOISTERS, one of which is a precious relic of XV cent. architecture, where a few Minor Conventual brothers live isolated from the world.

Tradition records (although history does not confirm the truth of it) how Brother Francesco of Assisi, on his way back from Soria on a Venetian ship in 1220, landed on this island with his companion Illuminato of Rieti while a storm raged, and at his appearance the waters and the sky became calm. The Saint, welcomed by the twittering of the birds, fixed his abode here and built himself a hut with his own hands. Tradition goes on to record the miracles worked by St. Francis here and how, when he planted his stick of pine wood, it burst in to leaf, formed roots and grew as if by enchantment. Today the brothers still show this venerable pine tree which is, for these friars, a sacred object handed down over the centuries from the first brothers who, after the death of their Founder Saint, established their abode on the island which had been given to them in 1228 by the Venetian nobleman Jacopo Michiel.



TORCELLO.

This can be reached straight from Venice by steam ferry leaving from the Fondamente Nuove or from Burano after the visit there.

From Burano a short distance beyond the Mazzorbo Canal and the Canal dei Borgognoni, we arrive at TORCELLO which welcomes us with the gay sweetness of its fertile gardens; where fifty years or so ago malaria reigned, land reclamation has redeemed both soil and man, and where once a few islanders lived there are now numerous families of farmers. In the middle of the island stand the last vestiges, the few evidences of what had once been the stern civilization of long ago centuries, among which are the CATHEDRAL and the CHURCH OF SANTA FOSCA.

TORCELLO



TORCELLO - The Cathedral - INTERIOR (XI cent.)

All the signs of its power and prosperity, churches, houses, palaces, and monasteries, have disappeared, dispersed and swallowed up by the mud, but the recollection of its ancient vicissitudes crowd upon us.

In those fearful and tragic times, when the Roman population of the Veneto mainland fled from the savagery of the Huns and the Longobards between the V and VII centuries, to find refuge and defence on the islands on the lagoon nearby, Torcello and the other islands round about received most of the refugees from Altino. Indeed legend tells how the mass of the people abandoned their town and following a voice from the sky took refuge on these islands giving the name of *Turris* from which TORCELLO (*Turricellum*) is derived, to the largest of them in memory of the tower of their last home town. In 638 the Bishop of Altino transferred the seat here, bringing with him the *Holy Remains* and reliquaries; although much dwindled both in authority and wealth, it continued to exist almost up to the downfall of the Republic.

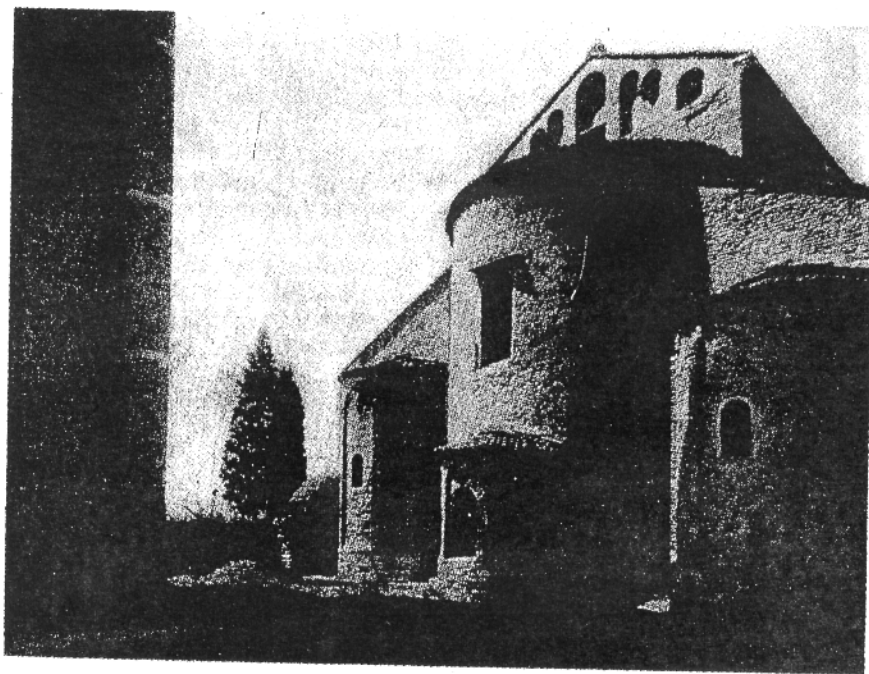
In more prosperous times Torcello became one of the most important centres with its churches and monasteries and flourishing industries, especially the wool industry which was developed here exclusively up to the XIV century. It had an independent government (Podestà and Council) with its own Magistratures and aristocracy, until with the rise to greater wealth and power of Venice a short distance away, the dwindling of its trade and the gradual silting up of its waters, it decayed for ever.

TORCELLO - THE CATHEDRAL

We land, skirt the narrow canal, and crossing the little bridge (on r. Locanda Cipriani) come into the PIAZZETTA; in the middle of the grassy space is a rough *marble seat* which popular legend called "Attila's seat", and which a more reliable hypothesis believes to have been used by the island tribunes when dispensing justice. On one side stands the picturesque little XIV cent. Gothic palace once the *Seat of the Council* of the island and on the other the small building of the *Palace of the Archives* both now the home of the *Lagoon Museum*. Between the two palaces the Podestà's Palace now destroyed, once stood. On the opposite side to r. is the *Church of Santa Fosca* and facing it the solemn *Cathedral* with the remains of the *Baptistry*.

The *CATHEDRAL*, dedicated to *SANTA MARIA ASSUNTA*, must have been founded, according to a precious inscription preserved inside, at the time of Heracleus Emperor of Byzantium, in 639, by order of Isaac Hexarch of Ravenna.

Towards the end of the same century, after the Bishop of Altino had transferred himself to Torcello because of the increasing emigration, this building, which had perhaps been originally only a simple place of worship, had to be restored and rebuilt having become a bishops seat and therefore grown in importance.



TORCELLO - The Cathedral - THE APSES

TORCELLO - THE CATHEDRAL

The BAPTISTRY (VII cent. now only a few vestiges), was built in front of the Cathedral on a circular plan with its entrance in front of the door of the Cathedral, and another side entrance with large niches on either side. The interior was on a circular plan with eight columns supporting the drum, in recollection of the classical Roman buildings on a circular plan. The Cathedral underwent radical restorations and reconstructions in 863 by order of the sons of the nobleman Marino, and in 1008 on the occasion of the elevation to the bishopric of Torcello of Orso Orseolo, son of Doge Pietro Orseolo II.

The building, looked at in its general aspect, is a Veneto-byzantine work of the XI cent. in the form of a Romanic basilica; it is the oldest monumental building still existing in the lagoon lands.

The IX cent. FAÇADE heightened in the XI cent. is decorated with shallow pilasters, preceded by a IX cent. *Portico* in the part facing the façade and added to at a later period (XIV-XV cent.); it is supported by pilasters and columns with wooden architraves and joists. Down the sides of the main door of the Church there are *ornamental motives of interwoven designs and crosses* (IX cent.), and a fine band of grape-vine design (XI cent.).

Down the side of the Church, the shutters of the centred windows are interesting; these are made of large slabs of stone which swing on hinges also made of stone.

Back part: central apse (VII cent.) built in the XI cent., with the little apse of the coeval crypt underneath incorporated: *side apses* (IX cent.) ornamented with shallow pilasters and little arches: a fourth apse was added at a later date.

Oratory of San Marco: a few yards away (XVIII cent. restored) on the grassy space where tradition says the body of St. Mark rested before reaching Venice; there are the interesting remains, instead, of another small basilican work, dating probably from the XI cent.

The *Campanile* is a stout square tower with shallow pilasters and a fine belfry with windows of the same type as the Venetian bell towers (XI cent.). An incomparable view over the whole of the lagoon may be enjoyed from it.

INTERIOR: of simple and solemn aspect, severe and august for the beauty of the marbles and the gold of the mosaics as well as the great age of its origins. It is on a basilican plan with great apse and two minor side ones which correspond to the nave and side aisles subdivided by a double row of nine columns with round stilted arches. - Wooden CEILING, with uncovered sprung beams. - During the third period of work in 1008, the original basilican type having remained, perhaps, unchanged, it appears that reconstruction work on the nave and most of the decorative carved work in the interior was begun. The *Capitals* on the columns in the nave, may also be attributed to this period; they are splendid Corinthian type capitals (XI cent.) with the exception of number 2 and 3 on the r. (VI cent.). - The FLOOR, covered with a rich marble mosaic, is XI cent. work. In the centre of the nave near the choir steps, lies the *Tomb Slab* of Bishop Paolo d'Altino (XV cent.). - The CHANCEL CHOIR, once used for the choristers and then for the priests, is

TORCELLO - THE CATHEDRAL

considered as a whole to be a XI cent. work, although it may have undergone alterations in the second half of the XII cent. when, after the Chancel was restored, the two *Pulpits* were dismantled to be put together again and set up at the side on the left outside the area of the Chancel itself. - The FRONT OF THE CHOIR (Roodscreen) is made up of panels: *The Virgin and the twelve Apostles*, painted by a Venetian master (early years of the XV cent.), with a great wooden *Crucifix* above, and four precious *plutei* (marble panels) with designs of animals (peacocks, lions, birds), bunches of flowers and volutes, an exquisite example of Byzantine art (begin, XI cent.). - Constructional and decorative fragments in Byzantine style, clumsily put together with some sawn off, make up the PULPITS today. Among the most interesting is the *pluteo* (mutilated) set in under the stairs, called *Pluteo dell'occasione* (X-XI cent.) perhaps part of the original pulpit, with an allegorical representation of *Time* on a winged wheel, defeated by human activity: on r. sad-looking old man and woman: *Idleness*. Within the choir on either side: *wooden inlaid choir stalls* "a felze", Gothic art (XV cent.).

CHANCEL: HIGH ALTAR; the original altar (VII cent.) was found and put together with other original material, and the superimposed Baroque altar demolished (Sig. Forlati architect 1929); it consists of an altar table supported by four small corner columns (three of them the original ones) and a central support. Under the table a Roman sarcophagus (II-III cent.) containing the remains of Sant'Elidoro, first bishop of Altino, was found; it was brought here in 635. On l. of altar set in the wall: Original inscription of the foundation of the Church: "*Imperator Eraclio Augusto e per ordine di Isaacio esarca e patrizio*", (639), the oldest written document regarding Venetian history. All round the walls of the Chancel apse, which is faced with marble, there are six steps with a small flight of steps in the centre which the bishop mounted to his *cattedra*; under the marble panels on the left there are traces of the original painted drapery decoration (IX cent.) The original CRYPT, which can be reached from the side Apses, lies beneath the central Apse. The COVE OF THE APSE and the TRIUMPHAL ARCH are covered with mosaics. Although certain attribution is a difficult and much discussed problem it may be granted that the surviving arrangement on two levels, with the *Virgin Teotoca* (mother of God) alone above with the row of *twelve Apostles* ranged below with the *Annunciation* on the triumphal arch, may correspond to a conception of very ancient iconography in existence since the VII century, to the building, that is, of the church itself, and preserved through the restorations and remakings which the mosaics had to undergo. The figure of the *Virgin*, alone and august in the limitless field of gold in the cove, hieratic in her stiff Byzantine manner, is probably a work of the XIII cent. The *Twelve Apostles* (mostly disfigured through ancient and recent restorations) are more Roman in form and character, having been inspired more by models of the Ravenna school (Sant'Apollinare Nuovo and "in classe"); work of the XII cent. The figures of the *Annunciation* over the Triumphal Arch are somewhat Byzantine in type.

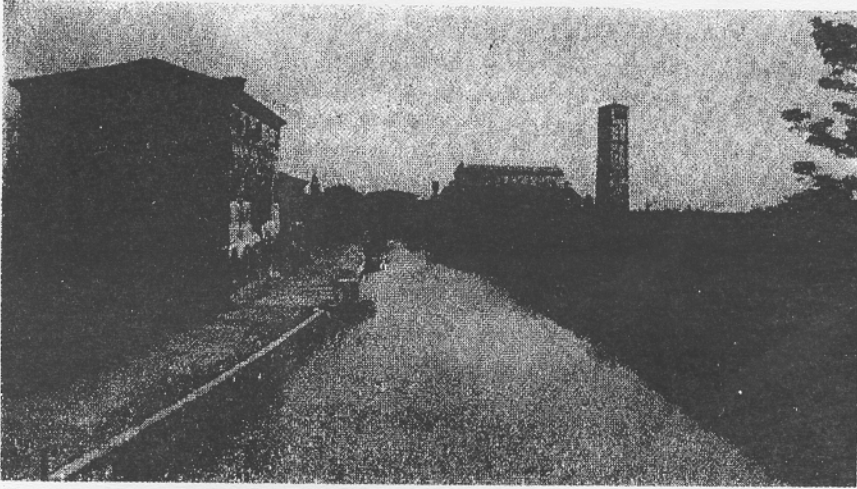
The MOSAICS in the R. APSE are extremely interesting: in the groined vault that precedes it four *Angels* holding a crown with the *Mystic Lamb* in it, within arabesques and leafage, are shown; the scheme is inspired by an older one (VI cent.) copied partly from the ceiling of the chancel of San Vitale in Ravenna; work of the Ravenna School (XII cent.). The mosaics in the apse itself are also of the Ravenna School but by another hand: *Christ enthroned blessing between the Archangels Gabriel and Michael* with gorgeous robes and precious stones. - On the lower level: *St. Augustine*, *St. Ambrose*, *St. Martin* and *St. Gregory*; these show types and forms inspired by IX cent. Ravenna originals,

TORCELLO - THE CATHEDRAL

probably done during the time (864) of Bishop Adeodato, when the two side apses were made. Of the original mosaic decoration very little remains since they were remade in the XII-XIII cent. - R. WALL: beside the chapel: *marble Tabernacle*, an architectural fragment perhaps forming part of the original altar of the church in the VII cent. - L. SIDE CHAPEL: on the floor, *Tomb Slab* of Nicola Morosini, Bishop of Torcello († 1305). R. NAVE: on the two altars, *Altarpieces in gilded and painted wood, with figures of Saints*, original carving by PAOLO CAMPSA (XV-XVI cent.), altered and spoilt by ANTONIO DE PORIS who did the central figure and left his name on it. By the side of the Main Door *Holy Water Stoup*, supported on a piece of a column; on the marble basin itself there is a frieze in niello and characteristic decoration with animals, heads and human figures holding up the basin (XI cent.); a rare example of its kind. - WALL OVER THE MAIN DOOR: magnificent MOSAIC showing, in a complex series of compositions, *the Apotheosis of Christ and the Last Judgement*. It is thought to be a work of the Veneto-byzantine School of the XII-XIII cent., akin to the coeval mosaics of St. Mark's in stylistic characteristics. The upper part: *The descent into Hell and two majestic Archangels*, show diverse stylistic characteristics and may be work of a later period (XIII cent.). The iconographic scheme, inspired by Byzantine proto-types, tends above all to take on a narrative value and character. In spite of extensive restorations (a few fragments of the original mosaics are kept in the Island Museum) it still has considerable importance for its great size, high standard of technique and the complexity of its conception. - It is divided into six bands; at the top: *Christ on the Cross between the Virgin and St. John*. - Second level: in the middle: *The descent into Hell; Christ tramples on the gates of Hell* while the dead rise from their graves; He grasps Adam, behind whom stands Eve with two Kings close by, by the arm. At the sides: *The two Archangels Michael and Gabriel*. - III Level: *Christ in glory in a mandorla between the Virgin, St. John the Baptist, the twelve Apostles and Saints*. - IV Level: in the centre: *The Etoimasia*: on the prepared throne lies the open book and behind the instruments of the Passion, with Adam and Eve kneeling on either side (?); to l. and r. *Angels blowing the trumpets for the last Judgment*. - V Level: over the arch of the doorway: *The Archangel Michael weighs the souls with the scales, while the devil stands in front and slips the ones belonging to him into a sack*. - On r.: *two angels thrust the sinners into the river of fire which falls from the feet of Christ with Lucifer sitting in the middle*; on l.: *the Elect*. - VI Level: to r.: under the damned, *the various tortures of Hell prepared for the wicked*; to l. various scenes follow: *Christ gathering the children around him; the Virgin praying, the malefactor with his cross, St. Peter at the Gate of Paradise which is guarded by a cherub*. - Lunette over the main door: *The Virgin praying*, XIII cent. mosaic.

SACRISTY: beside the door: *Holy water stoup* in the shape of a shell (IX cent.). - Fragments of marble panels and pierced marble screens, friezes and architectural fragments belonging to the church are kept here. Interesting are: *Pluteo* (panel) della "Ruota", which, together with the one fitted into the left hand pulpit, bears allegorical subjects of pagan inspiration but with a moral basis such as this one which might be called *Ingratitude*; it illustrates the myth of Ixion who, forgetting the benefits received from Jove, tried to seduce his wife, and was condemned to be whirled round on a wheel for ever. The subject is framed by a design of interwoven osiers; an interesting carving although in bad condition (X-XI cent.). *Virgin and Child*, a graceful marble statuette formerly attrib. to the Florentine sculptor PIETRO LAMBERTI who worked in Venice during the first half of the XV cent. (Fiocco).

TORCELLO - THE LAGOON MUSEUM



TORCELLO - View of a canal with the Cathedral in the background

Beside the Basilica stands the *CHURCH OF SANTA FOSCA*, a XI-XII cent. building on a central plan. - *EXTERIOR*: *Portico* on three sides with stilted arches supported by carved capitals; originally it had carved marble *plutei*, some of which are still there, once placed between the pillars. Central pentagonal apse with decorations on two levels with small blind arcading, the lower level with small double columns and the upper with pilasters; the crowning in "dog-tooth", brick-work (XI-XII cent.); on r. side: *Santa Fosca adored by brethren*, (1407) a late XI cent. work.

INTERIOR: on the Greek cross plan with nave and side aisles with one arm prolonged into the three apses. The central cupola was not built and is substituted by a wooden roof. The joining up of the square base with the circular shape of the cupola by means of squinches on which the cupola was to rest, is interesting. The church, which is charming for the grace of its architectural motives and the harmony of its proportions, reveals affinities with the other buildings in the lagoons of the period between the XI and the XII centuries.

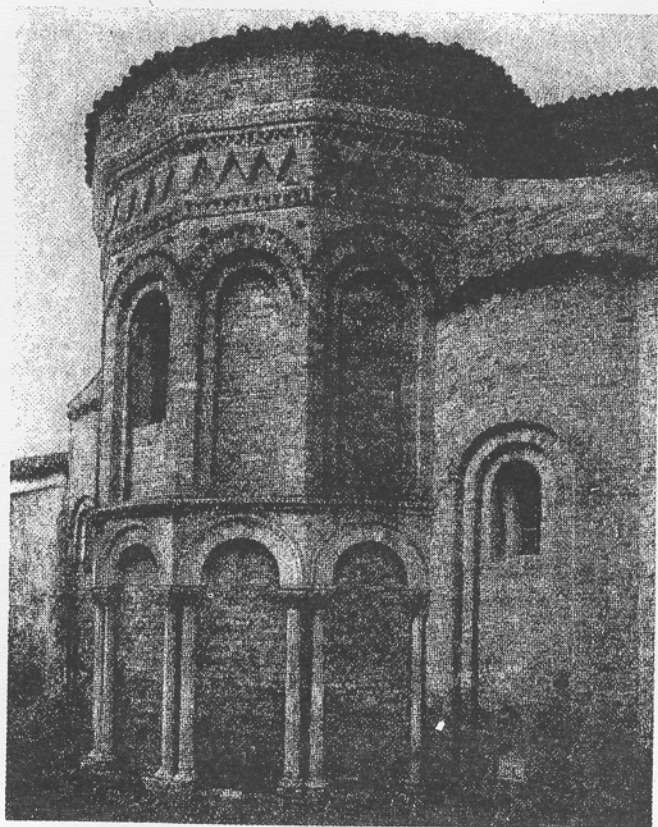
Over the table of the only *altar*, rebuilt in 1939, is placed a XV cent. wood relief carving which was once gilded and painted, showing *Santa Fosca sleeping*.

THE LAGOON MUSEUM: this museum has been arranged in the two *Palazzi del Consiglio* and *dell'Archivio* since 1887; some smaller works, some of which are of particular historic and artistic interest, have been collected here.

PALAZZO DEL CONSIGLIO: In the *SMALL ROOM* near the entrance: *Greek Cross in marble with decorations and inscription*, VENETO-BYZANTINE ART (XI cent.) *half-length figure of Christ between the Virgin and St. John*, interesting small panel and background still showing Romanic characteristics of the end of the century; not.

TORCELLO - THE LAGOON MUSEUM

pressive vigour especially in the figures of *Christ and the Virgin* (datable begin XIV cent.). - *Madonna in wood*, in fragmentary wooden frame (XV cent. Gothic style). - *Pastoral staff*, in carved ivory from the tomb (existing in the Cathedral) of Bono Balbi (†1215). In a glass case: *Illuminated Codexes*, two pages of a *Missal* with miniatures on gold grounds; *Ducal Commissions*, diplomas and statutes concerning Torcello, fragments of *mosaic* (not all original; fifteen of *Heads*) taken from the Last Judgment in the Cathedral (some are in the large Room). - **CENTRAL ROOM:** Wooden Altarpiece with the *Virgin between San Rocco and a beheaded female Saint*. In the middle of the Room, a *marble vase* with a band round it with a liturgical inscription in Greek, used as a Holy water stoup, coming, apparently, from a Murano church (XI cent.). - On the walls: *fragments of the silvergilt Altarpiece*, with *repoussé* figures (XII-XIII cent.), formerly on the High Altar in the Cathedral; in 1805 it was deprived of the pieces which are missing. Only 13 panels out of the original 29 are left to this precious relic; in the middle: the *Virgin and Child*, and two *Symbols of Evangelists*; at the sides, *Saints*. - *Standard* or "*Pennello*", of the Confraternity of Santa Fosca bearing the *Virgin and Child with Santa Fosca and Santa Maura*; embroidery in silk and silver thread (afterwards applied to a backing of cloth). - Four canvases with



TORCELLO - Santa Fosca - Apses (XII cent.)

TORCELLO - PALACE OF THE ARCHIVES

incidents in the life of Santa Cristina, of the VERONESE SCHOOL, coming from the demolished Church of Santa Cristina at Torcello. - LITTLE END ROOM: *Annunciation*, attrib. to VERONESE and ASSISTANTS; inside doors of the organ from the demolished church of Sant'Antonio at Torcello; - *Adoration of the Magi*, by the same with assistants; outside doors of organ.

PALAZZO DELL'ARCHIVIO: recently rearranged (Giulia Fogolari). Under the portico: *Sarcophagi, Roman funeral altars, funeral stele, inscriptions, capitals*; on the wall: *broken Byzantine panels showing birds and bunches of grapes*. - *High relief of St. Bartholomew*, formerly in the Church of Santa Caterina of Mazzorbo (XV cent.). - *Low relief with the figure of St. John the Evangelist*, from the Church of the same name (XV cent.). - *High relief with the figure of St. John the Evangelist and inscription* (XVII cent.). - UPPER ROOM: - Glass case in front of the window: excavated objects: *paleo-veneto bronze objects, Etruscan mirrors, pottery from the islands in the Lagoon* and other fragments from various places: - *glass, money, weapons, found in the nearby marshes*, among which is an important *spear head with runic characters engraved on it*. - In the middle of the room: *great Corinthian krater with scenes of battle, and animals* (VII cent. B. C.): a group of *marble carvings from Greek originals*: - *head of an old woman from Altino*; - *headless female figure, also lacking the arms (Venus?)*; the drapery very beautiful; - *Statues of Hermes Propyleios and Aesculapius in a cloak*; - Among the pottery *four Micene vases* and some other *Campanian and Apulian Vases* are of interest.

Thus, through these poor fragmentary vestiges, the far-off past of a prosperous and wealthy civilization which had its busy centre in these places, later abandoned and silent, are illuminated by a weak and uncertain light.