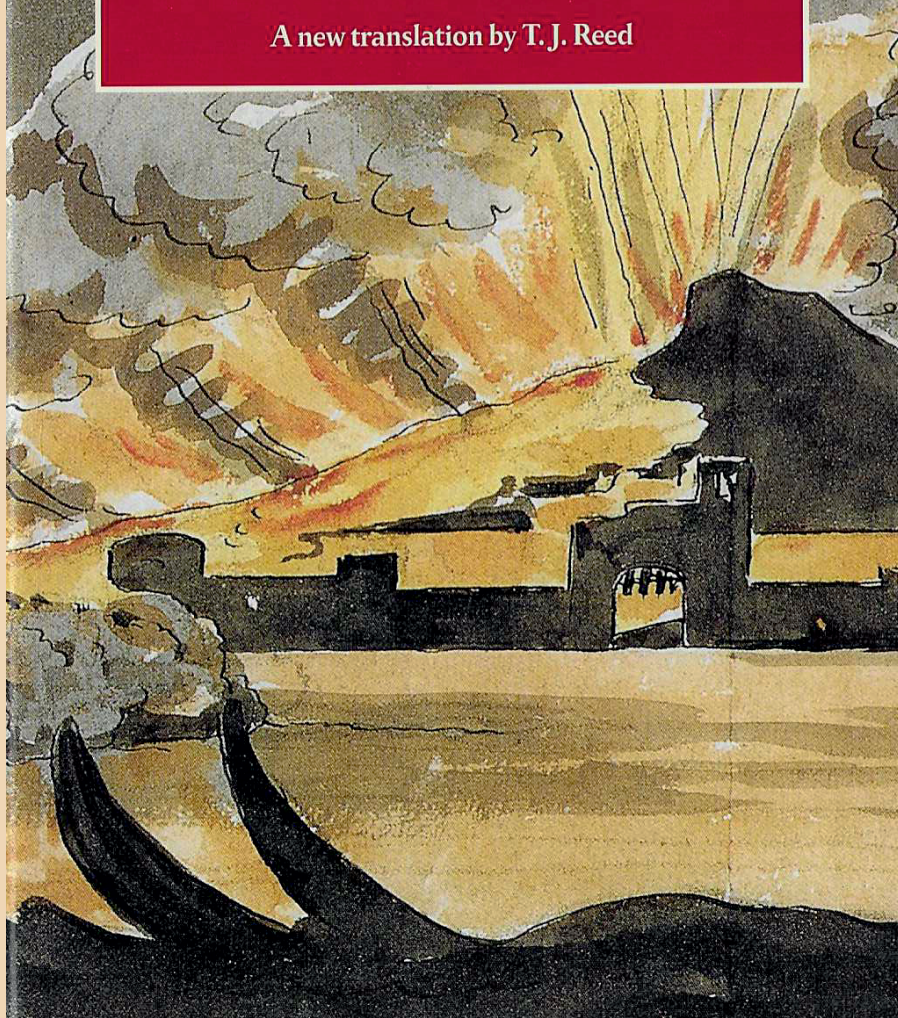


OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

GOETHE
THE FLIGHT TO ITALY
DIARY AND SELECTED LETTERS

A new translation by T. J. Reed



FOURTH SECTION

VENICE

1786

Venice

Thus then it was written in the book of destiny that on 28 September, at five by our time, I was to sail out of the Brenta into the Lagoons and see Venice for the first time, and soon afterwards set foot on and reside in the wondrous island city, this Beaver Republic. And so thank God *Venice* is no longer a mere word for me, a name by which so often, as a sworn enemy of empty words, so often I have been affrighted.

As the first gondola came alongside our boat, I suddenly remembered my first childhood toy, which I had not thought of for perhaps twenty years. My father had brought back a beautiful model gondola from Venice, he set great store by it and it was a great thing when I was allowed to play with it. The first tin prows and black cabins of the gondolas, I greeted them all like old acquaintances, like a long-lost early memory.

And as I feel I am only travelling in order to report back to you, now it's night I settle down to tell you all sorts of things.

I'm comfortably put up in the *Queen of England*, not far from St Mark's Square, the greatest advantage of my lodging.

My windows look out on a narrow canal, between two high houses, immediately beneath me is a bridge and opposite is a narrow alley thronged with people. That's where I'm living and that's where I'll stay for a while until I've got my packet for Germany ready and sucked my fill of the image of this city.

The solitude I've so often yearned and sighed for I can enjoy here, if enjoyment it is, for nowhere can you feel so alone as in a milling crowd like this, where you're not known, in Venice there's perhaps hardly a single person who knows me, and I'm not likely to meet him. We had marvellous weather for the trip down here on the Brenta, which is quite well described in Volkmann p. 636, I travelled with the public boat and can't sufficiently praise the propriety and

order of such a mixed middle-class society as we had on board. There were a number of really pretty and agreeable women and girls among them. I find it amazingly easy getting along with this people. Just before our boat reached Venice I took a gondola with another passenger and we made our entry. It is a grand and impressive sight.

I hurried to St Mark's Square, and now my mind is the richer and broader for this image too. This evening I'll say no more. I'll find time here to communicate my thoughts to you. Farewell! I love you always with the same heartfelt tenderness.

29th, morning

Yesterday evening it clouded over completely, I was worried rain was on the way, the seabirds were another sign. Today the weather's magnificent again. Have done my stint on Iphigenie and now I'm dressing and going out. Before I do, hallo and good-morning.

St Michael's day, evening

At the end of a happy and well-spent day it's always an inexpressibly sweet sensation to sit down and write to you. I was sorry to have to tear myself away from St Mark's Square when night fell; but the fear of getting too far behind with writing drove me back home.

About Venice everything that can be said has been said and printed, so only a few words about the way it comes to meet me. The main thing that stands out is again the idea of *the people*. Great mass! and a necessary, spontaneous form of life. This race didn't flee to these islands for fun, it was no arbitrary force that drove others to unite with them, it was luck that made their situation so favourable, it was luck that they were shrewd at a time when the whole of the northern world still lay caught up in its nonsense, the way these people multiplied and grew wealthier was a necessary consequence. Then they pressed tighter and tighter together, sand and swamp became rock beneath their feet, their houses rose for air like trees growing close together, they had to try for height so as to make up for what they couldn't get in breadth, miserly about every inch of ground and from the start pressed into narrow spaces, they didn't allow more width for alleyways than would just divide house from house and let people pass, and anyway water was street, square, promenade for them, in short Venetians had to become a new kind of creature and so Venice too can only be compared with itself. Just as

no other street in the world can compare with the *Grand Canal*, so too there is nothing to compete with the space in front of St Mark's Square. I mean the great stretch of water that is embraced on one side by the half-moon of Venice proper, with the island of San Gior- gio facing, a bit further to the right the Giudecca and its canal, and further right still the Doge's Palace and the mouth of the Grand Canal. I'll enclose a map of Venice and make things quite clear by drawing in the lines of sight to the main things that strike the eye when you come out between the two columns of St Mark's Square. (NB In the end I haven't, because it really doesn't give a proper idea.)

I've contemplated it all with a calm attentive eye and taken delight in this great life-form. After eating I went out on foot to begin with so as to take things gradually, and noting only the compass directions plunged without a guide into the labyrinth of the city. You can't imagine that either, without you've seen it. Usually you can span the width of the alleyways with outstretched arms, or almost, in the smaller alleys you couldn't even stretch your arms right out. There are broader streets, but they're all narrow in proportion. I easily found the Grand Canal and the Rialto Bridge. It's a grand beautiful sight, especially looking down from the bridge, as it's arched and rises quite high. The canal is thick with ships and teeming with gondolas, particularly today because on the Feast of St Michael the well-dressed women were all making their pilgrimage to church, and at least had themselves ferried across. I met some very beautiful beings.

When I was tired I took a gondola, left the narrow alleys behind, and went right through the Canal Grande, round St Clara's Island, along the great lagoon, into the Giudecca Canal as far as St Mark's Square, and was now suddenly one more Lord of the Adriatic, as every Venetian feels himself to be when he reclines in his gondola. I honoured the memory of my poor father whose greatest pleasure was to recount these things. It is a great work of collective human effort worthy of all respect, a splendid monument not to a *ruler* but to a *people*, and if their lagoons are gradually filling up and stinking and their trade is getting weaker and their power has declined, that doesn't make their republic any less venerable to me in its whole conception and essence. It is subject to time like everything else in the world of phenomena.

We'll be able to talk endlessly about this, including things

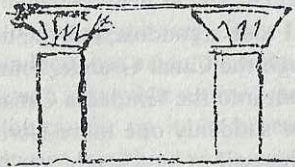
you're not supposed to talk about here, like the state and its secrets, which I think I know well enough without anybody having to give them away.

Now a few observations with Part 3 of Volkmann as a guide.

p. 509. St Mark's you must look at an engraving of. The architecture is worthy of any nonsense that may ever have been taught or practised in it. I always frivolously think of the façade as a colossal crab. At least I reckon I could design an enormous crustacean with these proportions.

p. 513. *Ancient horses** These exquisite animals stand here like sheep that have lost their shepherd. When they stood closer together on a more worthy building, in front of the triumphal chariot of a world-conqueror, it may have been a noble sight. Still, thank God that Christian enthusiasm hasn't melted them down and made chandeliers and crucifixes out of them. May they stand here in honour of St Mark, since we owe their preservation to St Mark.

p. 515. *The Doge's Palace*, especially the façade looking on to St Mark's Square. The strangest thing that I think the human mind has produced. More when we meet. I have a notion, I won't put it higher than that. It's that the first practitioners of the architectural art imitated the ruins of Antiquity when they were still half-buried and the spirit of their successors has now cleared away the rubble and brought out the beauty of the form.



When you see columns like these, don't you feel that part is still buried in the earth, and yet the lower colonnade of the Doge's Palace has these dimensions.

p. 528. Columns on the Piazzetta.

Both of granite, the one with a height probably 10 times its diameter is of red granite whose polish and colour has been preserved, it's so slender and delightful you can't tear your eyes away from it.

The other is about 8 diameters high, so may belong to the Doric order as the first one does to the Composite, it's of white granite that has suffered at the hands of time and developed a kind of shell, about as thick as the back of a biggish knife-blade, which has turned matt and is now peeling off in some places. On the Piazzetta side of St Mark's there are two smaller columns of exactly this kind of stone where you notice the same thing happening.

Apart from St Mark's I haven't been into any buildings. There's enough to do outside, and the people are endlessly interesting. I spent a long time at the fish-market today and watched the way they haggle and bargain with extraordinary intensity, alertness, and shrewdness.

It's also great fun watching the public goings-on of their legal practices. The notaries and the rest sit there each at his desk writing away, somebody comes up to him to ask him to do a document, etc. Others are walking about and so forth. It's a constant communal life and what a necessary part of this tableau the beggars are. Without them we wouldn't have the *Odyssey* or the Story of Dives and Lazarus.* I'm making a terrible mess again, but I can't wait to get the words down on the paper.

30th, evening

When life begins for the Venetians, I withdraw and go home to talk to you a bit. Even the maid asked me yesterday why I don't like to go out in the evening.

Today I've been slowly extending my idea of Venice again. I now have the plan of the city, then I went up the tower of St Mark's, where your eye is met by what must surely be a unique spectacle. It was midday and bright sunshine so that I could make out everything near and far without an eyeglass. The tide was in over the lagoons.

p. 532. Across the *lido*, a narrow strip of ground that closes off the lagoons, I saw the sea and some sails on it for the first time. There are galleys and frigates anchored in the lagoons, meant to be joining Admiral Emo,* but the wind is in the wrong quarter.

The hills near Padua and Vicenza and the Tyrolean Alps frame the picture to the west and north quite wonderfully.

Towards evening I got lost without a guide again in the most remote quarters of the city and tried to find my way out of this labyrinth without asking directions. You find where you are in the

end, but it's an incredible tangle, and mine is the best way to really persuade your senses that is so, on top of which I've been noting down to the last detail the behaviour, way of life, customs, and nature of the inhabitants. Dear Lord, what a poor good animal man is.

The quays make a pleasant walk.

The three days I've been here, I've seen a fellow telling stories to a more-or-less large audience. I can't understand a word. But nobody laughs, sometimes the listeners smile—they, as you can imagine, are from the very lowest class. And he has nothing striking or ludicrous in his manner, rather a certain sober look and a variety and precision in his movements which I only noticed this evening. I must take a closer look at him.

Next Monday the *Opera Buffa* and two comic theatres are opening. So we're going to give ourselves a treat too. I hope it will turn out better than in Vicenza. Otherwise there isn't much to report today. Apart from some hard work on Iphigenie, I've spent most of my time on Palladio, and can't put him down. My good angel made me pursue the book that I wanted Jagemann* to send for four years ago, but he got me the more recent edition of the Works. And yet, again! what use would they have been to me if I hadn't seen his buildings? In Verona and Vicenza I saw what I could for myself, it was only in Padua I found the book, now I'm studying it and the scales are falling from my eyes, the mists are dissolving and I understand the objects I see. Simply as a book it's a great work. And what a man he was! My love, how happy it makes me that I've devoted my life to what is true, as it's now such an easy transition to greatness, which is the highest purest point of truth.

The revolution that I foresaw and that is now going on within me is the same as has happened to every artist who for a long time was diligently true to nature and now beheld the remains of the great ancient spirit, his soul swelled within him and he felt a kind of inward transfiguration of himself, a feeling of freer life, higher existence, lightness and grace.

I wish to God I could keep my Iphigenie another half-year, people would be able to sense the southern climate in her even more.

1 October, evening 8 o'clock
I'm coming to you later than usual today, yet will have a great deal to say. This morning I worked at Iphigenie for a long time and it went

on well. No two days are alike and I'm surprised I manage so well in this foreign life, but it's a sign that I'm still in firm possession of myself. Then I went to the Rialto and St Mark's Square. Since I learned that Palladio made a design for a bridge over to the Square, and since I've seen him in his works, perhaps I'm allowed a few niggles about the Rialto as it now is. I'll expand on that when we meet. Then I went through several quarters of the city to get to the Square and, as it happened to be Sunday, I did some thinking about how dirty Venice is. The authorities do make some provision. People sweep the muck into nooks and corners, I see big boats plying back and forth, and in some places putting in, to transport the sweepings, which people from the surrounding islands use as manure. But it really is inexcusable that the city isn't cleaner, since it's really designed to be clean, all the streets have an even surface, and even in the remote quarters they at least have a raised brick edge, where necessary there's a bit of a camber in the middle, and depressions at the sides to catch the water and carry it away into underground channels. Some further basic measures would make it infinitely easier to turn Venice into the cleanest of cities, as she is the most bizarre. I couldn't refrain from making a plan for it as I went along.

After dinner I studied more Palladio, who makes me very happy, and then went out with the map of the city in my hand looking for the Church of the *Mendicanti*, which I duly found all right.

The women were performing an oratorio behind the grating, as usual the church was full of people listening. The music very beautiful, and magnificent voices. An alto sang King Saul, not the voice I was expecting. Some passages in the music were infinitely beautiful, I enclose the text, it's such Italian Latin that in many places you can't help laughing; but plenty of scope for the music. It would have been a real delight if the wretched conductor hadn't beaten time by slapping a rolled up score against the grating in a quite disgraceful way, as if he was dealing with schoolboys who needed teaching, and they'd done the piece often, it was absolutely unnecessary and ruined the whole impression, much as if a beautiful statue were set up with bits of scarlet rag stuck on all the joints.* The intrusive sound undoes any harmony, and this is a musician and he can't hear it, or rather he wants the slapping to draw attention to his presence, whereas it would be better if he let the audience guess at his quality from the perfection of the performance. I know the French do things

that way, I wouldn't have expected it of the Italians. And the audience seems used to it.

I had some thoughts about that too, and will communicate them if I find them further confirmed.

Tomorrow I'm going to begin looking at things closely. I'm now familiar with the whole layout, there's no risk of being confused by the detail, and I'll take a firm image of Venice away with me. Today for the first time I was accosted by a prostitute in broad daylight in an alley near the Rialto.

This evening there was a splendid moon. A storm came up over the sea from the south-east, that is from the Dalmatian mountains, there was lightning, the storm passed over the moon, broke up, and went on towards the Tyrolean Alps, so that's the same wind that throws all the clouds that have formed further south against the German mountains and perhaps means trouble for you in the north. Still, I have hopes for you, as the mountains are mostly clear.

I've done some quick sketches on grey paper of the way things looked over the water this evening.

Farewell. I do feel tired in the evenings. I'm sure you'll sometimes take the wish for the deed, even if I don't manage to say anything very clever.

2 October, evening

A word before I go to the opera.

p. 569. St *Giorgio* a fine monument to Palladio, although in this case he was following not so much his own genius as the genius of place.

p. 566. *Carità*.* I found an indication in Palladio's Works that what he intended here was a building to imitate the private dwellings of Antiquity, the upper classes naturally. I hurried off there avid to see it but alas hardly a tenth of it is executed. Yet even this part worthy of his divine genius. A perfection in the design and a meticulousness in the execution such as I hadn't previously come across. In the mechanical aspects too, as the greater part was put up in brick (of which it's true I've seen other examples) a fine precision. I did some drawing after Palladio today and want to assimilate him at the deepest level.

p. 530. Library, rather the hall of antiquities that you go through first, precious things. A robe of a Minerva, a Cleopatra; I say 'robe',

because I mentally break off the restored heads and arms straight away. A Ganymede supposed to be by Phidias* and a celebrated Leda. Again just fragments, the first well restored, the second moderately, but with a strong feeling of sensuality.

I can't forget the Carità. He also added a staircase to it that he praises himself and which really is very beautiful.

3 October

Yesterday evening opera at *St Moisè*. Nothing really enjoyable about it. The text, the music, the players all lacked the inner energy needed to raise things to the highest level. It was all not bad, but only the two women took any trouble, not just to act well but to *project* themselves and *please*. Well, that's something. They have good figures, good voices, suitably lively and pleasing. On the other hand, none of the men had any of the inner power and zest to make much impression on the audience. And no positively brilliant voice.

The ballet miserably uninventive, and duly whistled off the stage. A few splendid leapers, the women taking great care to show the audience all their best parts.

Today though I saw a quite different comedy, which was more enjoyable. I was at a court hearing in the Doge's Palace.

It was an important case and was even being heard, fortunately for me, in the vacation.

One of the lawyers who spoke was everything that a *Buffo caricato** should be. Figure: fat, short, but agile. A tremendously prominent profile. A voice like brass and vehement, as if everything he said was in deep and deadly earnest. I call it a comedy because it's probably all set up in advance before the production is put on for the public and the judges too know in advance what they're going to decide. Even so, this way of doing things is immensely preferable to the hole-and-cornerism of our chanceries. I'll tell you the full circumstances and how agreeably without pomp, how natural it all is, when we meet.

Evening

Seen a lot. Just a few words as a reminder

p. 565. *I Scalzi*, marble enough, and not at all badly put together; but nothing of the elevated spirit that can only be sensed in inimitable measure, order, harmony.

566. *La Salute* the middle vessel on which the cathedral rests is of

a height and breadth that are not to be scorned. But the whole in every detail is just one example of bad taste after another, a church that is worthy to have miracles happen in it.

567. Marriage-feast at Cana. A picture well known from engravings, and charming enough in that form. Magnificent women's heads and the tasteless subject of a long table with guests very nobly handled. The ceiling decorations by Titian a very crazy choice of subjects for a ceiling; yet beautiful and splendidly executed.

Isaac's father has him by the forelock, the rest of his hair hangs down and he's looking down in a graceful posture. David, having killed Goliath, puts his hands together in a free and easy gesture as he looks up to heaven.

p. 577. *Il Redentore*. A beautiful and grandiose work of Palladio's. The façade much more praiseworthy than the one on *St Giorgio*. These are works that have been engraved, we can talk about them. Just one general word. *Palladio* had absorbed so much of the existence of the ancients and felt the littleness and narrowness of the time into which he'd been born, like a great man who won't resign himself but sets out as far as possible to reshape the rest to his own noble conceptions. Thus he was not happy, so I infer from a mild phrase in his book, with the way people went on building Christian churches in the old basilica form, he tried to make his churches more like ancient temples. That led to some features that don't quite fit, which I think he managed to integrate in the case of *St Redentore*, but are too obtrusive in *St Giorgio*. Volkmann says a bit about this but doesn't hit the nail on the head.

St Redentore is exquisite inside as well. Everything is by Palladio, including the altar designs. Only the niches, which he meant to be filled with statues, have garish painted wooden figures.

In honour of St Francis, the *Capuchin fathers* had given a side-altar the full decorative treatment. You couldn't see anything of the stonework except the Corinthian capitals. All the rest seemed to be covered over with a splendid tasteful embroidery in arabesque style, the nicest of its kind I've seen. I was especially surprised at the broad gold-embroidered foliage and tendrils. I looked closer and found it was a very nice piece of *trompe-l'œil*. What I'd taken for gold was pressed straw stuck on paper in lovely patterns and the background painted with vivid colours, and that so variegated and attractive that this jest, which in material terms was not worth a penny, and which

probably some of them had done themselves for free, would have cost thousands if it had been genuine. We can do it some time. A fault in the whitewashing and painting of churches I note just as a reminder.

573. *Gesuati*, a true Jesuit church. Cheerful paintings by Tiepolo. In the ceiling pieces some of the charming female saints are showing more than their calves, if my eyeglass doesn't deceive me. The picture Volkmann quotes is a foolish subject, but very nicely executed.

I ought to say more about the Doge's Palace, which I saw this morning. Maybe tomorrow. As you can see, I'm just shooting everything on the wing. But it's caught for good in the perceptions of eye and heart.

4 October, noon

Today it rained and I made use of the time and got straight down to work on Iphigenie. Now a few words for my beloved.

Yesterday I went to the comedy at the *Teatro S. Luca*, which was a real pleasure, extemporized, performed in masks and with great naturalness, energy, and competence. The standard isn't all of a piece. Pantaloon is very good and one of the women, who looks very like Countess Lanthieri, no great actress but speaks excellently and knows how to carry herself. A crazy plot with incredible twists and turns that provided a good three hours' entertainment. But it's the *people* every time who are the basis on which it all rests. It's the whole that does it, not the parts. In the square and on the quays and in the gondolas and in the palace. The buyer and the seller, the beggar and the seaman, the lawyer and his adversary—all living and active and involved and talking and asserting and shouting and making offers and singing and scolding and cursing and making a din. And in the evening they go to the theatre and see and hear their daily life, only artfully put together, more charmingly tricked out with a bit of fantasy woven in, etc. and they take a childlike pleasure and shout some more and clap and make a din. From one night to the next, from midnight to midnight it all goes on in exactly the same way.

I scarcely think I've seen more natural acting than these masks, really an outstanding natural talent.

As I write this there's noise on the canal beneath my window that

lasts beyond midnight. For better and worse they're always up to something between them.

The Farsetti house has a precious collection of casts of the best pieces from Antiquity. I'll say nothing about the ones I already knew from Mannheim* and elsewhere, and mention only new acquaintances: the Cleopatra colossal in repose, she has attached the asp to her arm and is entering the sleep of death. The mother Niobe covering her youngest daughter with her cloak to protect her from Apollo's arrows, several gladiators, an Amor resting wrapped in his wings, a seated and a standing Marius, they're works that can give delight for thousands of years and it still won't exhaust the value of the artist. Also some very fine busts. I just feel even now how far behind I am in my knowledge of these things, still, it will come with a rush, at least I know the way. Palladio has shown me the way to this and to all of art and all of life. That perhaps sounds a bit odd, but yet it's not as paradoxical as when the sight of a pewter dish gave Jacob Böhme illumination about the whole universe.*

If I come back and you are still nice to me, you shall know all about my secrets too.

Another thing in this collection is a cast of the frieze and the cornice of the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina whose outlines I'll trace lightly from the Palladio edition, to give you a quick idea. Although no drawing can match the architectural presence that springs out at you. This is only a miserable little picture anyway (I've left it out, it was useless).

Tomorrow, Thursday, the *St Luca* troupe are playing again, according to the advertisements a kind of historical play. Saturday is solemn mass at St Justina with the Doge there, whom I shall see then in full ceremonial fig along with the nobility. Sunday is the consecration of St Mark's where he'll appear again too. Till then we'll see what there is for us still to see in Iphigenie and the Venetian sights.

p. 523. Paradise by Tintoretto. Another glorification of the Mother of God. But in spirit doesn't come near the one in the *Casa Bevi l'aqua* at Verona. One thing I think I've noticed is that Tintoretto does small figures better than big ones. With the small ones he could give free rein to his natural grace and lightness of touch, and the larger scale was a hindrance.

In this Paradise too there are larger figures and the picture is still by him, but that luminosity of spirit has vanished. He also painted

the Verona piece when he was still young, as I conclude from all the signs and the provocative Eve, this picture in old age. Eve is quite hidden.

All the rest of the paintings in the Palace I've seen and had explained to me, and at least I have a mental image of the whole and of the most remarkable subjects.

I've now hired a servant. A splendid old man. A German—who every day saves me what he costs. He's been right through Italy as companion to people of rank and knows his way around. He keeps the Italians in check as is needed. For example, he gives the exactly right least tip in each place, I have to pass as a merchant everywhere.

He had a set-to with a gondolier over 10 soldi, it made a tremendous row, and the gondolier was right at that. But he takes no notice, he did much the same today in the Arsenal. He reminds me a bit of Wende,* has his manners too. I was glad to be by myself the first days, and I'm glad that I have him now.

I had a fancy to get myself a tabarro* and all the trappings, for people are already going about in masks. But when I thought about it it seemed too expensive, and am I not enough of a carnival mask for them as I am? I'll buy myself a Vitruvius* instead, that's a pleasure will last beyond Venice and the carnival.

Evening

I have a set routine now, when it strikes night-time I go home. The noisy square is too lonely for me, and I need you. Now this and that.

I've now heard the following speak in public:

- (1) Three fellows in the square telling stories each in his way.
- (2) Two preachers
- (3) Two agents
- (4) The comic actors, especially Pantaloon.

They all have something in common, both because they're of one nation which is constantly involved in living and talking, and because they imitate each other. They have certain favourite gestures which I must take note of, and in general I practise doing what they do and will tell you stories in this style when I come back, although they lose a lot of their originality in another language, I also enclose the figure



of the lawyer, which is much less of a caricature than the real thing was.

Today for the feast of St Francis I was in his church, *Francesco alle vigne*. The loud voice of the Capuchin was accompanied by the shouts of things being sold outside the church, a kind of antiphonal effect, I stood halfway between the two and it sounded rather good. This is another church that Palladio grafted on to an old one, and the strange contradictions I was talking about yesterday show up again here. I'm very much looking forward to studying all this more thoroughly later.

This evening I'm going to the theatre, *St Chrysostomo* where they do comedies translated from the French, I must see what kind of effect that produces.

p. 520. In a room next to the *Sala del Consiglio dei Dieci** which also belongs to this fearsome tribunal there hangs a delightful Dürer opposite a Raphael; when I was looking at the former, one of the *avogadori** came in from the next room, a fantastic figure, a fine sight in his get-up, and my companions bowed almost to the ground. He called someone, was in general quite affable, went just as he had come. They also let me take a peek into the room where the three State Inquisitors meet, so I also know what it looks like in there. I'm glad to see how they keep my Birds in order.

5 October. After dinner
This morning I was at the Arsenal and it was interesting enough for me, as I don't yet know anything about the sea and so here too I had to go back to primary school, so to speak. For certainly everything here has the look of an old family which is still active but where the blossom and the best fruiting time are past.

As I'm also trying to learn something about craftsmen, I saw some remarkable things. I climbed up on the completed frame of an 84-gun vessel. A similar ship, fully built and fitted out, burned down to the waterline six months ago on the *Riva de Sciaovoni*. The powder chamber was not very full and when it went up there was no great damage done. The neighbouring houses lost their windowpanes.

I've seen beautiful oak-wood from Istria being worked. I can't say too often how much my hard-won knowledge of natural things, which mankind need as materials and apply for their profit, helps me generally and throws light on matters. For example, my mineralogical and oryctological knowledge* of rocks gives me a head start in architecture.

On this journey I hope and intend to achieve a settled view of the fine arts, really impress their sacred image on my mind, and keep them as a source of private pleasure. But then to turn my attention to craftsmen and when I come back study chemistry and mechanics. For the time of beauty is over, our day demands only what is an urgent and strict necessity.

I already have preliminary thoughts and feelings about the renaissance of the arts in Italy in the Middle Ages, and how this *Astraea**

soon abandoned Earth again and how the whole picture fits together. How Roman history rises from the past to meet me! A pity, a pity, my love! all a little late. Oh why didn't I have a sensible Englishman as my father, instead of being left to acquire and conquer all this all by myself as I was, and still am.

It's raining and I'm sitting by the fire. When will I pour tea for you again beside mine?

Since I promised you coffee from Alexandria, you probably didn't think I'd even get it in Venice. I've already asked, myself or through people who know, in various places, but I'm not yet confident, I have to be quite sure. The kind I've seen was going to cost a ducat for seven pounds, that wouldn't be bad. Mind you, transport from here to the depths of the continent in Thüringen would add something, but no matter, you shall have some.

Yesterday I didn't go to the comedy as I'd intended. Today I hope to see a tragedy and am very curious what it will be like.

With architecture things are getting better by the day. If you jump in, you learn to swim. I've now got a rational grasp of the orders of columns and can mostly say *why* they're as they are too. I can now keep the dimensions and relationships in my mind, whereas I found them incomprehensible and impossible to retain when they were merely something to be learned by heart.

A word about the *Bucentaur*.* It's a luxury galley. But a fine conception and well executed. I keep coming back to my old principle: if an artist has a genuine subject, he can produce something genuine. The task here was to make a galley that would be worthy to carry the heads of a republic on the most solemn day to the sacrament of their time-honoured overlordship. And it is finely executed. Ornamentation every inch! You can't therefore say it's overloaded with ornament. Nothing but carving and gilding, not for any practical use, a true *monstrance* to show the people their leaders in full magnificence. And we know that the people, just as they like to decorate their own hats, also like to see their rulers magnificent and dressed up. It's a real family heirloom by which you can see what the Venetians were and what they thought of themselves.

The way I'm writing all this down for you, I won't have much left for when I'm back. I can definitely say I haven't had a single thought that seemed to me worth anything without at least giving some hint of it in a few words. As it's not yet time for the theatre, a word about

Palladio following on from yesterday's. In the works he carried out, especially the churches, I've seen a lot to criticize alongside the very greatest things, so that it felt as if he was standing there beside me and saying: this and this I did against my will, but I did it because that was the only way I could get anywhere near my ideal in these circumstances.

It seems to me that when looking at a square, a dimension of height or breadth, a pre-existing church, an older house for which he was supposed to add façades, he simply thought: how are you going to get this whole thing into the grandest form, you may have to botch this or that detail, here or there it will produce an incongruity, but never mind, the whole will have great style and you'll get pleasure from working on it, and so he put up the great picture he had in his mind even in places where it didn't quite fit, where he had to fragment or mutilate it. That's why I so value the wing in the *Carità*, because there he was doing exactly what he wanted. If it were finished, then perhaps there would now be no more perfect piece of architecture in existence in the world.

I'm getting an increasingly clear picture of all this (i.e. the way he thought and the way he worked) as I read more of his works, or rather see how he treats the ancients. For he uses few words, but they are all weighty. It's the fourth book,* on the Temples of Antiquity, that is a real guide to the way you should see Rome.

The really remarkable thing is the way other architects before and after him have chewed over these difficulties and the only solution they've found is a golden mediocrity. I'll grasp all that even better when I've got past the elementary classes.

Night

I've just been laughing all the way home from the tragedy and will tell you about it before I go to sleep. The play wasn't bad. The author had put together all the tricks of the tragic trade and it was grateful material for the actors. Most of the situations were familiar, but some were new and quite ingenious. In the end the only thing left was for the fathers to stab each other, which duly passed off happily. Whereupon the curtain fell, to great applause. But the clapping only got louder, the audience shouted *fuora* and at last the two principal couples condescended to creep out from behind the curtain, bow and scrape, and exit on the other side. But the audience still wasn't

satisfied, they kept on clapping and shouting *i morti!* and it went on and on till the two old men came out and bowed, whereupon there were shouts of *bravi i morti!** They got lots of applause and off they went. The joke loses a lot if you don't have the shouts of *bravo! bravi!* that the Italians use all the time ringing in your ears, as I have, and then suddenly you even hear them calling out this compliment to the dead. It had me really chuckling. Good night! *Felicissima notte!** the Italians say.

6 October, morning

Yesterday's tragedy taught me a lot. First, I heard the way the Italians handle and declaim their eleven-syllable iambs. Then I saw how cleverly Gozzi* linked masks with tragic characters. That is the real drama for this people. For they want to be moved in a crude fashion. They don't seem to me to have any tender sympathy with the tragic victim, they just enjoy it if the hero speaks well, for they set a lot of store by good speaking, then they want to have a laugh, or some kind of stage foolery.

It was comical when the tyrant gave his son a sword and demanded he should kill his own wife with it, she being there on stage, the people started to disapprove of this action vociferously, they weren't far off interrupting the play and demanding the old tyrant should take his sword back. Whereupon the whole dramatic development would have been ruined. It really was a silly, unnatural situation too in the circumstances, and the people spotted that at once.

I also now have a better understanding of the long speeches and the way they argue the pros and cons in Greek tragedy. The Athenians were keener still on hearing people speak and even better judges of it than the Italians, and they learned something from the courts where they hung around all day.

Afternoon

This morning I went over with my old guardian spirit *al lido*,* a spit of land that closes the lagoons off and divides them from the sea. We got out and walked right across it, I heard a loud noise, it was the sea,* and soon I saw it. It was pounding high against the beach as it withdrew, for it was around noon and the tide starting to ebb. So now that's something else I've seen with my own eyes, and I followed it as

it retreated over the lovely threshing-floor it leaves behind. I would have loved to have the children here* with me for the seashells. I picked up enough myself, just like a child, especially as I have a use for them.

People eat a lot of squid here, I got them to give me some of the black liquid and plan to get more yet. I'll let it dry in the shells and send it you, use some of it and keep some for me, I can get as much as I like. The colour is pitch black, mixed with water it's a bit gritty, but add some bister and it will be all right. We must try it and I'll ask around whether there's anything else needs bearing in mind or doing.

On the *lido* not far from the sea there are English graves and further on Jewish ones, they aren't supposed to rest in hallowed ground. I found the grave of the noble consul *Smith* and his first wife, I owe him my copy of *Palladio** and thanked him for it over his unhallowed grave.

The sea is a grand sight. I must try to arrange a trip out in a fishing boat.

Evening

I'm really happy and contented since I've had *Minerva* to accompany and support me* in the figure of the old servant I hired. So precise in everything, so sharp in making economies, I've never seen anything like it. Always the shortest route, always the lowest price, always the best of what we're looking for. If only it fitted my plans to stay on in Venice, even just for three months, so that I could study Venetian history and make a few acquaintances. With my way of seeing things and with this honest spy, I'd reckon to put together a fine mental image of Venice.

By the sea today I found various plants whose similar habit gave me a clue to their characteristics. All of them are simultaneously thick-stemmed and vigorous growers, sappy and tough, and it's obvious that the ancient salt in the sand and even more the salt air makes them this way. They're bursting with juices like water-plants, they're firm, tough like mountain plants. Where their leaf-tips tend to spikes, as with thistles, they're tremendously sharp and strong. I found a bush of leaves like that, I took it for our coltsfoot, but here armed with sharp weapons and the leaf like leather, I pressed some. (*Eryngium maritimum*.)

Similarly the seed-pods, the stems all thick and firm. The rushes sharp and stiff so they really prick you. I found some varieties of sponge and some insect cases washed up on the beach. How satisfying it feels that this is now all world and nature and no longer something in a glass case.

I look forward with pleasure to all the kinds of knowledge that nod to me from this side and that, and I shall gladly return to books.

The fish-market and the many products of the sea give me pleasure, I often go across there and shine a light on the hapless ocean denizens who have been snatched from their element.

This morning I also saw the Doge's chambers where his portrait hangs, a handsome man of benevolent appearance.

Another Titian. Delightful brushwork, but otherwise nothing to enthuse over.

The horses on St Mark's seen near to. Excellent figures! From below I'd just about noticed that they had patches of colour, partly a lovely metal sheen, partly touches of copperish green. Close up you can see they were completely gilded and are covered all over with weals, as the barbarians wouldn't file the gold but tried to hack it off. Never mind, at least that way the shape was left. A magnificent team. I'd love to hear someone who really knows horses talk about them.

What seems to me strange is that up there they look heavier and from down on the square they look as delicate as deer, though it is possible to explain it.

The domes and vaults of St Mark's and their side surfaces are full of coloured figures on a gold ground, all mosaic work. Some are very fine, others not great, according to which master did the design and which artist executed it. It really came home to me how much everything depends on the initial invention, that has to have the right proportions and the true spirit, since working with little square pieces of glass, and here not even in the neatest way, they can equally well follow a good and a bad pattern. This artistic technique, as you know, is now very highly developed.

7 October, morning

Today I haven't been able to produce a single line of Iphigenie, so I'll write to you straight away in order to make good use of my fresh day.

Last night I saw Crébillon's *Electra** at the *St Crisostomo* theatre, in

translation of course. I can't say how tasteless and tedious I found it. The actors are fair enough and the audience can be fobbed off with one or two good passages. Orestes alone has three different 'poetic' narratives in one scene, and in the end he goes mad enough to drive you mad. The *Electra* is like Madame Bechtolsheim,* only taller, more solid, with good carriage, speaks the verse well, only from beginning to end crazed, as the role required. Still, I again learned something. The eleven-syllable Italian line creates great problems in the declaiming, because the final syllable is always short and therefore always rises, whatever the actor declaiming it wants. I've also been thinking that I'd quite happily put on my Iphigenie with this troupe and in front of this audience, only I'd change one or two things, as I would have had to do anyway if I'd been making it suitable for our theatres and our public at home.

But oh dear. It seems the last spark of my attachment to the theatre is fated to be put out. You won't believe how empty, how absolutely null all that feels to me. I'm also beginning to understand how much of a come-down Euripides* was from the art of his predecessors, and yet he still got an incredible reception. If you have eyes to see, it's clear how it all came about.

Evening

If I hadn't got you to write to, I wouldn't have come back home yet. The full moon in a perfect clear sky over the lagoons, the islands, the strange city, makes a magnificent spectacle, the Square looks like a bizarre opera setting, and everywhere's packed with people.

Now in order.

This morning I was at the solemn service that the Doge has to attend in honour of an ancient victory over the Turks.* It was held in St Justina's.

When the golden barques arrive bearing the Doge and a part of the nobility, the strangely clad boatmen labour at their red oars, on the banks the clergy, the Fraternities* stand waiting and jostling, with their wax tapers carried high on poles and long portable silver candlesticks, and the long violet robes of the Savii, the ministers of the Republic, then the long red ones of the Senators enter and finally the Old Man in his long golden robe with the ermine cape disembarks, three take up his train, and then as many *Nobili* again follow, all this in front of the church portal, with the Turkish

banners held in front of the door: you suddenly feel you're looking at an ancient embroidered tapestry, but one that's admirably designed.

For a northern fugitive like me this ceremony was a delight. With us, where all solemnities are short-coat occasions and where the biggest ceremonies you can think of are conducted with shouldered arms, this kind of thing wouldn't be right: but for a place like Venice these trailing robes and peaceable enactments *are* right. The Doge is a man of fine stature and appearance. But you can see he's ill and is just about holding up under the heavy robe to maintain the dignity of the occasion, for the rest he looks much like the grandpa of the whole race and is altogether kind and affable.

The costume looks very well. The little flap on his cap doesn't spoil the effect, because it's of a fine transparent stuff and rests on the whitest, lightest hair imaginable.

Some fifty *Nobili* in long dark red robes were with him, mostly fine figures, not one caricature among them. Several of them tall, with large heads, strong profiles, white, soft, without looking bloated or dreadfully sated. Rather they look effortlessly judicious, calmly sure of themselves. Lightness of being, and running through it all a certain gaiety.

When everyone was arrayed in the church and the Mass began, the Fraternities processed in through the main door and out through the side door after receiving man by man, or rather pair by pair, the holy water and bowing to the high altar, the Doge, and the nobility.

I've been to the Pisani Palace. A pity that you sense its republican element so strongly and yet that too is good in a way. Built over time, not fully carried through because of local hindrances, very high, a fine view of the whole of Venice from its roof. Handsome rooms, very habitable too, although not much in the way of decoration, which in any case people didn't know much about in olden times, and anything here is old. (I mean of course the original design.)

I notice a fine kind of flooring that's common here. They do a good imitation of all kinds of granite and porphyry, sometimes with pretty fantastic colours, and the floors are kept clean and sparkling.

Scuola di St Marco. Beautiful pictures by Tintoretto, whom I've always loved and love more and more.

Ballon. As in Verona. There were a couple of excellent players. The onlookers placed bets and had a great time. And the most common man had the right to comment.

This evening I'd ordered the famous boatman performers who sing Tasso and Ariosto* to their own tunes. It was a moonlight night, I took a gondola, one singer in the bow, one in the stern, they began their song and sang the verses turn and turn about. The melody, which we know through Rousseau,* is something between chorale and recitative, it keeps the same movement throughout without having a regular time, the modulation too stays constant, except that in order to match the content of the lyric they use a kind of declamation that changes the tone and the measure.

But this last is really the spirit and the life of it.

How the melody originally came about I won't enquire, enough, it's just what is needed by someone idly modulating something to himself and fitting poems he knows by heart to the tune. With a strong carrying voice (the people are impressed by power more than anything) he sits on the bank of an island, a canal, on a bark, and lets his song ring out as far as he can. And it does carry a long way over the silent surface. Far away someone else hears it who knows the melody, understands the words, and replies with the next lines, the first man replies again in his turn, and thus each of them is the other's echo and the song goes on for nights, entertains them without wearying them. So the further they are apart, the more charming their song is, if the listener is between the two then he's in the best place. So as to let me hear this they got out on the Giudecca quay, spread out along the canal, I walked up and down between them in such a way that I was always leaving the one who was starting to sing and approaching the one who was ceasing. It was only at that point that the sense of the singing dawned on me. And then, as a voice from the distance it sounded strange, like a lament without mourning—and has something incredibly moving, to the point of tears. I put it down to my mood, but my old chap said as we were going home: *è singolare come quel canto intenerisce, e molto più quando è più ben cantato*.* He told me you have to hear the lido women singing, particularly the ones from furthest out, *Malamocco* and *Palestrina*, they apparently sing Tasso to this and similar melodies. It's their custom, when their menfolk are fishing out at sea, to sit on the shore in the evening and sing these songs in their carrying voices until they hear the men singing back from far out, so it's a conversation. Don't you think that's lovely? very lovely! It's easy to imagine that someone *listening* close by might take no pleasure in these voices as they

struggle with the waves of the ocean. But how human and true the idea behind the singing is. How this melody comes alive for me now, where before we so often puzzled over its dead letters. Song of a lone person into the far distance, that another of like mind may hear and answer him.

Why can't I send you a sound in the same way, which you would hear at the same hour and answer.

Goodnight my love, I'm tired from all the walking and clambering over bridges. Goodnight.

8 October. After supper.

The good old Doge didn't attend the function at *St Mark's* today, he's ill and instead of the ceremony we visited some other things, we continue to walk about the city seeking out its treasures one after the other.

Palazzo Pisani Moretta. A *Paolo Veronese* that can give you an idea of the master's full worth. It's as fresh as if it was painted yesterday and his great art of producing a delightful harmony without imposing a single tone on the whole piece, merely by the varying areas of colour, is here very evident. As soon as a picture has deteriorated, you can no longer make out any of this.

As far as costume goes, one only has to think he was setting out to paint a sixteenth-century subject and all's well. The younger princess is a charming little mouse and has such a calmly stubborn little face. The rest when we meet.

Scuola di San Rocco. p. 554

These so-called *Scuole* are buildings that belong to the various fraternities, where they hold their meetings and keep the tools of their trade and their treasures. The Fraternity of St Roch got particularly rich after a plague, because pious souls were grateful to this patron saint and the *Santissima Vergine** for saving them from it. It had raged from March to November and now towards winter it stopped all by itself.

Today it really struck me how joyfully human beings embrace something senseless, it only has to be presented to them in sensuous form, so one should be glad to be a poet. What a beautiful invention the Mother of God is, is something you don't feel until you're in the midst of Catholicism. A *Vergine* with the *Son* on her arm, who is however a *santissima Vergine* because she has brought a son into the

world. It's a subject that brings your senses to such a beautiful standstill, it has a kind of inner grace like poetry that gives such pleasure and makes you so unable to think, that it really is made into a religious object.

Unfortunately, though, these subjects have been the scourge of painters and they are the reason why art sank so low again when it had scarcely begun to raise itself. A *Danae** is always a quite different task for the artist from an Immaculate Conception and yet ultimately the same subject. Except that the artist can make a great deal out of the first and nothing at all out of the second.

The building of the *Scuola di San Rocco* is grand and beautiful without being an architectural masterpiece. That was still a time for painters. Tintoretto did the big pictures in the main hall. Also a large Crucifixion in a side-room.

My recent observation is being confirmed, but I must explain myself more precisely.

Here too there are large figures excellently painted and the pieces well conceived; but the paintings would all have more charm if they were smaller. The figures, if I can put it like this, appeared to him in a smaller format and he only enlarged them to scale, without being able to enlarge their inner nature.

His human forms, his compositions don't have the *Sodezza** that's required for large figures. They occupy the eye agreeably and render a felicitous idea on a small scale, but they don't have enough inner substance to fill such a large space and to impress with their presence. Thus for example, to make a figure colossal it isn't enough just for it to be nine or ten feet high, its nature must be colossal, it mustn't impress me with its dimensions but with its whole being, so that I don't measure up to it even if I mentally enlarge myself.

The best piece in the hall, I think, is the Lord's Supper by the altar. He's set the table back and in the foreground put in a beggar and a woman sitting on the steps. All the background and the figures in it have an indescribable *Vaghezza**.

After that I was in the Jewish quarter and in all sorts of other places.

Evening

Today there isn't much to tell you, I was *ai Mendicanti* again where the women perform music, again they sang quite splendidly,

especially the one I praised the last time. If only one could keep the impression in one's mind's ear.

Afterwards I was with an old Frenchman who can't speak any Italian and consequently is totally at a loss, despite his letters of recommendation he sometimes doesn't know whether he's coming or going. He's a man of some rank and cultivation to whom I'm very polite and talk about all manner of things, we had a conversation about Venice etc., he asked me how long I'd been here, I told him not yet a fortnight. He replied: *il paroît que Vous n'avez pas perdu votre tems*.* That's the first good-conduct certificate I've collected. Tomorrow I'm going to take a long trip away.

If only there were good spirits so that I could make you share just one aria and the moonlight on the water and the square. Goodnight.

9 October

A delightful day from morning to night. I drove to Palestrina, over towards Chiozza* where the large works are that the Republic is putting up against the sea. They're of hewn stone and are really meant to protect the whole strip of land that separates the lagoons from the ocean, a much-needed and very important project. A large map I'm sending will help you grasp what it's all about.

The lagoons are an effect of nature, in the Adriatic gulf there's a considerable stretch of land that is covered and uncovered by the tides. That Venice is what and where it is, with the islands, and the channels that run through the marshes and are navigable even when the tide's out, all this is the doing of human hands; and human hands must preserve it.

The sea can only get into the lagoons at two points, near the castles opposite the Arsenal and at the other end of the *lido* near Chiozza. The tide normally comes in twice a day and out again, always by the same route in the same direction, fills the channels and covers the marshy ground, and then flows out again leaving the high ground if not dry then visible, and the channels full.—It would be a quite different matter if it gradually found other routes, attacked the tongue of land, and streamed in and out as and where it pleased. Quite apart from what that would do to the settlements on the *lido*: Palestrina, St Peter, etc.; the channels in places would overflow, the water would look for new channels, make the *lido* into islands and the islands that presently lie at its centre perhaps into strips of land. To

stop this happening, they now have to protect the *lido* all they can. Not just the sea rising, but the way it would arbitrarily attack and overturn what people have taken possession of and what they have given purpose, shape, and direction to.

In extraordinary cases, and there have been some when the sea rose excessively, it's still a good thing if it can get in at two points and the rest are closed off, so it can't get in so fast or with such power and then within a few hours it has to yield to the ebb and in this way too its force is moderated again. Incidentally Venice has no need to worry,* the rate at which the sea-level is slowly dropping gives her thousands of years, and with a little shrewd assistance they will be able to keep the canals filled with water. If only they would keep their city cleaner, which is so necessary and so easy, and really of great importance for ages to come. For example, it's forbidden on pain of severe punishment to tip anything in the canals or throw their sweepings in. But you can't tell a sudden heavy shower not to get into every corner where they've left their sweepings and wash them into the canal. Indeed, what is worse, wash them into the drains that are meant to take the water off so that these get silted up. Even some of the tiles on the Piazzetta by St Mark's, which like the ones on the great Square are a clever device for draining the water away, have sometimes been clogged and flooded. If you get a really rainy day, the result is an intolerable muck. Everyone swears and curses. Going up and down the bridges people splash their cloaks and tabarros, everyone goes about in shoes and stockings and they spray each other, and it's no ordinary muck but really acid. Then the weather turns nice again and nobody thinks about cleanliness. It only needs the *political will*, and something could be done; I'd like to know if they have some political reason for leaving things as they are, or whether it's expensive negligence that lets things slip.

This evening I went up St Mark's tower. Since I'd recently seen the lagoons in all their splendour, with the tide full in, I also wanted to see them in their humbled state when it's out, and it's necessary to combine these two images if you want to have an accurate picture. It looks strange when you see land everywhere where water was before. The islands are no longer islands, but only higher built-up areas in a grey-greenish morass with beautiful channels cutting through it. The marshy part is covered with sea-grass and must also be

gradually rising, although the ebb- and flood-tides are constantly tugging and burrowing at it and give the vegetation no peace.

Back to the sea again! Down there today I watched the goings on of the sea-snails, patellas (mussels with a *single* shell) and the pocket-crabs, and it gave me a glow of pleasure observing them. No, really, how delightful and magnificent a *living thing* is! How exactly matched to its condition, how true, how intensely *being*! And how much I'm helped by the small amount of study I've done and how I look forward to taking it further!

Goodnight, my love! I now have a Vitruvius, I must study him so as to achieve illumination. Goodnight.

10 October

Today I've started going through my diary and preparing it for departure. The files are now to be passed to a higher instance for your judgement. I already find that a lot of what I've written could be made more precise, expanded, or improved. Let it stand as a monument to first impressions which, if not always true, we still find delightful and valuable.

I'm also beginning to prepare myself for the close. Iphigenie isn't getting finished; but she shan't lose anything by being with me under these skies. Oh if only I could send you a breath of this light way of being!

For Italians the *Ultramontano** is an obscure idea! as it is for me too. Only you and a few friends wave to me through the mists. Yet I tell you honestly it really is just the climate, otherwise there's nothing that makes me prefer these regions to the north.

For otherwise birth and habit are after all a powerful thing, I wouldn't want to live here, or anywhere else where I didn't have an occupation.

Architecture rises up before me like some ancient spirit from the grave, it tells me to study its principles like the rules of a *dead language*, not so as to practise it or to take a live delight in it, but only so as to revere the eternally departed life of past ages in quiet reflection.

I thank God for the way everything I valued from my young days is becoming dear to me again. How happy I am to be able to get close to Roman history and the ancient writers again! and with what reverent devotion I read Vitruvius!

Now I can say it, can confess my sickness and my foolishness. For years now I haven't been able to look at a Latin author, or touch anything that even just renewed an image of Italy, without suffering the most terrible pain.

Herder used to joke with me that I learned all my Latin reading Spinoza,* for he noticed that was the only Latin text I read. But he didn't know I had to beware of contact with the ancients. Even quite recently Wieland's translation of the *Satires** made me deeply unhappy, I only read two of them and it nearly drove me mad.

If I hadn't taken the resolve that I'm now carrying through, I would have absolutely gone to pieces and become incapable of anything, so ripe had the desire become within me to see these objects with my own eyes. For I could get no nearer through historical knowledge, it was as if the objects were standing there only a hand's-breadth away yet cut off from me by an impenetrable wall.

For it really does feel like that to me now, not as if I were seeing things but as if I were seeing them again. I've been in Venice just this short while, and all Venetian existence is as much part of me as if I'd been here for twenty years. I know too that the idea of it I'm taking away with me, even if it's incomplete, is still certainly a quite clear and true one.

Midnight

Now at last I can really say that I've seen a comedy. Today the *St Luca* Theatre was doing *Le baruffe chiozzotte* which might roughly be translated as *les criailleries de Chiozza* or *Squabblings in Chiozza*.

The characters are all sea-people, inhabitants of Chiozza and their wives and sisters and daughters. There's all the usual to-do of these people, for good or ill, their quarrels, vehemence, manners, easy-goingness, banality, wit, humour etc. are all well caught. The play is a Goldoni* too. As I was in the area only yesterday and the impression of the people's manners and voices was still in my mind's eye and ear, it was great fun, and though there were a lot of jokes I couldn't understand, still I could follow the whole thing very well and had to join heartily in the laughter. But I've also not seen such fun as the people had, seeing themselves and their like put on the stage. Shouts of laughter from beginning to end. But I have to say too that the actors made an excellent job of it. In line with the characters they'd

shared out, as it were, the different voices that are found among the people. It took you in from start to finish.

The leading actress was quite exquisite, much better than the other night in heroic garb and high passion. The women in general, but she in particular, imitated the people's voice, gestures, and ways with immense charm.

But it's the author who deserves the highest praise, for giving his countrymen this most enjoyable way of spending an evening, conjured up out of nothing, you can sense everywhere the infinitely practised hand.

11th, evening

I was in the Carità again making a pilgrimage to Palladio's grand inspirations. You could spend years contemplating works like this. Tomorrow morning I'm going back. For I really think I've seen nothing higher. And I feel I'm not mistaken. But just think, the outstanding artist, with an innate feeling for what is great, which he worked hard to cultivate (for people have no idea how much trouble he took over the works of Antiquity) finds an opportunity to carry out a favourite idea, to emulate a dwelling of the ancients, for once the idea exactly fits. There's nothing to get in his way, nor would he let anything. About the invention and the design I say nothing; just this much about the execution. Only the capital and base of the columns and a few other parts, which I took careful note of, are of cut stone. All the rest (I mustn't say of brick) of fired clay, for I've never come across bricks like these, you can imagine how sharp they are, as the frieze with its decoration is also baked from the same material and the various parts of the cornice too. That means he had shapes made for everything in advance, and they must have been much bigger in proportion as the clay shrinks, the parts had all been fired ready and they put the building together just like that with very little lime. The decoration of the arches, everything is fired in the same way. This method wasn't entirely new to me, but the way it's carried through here goes beyond anything I conceived. In Dessau* they did the same, and presumably Palladio had it from the ancients. But precisely for that reason everything is as if all of a piece, if it were whitewashed so that it was all one colour, it would be enchanting. O destiny! to think of the idiocies you favoured and preserved, why didn't you allow this work to be completed?

I don't think I've said anything about a staircase (a spiral staircase without a column in the middle) which he praises himself in his works—*la quale riesce mirabilmente*.* You can imagine, if Palladio says *che riesce mirabilmente*, it must be something. Well it's nothing but a spiral staircase, but one that you don't get tired of going up and down. And today I also saw the sacristy, which is right beside the stair and was done to his design, I'm going back again tomorrow. If I could just get it really fixed in my mind and feeling.

The funniest thing is the way I expound all this to my hired servant, because when you're full of a thing, you can't stop talking about it, and you keep looking for some new angle from which to show how wonderful it is.

Farewell. My old Frenchman who's been here a week now is leaving tomorrow, it was a delight to see a dyed-in-the-wool Versailles Frenchman abroad. And he travels, I've been astonished to see in his case just how one can travel, and in his place he's a quite considerable man. Farewell my dearest.

12 October

I stayed at home today to get my things in order, reckon up, read the papers, do some writing, and get myself ready for the next bit of my journey. I've had a thorough look round in the forecourt, let's hope things keep going this well.

My diary will give you the first instantaneous impressions, how nice it will be later on when I can explain in person how all these ideas connect up and lead further, and give you some amusement whenever the time is right.

Yesterday the *St Luca* company were doing a new play, *l'Inglesismo in Italia*.* As there are lots of Englishmen living in Italy, it's natural that their manners have some influence, I thought I'd pick up something for future guidance, but it didn't work out. Caricatures as ever, a few good scenes of foolery, but much too heavy and solemnly meant, and aimed only at the lowest level. It didn't even please the audience and was very near to being hissed off the stage.

And then the actors weren't in their element, not in the square at Chiozza.

NB of the Sacchi troupe, which by the by has broken up, I've seen

La Smeraldina. Brighella is still here too, but at *St. Grisostomo*, a theatre that's a bit out of the way for me.

On masks, and the way set characters of that kind take shape by themselves, more another time.

Farewell for today. My mind's worn out from my lonely day and so much frantic inactivity.

13 October

Now my dearest I have to close. Tomorrow I'm off, and so is this packet. I'm weary of seeing and am quietly thinking over what's past and what's coming next.

However much I've written, there's far more left in my thoughts, still, most of it has been hinted at.

About the nation itself and the pros and cons of all the nations in comparison with each other, on the basic character and the dominant way of life of this one, on the life of the nobility, their houses, their manners, etc., I'll tell you later, as about much else.

Let it suffice now to send you with great pleasure everything I've picked up on the way, so that you can judge it for yourself and preserve it for me for our profit and enjoyment. The first phase of my journey is past, may heaven bless the ones still to come, and above all the last one, which will bring me back to you.

The enclosures and drawings I've put in the box that will contain the coffee. It's the very best quality, from Alexandria, that you can get here. I'm sending you twenty-five pounds, please give five to the Duchess with my best compliments and five to the Herders and keep the rest yourself. If you like it, I can get more.

Farewell. I'm reluctant to close. If everything goes well, you'll get this before the end of October and the diary of the second phase you shall have at the end of November. That way I'll be near you again, and stay near you. Farewell. Greetings to the family. Far and near, I'm yours.

G.

List of rock-types, contd.

36. Rocks from the Paduan hills which they use for paving in Padua and Venice. Is it lava? or porphyry?
37. Limestone that's sawn and variously used for buildings, from the foothills of the great chain. *Vitruvius* mentions it.

38. Limestones that have been in the sea for some time and have been eaten away by sea-worms.
39. Sea-mud baked hard. Probably the newest rock-type of all.
40. Basalt debris from the Adriatic.
41. Lime from the wall near *Palestrina*, mixed with tarass.