

FOREIGN FACTS AND FANCIES

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Foreign facts and fancies by Various

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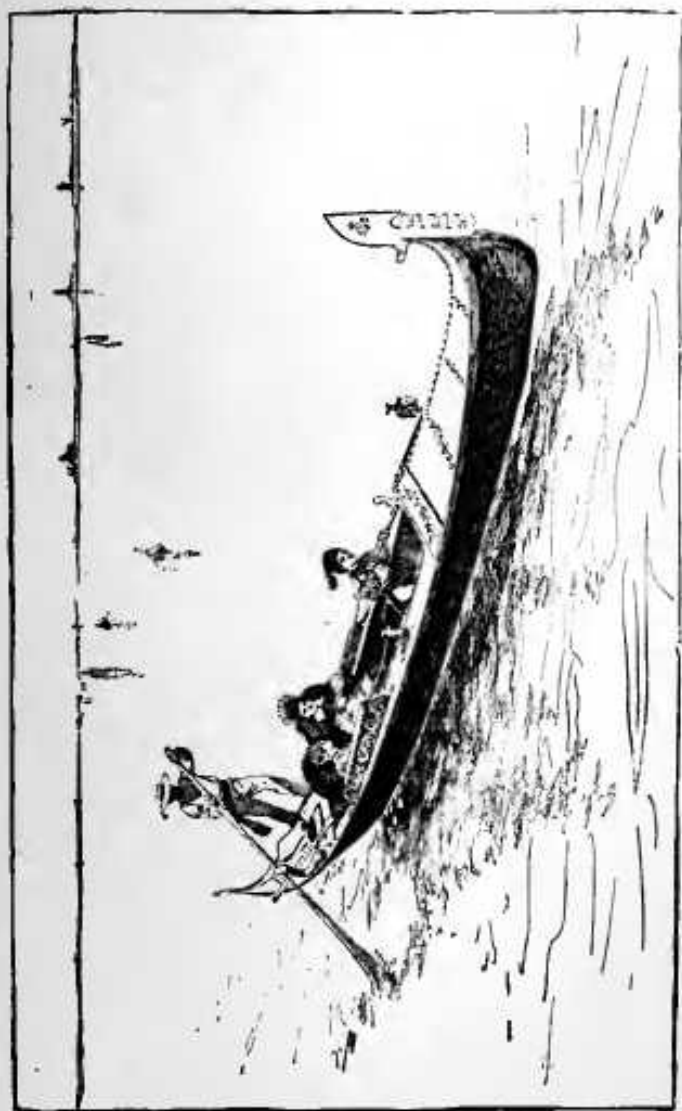
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VARIOUS

**FOREIGN FACTS
AND FANCIES**



OUT FOR THE AFTERNOON.

FOREIGN FACTS AND FANCIES

BY

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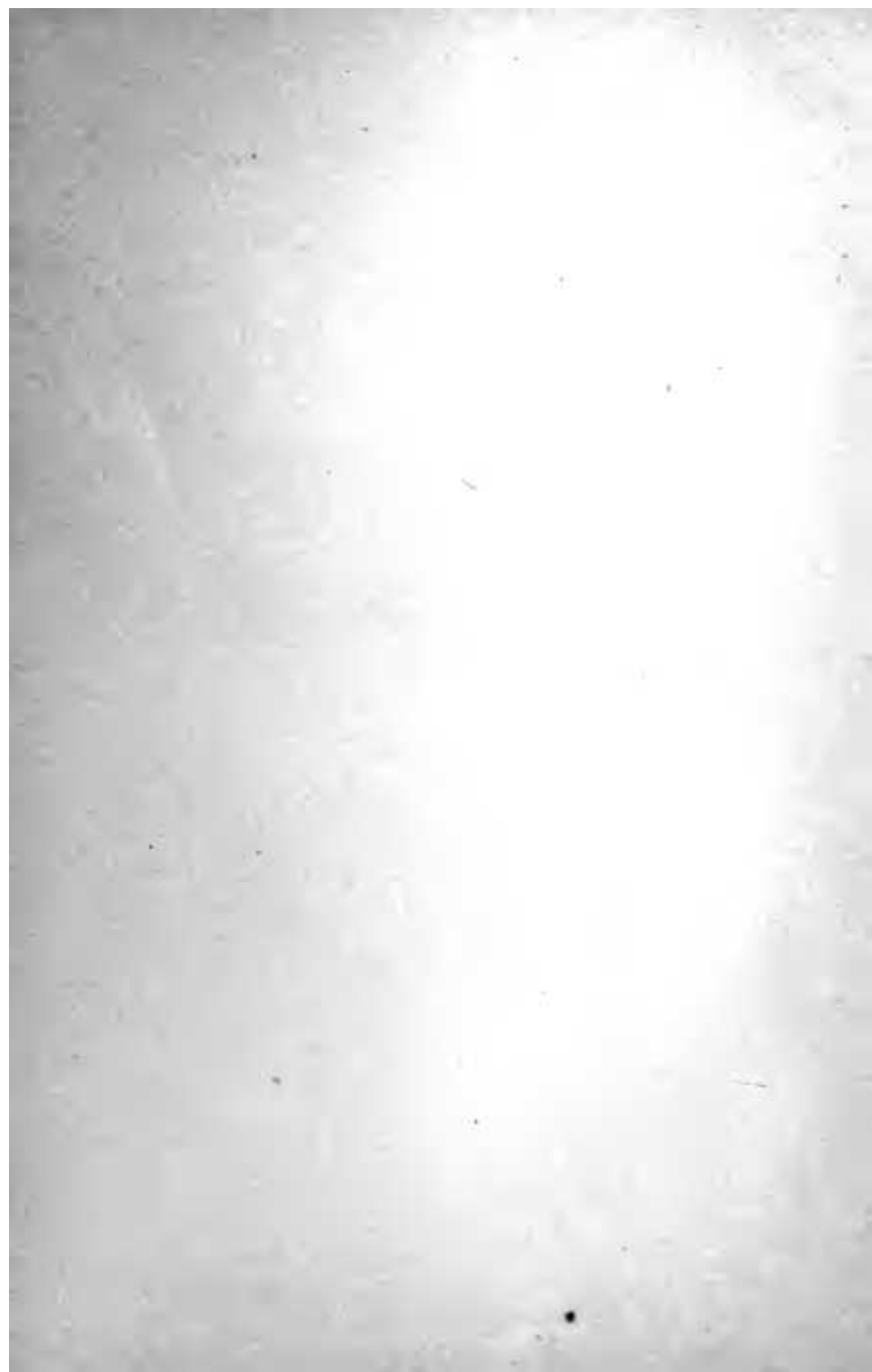
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CHILD-LIFE IN VENICE.

PART I.

THE idea of children does not readily occur to the stranger in Venice. Why should it? Are not its citizens born into the world men and women, with faces beyond their years? Do its narrow, crooked passages, hardly worthy the name of streets, constantly interrupted by steep bridges over sea channels lined with aged palaces, between whose marble walls the silent tides steal ever onward like the march of fate, furnish any playgrounds for boys and girls?

So when I stood, very early the morning after my arrival, in the great Piazza of St. Mark's, no thought of childhood was in my mind.

I thought instead of the mystic-winged lion poising himself on his soaring column; of the rose-colored mass of the Doge's palace with its exquisite marble arcades; of Nero's colossal

bronze horses over the doorway, in the grand Oriental front of the ancient basilica; of the glistening mosaics, the marvellous carvings, above all of the unfathomable depths of blue sky over me, and the equally unfathomable depths of blue water at my feet. And this singular beauty, which no picture had ever revealed, no book had ever shown, was silent. Neither sound of hoof nor roll of wheels, nothing but the plash, plash of the ever-moving water, and the soft croon of innumerable pigeons.

And what dissipated my reverie? Why, the merry laugh of a Venetian baby! Yes, the only other figure in the stately square was that of a young and comely nurse, who carried tenderly in her strong arms the first child I saw in Venice. She came through the Piazzetta, that little passage which leads from the great square to the water, and in her dark red-trimmed skirt, long white apron with its great bow behind, black bodice, and quaint, tight-fitting cap, was as significant embodiment of the every-day life, which in spite of unique situation, and unparalleled surroundings, is as