

**ST. MARK'S REST; FIRST
SUPPLEMENT, THE SHRINE OF THE
SLAVES, BRING A GUIDE TO THE
PRINCIPAL PICTURES BY VICTOR
CARPACCIO IN VENICE**

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St. Mark's rest; First supplement, the Shrine of the slaves, bring a guide to the principal pictures
by Victor Carpaccio in venice by John Ruskin

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JOHN RUSKIN

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ST. MARK'S REST.

FIRST SUPPLEMENT.

THE SHRINE OF THE SLAVES.

BEING A GUIDE TO THE PRINCIPAL PICTURES BY

VICTOR CARPACCIO

IN VENICE.

BY

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GEORGE ALLEN,
SUNNYSIDE, ORPINGTON, KENT.

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P R E F A C E .

THE following (too imperfect) account of the pictures by Carpaccio in the chapel of San Giorgio de' Schiavoni, is properly a supplement to the part of 'St Mark's Rest' in which I propose to examine the religious mind of Venice in the fifteenth century: but I publish these notes prematurely that they may the sooner become helpful, according to their power, to the English traveller.

The second supplement, which is already in the press, will contain the analysis by my fellow-worker, Mr. James Reddie Anderson, of the mythological purport of the pictures here

described. I separate Mr. Anderson's work thus distinctly from my own, that he may have the entire credit of it; but the reader will soon perceive that it is altogether necessary, both for the completion and the proof of my tentative statements; and that without the certificate of his scholarly investigation, it would have been lost time to prolong the account of my own conjectures or impressions.

THE SHRINE OF THE SLAVES.

COUNTING the canals which, entering the city from the open lagoon, must be crossed as you walk from the Piazzetta towards the Public Gardens, the fourth, called the 'Rio della Pietà' from the unfinished church of the Pietà, facing the quay before you reach it, will presently, if you go down it in gondola, and pass the Campo di S. Antonin, permit your landing at some steps on the right, in front of a little chapel of indescribable architecture, chiefly made up of foolish spiral flourishes, which yet, by their careful execution and shallow mouldings, are seen to belong to a time of refined temper. Over its door are two bas-reliefs. That of St. Catherine leaning on her wheel seems to me anterior in date to the other, and is very lovely: the second is contemporary with the cinque-cento building, and fine also; but notable chiefly for the conception of the dragon as a creature formidable rather by its gluttony than its malice, and degraded beneath the level of all other spirits of

prey; its wings having wasted away into mere paddles or flappers, having in them no faculty or memory of flight; its throat stretched into the flaccidity of a sack, its tail swollen into a molluscous encumbrance, like an enormous worm; and the human head beneath its paw symbolizing therefore the subjection of the human nature to the most brutal desires.

When I came to Venice last year, it was with resolute purpose of finding out everything that could be known of the circumstances which led to the building, and determined the style, of this chapel—or, more strictly, sacred hall—of the School of the Schiavoni. But day after day the task was delayed by some more pressing subject of enquiry; and, at this moment—resolved at last to put what notes I have on the contents of it at once together,—I find myself reduced to copy, without any additional illustration, the statement of Flaminio Corner.*

“In the year 1451, some charitable men of the Illyrian or Slavonic nation, many of whom were sailors, moved by praiseworthy compassion, in that they saw many of their fellow-countrymen, though deserving well of the republic, perish miserably, either of hard life or hunger, nor have enough to pay the expenses of church burial, determined to establish a charitable brotherhood under the invocation of the holy martyrs St. George and St.

* ‘Notizie Storiche,’ Venice, 1758, p. 167.

Trifon—brotherhood whose pledge was to succour poor sailors, and others of their nation, in their grave need, whether by reason of sickness or old age, and to conduct their bodies, after death, religiously to burial. Which design was approved by the Council of Ten, in a decree dated 19th May, 1451; after which, they obtained from the pity of the Prior of the Monastery of St. John of Jerusalem, Lorenzo Marcello, the convenience of a hospice in the buildings of the Priory, with rooms such as were needful for their meetings; and the privilege of building an altar in the church, under the title of St. George and Trifon, the martyrs; with the adjudgment of an annual rent of four zecchins, two loaves, and a pound of wax, to be offered to the Priory on the feast of St. George. Such were the beginnings of the brotherhood, called that of St. George of the Slavonians.

“Towards the close of the fifteenth century, the old hospice being ruinous, the fraternity took counsel to raise from the foundations a more splendid new one, under the title of the Martyr St. George, which was brought to completion, with its façade of marble, in the year 1501.”

The hospice granted by the pity of the Prior of St. John cannot have been very magnificent, if this little chapel be indeed much more splendid nor do I yet know what rank the school of the Slavonians held, in power or number, among the