

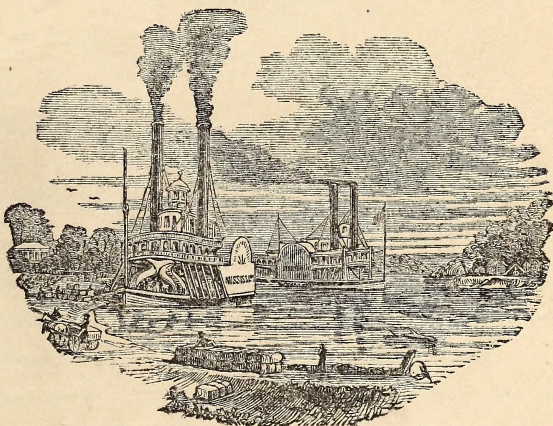
North Carolina State Library
Raleigh

STERLING'S SOUTHERN

FOURTH READER:

FOR THE USE OF

SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES.



BY

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THE DUCAL PALACE—VENICE.

1. Having witnessed the posthumous gratitude and grief of these devout Romanists for the munificence of a dead benefactor, we turned to the Doge's or Ducal Palace, where you may be sure we found much both to look at and think about. This great structure is intimately connected with both the past glory and the shame of Venice, and is crowded with the finest works of art as well. Here, as at the Academy of Fine Arts, those great Masters who have given renown to the Venetian school of painting, shine in the plenitude of their splendor.

2. The grand old Senate Chamber, for instance, is radiant with their choice productions; one of them, the Last Judgment, by Tintorini—a subject, by the way, which some of the Venetian legislators needed to have conspicuously before them—covering one entire end wall of the hall. This room is also remarkable for the first paintings ever executed on canvas. Here also is the library—a storehouse of rare old books and manuscripts.

3. In other parts of the palace you have mementoes of the methods of administering “justice” in by-gone days. Near the entrance to the Council Chamber is a letter-box, accessible from the outside, into which were dropped anonymous accusations against such persons as the malignantly disposed might wish to ruin. Here also is the masked chamber, where witnesses could swear to the foulest charges, and nobody ever know who gave the testimony, and opening out of which is the secret door through which the accused and condemned passed, to see the sunlight of liberty and life no more for ever.

4. Some of these apartments are elegantly finished with panels of cedar and rich carvings. Here and there is a blank space, once filled with a choice picture, but which Napoleon carried off, with his other spoils, to Paris, and which has never found its way back. In one room is shown

a map of special interest to denizens of our own new world. It was made before Christopher Columbus discovered our Western shores, and is a map of the world, without America.

5. With the Ducal Palace is also connected another celebrity, of which every one has heard—the celebrated “Bridge of Sighs.” It extends from the palace to the prisons, and is divided into a gallery and a cell. Prisoners, when taken out to die, were conducted over this bridge into the cell, and there strangled. It was “the bourn from which no traveller returned ;” hence its name. It is a short bridge, but the journey was a very long one.

6. The dungeons underneath the palace even now fill one with horror to visit them, being even more dismal and terrible than the old Mamertine prisons at Rome. An intricate passage leads to them, and the lower ones are far under ground. The wretched cells are narrow and low-roofed, and closed with heavy masonry. They are in midnight darkness, and the only chance for air is from a little hole in the door. Human ingenuity could scarcely devise a more horrible sepulchre for the living.

7. Prisoners who were not left to linger out the miserable remnant of their days in the midnight gloom of these dungeons, were furnished a more speedy means of exit from this world, in the garroting chair which once stood in the adjoining passage. To this the unhappy victim, having been conducted in the dead of night, and seated in it, was strangled, and his neck broken by the turn of the fatal screw, when his body was handed out of a little door, arranged for the purpose, and borne away by the stealthy gondola to its ignoble last resting-place. Hard as is the present lot of Venice under Austrian rule, it is not so bad as in those by-gone days of terror.

REV. JOHN LEYBURN.