

Dalmatian

Since the appearance of Jackson's book, Dalmatia can hardly be classed as terra incognita with the English reading public, but I realized on reaching Trieste that I was undertaking no every-day journey in planning a comprehensive tour along the east coast of the Adriatic. After a long search I found a little guide book, in German, that gave the required maps and some information as to routes, and armed with this I managed during the month that followed to visit nearly all the places of greatest interest along the coast and a number of the islands.

Dalmatia is not a land of railroads, although a few small beginnings have been made, but it will never be the network that is found in France and Italy owing to the enormous difficulty and expense of carrying a road over the mountains to — where? perhaps a village inhabited by people more than half Asiatic and with no more wealth than a few flocks of goats or a dozen acres of vines. Along the coast it is different. Here we find a continuous line of towns, for the most part founded by Venice in her palmy days, and even today to a certain extent possessed of her former energy. These towns are in nearly all respects Italian, not only in language but in general appearance, ~~but~~ with an original variation, however, inevitable to the changed conditions under which they were built. To the architectural traveller these towns are of especial interest. In all I might say there is at least one church of magnitude, and often the municipal buildings are not only pretentious but highly interesting. The private houses, too, come in for their share of attention, and in no other country of like extent did I find the towns more substantially built — for the most part of squared stone. The town of Dalmatia is as I have said not made by rail, but on the steamers of the various coasting lines — for the most part those of the Austrian Lloyd which offer fair accommodation and run at frequent intervals.

My route was first to Trieste from Venice, by land, rail to Pola from whence I went by water to Zara, Sebenico, Scardona, Trau, Salona, Spalato, Sesina and other ports in the islands, Metcovich from whence an excursion into Herzegovina and Bosnia, then further along the coast Stagno, Gravosa, Ragusa and finally into the beautiful bay to Cattaro. Beyond this my tour was no longer in Dalmatia, but along Montenegro and Albania to Corfu. Unfortunately when I once left Austrian soil the quarantine regulations came into effect and I was obliged to gain my experience of Montenegrin and Albanian architecture — poverty stricken enough to be sure — through the eye of faith in the guide book, and a field glass. Of the grandeur and beauty of the country through which I travelled — all so seldom travelled by western Europeans I can say nothing more ^{than} that

for its kind it is unsurpassed by any mountain district, and in the grand bay of Cattaro almost rivals the famous Hardanger Fjord.

In the architecture of the coast towns we find considerable historical range - from the times of the Romans through the romanesque period, which includes the best of the cathedrals, to the Gothic epoch which shows examples in the Venetian variety, and finally a few good examples of renaissance, built by Venice, in the shape of fortresses, city gates and municipal works generally. The Roman remains are principally in Pola and above all in Spalato where the unrivalled remains of the great Palace of Diocletian would call for the journey to Dalmatia were there no other buildings on the coast. The remains at Salona - the ancient city to which Diocletian's Palace belonged - although extensive are mostly of antiquarian interest - fragments of the ancient fortifications, foundations of various buildings and the outlines of an amphitheatre. To the architect, however, Pola appeals much more strongly. Here I found the best preserved Amphitheatre that I have yet met, although I have visited both Nimes and Arles. Here the exterior wall with its successive tiers of arches, the arrangements for the awning poles and the unique towers that perhaps were utilized for staircases stand perfect, and although the seats have nearly all disappeared from the interior, yet the arena which was arranged for sea fights is easily made out with its water conduits from the aqueduct and vents to the sea. Of equal interest are the well preserved Temple of Augustus and Roma, a corinthian building dating from the year 8 A.D. and a beautiful little triumphal arch - the Arch of the Sergi - which stands in the middle of one of the principal streets of the town. Other Roman remains are a twin temple to the one above mentioned, only the rear of which remains walled into the town hall, and two gates, the one quite imposing which formerly led to the Capitol. Of more importance, however, than all is the great Palace of Diocletian at Spalato, although the palace proper has disappeared, yet much more of the imposing group of buildings remains than I had ever suspected. This is not so apparent at first owing to the fact that the entire palace enclosure is now not only surrounded by but entirely filled by the most closely built part of the ~~city~~ town. The remains consist of the great surrounding wall with its gates; the magnificent Peristyle of the Palace; a temple to Aesculapius and above all the present Cathedral - the so-called Mausoleum of Diocletian. The most conspicuous part of the remains as one approaches from the sea is the south facade of the enclosing wall formerly decorated with a dor. ic arcade much of which still remains. There was only a small sea door on this facade which led by a long vaulted passage - still extant - to the Peristyle. On the west and ^{east} ~~west~~ sides of the enclosure were gates at the ends of the ~~old~~ street that bisected the palace group in that direction, and

what remains especially of that to the west suggests the imposing effect of the whole in its best days. The gate on the north side was, however, the principal entrance - the so-called Porta Aurea. The broad opening is spanned by a flat arch lintel of curious construction relieved of the weight of the wall above by a round arch. The too plain appearance of the great mass of wall above the door is relieved by an ~~and~~ arcade enclosing niches, in all probability formerly filled with statuary. The enclosing wall is visible at nearly all points - for little of it has been destroyed - and at the four corners rise massive towers. From the Porta Aurea a street leads directly to the centre of the enclosure meeting the street from the east and west doors in the Peristyle of the Palace, now the Piazza del Duomo, a fact significant of the size and magnificence of the Palace when its fore-court today answers the purpose of one of the principal squares in a considerable town. The architecture of this Court is familiar to us in ^{the} woodcut usually given in histories and other architectural works as the Palace of Diocletian. The east and west sides with their long arcades, and the south end - a high arched entrance enclosed by a pediment - remain almost perfect. This arch leads to a partly demolished circular vestibule with remains of niches and other ornaments. From this vestibule the Palace proper was entered. Beyond the ~~western~~ ^{eastern} arcade rises the Temple of Jupiter or perhaps more correctly the Mausoleum of Diocletian. This building, now utilized as the Cathedral of Spalato, is ~~an~~ ^{in form} octagonal ~~building~~ 60 or 70 feet in diameter surrounded by a corinthian peristyle. The principal entrance on the west face is approached through a portico that extends to the arcade of the ^{Palace} peristyle. The interior is circular with square niches towards the principal faces of the external octagon and semicircular niches in the subordinate faces. The interior walls are decorated with two superposed orders of corinthian columns & a frieze representing hunting scenes. The whole is covered by a dome of brick of peculiar construction. Although not large in plan this temple presents a striking appearance, partly due to its peculiar form and partly to the great size of the monolithic columns of the colonnade which surrounds it and the richness of its external decoration. The Temple of Esculapian now used as the Baptistery of the cathedral is a simple rectangular building lacking its porch. The doorway is, however, a masterpiece of rich decoration and lends an interest to the temple otherwise of no particular importance. Taken as a whole the remains of the great Palace, although built at a time when Roman art was rapidly declining, and in detail is perhaps far from being a masterpiece, stands as one of the most striking examples of the magnificence of the architecture of the Empire even when its days were numbered and the barbarians of the north almost at its doors ready to overwhelm it.

In Trieste, the starting point for my journey, I found one of the earliest examples of the Romanesque period that I met. This was the Cathedral of San Giusto, which rises on the hill above the Town Hall. When we consider that the building in its oldest parts dates from the 4th century and the latest from the 6th we are led to think that it should hold some position in the history of Romanesque architecture. Unfortunately my visit fell on a high holiday and my opportunity of examining the details, especially at the altars, was not only diminished by the ornamental hangings, but by the worshippers themselves who crowded every part of the building. The church is made up of a nave and four aisles separated by four rows of columns, for the most part round in section. The nave and inner aisles end in semicircular apses, the latter decorated with remarkable mosaics worked on a gold ground. The irregular spacing of the arches between the aisles, the curious corinthian-like capitals, and use of antique fragments on the exterior are all characteristic of the earliest Romanesque work everywhere, but here there is a strong element of the Byzantine apparent in the use of the thorny acanthus in the ornamental foliage and the mosaic decorations. Several miles out from Trieste there is a small country church on the site of the town of Muggia vecchia undoubtedly very ancient and showing some curious work. But owing to the lack of ornament was rather uninteresting. In Zara I found important and richly developed Romanesque designs in the Cathedral and the Church of S. Grisogno although they date from the 14th century. Both, especially the cathedral, resemble the churches of Northern Italy in the use of exterior arcaded galleries and delicate rich ornamentation at the principal portals. The cathedral possesses a modern and to us especial interest in its new campanile, which was erected after designs by the talented author of the "Jackson's Dalmatia", but I am sorry to say does not reflect as much credit on the author as the book. Of no less interest perhaps greater on account of its peculiarities of design and construction is the circular church of San Donato ³⁰⁰⁰ dating from the 9th century. This remarkable building now used as the Museum has lately been examined by antiquaries and found to rest on a foundation made up of the fragments of some large and important Roman building. Here as footers for the huge piers that support the central dome, we see drums of fluted columns, architraves, bases, capitals and beautifully carved cornices - mere building material that was covered with earth. The interior of the church strongly resembles St. Vitale at Ravenna and the Cathedral at Six-la-Chapelle not only in plan but in the design of the bay and like them shows an upper gallery. Antique fragments have also been used, and with the most naive simplicity - for example at one place an attic base placed upside down serves as a capital. At the east end are placed the principal and two subordinate apses usually found in Romanesque churches of the basilica type, and here I

found the peculiarity I had noticed several times before; that is the axis of building as referred to the west portal does not run exactly through the centre of the apse but at some distance to the ~~right~~ ^{left}. This was explained to me by an old monk at St. Benoit sur Loire, in France, as representing the head of Christ, which fell to one side when he died on the cross!

I might include the Cathedral at Traw under this division for although in detail it shows much that is evidently Gothic the plan is purely Romanesque and the magnificent west portal has much the character of famous works of the Romanesque school - La Gloria at Santiago, St. Trophime at Arles and others.

The sculptures of this portal show a peculiarity that I have seen only in a few places and I think without exception only in Romanesque work. That is in the sculptured groups on the voussours of the portal arches the figures all radiate from the centre of the arch. As an aesthetic feature in this general design this arrangement is of the utmost value and it is incomprehensible why the later Gothic sculptors should have adopted the much less satisfactory expedient of following the lines of the arch with the figures. In every case the radiating method was successfully carried out, even in one curious example that I saw where the figures were carried a-

round a salient angle, while I think every one feels the disagreeable effect produced by the lines of hanging statuettes ⁱⁿ Gothic portals which point at all angles. The interior of the Cathedral at Traw although not large is through the excellence of its proportions and noble simplicity of its lines the most effective in Dalmatia. The nave-aisle arcade is round arched resting on massive piers, aisles and nave end in semicircular apses and at the west end is a narthex-like portico which protects the richly decorated portals. The vaulting is quadripartite in design and construction but remarkably domical, which adds much to the apparent size of the interior. Although really a part of the furniture of the church the pulpit should be mentioned as an architectural feature not only on account of its size and material - it is of the richest marbles - but for its beautiful design and remarkably rich decoration.

Of the Gothic Period there is no lack of examples not only in the smaller churches and chapels but among the collegiate churches and in one notable case cathedrals also. As we might conjecture, a country under and in a great part colonized by Venice will show the influence of Italian builders and such is the case in Dalmatia. The prevailing Gothic of the country resembles that seen in San Giovanni e Paolo, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei

vari, and in the most important of all, the Cathedral at Sebenico. The resemblance to ~~influence~~ of the beautiful little S. Maria dei Miracoli is marked. In this latter cathedral we have the semicircular pediment above the nave front and quadrants before the aisle roofs, with the delicate detail characteristic of the border-land between gothic and renaissance. In fact we might be almost justified in placing this building on the side of the renaissance although it dates from 1443 to 1536 - a little early for a colonial country. A feature ~~with~~ of this building which is I think unique is the stone barrel vaulted of the nave which at the same time serves as the roof with no other covering than the lead sheeting. It was during the gothic period that many of the municipal buildings were erected - the town halls at Pola, at Spalato, ~~Sebenico~~, Trau above all the beautiful Rector's Palace at Ragusa, all of which show more or less the open arched lower story of the Italian towns and the last mentioned suggests a study from the Ducal Palace in Venice. The court of this Rector's Palace is one of the richest examples in the country, with its fine arched passage and external staircase. The fortifications which form such a prominent feature in the most picturesque places along the coast - Sebenico, Scardona, Lesina and especially Ragusa which almost rivals Carcassonne - date mostly from this period and often show rich architectural decoration e.g. the Pille Gate at Ragusa. During the renaissance, builders were not idle and from this epoch date the gates in the walls at Zara the loggias at Sebenico and Lesina and the most important of the churches at Ragusa, often the work of masters of the period, for more than once we meet with the name of Sammichele and others. The architecture of today resembles that of Vienna in a degree, although in the smaller places it holds to Venetian traditions. I must mention in closing a rather amusing incident which shows the self confidence of the native architects. At Scardona, the starting point for the excursion to the famous Kerka waterfall, I happened to meet an architect from Sebenico and in the course of a conversation asked him what he considered best worth seeing in Dalmatia - "Well," he said, "of course there is the cathedral at Sebenico, but there is one thing you should not miss on any account, to be sure it is modern but it is one of the very finest things in Dalmatia - a campanile in Sosischie". I afterwards found out he had designed it. However in the course of my trip I happened to pass Sosischie and saw the campanile, and must admit that it was a graceful and pleasing composition.

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