



THE CHURCH OF ST. MARK, VENICE.—The Church of St. Mark has stood here for nearly eight hundred years as a splendid proof of the ancient magnificence of Venice. Its architecture is most extraordinary. With its bulbous domes and minaret-like belfries, its glittering mosaics, and cupolas sparkling with gold, it seems more like a Mohammedan than a Christian shrine. One might also call it a Christian mosque! The Venetians brought back with them from their Eastern wars ideas of Oriental architecture which pleased them, but in attempting to repeat them they made a singular medley of the whole. Yet no expense was spared to make it magnificent. For, to say nothing of its splendid columns and rich carving, the mosaics on its *exterior* alone cover an area of 45,790 square feet, and are still gorgeous in their golden and purple colors. And when we think that this is nothing to the vast expanse of mosaic *within*, we are no longer surprised that this sanctuary has been proudly called “La Chiesa Aurea,” or the Church of Gold, and compared to a cavern hung with stalactites of precious stones! During more than five centuries, the first question addressed to generals and captains returning from the Eastern wars was this: “What new and splendid offering bring you for San Marco?” Above the doorway of this famous church are four enormous horses made of gilded bronze. They were originally in Rome, and adorned Nero’s golden chariot of the Sun. From Rome they were taken by Constantine to Constantinople. Thence they were brought by the conquering Doges to Venice. Napoleon I also took them to Paris; but after Waterloo they were restored by the allies to the Queen of the Adriatic.