

III

THE APPROACH

IN all probability the traveller to Dalmatia will approach it either from Trieste or from Fiume, and both imply Venice as the point of departure. The line runs round the head of the Adriatic, through a long, level district, almost marshy in places, where the rivers Sile, Piave, Livenza and Tagliamento slacken their courses on their way from distant, hardly visible Alps to the sea. This plain has been, all down history, the scene of warfare almost as continuous as that which has won for Belgium the title of "the cockpit of Europe". Away to the north-east, where the Tagliamento has cut a gorge in the Alps, lies the gate by which the barbarians from Pannonia and the Sarmatian plain flooded down on Friuli. In the delta of the Isonzo, near the Lagoon of Grado, lies Aquileia, where the giant Emperor Maximinus was slain by his own soldiers in 238,