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The Carmelite and Gelsomina found the keepers in waiting, and when they had retired, the door was locked and barred as usual. As they had no farther concerns with the gaolers, they passed on unobserved. But when they had reached the corridor, which led towards the apartment of Gelsomina, the monk stopped.

M 2

244

"Art thou equal to a great effort to save Jacopo?" he asked in that manner which denotes the consciousness of a solemn and [blank: C: absorbing] motive.

"Father!"

"I would know if /thou art certain\ thy courage will support thee, in a trying scene; without /[C:this]\ the youth will surely perish!"

"Father, I could die to save Jacopo a pang!"

The Carmelite regarded the slight form and radiant eye of the speaker in melancholy admiration.

"Come, then, daughter," he resumed, "we will, at least, do our duty to all, the offending and the offender—sinner and sufferer. Should we fail, the crime of forgetfulness will not lie upon our souls."

He took her hand, turned and led the obedient girl into the parts of the palace, which contained the apartments appropriated to the common uses of the chief of the State. The jealousy of the Patricians, concerning those who approached the Ducal presence, is [blank: C: matter] of history. As will ever be the case with a titular Sovereign, /where an Aristocracy rules\ The Doge was a puppet in the hands /of the nobles\ and great care had been taken to surround him with those whose influence was not dreaded, and on the other hand to keep all aloof who might give, what the policy of Venice was pleased to term, a false direction to his mind. This wariness proved however the real weakness of all power that is based on exclusion, rather than any danger of the Prince's becoming a convert to better principles, since he had been educated, like all around him, in the /C: opinions\ of his age and country, and was far from being a man likely to [break through] overstep the bounds [set the bounds ?] with which he had been environed by\art and habit.

246

In thus venturing into the presence of the Prince, Father Anselmo owed his success partly to his holy calling, but more to the confident manner in which he proceeded. Sentinel after sentinel permitted him to pass, without question though not without surprise, until he had gained the ante-chamber which contained the menials in ordinary waiting.

"His Highness should be in his closet, at this hour?" said the monk, addressing the usher who rose to receive these unexpected visitors.

"You have [blank: C: guessed] the truth, father—and—"

"Tell him, on [stet: my son], that the Carmelite he wishes to see, and the young girl, in whose happiness his Princely bosom feels so parental an interest, await his pleasure."

"Has his Highness commanded—"

"Tell him, moreover; son, that there is little time to lose, since the hour draws near when the fate of the wretched but innocent will be [C: decided]."

The monk spoke solemnly, for so he felt, and he had assumed an air of authority which deceived the menial, /C:who\ without pausing to remonstrate, admitted his guests into an inner room, d /C:where\ inviting them to be seated, he went to execute his errand.

248

The Doge of Venice, /at the time of our tale ,\ as has already been mentioned, /C:was\ a man far advanced in years. He had thrown aside the cares of the day, and was now, in the retirement of his closet, endeavouring to [blank. C: still] those human sympathies which are stronger than any [of the substitutes of human ingenuity which loaded his artificial condition, by entering into the feelings and descriptions of one of the classic poets of his country. All the usual [blank. C: state]is [stet: of his] /C:condition\ had been thrown aside, for [the] lighter ease and personal indulgences . His white locks fell in graceful ringlets about his venerable temples, his yielding form was concealed in a night-robe, and his whole air was that of one who gladly withdraws from [C; a] pageantry whose burthen was no equivalent for its honours, into the [blank. C: grateful] retirement of his own thoughts. /C: So entire was his abstraction, that \ When the domestic entered the room, with the noiseless step of habitual deference, the old sovereign scarce raised an eye from the page, on which it rested..

triffle249

"Signore" said the groom of the chambers, using that familiar mode of address, which is so common among those who serve nearest and most intimately about the persons of Princes.

"What would'st thou, Marco?"

"Here are the reverend Carmelite and the young girl, in waiting to be received into your Highness' presence."

"What sayest thou, child!-- What pretence is this!"

"Pardon, Signore. I do but repeat the message of the monk. Tell his Highness that /C: the Carmelite\ he wishes to see, and the young girl, in whose happiness his princely bosom feels so parental an interest, await his pleasure."

M 3

250

Age and experience had taught the Doge of Venice caution. Though he did not distrust his senses, [and] /C: nor\ believe his memory played him false, he, at once, perceived the prudence of examining [for himself] /C: warily\, into the meaning of this extraordinary message. It might be a device of the inquisition, which simplicity and his innocence would best defeat, or it might, in truth, be some matter of urgent necessity, [which] /C: that\ would gratify that love for his species, which, notwithstanding the effects of the specious system in which he existed, was never entirely dormant in his breast.

"Did he say more, Marco?" he asked C: after deep reflection.

"Signore, he said there was haste for the audience, as the hour was near when the fate of a very wretched but most innocent man would be settled. Most probably he meant some of the young nobles, who are under a cloud, for excesses in the Carnival."

The domestic had added some superlatives to the language of the monk, as is usual in men of his class, and he did not fail to second them by a proper emphasis and /C: a suitable\ expressive countenance [C: [suited]]. [C: But t]hese embellishments were lost upon his master, whose thoughts had taken an entirely different direction.

"Bid thy companions come to me," said /C: the Doge\, after a moments pause; "and usher the carmelite in, with a trifling delay."

The first of these orders was quickly executed. The prudent Prince then ordered the attendant to hasten to a secretary, with a note requesting the presence of an Inquisitor, who was known to be occupied, \*\* isn [should be "in"] the palace at that monment, among the archives of the secret council. This duty of precaution observed, the venerable old man prepared to receive those who came to see, with a calmness suited to his high rank and dignified character.

The member of the Council of Three made his appearance at one door, just as Father Anselmo and his trembling companion entered the cabinet by another. An expression of the Doge's eye was sufficient to apprise the former that he was summoned, /C:more\ as a witness of what was about to occur, than with any desire to consult his opinions. The practiced old Senator, therefore, affected as much indifference as, under the circumstances, he could assume, during the [ceremony] interview.

The Carmelite threw back his cowl when fairly in the presence [of] , exposing his ascetic countenance and benevolent eye , while Gelsomina, partly in awe of the rank of him before whom she had so suddenly been ushered, and partly under the [influence] impulse of powerful feeling, sunk on her knees, folding her hands upon her bosom like one who prayed.

"What means this unlooked for and unseasonable visit and /that\ attitude of supplication," demanded the Prince, whose finger pointed to the bowed

253

form of the girl, while his eye met that of the monk—"Both are unusual here!"

"Illustrious Doge," returned Father Anselmo, "we come as petitioners for justice rather than for mercy. There is one in the cells condemned of the tribunals who must die in the morning unless your princely word stay the blow of the executioner. I am the ghostly counsellor of the unhappy youth, and this trembling maiden is one bound to him [C:in a manner I need scarcely name]."

"Thou would say she is his betrothed?"

"Plighted to him, Highness, by every human tie save that in which theurch [stet] is the agent of Heaven."

"It is unfortunate that one so innocent <a> /of\ mien and of so tender years should have placed her happiness on a foundation so frail as the conduct of a worthless suitor. Didst thou say, Father, that the criminal is condemned by the common tribunals?"

"By the criminal judges, Highness, and ordered to the block with the morning light."

The venerable Prince seemed relieved. The courts <to which both> alluded to, never meddled with affairs that might not, in appearance at least, be submitted to the common sentiment of the city, and he saw no obstacle to his listening further.

"By what authority dost

255

thou impeach the decision of the judges, Carmelite?" he demanded severely, though the manner in which his relenting eye wandered from the monk to the countenance of Gelsomina betrayed a yielding of purpose.

"Signore, as I have said, by virtue of my holy calling. I have confessed and shrived the penitent. He has laid bare his soul to me, like one whose feet were in the grave, and though I find him guilty towards his God, in common with all of women born, I find him unoffending towards the state."

"Thinkest thou, father, that the law would ever reach its victims were we to listen only to the accusation which the criminal adduces against himself. I have lived long, reverend Carmelite priest, and it has been my fortune to study the weaknesses of the race; in all the time providence has left upon my shoulders the grievous weight of authority I am doomed to bear, I do not remember to have met with the victim of his own misdeeds who has not believed himself unfortunate rather than criminal."

"That men apply this treacherous solace to their consciences one of my vocation has not to learn—nay, that too often while most condemning their sins by words of confession and self-abasement they make a merit of humility is so true that none accustomed to deal with these illusions of the mind can question it: but Doge of Ve-

256

nice there is still a majesty and awe in the sacred rite, I have been called to fill, which can look down and even overcome the mounting of the spirit. Many attempt to deceive themselves at the confessional, but by the power of God, few succeed."

"Praised be the Most Holy Mother, and Her Blessed Son that this is so!" returned the Prince, struck by the mild dignity of the Carmelite [C: and crossing himself reverently]. "Wilt thou name the condemned?"

"Tis a certain Jacopo Frontoni; a reputed bravo."

The movement of the countenance and [blank. C: action; stet "of"] f Doge were both full of natural surprise

"Callest thou the bloodiest stiletto that ever disgraced our City the weapon of a reputed bravo?" he exclaimed. "The arts of the wretch have prevailed against thy observation, Father; the true confession of such a monster can be but a history of revolting crimes."

257

"Such was my opinion when I entered his cell, but I left it convinced of my error. If your Highness will deign to hear his tale, like me perhaps, you will think him a fit subject of pity rather than of punishment."

"This is wonderful! Of all the criminals of my reign, this is the last in whose favour I could have imagined there was a word to be uttered. Speak Carmelite; for curiosity is as strong within me as surprise."

The pious monk ejaculated a thanksgiving that he had succeeded so far, for it was not always easy, in that City of mystery, to bring the truth to the ears of the powerful. He cast a glance of encouragement at the still kneeling girl, and commenced his explanation. This is [at present probably] perhaps the only country, even at the present hour, in which truths of a public nature, may be [blank] and fearlessly exposed. In any other, there is some contradiction between theory and practice, some dread of the conflict between intelligence and vested interests, that cause men to be tender of their words lest they draw upon themselves the vindictive resentment of the privileged.

When men live under a system of duplicity a portion? of the ? quality becomes interwoven with their habits, and the most virtuous are unconsciously tainted with the vice of discipline. Thus Father Anselmo touched tenderly on the practices of the State, as he proceeded and used a reserve in speaking of that which both his principles and his feelings condemned, of which he was not himself perhaps aware.

"It may not be known to one of a condition as high as that of the Doge of Venice," he said, "that a certain Francesco Frontini, a humble but honest mechanic of the city, was accused of aiding in frauds on the republic's revenue. This is a crime that St. Mark never fails to visit with his heaviest anger, and the unfortunate man was long imprisoned in the hope that he would make revelations, [of] which were beyond the power of one who adhered to truth."

"I remember to have heard of such an accusation, father, but it is long since the matter has been recalled to my mind."

"Highness, I am not now to learn that they in whose name justice is administered, are not bound to have all-seeing eyes, it is now said that this Francesco was wrongly accused, though the truth did not appear until he had wasted years in the cells of the palace. By the death of one who was in truth a criminal, and who had made suit to the daughter of Frontini, the innocence of the latter was acknowledged."

"The State was not slow to acknowledge its error?" said the Doge with the quickness of a man whose better feelings were touched.

260

"Signore, the republic is discreet and moves warily in a matter of its own interests. There were reasons that I shall not presume to examine why the prison door of poor Francesco was kept shut, long after the death of his false friend left no doubt as to his having been wrongfully confined."

"Was he a relation of the bravo?" asked the Prince [blank.

"Signore, his father. Like a pious child Jacopo brought proofs of the wrongs of his parent to the authorities, and slow to be convinced, these illustrious patricians enlisted him in their service in order that their doubts of the father's innocence might be removed by the services of the son."

"You speak in enigmas monk."

"I am little used to deal in these worldly devices, great Doge, but this is what I hear. The character of Jacopo was found favourable to a scheme of the police, who profited by his fidelity and habits to entrap the revengeful, with the apology of preventing crimes. He had a false reputation as a bravo, though secretly an agent of the Senate, and his reward was to have been Francesco's liberty."

The Doge listened uneasily. His eye glanced aside at the [blank—] but [unmoved] unmoved Inquisitor, who stood as if chance only made him an auditor of what was said, but the look at the Senator was as brief as if /C: the marble like visage repelled the glance.

"For all this you have the word of a condemned man, father?"

"With the near view of death before his eyes, Prince. Jacopo told his tale like one whose mind was prepared to meet his end and equally without resentment as without fear. By some fatal mistake of the Judges his pretended crimes have been [blank] with real murders, and without quick relief, there is danger that he will receive unmerited punishment."

"Thy tale is extraordinary, Priest, and it requires reflection—Didst thou not say the father was long held a prisoner?"

"Highness I did."

"And does he know of this jeopardy of his son."

"He is dead."

"A prisoner, Carmelite?"

"A prisoner in his cell."

The Doge of Venice turned aside for the flush that crossed his care worn brow, contained a confession it was not fit that every eye should see. The monk who had not failed to watch each changing expression of his countenance, bent and whispered to Gelsomina.

Highness," said a tremulous but plaintive voice.

"What wouldst thou child?" asked the old Duke, in whose bosom the man had to struggle powerfully with the Prince—"What wouldst thou child?"

"Justice—Mercy and Justice!"

"I have occasion to say lately that Mercy is not always Justice. Hast thou faith, child, in this extraordinary tale?"

"Have I faith—"exclaimed Gelsomina, pressing her hand upon her chest, as if she would prevent the mounting of her heart—"My faith in the saints is not stronger! Highness I have seen Jacopo, for many years visiting the cell of his father, and doing all that love and duty could teach a son --I have witnessed his grief, his struggle to keep down his sorrow lest it might make the prison still harder to be borne, and such tenderness, as until then, I had believed none but a woman could feel."

"Thou wert his companion in these secret visits?"

"Illustrious Prince, I was. I am the daughter of the head keeper and they sent me as his guide."

:And thou knewest he was a bravo of the bridges?"

"Oh! no. That wretched deception they hid from me. Had Jacopo told me this, I would have spoken him plainly as one who loved him."

N 2

268

"Thou wouldst have said—?"

"I would have told him, great Doge, what God and the church have put into my spirit"— returned Gelsomina rising under the influence of her feeling, while a bright glow lighted every feature of her face. "I would have said it is not permitted to us even to feign evil that good may come of it—that deceit depraves the heart—that [this phrase is in AMS: he who would live innocently must be what he seems and seem what he is—that] the saints shut their ears to prayers which do not come /pure\ from a soul untainted by evil practices, and that it were better to die in the deepest cell of the prison than to live with the odium of murder."

"Thinkest thou he would have hearkened to thee child?"

"He might have found the power of the state stronger than his [affection] love for a poor unknown and friendless girl, Highness, but I would not have quitted him while there was hope and aided by my padron I might have prevailed. Oh! They who trifle thus with sin begin at last to look upon it with less horror than is safe!"

"The girl has been well instructed, Carmelite!—Art thou her ghostly counsellor?"

"Signore, I am not--Though dwelling in the midst of those who are victims of vice, her soul is pure."

"Thy tale is [extraordinary /remarkable\—so extraordinary as to need much confirmation—" returned the aged Prince, who, ever and across suffered a /furtive\

glance to probe the thoughts of the motionless Inquisitor. "Hast thou heard of the death of one Antonio a fisherman, monk?"

"More than that I received his last confession and [blank knew] the man."

A sudden movement drew all eyes towards the unknown Member of the secret Council, but the priest only understood the ominous warning that shot from his glance

"Then thou mayest know that Jacopo is suspected of causing his end," continued the Doge.

"The charge is false, excellent Prince. That much I will I say, though my own life answer for the words."

270 The Doge [blank ] the meaning eye of the monk, for a moment, and he paced the room in silence. A glimpse of the truth began to dawn upon his mind, and he felt the pang which so often must accompany a solemn mockery of truth. Prince and no Prince, the seeming fountain of Justice as well as mercy, but in fact the tool of a cool and calculating policy, he endured the pain of seeming what he was not the very head and fountain of the offense of him who was [blank: ] now to die. Too much trained in the ways of necessity to endanger further exposure, he went towards Gelsomina, and partly to avoid the eye of the Carmelite and partly to indulge his own feelings, he laid his hand affectionately on her raven ringlets in the manner of a parent about to bless his child. The girl seized the happy moment, and sinking on her knees again gave a vent to her feelings.

"Great Doge!" she cried "you will turn this crime from Venice! By your royal word command the door of Jacopo's prison to open, [that] lest there be innocent blood upon [Venice] the republick. If it be a fault to /have\ feigned crimes to serve his father, it is a fault he shares with the patricians, who will have pity on his ignorance and humble condition. You will not leave him to die! Oh! If you knew his noble nature, as I do, you would not hesitate to pronounce his pardon."

272

"Thou art open in thy love of this Jacopo, child!"

Gelsomina bowed her head in modesty rebuked. But sustained above her ordinary feelings, by her motive, the transient emotion scarce caused her cheek to glow as it was gone. She lifted her face with dignity and continued.

"Highness! /she said--\ "I cannot feel shame when the life of Jacopo is in danger. I would declare my love for the youth, before the citizens, to serve him in this strait, and shall I hesitate in this venerable presence. Father Anselmo has blessed us with the same benediction, and my own mother has long since told me that one day I should be Carlo's. Think on his constant love for his father, his long and secret service to the state, his real innocence and the burthen of sorrow he has so long borne without complaint, Great Doge, and then leave him to his fate, if you can!"

"Thou art of plain speech, girl!"

"Fear hath made me bold. There is a God for the republick as well as for the gondolier. Think you he will on this deed with a smile, or that he will forget the mockery of justice! Men flatter themselves with the hope of sharing with a nation their public acts, but there is an eye upon us which looks farther than the Council, and a countenance whose frown is more terrible than the wrath of the Senate! Beware how you anger the God of Jacopo, my God, and your God, Doge of Venice; for he will not see evil and be satisfied."

The bright, glowing eye, the glowing cheeks and the firm speech of the slight and usually timid being who uttered this language, caused the auditors to look at each other in secret awe. The aged prince smiled but it was [blank: ] and his muscles trembled.

“Thou knowest not what thou utterest, child,” he said struggling to clear his voice—“These are words that ill become thee to use or me to hear.”

“Art thou greater than he who rules Heaven and Earth! May not the truth be [proclaimed] /said\ in this presence that is proclaimed before his altars! No you are a man and a father, and a Prince beloved by his people, and a christian that does not laugh at the fearful being he worships. I know you will not dare to suffer this deed, and I will say no more.”

“Lead her away, father, and calm the disturbed mind of the child by thy wisdom,” said the Prince, whose colour went and came during the few last minutes of the interview.

The Carmelite obeyed. Gelsomina offered no resistance, but rising at his beck, she turned [blank] a look like that which innocence and conscious principles is apt to assume in support of the right on those she left behind, and slowly followed the monk from the room. The Doge kept his anxious eye on her form until it was concealed by the closing door, and then he faced his companion. As the Prince advanced towards the member of the secret council, his eyes moistened, the native benevolence of the man shone in his countenance, and he held forth his hands like one who sought support in the sympathies of the other.