

THE BRAVO Chapter I (rev. March 2006)  
Transcript of AMS at AAS

The sun had disappeared behind the white summits of the Tyrolean Alps, and the moon had already risen above the low barrier of the Lido di Palestrina. Hundreds of pedestrians were pouring out of the narrow streets of Venice, into the square of St Mark, like water gushing through some straitened aqueduct into a broad and bubbling basin. Gay cavalieri and grave cittadini; soldiers of Dalmatia and seamen of the galleys; dames of the City and females of lighter manners; jewelers of the Rialto and Traders from the distant Levant; Jew, Turk and Christian; traveller, adventurer, podestà, valet, avvocato and gondolier held their way, alike, to the common centre of amusement and recreation. The hurried air and careless eye; the measured step and jealous glance; the jest and laugh; the song of the cantatrice and the melody of the flute; the grimace of the buffoon and the tragic frown of the improvisatore; the pyramid of the grotesque, the servile smile of the harpist, cries of water-sellers, cowls of monks, plumage of warriors, hum of voices, and the universal movement and bustle, added to the more permanent objects of the place, rendered the scene one of the most remarkable of christendom.

On the very confines of that line which separates western from eastern Europe, and in constant and great communication with the latter, the City of the Isles Venice possessed, at the period to which this narrative relates, a greater admixture of character and costume than any other of the numerous ports of the South at region. A portion of this peculiarity is still to be observed, under the fallen fortunes of the place, but at the period of our Tale, the City of the Isles, though no longer mistress of the Mediterranean, nor even of the Adriatic, was still rich and powerful. Her influence was felt in the counsels of the civilized world, and her commerce, though waning, was yet sufficient to uphold the vast possessions of those families whose ancestors had become rich in the day of her preeminence prosperity. Men lived among her islands in that state of incipient lethargy which equally masks the progress of a downward course, whether the decline be that of a moral or of a physical decay.

At the hour we have named, the vast parallelogram of the Piazza was filling fast, and which the cafes and casinos beneath the arcades, which surround three of its sides, were being already thronged with company. While all beneath the arches was gay and brilliant, with the light of torch and lamp the noble range of edifices called the procuraties, the quaint and venerable massive pile of the Ducal palace, the cathedral of St Mark's most ancient christian church, the granite columns of the piazzetta, the giddy tower of the campanile, and the triumphal masts of the great square and the giddy tower of the campanile at their juncture, were all reposing standing in the soft and natural light more mellow glow of the hour moon.

Facing the wide area of the great square, stood the quaint and venerable cathedral of St San Marco. A temple of trophies, and one equally proclaiming the

prowess and the piety of its founders, this remarkable structure presided over the fixtures of the place, <like some eternal memorial> /a fitting monument\ of the republic's antiquity and greatness. Its Saracenic architecture, the rows of precious, but useless, little columns which load its front, the low, Asiatic domes which rest upon <the> /its\ walls in the repose of a thousand years, the rude and gaudy mosaics, and above all the captured horses of Corinth, which started from out of the <dark and fantastic> /sombre\ mass, in <all> the glory of Grecian art, received from the solemn and appropriate light a character of melancholy and mystery that well comported with the <dim> /thick\ recollections which crowd the mind, as the eye gazes at this rare relick of the <middle ages> past.

As fit companions <to> /of\ this edifice, the other peculiar ornaments of the place which we have named, stood at hand. The base of the campanile lay in shadow, but hundreds of feet of its gray summit received the full rays of the moon on its glittering side. The masts destined to bear the conquered ensigns of Candia, Constantinople and the Morea cut the air, by its side, in dark and lofty lines, while, at the extremity of the smaller square and <on> /near\ the margin of the sea, the /forms of the\ winged lion and the patron saint of the City, <rested>, each on his <African> /<[unrecovered]>\ column, /of African granite\, <tranquil and distinct> were /distinctly\ traced against the back ground of /the\ eastern sky. <distinct and>

<At the> /It was\ Near the base of the former of these massive blocks of stone, <there> /that one\ stood <one> who seemed to gaze at the animated and striking scene with the listlessness and indifference of long use. A multitude, some in masques and others careless of being known, had poured along the quay into the Piazzetta, on their way to the principal square, while this /individual\ had scarce turned <an eye> /a glance\ aside, or changed a limb in w/e\ariness. His attitude was that of <listless> patient, practiced, and obedient waiting on another's pleasure. With folded arms, a body poised on one leg, and a vacant though good-humoured eye, he appeared to attend some <signal of command, or some> beck of authority, ere he quitted the <place> /spot\. A silken jacket, in whose tissue <gay> flowers /of the gayest colours\ were interwoven, the falling collar of scarlet, the bright velvet cap, with armorial bearings <wrought up> /embroidered\ on its front, <the> proclaimed /him to be\ a gondolier in private service.

Wearied, at length, with the anticks of a distant groupe of tumblers, whose pile of human bodies, had for a time arrested his look, this individual turned away, and faced the light air from the water. Recognition and pleasure shot into his <vacant> countenance, and, in a moment, his arms were interlocked with those of a swarthy mariner, who wore the loose attire and Phrygian cap of men of his calling. The gondolier was the first to speak, <and> his words flowing from him, in the soft <dialect>\accents/ of his native islands

"Is it thou, Stefano! They said thou hadst fallen into the gripe of the devils of Barbary, and that thou wert planting flowers for an infidel, with thy hands, and watering them, with thy tears!"

The answer was in the harsher dialect of Calabria, and it was uttered with the rough familiarity of a seaman.

"La Bella Sorrentina is <not the> /no\ housekeeper of a curato. She is not a damsel to take a siesta with a Tunisian rover prowling about in her neighborhood. Hadst

thou ever been beyond the Lido, thou wouldst have known the difference between chasing the felucca and catching her."

"Kneel down, and thank <Th> San Theodoro, for his <bounty> /care\. There was much praying on thy decks that hour, caro Stefano, though <thou art so> /none is\ bolder among the mountains of Calabria, <with> /when\ th<e>/y\ felucca /is once\ safely drawn upon the <shore> beach!"

The mariner cast a half comic, half serious glance upward, at the image of the patron Saint, ere he replied. <in the same vein of raillery>.

"There was more need of the wings of thy Lion, than of the favor of thy Saint. I <have> never <been> known to come further north /for aid\ than San Jannarius <in my greatest need> even when it blows a hurricane."

"So much the worse for thee, caro /since the good bishop is better at stopping the lava, than at quieting the winds\—but there was danger, then, of losing the felucca and her brave people, among the Turks?"

"There was, in truth, a Tunis man prowling about, between Stromboli and Sicily, but, aila di San Michelli! he might better have chased the cloud above the volcano than run after the felucca in a Scirocco!"

"Thou wert chicken-hearted, Stefano?"

"I—! I was more like <a chained> /thy\ lion. here, with some small additions of chains and muzzles."

"As was seen by the felucca's speed!"

"Cospetto! I wished myself a Knight of <St John's> /San Giovanni\ a thousand times, during that chase, and The Bella Sorrentina a brave Maltese galley, if it were only for the cause of Christian honor! The miscreant hung upon my quarter, for the better part of three glasses, so near that I could tell <if> which of the knaves wore dirty cloth in his turban, and which clean. It was a sore sight to a Christian, Stefano, to see the right thus born upon by an infidel!"

"And thy feet warmed with the thought of the bastinado, <friend of mine> /caro\?"

<"If> "I have run too often barefoot over our Calabrian Mountains to tingle with every fancy of that sort."

"Every man has his weak spot, and I know thine to be to dread of <the> a Turk's arm. Thy native hills have their soft as well as their hard spots, but it is said the Tunisian <takes> /chooses\ a board as knotty as his own heart, <for> when he amuses himself with the wailings of a christian."

"<Enough for friendship. When the knaves get so near as to throw their grapnels on the deck of la Sorrentina, let thy cousin Jelsonoma go weep, for there will many a weary day pass before she will again see the face of as true a mariner—> /"Well, the happiest of us all, must take such as fortune brings. If my soles are to be shod with

blows, why thy honest cousin the minister of St. Agatha will be cheated of a customer. I have bargained with <a> /the\ good curato, that all such <chance blows> /accidents\ shall go in the general account of penance—\ But, how fares the world of Venice,?—and wast /dost\ do thou, among these hot canals, /at this season\ to keep the flowers of thy jacket from wilting?"

"To day as yesterday, and to-morrow will be as to day. I row <my> /the\ gondola from the Rialto to the Judica; from San Giorgio to San Marco; From San Marco to the Lido, and from the Lido, home. There are no Tunis men by the way, to <quicken> /chill\ the <arm> /heart\ or warm the feet."

"Enough <for> /of\ friendship. And is there nothing stirring in the republic? No young noble drowned, nor any Jew hanged?"

"Nothing of <late> /that interest\—except the calamity which befel Pietro—<You> /Thou\ remember/est\ Pietrillo, /he\ who crossed into Dalmatia with thee, once, as a supernumerary, the time he was suspected of having aided the Young French <Marquis> /man\, with running away with <the> /a\ Senator's daughter?"

"Do I remember the last famine! The rogue did nothing but eat macaroni and <drink> /swallow\ the Lachrimæ Christi, which the Dalmatian Count had on freight."

"Il poverino!—His gondola <was> /has been\ run down by an Ancona man, <no later than> who passed over the boat as if it were a Senator stepping on a fly."

"So much for little fish coming into deep water."

"The honest fellow was crossing the Judica, with a stranger who had occasion to say his prayers at the Redentore, when the <clumsy> brig hit him in the canopy, and broke up the gondola as if it had been a bubble left by the Buccentaur."

"The <An> Padrone was too generous to complain of Pietro's clumsiness, since it met with its own punishment?"

"Madre di Dio!—He went to sea that hour, or he might be feeding the fishes of the Lagunes! There is not a gondolier in Venice who did not feel the wrong, at his heart, and we know how to obtain justice for an insult, as well as our masters."

"Well a gondola is mortal as well as a felucca, and both have their time; <and> better die by the prow of a <fe> brig than fall into the gripe of a Turk.—How is thy young master, Gino, and /is\ he likely to obtain his claims of the Senators?"

"He cools himself in the Judica, in the morning, and <at even> if thou would'st know what he does at evening, thou hast only /to\ look among the nobles, in the Broglio."

As the gondolier spoke he glanced an eye, aside, at <the>/a\ groupe of patrician rank who paced the gloomy arcades <of the> /which\ supported the superior walls of the Doge's palace, a spot sacred to the <pleasures and> uses of the privileged few.

"I am no stranger to the habit <of> thy Venitian Nobles have of coming to that low colonnade at this hour, but I never before heard of their preferring the waters of the Judica for their baths."

"<When a Senator>/Were even the Doge to\ throw himself out of a gondola he must <sink>swim or sink like a<ny other> /meaner\ christian."

"Acqua del Adriatico! Was the young Duca going to the Redentore, too, to say his prayers?"

"He was coming back, after having—but what matters it <where he chose to pass his night> in what canal a young noble sighs away the night! We happened to be near when the Ancona man performed his <handsome> feat. While Giorgio and I were boiling with rage at the awkwardness of the stranger, my master, who never had much taste or knowledge of gondolas, went into the water to save the young lady from sharing the fate of her <father> /uncle\."

"Diavolo!—This is the first syllable thou hast uttered concerning any young lady, or of the death of her <father> /uncle\!"

"Thou wert thinking of thy Tunis'man and hast forgotten. I must have told thee how near the beautiful Signorina was to share the fate of the gondola, and how the </calamity of the\ Florentine Marchese> loss of the Florentine Marchese weighs in addition on the <cons> soul of the Padrone?"

"Santo Padre! That a christian should die the death of a<n unlucky> /hunted\ dog, by the carelessness of a gondolier!

"It may have been lucky for the Ancona man that it so fell out, for they say the Florentine was one <to make> of influence enough to make a Senator cross the bridge of sighs, at need."

"The devil take all careless watermen, say I!—And what became of the awkward rogue?"

"I tell /thee\ he went outside the Lido that very hour /or\— —"

"Pietrello?—"

He was brought up by the oar of Giorgio, for we both of us were active in saving the cushions and other valuables."

"Couldst thou do nothing for the Florentine?—Ill luck may follow the brig on account of his death!"

"Ill luck follow her, say I, /till she lays her bones on some rock that is harder than the heart of her padrone. As for the stranger,\ We could do no more than offer up a prayer to San Theodoro, since he never rose after the blow. But, what has brought thee to Venice, caro mio, for thy ill-fortune with the oranges /in the last voyage\ caused thee to denounce the place."

The Calabrian laid a finger on one cheek, and drew the skin down, in a manner to give a droll expression to his dark, comic eye, while the whole of his really fine Grecian face was charged with an expression of coarse humour.

"Look you, Gino—thy master sometimes calls for his gondola between sunset and morning?"

"An owl is not more wakeful, than he has been of late. This head of mine has not been on a pillow, before the sun has come above the Lido,

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since the snows <have> melted <on> /from\ Montalica."

"And when the sun of thy master's countenance sets in his own pilazzo, thou hastenest off to the bridge of the Rialto, among the jewelers, and butchers, to proclaim the manner in which he has passed the night?"

"Diamine! 'Twould be the last night I served the Duca di St Agatha, were my tongue so limber! <A> /The\ gondolier and <a> /the\ confessor are the two privy counsellors of a <Venitian> noble, <m>/Master Stefano, with this small difference, that the last only knows what the sinner <chooses to tell> /wishes to reveal\, while the first sometimes knows more. I can find a safer, if not a more honest employment, than to be running about with my master's secrets <o>/\n <my tongue> /the air\."."

"And I a wiser than to let every Jew broker in San Marco have a peep into my charter party."

"Nay, old acquaintance, there is some difference between our occupations, after all. A padrone of a felucca cannot, in justice, be compared to the most confidential gondolier of a Neapolitan Duke, who has an unsettled right to be admitted to the Council of three hundred—"

<"Hist!" interru> "Just the difference between smooth water and rough. You ruffle the surface of a <lazy> canal with a lazy oar, while I run the canal of Piombino in a Mistral, shoot the Faro of Messina in a white squall, double Santa Maria de Leuca, in a breathing Levanter, and come skimming up the Adriatic before a Scirocco, that is hot enough to cook my macaroni, and which sets the whole sea boiling, worse than the cauldrons of Scylla!"

"Hist—" eagerly interrupted the gondolier, who had indulged <good naturedly> /with Italian humour\ in the controversy for preminence, <though not without good> /though without any real feeling-\ "Here comes one, who may think, /else\ we /shall\ have need of his <stiletto> /hand\ to settle our dispute—Ecco lo!"

The Calabrian recoiled a pace, in silence, and stood regarding the individual who had caused this hurried remark, with a gloomy but steady air. The stranger moved /slowly\ past <in calm gravity>. His years were under thirty, <and> /though\ the calm gravity of his countenance, <which even wore an aspect of melancholy, [unrecovered] and which was heightened by the uniform colour of a face th> whose <paleness> /<bloodless> hue\ was scarce relieved by <the [unrecovered] and sickly /a sickly\ tint,

which might have come equally from the sun of Italy or the inward sources imparted to it a character of more mature age. The cheeks were bloodless, but rather they betrayed the pallid hue of mental, than of bodily disease. The perfect condition of the physical man was sufficiently exhibited in the muscular fullness of a body which, though light, and active, gave every indication of strength. His step was firm, assured and even; his carriage erect and of entire self possession; and his whole mien was strongly characterised by a self possession that could scarcely escape observation. And yet his attire was that of one of an inferior class in life. A doublet of common velvet, a dark Montero cap, such as was then much used in the southern countries of Europe, with other vestments of a similar taste, composed his dress. The face was rather melancholy rather than sombre, and its perfect repose accorded well with the striking calmness of the body. The lineaments of the former, however, were bold and even noble, exhibiting that strong and manly outline which is so characteristic of the finer class of the Italian countenance. Out of this striking array of features gleamed an eye, that was full of brilliancy, and passion.

As the stranger passed his glittering organs rolled over the persons of the gondolier and his companion, but the look was though searching and rapid it betrayed no emotion. 'Twas the wandering but wary glance which men who have much reason for distrust habitually cast on a multitude. It turned with the same jealous keenness on the face of the next it encountered, and by the time the steady and well balanced form was lost in the crowd, that quick and glowing eye had cast its rapid gleamed, in the same rapid and uneasy manner, on twenty others.

Neither the gondolier nor the mariner of Calabria spoke until their riveted gazes after the retiring figure had disappeared became useless. Then the former simply ejaculated, with a strong respiration, the word—

"Jacopo!"

His companion raised three of his fingers, with a hidden meaning towards the palace of the Doges.

"Do they let him take the air, even in San Marco!" he asked, in unfeigned surprise.

"It is not easy, mio amico, to make water run up stream, or to stop the downward current. It is said that most of the senators would sooner lose their hopes of the horned bonnet, than lose him. Jacopo! He knows more family secrets than the good Priore of San Marco himself, and he, poor man, is half his time in the confessional."

"Ah! they are afraid to put him into an iron jacket lest some awkward secrets should be squeezed out!"

"Corpo di Bacco! There would be little peace in Venice, if the council of three should take it into their heads to make him loosen his tongue, of yonder man in that rough rude manner!"

"But they say, Gino <caro>, that your council of three has a fashion of feeding the fishes of the Lagoon which might throw the suspicion of his death on some <other> unhappy Ancona man, were the body ever to come up, again?"

"Well, no need of bawling <the fact> /it\ aloud, as if thou wert hailing a <M> Sicilian through thy trumpet, though the fact should be so. To say the truth, there are few men in business, who are thought to have more custom than <the man> /he\ who has just gone up the piazzetta."

"Two sequins!—" rejoined the Calabrian, enforcing his meaning by a significant grimace.

"Dama! Thou forgettest, Stefano, that not even the confessor has any trouble with a job in which he has been employed! Not a caratano less than a hundred will buy a stroke of his <he> art. Your blows for two sequins,\*\*, leave a man time to tell tales, or even to say his prayers, \*half the time\*."

"Jacopo!" ejaculated the other, with an emphasis which seemed to be a sort of summing up of all his ideas on the subject.

The gondolier shrugged his shoulder with quite as much meaning as a man born on the shores of the Baltic could have conveyed by words, but he too appeared to think the matter exhausted.

"Stefano Milano," he added, after a moment of pause, "there are things in Venice which he, who would eat his sardines in peace woul† do well to forget—Let thy errand, in port, be what it may, thou art in good season to witness the regatta which will be given by the young nobles <shortly.>" to-morrow."

"Thou hast an oar, caro, for that race?"

"Giorgio's, <and> /or\ mine, under the patronage of San Theodoro. The prize will be a /silver\ gondola to him who is lucky or skilful enough to win. <After which> /And then\ we shall have the nuptials with the Adriatick."

"Thy nobles had best woo the bride well, for there are hereticks who lay claim to her good will. I met a rover of strange rig and miraculous fleetness, in rounding the <south capes of> headlands of Otranto, who seemed to have half a mind to follow the felucca in her path, towards the Lagoon."

"Did the sight warm the/e\ <blood> at the soles of thy feet, Gino <caro> /dear\?"?"

"There was not a turbaned head on his deck, but every sea cap set upon a well covered poll and a shorn chin. Thy Buccentaur is no longer the bravest craft that floats between Dalmatia and the islands, though her gilding may glitter <the farthest> /brightest\. There are men beyond the pillars of Hercules, who are not satisfied with doing all that can be done on their own coasts, but who are pretending to do much of that which can be done on ours."

"The republick is a little aged, Calabrese, and years need rest. The joints of the Buccentaur are <a little> racked by time and many voyages to the Lido. I have heard my master say that the leap of the <lion> winged lion is not as far as it was in his young days."

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"Don Camillo has a reputation of talking boldly of the foundations of this City of piles, when he has the roof of old St Agatha over his head. Were he to speak more reverently of the horned bonnet and the council of three, his pretensions to succeed to the rights of his forefathers might seem juster in the eyes of his judges. But distance is a great mellow of colours and softner of fears! My own <id>opinions of the speed of the felucca and of the merits of a Turk undergo changes of this sort, between port and the open sea and I have known thee /kind Gino <[unrecovered]>\ forget San Theodoro, and bawl as lustily to San Jannarius when at Napoli, as if thou <wert truly born under the good protection of our southern patron birth place> /<had again birthright then [unrecovered] of thy>\ really fancied thyself born in the land."/

"One must speak to those at hand, in order to be quickest heard," rejoined the gondolier, casting a glance <upward at the> that was <half> /partly\ humorous, and <half> /yet not without\ superstitio<us>/n\ upward at the image which crowned the granite column <[unrecovered]> against whose pedestal he /still\ leaned. "A truth which warns us to be prudent, for yonder Jew cast a look this way as if he felt a conscientious scruple in letting any irreverend remark of ours go without reporting <it to the Senate>. The bearded old rogue is said to have other dealings with the Council of three hundred, besides <dem> asking for the moneys, he has lent to their sons! And so, Stefano, thou thinkest the republick will never plant another <he> mast of triumph in San Marco, or bring <another> /more\ trophies /to\ the venerable church?"

"Napoli, herself, with her constant change of masters is as likely /<now>\ to do a great act on the sea, as thy winged beast, just now! Thou art well enough to row a gondola in the canals, Gino, or to follow thy master to his Calabrian castle, but if thou wouldest know what passes in the /wide\ world, thou must be content to listen to the mariners of the long course. The day of San Marco has gone by, and that of the Biscayane and of the heretick <has come> more north, has come."

"Thou hast been much of late among the lying Genoese, Stefano, that thou comest <among us> /hither\ with th<y>/ese\ idle tales of what a Biscayane or a heretick can do. Genoa la superba! What has a city of walls to compare with one of canals and islands like this, and what has that Appenine republick performed to be put in comparison with the great deeds of <Ven> the Queen of the <East> /Adriatick!\. Thou forgettest that Venezia has been"

"Zitti-zitti—that has been, caro mio, is <a> /too\ great /a\ word in Italy. Thou art as proud /of the past\ as a Roman of the Trastevere."

"And the Roman of the Trastevere <are> /is\ right! Is it nothing Stefano Milano to be descended from a great and victorious people?"

"It is better, Gino Monaldi, to be one of a people that is great and victorious /just\

now. Thy <ador> enjoyment of the past is like the pleasure of <him> /the fool\ who dreams of the wine he drank yesterday!"

This is well for a Neapolitan, whose country never was a nation," returned the gondolier, angrily. I have heard Don Camillo, who is one born in the land, often say, that <the> half the people of <Sicily> /Europe\ have ridden the horse of Sicily, and used the legs of thy Napoli, except those who had the best right to the services of both."

"Even so. And yet the figs are as sweet as ever, and the becca fice as tender! The ashes of the volcanoes cover all!"

"Gino!—" said a voice of authority near the excited and indignant gondolier.

"Signore—"

<The> He who interrupted the dialogue pointed to the boat without saying more.

"Alla vedere—" hastily muttered the gondolier. His friend squeezed his hand, /in perfect amity,\ and, at the next instant, <the former> /Gino\ was arranging the cushions for his master, having first aroused his subordinate <Giorgio>, /brother of the oar,\ from a profound sleep <on the th>