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The Doge is surpris'd by Rugantino himself.



Count Florio & Rosabella discovered by

RUGANTINO,

THE

BRAVO OF VENICE.

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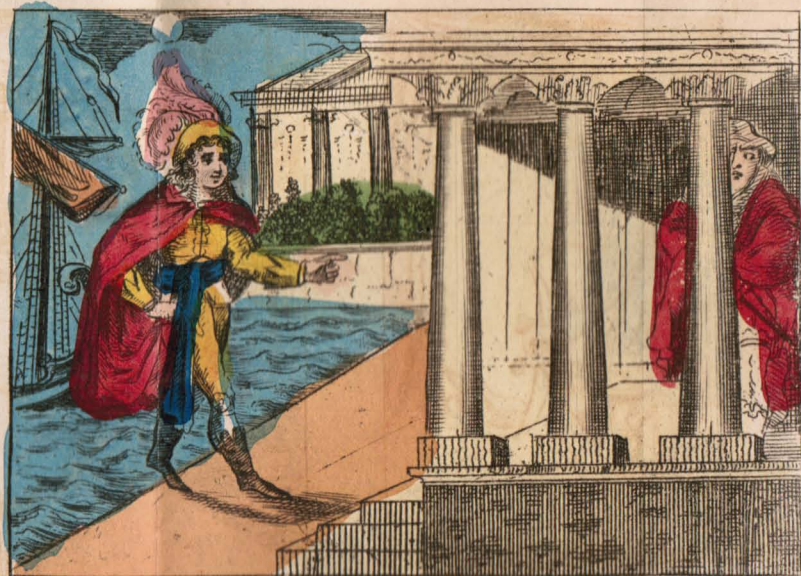
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The Doge is surpris'd by Rugantino.



Faleri approaches the Colonnade where Parvizi has concealed himself.



Count Florardo & Rosabella discovered by her Father.



Rosabella on seeing Rugantino falls into the arms of Camilla.

THE BRAVO OF VENICE.

For a length of time the inhabitants of Venice, from the Doge to the Peasant, were kept in a state of the greatest trepidation, by a band of desperate Bravos, whose crimes were of the blackest dye, and whose secret haunts had escaped detection. At length the arm of justice overtook four of them, named Pietrino, Struzzi, Thomaso, and Matteo, and they were adjudged to expiate their crimes by the forfeiture of their heads. The sound of the bell, which gave the signal for execution, was welcome to all Venice, except a few, whose dissolute lives had reduced them to a state of want and desperation, and who had long been plotting the overthrow of the republic, by the destruction of Andreas the Doge; to effect which it was necessary that some of the principal persons in the state should first be removed. The four ruffians above-named had been engaged to carry the latter part of their scheme into execution: dreadful to their ears, therefore, was the sound, which frustrated their schemes, and baffled all their hopes. The execution of the four bravos was not enough to tranquillize Venice, while the still more desperate and terrible Rugantino yet lived, and had hitherto escaped the vigilance of his pursuers, and bade the republic tremble.

The plans of the conspirators were again revived, by the hope of engaging Rugantino in their service; and he, boldly suffering himself to be found, readily undertook for a large reward to execute their wishes. He immediately set to work; and in a few hours, Conari, the Doge's bosom friend and adviser, and one whose penetrating eye the conspirators most

dreaded, was not to be found—was numbered among the dead.

The Doge, ignorant of the conspiracy, was struck with terror and amazement. A proclamation was issued, and dispersed throughout the republic, offering a reward of ten thousand sequins to any one who would discover, and bring to justice, the person or persons by whom Conari had been removed from the world. Immediately after the proclamation was affixed to the gate of the Doge's palace, by some unknown hand:—

“ VENETIANS,

“ Search no longer for the murderer of Conari;—you will not find him;—I, Rugantino, was his assassin; I plunged my dagger in his bosom, and then dismissed his body to feed fishes.

“ the Doge promises ten thousand sequins to him who shall be brave and skilful enough to *discover* and seize Conari's murderer.—Ten thousand sequins!—Puny reward! Rugantino hereby promises twenty thousand sequins to the man who shall lay hands on

THE BRAVO OF VENICE.

“ *Alone*, will I make the republic tremble. Venice no longer harbours *five* banditti; *one*, and *one* only, shall inhabit here; and that one shall be the Doge himself! shall watch over right and over wrong; and according as he judges, shall reward or punish.

“ Let those who need me, seek me; they will find me every where!—Let those who search for me with the design of delivering me up to the law, despair and tremble;—they will find me no where.—But I shall find *them*, and that when they least expect me.— Venetians, this comes from the Bravo

“ RUGANTINO.”

“ The villain!” cried the Doge on reading this paper. “ Endless wealth, and the greatest honours, shall be his reward, who will bring the monster to justice.”

But in vain. Rugantino was not to be found. In vain was every effort made to gain a knowledge of his hiding-place, in hopes of the promised reward: Rugantino set all their ingenuity at defiance.

The hour of midnight had already approached; and the moon, emerging from behind a cloud, threw her bright beams over the Adriatic, when a tall man, disguised in a cloak, with lengthened strides approached the shore, and cast an impatient look across the waters before him. He turned, and entered the portico of a building, exclaiming, as he hastily paced to and fro, “ How happens it Faliero keeps not his appointment!—Curse on this delay!”—Adding, “ to what a desperate condition am I reduced by the scornful imperious Rosabella. I, who am descended from one of the noblest families of Venice, to kneel and sue in vain at the feet of a scornful beauty.—To be spurned!—By heaven, she shall die for it!—Monaldeschi too! that prince for whom the Doge has reserved her hand, he also shall meet the dagger's point of the terrible Rugantino. Oh, how I shall triumph when Rosabella, her favoured prince of Monaldeschi, and Andreas, the imperious Doge, shall fall beneath that Bravo's steel! Then shall Parozzi, with his valiant compeers, alone give laws to Venice.

At this moment a gondola reached the shore, from which the ruined spendthrift, the high-born Falieri, sprang ashore, and was met by Parozzi, who severely reproached him for being two days behind his appointed time.

“ Noble Parozzi,” replied Falieri, “ I have not remained idle while at the village of Gonzaga. I know not what the Doge Andreas has done to the Cardinal Gonzaga to make him his enemy; but he now belongs to us.”

“ Impossible! You rave, Falieri!—You dream:—The Cardinal Gonzaga—”

“ Is our's, Parozzi: and our's both body and soul! I was obliged, indeed, to rave, as you call it, with him.—O yes, I roused up all my eloquence—and

declaimed in high-sounding terms about patriotism and the welfare of our country; of the danger of the increasing power of the Doge; of his luxury, his pride, his tyranny; of our glorious designs, our love of freedom, and so forth. Trust me, Gonzaga is a hypocrite, and the fitter for our purpose!"

"Excellent Falieri!" exclaimed Parozzi; "Venice shall yet see a conspiracy far more important than even the far-famed conspiracy of Cataline.—But now listen in turn to me.—More than half our triumph is already secured. The firmest link of that chain by which the Doge holds the chief men of Venice fast to his government, shall be torn asunder.—Conari is already gone."—"Conari gone!" said Falieri.

"To his grave, Falieri! And this night, my friend, this very night—Hark ye! What sound was that?—Didst not hear a cry?"

"A cry?" no, not so much as a whisper.—What ails thee, Parozzi? Why dost thou tremble and fix thine eye-balls thus wildly in vacancy? Is this thy boasted courage in a great enterprize like our's?"

"No, no: 'twas nothing. It is past and gone, and again my bosom burns with thirst of vengeance.—Hark ye, Falieri.—Rugantino—nay, start not at the name—Rugantino is mine!"

"Astonishing! Where didst thou find him? how secure him? He who is every where and no where; who defies all human laws, and seems to keep Lucifer himself in subjection to his will.—Where didst thou find him, Parozzi?"

"No matter where.—Last night, my friend, the terrible Rugantino stood before me, clad in all his horrors. His herculean limbs were wrapped in a blood-stained garment. His long black and matted hair hung over a sallow visage deformed with innumerable scars; while his broad and bushy eye-brows partly shaded, but could not wholly conceal, the fierce lightnings that flashed from his eyes.—Armed he was for destruction; and I spoke my wishes. The ruffian named his price!—O, how high the villain rates his services!—but no matter—though we are poor,

Memmo is rich enough: and Memmo's gold must pay him. But then, Falieri, the Bravo demanded a pledge of future payment; and that pledge I dared not deny to Rugantino."

"What pledge did he demand?"

"Our secret—our plot—"

"Imprudent Parozzi! The monster may betray us, to secure himself!"

"No, no, Falieri. He has given proof enough already of his fidelity; already is Conari disposed of, and Venice is in tumults.—Lemellino, and Manfrone, the Doge's firmest friends, his dagger will silently remove.—Nay more,—Falieri, this night, this very night, Rosabella bleeds before the shrine of her patron saint."

"How, Rosabella!"

"Yes, my friend. It is the night preceding her birth-day; and it is the custom of the beauteous tyrant to watch and pray from midnight to the dawn of morning at the shrine of Saint Rosa. There will Rugantino meet her in all his death-dealing horrors; and there too will the despised, rejected Parozzi appear to make the work the surer—Venice will be in tumults. Andreas and his few remaining adherents, confounded and dismayed, will not dare to oppose us; we shall speedily possess ourselves of the sovereign power, and reign masters where hitherto we have served as slaves."

"Bravely resolved, Parozzi.—Manfrone and Lemellino too—"

"All, all, my friend.—But hark! the midnight-bell has struck, and methinks I hear the distant chant that proclaims the approach of Rosabella. This way the procession comes.—Let us not be seen together. Tomorrow we will meet at Memmo's. Farewell till then."

"Farewell, bold Parozzi! success attend thee!"

Parozzi, hiding his face with his cloak, ran hastily down the street, at the bottom of which stood the church where Rosabella kept her vigils. He had scarcely passed, when a train of nuns and friars advanced, in the midst of which walked the Doge's daughter, the all-accomplished and beautiful Rosa-

bella. Unconscious of danger, she entered the church, and approached the shrine, and received from the high priest his benediction. The friars, the nuns, and her attendants, immediately withdrew to a considerable distance, and left her undisturbed in her devotion, at the shrine of Saint Rosa. Having finished, she cast her eyes over the many monuments by which she was surrounded, and being attracted by one which appeared newly placed there, she was induced to read the inscription. It was to the memory of Carlo Foscari, who was supposed to have been so lately murdered by the Bravo Rugantino. She was struck with horror as she read the inscription, recording his death, and the crimes of Rugantino; and, turning again towards the altar, a moan of distress caught her ear—she sprang from her knees, and, beheld, near her, an infirm old man, tottering, as if oppress with sudden faintness. She flew to his assistance.

“What ails you, my good father?” she inquired in a melodious voice, as she endeavoured to support the aged sufferer in her fair arms.

“God reward you, lady,” stammered he faintly, and a deep blush crimsoned his pale cheeks as his eyes met those of Rosabella.

“Lean, lean on me, poor old man,” she replied in the gentlest tone; and with a look of benevolent anxiety, she presently added;—“are you not better now?”

“Better?” uttered the deceiver with a feeble voice;—“better?—Oh yes—yes—yes—I am better—and you are the noble Rosabella, the daughter of Andreas, the Doge of Venice?”

“The same, good Father.”

“Oh, lady, I have somewhat to tell you. Be on your guard—Ah God! that there should be men so cruel!—Lady, your life is in danger.” Rosabella started, and the colour fled from her cheeks.

“Fear nothing, lady; but be silent. You shall not die; but if you value your life, be silent, and you shall see the assassin expire at your feet.”

Rosabella made a movement as if she would have fled: but suddenly the person whom she had assisted was no longer an infirm old man. He who, a minute before, was bent double with age and infirmities, burst into youth and vigour, and with the force of a giant, drew her back with one arm.

“For the love of heaven,” she cried, “release me! Let me fly!”

“Lady, fear nothing:—I will protect you,” and having thus said, he placed a whistle to his lips, and blew it shrilly. Instantly Parozzi rushed from his place of concealment, and while he raised a dagger to plunge into the bosom of Rosabella, he received his death-wound from the arm that detained her. Without uttering a single cry, he fell lifeless on the ground.

“You are safe, beautiful Rosabella!” exclaimed her deliverer. “There lies the villain who engaged me to assist in your murder. Return to your father, and tell him you owe your life to Rugantino.”

“Leave me, thou dreadful man!” she stammered in terror:—“Oh! leave me.” And had not Rugantino again supported her with his arm, she had sunk upon the pavement. For a moment the fierce, the horrible Rugantino gazed in silence on the face of Rosabella, where sat enthroned the majesty of the purest innocence; then bowing himself down to her, he imprinted a burning kiss on the pale cheeks of the beauty—“Ah, Rosabella,” he exclaimed, “why art thou so fair—and why am I—Knowest thou, Rosabella, who kissed thy cheek? Go, tell thy father, the proud Doge of Venice, ’twas the Bravo, Rugantino.—Thou art mine, Rosabella: that kiss has sealed thee mine. Remember,—henceforward thou art the *Bravo’s Bride*.”

A loud and appalling shriek of terror burst from Rosabella at this horrid appellation, which reached the ears of her attendants, and brought them round their mistress. Every aisle of the church, every shrine was examined,—but no lurking assassin was discovered. The dead body of Parozzi was there, and Rosabella

described his murderer. The church-doors had been carefully closed, when Rosabella reached the shrine, and no possible avenue of escape was known: yet the Bravo Rugantino was not to be found, and the terrified girl was conveyed to her father's palace in safety.

This strange adventure spread like wildfire through Venice. The guards of the Senate were ordered to patrol the streets. Every suspicious house was searched; every gondola on the canals was examined:—Still no traces remained of Rugantino. His retreat was inscrutable.

The Bravo now more than ever became the subject of general wonder. Every one pitied the sufferings of Rosabella. All voices were unanimous in execrating the memory of Parozzi; but each built his own hypothesis upon the strange circumstance of the noble Parozzi, her former lover, having decreed her death, and the Bravo Rugantino becoming her saviour, and the avenger of the meditated crime.

On the evening following the rescue of Rosabella at the shrine of Saint Rosa, Falieri, Contarino, the Cardinal Gonzago, and the rest of the conspirators, met, as usual, at the palace of Memmo. The assassination of Parozzi was the theme of their conversation. They could not divine by what means the Bravo, whom he had hired to perpetrate the murder of Rosabella, had been induced to turn his dagger's point on his employer.

The mystery at once perplexed and alarmed them. Debates ran high. The more timid spirits among them (and Memmo headed the cowards) trembled for the safety of their persons, and maintained that Rugantino had sold them to the Doge.—Others again (among whom were Falieri, Contarino, and the Cardinal Gonzago) as resolutely maintained that Conari's death was a sure pledge of the Bravo's fidelity to their cause, however mysterious his present conduct. All agreed in blaming Parozzi for having confided their secret to such a villain.

Suddenly loud footsteps were heard ascending the stair-case. Soon the folding doors burst asunder,

and a dreadful form stood in the midst of the conspirators.

"Do ye know me?" exclaimed a voice like thunder.

"We know you not," replied Falieri.

"Look then on this dagger: those drops of blood came from Parozzi's heart.—Do ye know me now?"

"We do," answered both Falieri and Contarino, "and know you for the traitor Rugantino."

"Stand off," cried the Bravo, presenting a pistol. "Dare not to approach nearer."—Awded by the fierceness of his demeanour, Falieri and Contarino stood still. The Bravo continued:—"Parozzi was a villain, and he died for it;—ye too are villains—and—I am your master."

"Heaven and earth!" cried Falieri, stamping with rage, "shall we submit to be braved in this manner by a ruffian? What hinders us, my noble friends, to seize the Bravo, and avenge Parozzi with our swords!"

"Agreed, agreed!" was uttered by a number of voices at once, while Rugantino advanced into the very midst of the assembly.—"Aye, aye," he cried, "brave Seignors, come on: and there," said he, throwing his dagger on the floor, "I present you that sure and unerring weapon. But mark me, noble Seignors, ere I left my own apartment, I committed your plot to paper. Should I not return by eleven o'clock, a faithful emissary of mine carries that paper to the Doge; and before twelve, every man of you is pinioned in a dungeon."

At this instant, the chimes of Saint Martin told three quarters past ten. The conspirators turned pale.

"Go, go!" cried Falieri: "Away, away!—Betray us not, and we will not attempt your life."

"But that is not enough. You must elect me your chief."

"Our chief! Do you forget who we are?"

"O no, Seignors; I recognize you every one: you are lords of Venice.—But you are conspirators also; and I am Rugantino, the Bravo of Venice.—Do you still hesitate?—Then here I take my station, (seating

himself in a chair,) and the appointed hour of eleven draws on."

"Oh God!" cried Falieri, almost convulsed with emotion—"Well, well, be it so—you are our chief."

"Swear allegiance to me on your knees."

The humble conspirators knelt around Rugantino, and took the oath he demanded; while, fixing his eyes disdainfully on them, he cried, "Behold, Seignors, to what an abject state has vice reduced ye.—Now give me a written list of all your associates."

To this condition they were compelled to submit; and having presented him the list, he rose, and departed.

He now again passed into the anti-chamber, when Falieri made a sign to his associates that he would secretly follow the steps of the Bravo; but, as if Rugantino divined his intentions, he instantly returned; and, presenting a loaded pistol, in a voice of thunder exclaimed, "On peril of your lives, let no man presume to quit this chamber till I blow my whistle."—The Bravo then withdrew; and the conspirators remained immovable, till the shrill blast of Rugantino's whistle roused them to an expression of their feelings; when they broke up the treasonable meeting, and retired to their respective homes.

* * * * *

"Yet, after all," (said the Doge of Venice, as he sat alone one evening in his private chamber, and ruminating on the strange events that had lately befallen himself and his family)—"After all it must be confessed, that this Rugantino is a most extraordinary man. He who can do what this Bravo has done, must possess such talents and such courage as (if he stood at the head of an army) would enable him to subdue a world. I wish I could gain a sight of him."

"Look up then—Behold!--Behold him!" roared Rugantino, and clapped the Doge on the shoulder.

Andreas started from his seat. A colossal figure stood before him, wrapped in a dark mantle, above which appeared a countenance so hideous and forbidding, that the universe could not have produced its equal.

"Who art thou?" stammered the Doge.

"Thou seest me, and canst thou doubt? Well then, 'tis Rugantino, the Republic's most submissive slave."

The brave Andreas, who had never trembled in fight, now forgot his usual presence of mind. Speechless did he gaze on the daring assassin, who stood before him calm and haughty, undaunted by the majesty of the greatest man in Venice.

"Rugantino," said the Doge at length, "thou art a fearful—a detestable man!"

"Fearful!" answered the Bravo: "Dost thou think me so? Good! that glads me to my very heart!—Detestable! that may be so, or it may not; but yet, Andreas, one thing is certain—You and I stand on the same line; for at this moment we are the two greatest men in Venice, *you* in your way, *I* in mine. Nay, no smiles of disbelief.—I hold you in my power, and therefore in fact you are beneath me."

The Doge rose to quit the chamber.

"Not so fast," said Rugantino, rudely laughing, and he barred the Doge's passage:—I have not done with you yet; we must have a little conversation."

"Hear me, Rugantino!" said the Doge, thou hast received from nature great talents. Why dost thou so pervert them? I here promise you pardon for the past, and protection for the future, if you will name to me the villain who bribed you to assassinate Conari, if you will abjure your bloody trade, and accept an honest employment in the service of the Republic; otherwise, quit with all speed the territory of Venice, or I swear—"

"Ho! ho!" interrupted Rugantino, "Pardon and protection, say you? Know that Rugantino is able to protect himself—You would be informed of the name of him who bribed me to be Conari's murderer? Well, you shall know it—but not to day:—I must, say you, quit Venice—and wherefore?—Rugantino fears not Venice! 'tis Venice that fears Rugantino.—You would have me abjure my profession? Well, Andreas, there is one condition which perhaps—"

"Name it," cried the Doge: "Will ten thousand

sequins purchase your departure from the Republic?"

"No, Andreas, but one price can pay me; I love Rosabella---Give me your daughter for my bride."

"Monster!—What insolence!"---

"Patience, Andreas! will you accept my terms?"

"Never."

"Then mark me, Andreas: I have just sold the lives of your two dear friends, Manfrone and Lemellino.--- Now give me Rosabella, and I break the bargain?"

"Miscreant! has heaven no lightnings!"

"You will not?--Mark me, proud Doge! in four-and-twenty hours shall Manfrone and Lemellino be food for worms!"

And with these words he drew a pistol from under his cloak, and flashed it in the Doge's face. Blinded by the powder, and confused by the unexpected explosion, Andreas started back, but instantly recovering from his surprise, he summoned his guards to seize Rugantino--Rugantino had already disappeared.

The same evening, Falieri and his confederates were assembled and arranging plans for the Republic's ruin; when, as the clock struck twelve, the doors flew open, and Rugantino stood before them.

"Wine, there," cried he; "the work is done!-- Manfrone and Lemellino are no more."

All sprang up in rapture and astonishment.---

"Now, blood-hounds," cried he: "are ye yet satisfied? Do ye demand no other murders!"

"Yes, one more," replied Falieri. "Flodoardo, that dauntless minion of the Doge's, will return tomorrow to Venice:---away with him too!"---"Aye, aye, away with him too!" shouted all the other conspirators.

"Flodoardo!" muttered Rugantino between his teeth, "Hum---hum, that is not so easy!"

Great preparations were now making in the palace of the Duke Andreas; for the Prince Monaldeschi, the

destined bridegroom of Rosabella, was hourly expected; when lo! almost at the gates of the city, the prince was found dead in a retired part of the road! His sword lay by him, unsheathed and bloody; his attendants were not to be found; his tablets were gone: but one leaf had been torn from them, and fastened on his breast.---It contained the following lines, apparently written in blood:

"Let no one pretend to the hand of Rosabella, who is not prepared to share the fate of Monaldeschi!"

"The BRAVO RUGANTINO."

"Oh! where shall I seek comfort or protection?" cried the Doge in despair, when he heard this dreadful news. "Why, why, is Flodoardo absent?"

At this instant, the arrival of the accomplished youth was announced; and the Doge advancing to meet him, exclaimed, "Welcome, welcome, brave Flodoardo.---Satan has burst his chains, and, under the name of Rugantino, now robs me of all my soul holds dear. I tremble lest the miscreant's dagger should deprive me too of you---Manfrone and---"

"I know all," said Flodoardo, with a melancholy air.---"Alas! my lord---"

He was interrupted from proceeding by the entrance of Rosabella, who advanced slowly into the apartment. Her eyes met those of Flodoardo, and a deep blush overspread her countenance. Flodoardo bowed with an air of distant respect.

"I have much to say to you, my friend," resumed the Doge; "but a foreigner of consequence has appointed this hour for an audience. In the meanwhile I leave you to entertain my poor Rosabella."

The venerable Doge quitted the apartment, and left the youthful pair together. Both were some time silent. At length Rosabella ventured to say,--- "You have made a long absence from Venice; did you receive much pleasure from your travels, Sir?"

"Much: for every where I heard the praises of Rosabella."

"Count Flodoardo, would you again offend me?"

"That," he answered with a deep sigh, will soon be out of my power. I shall speedily resume my travels; and the next time I quit Venice, I return to it no more."

"No more?" she exclaimed: "Oh, not so, Flodoardo! Ah! can you leave me?" She stopped, overwhelmed with confusion at her imprudence---I---I mean to say, can you leave my uncle?"

"Rosabella!" murmured the youth in a supplicating voice as he drew near to her.

"What would you of me, Seigneur?"

"My happiness. That suit I once begged for on my knees, and which was then rejected."

She gazed upon him for a moment undecided, then hastily drew away her hands, and exclaimed, "Leave me this moment, I command you."

Flodoardo clasped his hands in despair and anguish, bowed in token of obedience, and was about to say, "Farewell," when Rosabella, unable longer to resist the emotions that swelled her bosom, rushed toward him, and exclaimed; "Stay, Flodoardo! I am thine---thine for ever!"

The youthful lovers gazed on each other in silent rapture, when the entrance of the Doge roused them from their dream of bliss. Rosabella started from Flodoardo's embrace with a cry of terror: Flodoardo sprang from his kneeling posture, yet seemed by no means disconcerted; while Andreas fixed on them a look which at once expressed anger, melancholy, and the most heartfelt disappointment. Flodoardo approached him.

"Young man," said the Doge; "the attempt to excuse yourself must be fruitless."

"Excuse myself? No, my lord, I mean not to excuse my love for Rosabella, but to request your approbation of that love:---I demand her for my bride."

The Doge started with astonishment at this bold and unexpected request.

"It is true," continued Flodoardo; "that I am no more than a needy unknown youth, and it seems a piece of strange presumption when such a man pro-

poses himself to espouse the heiress of the Venetian Doge.---But make your demands, my lord; say, what you would have me become, what task you will me to perform, to obtain the hand of Rosabella?"

The Doge turned from him with a look of displeasure. The fair Rosabella now threw herself into the arms of her father, and endeavoured to hide her tears and blushes in his bosom. He understood and felt this appeal;---he saw that Rosabella had irrevocably bestowed her heart on Flodoardo. He gently withdrew himself from her embrace, and for some time slowly paced the apartment.

"Flodoardo!" at length said the Duke, "Rosabella loves you. Deserve her, and I will not oppose the decision of her heart.---An opportunity now offers of doing the Republic an essential service.---The murderer of Conari, Manfrone, and Lemellino still lives:---Go, bring him hither, alive or dead. If any human being is able to cope with this Rugantino, thou, Flodoardo, art the man."

"Noble Andreas," cried Flodoardo, after a moment's pause, "pledge me your princely word, that, Rugantino once in your power, nothing shall prevent me from being Rosabella's husband."

"I swear it.---Deliver into my power, either alive or dead, this most dangerous foe of Venice, and nothing shall prevent Rosabella from being your wife!"

Flodoardo grasped the Doge's hand with vehemence. The clock of St. Mark's tower struck five,---"My Lord," said he with great emotion, "time flies. In four-and-twenty hours will I produce in this very palace this dreaded Rugantino.---But, noble Andreas, should my hopes be realized, I would have spectators of my triumph. Order, I beseech you, a splendid entertainment to be prepared. At this hour of the afternoon of to-morrow, let every person of rank in Venice be assembled here. Let the senate, the college of ten, all, all be brought face to face with this terrible Rugantino, against whom they have been so long engaged in fruitless warfare."

"They shall," replied the Doge, "all shall be present."

"Still more," resumed Flodoardo; the Cardinal Gonzaga, Memmo, Falieri, Conterino, and the rest of the young nobility must be invited."

"You shall be gratified."

"One thing had nearly escaped my memory:---let no one know the motive of this entertainment till the whole of the company is assembled. Then let your guards fill the anti-chambers and surround the doors of the saloon. They must have their pieces loaded, and be commanded, on pain of death, to let every one enter, but no one quit the chamber."

"All this shall be punctually performed."

"Then, noble Andreas, farewell!--Rosabella--to-morrow, when the clock strikes *five*, we meet again, or *never*."

So saying, he rushed out of the apartment--Andreas shook his head, and Rosabella sunk weeping upon a couch.

"VICTORY!" shouted Falieri, as he flew into the Cardinal Gonzaga's chamber, where all the conspirators were assembled, "our work goes on bravely. Flodoardo returned this morning to Venice, and Rugantino has received the required sum.---And now the sooner the final blow is struck, the better."

Conterino.---You are right, Falieri; I protest I cannot help laughing to think that the Doge himself, by inviting us all to an entertainment to-morrow, affords us so fair an opportunity of executing our plans."

Memmo.---"I only hope there is no trick in it."

Falieri.---"Trick, indeed! thou white-livered wretch! stay at home, and take care of thy worthless existence, while we act like men. Mark me, friend, let the stroke of midnight be the signal for our attack.---Conterino must quit the ball-room, and with his adherents seize the arsenal which Salivati, who commands there, will instantly deliver to him. The

Admiral Adorno, as soon as he hears the alarm-bell, will immediately lead his people to our assistance. I will engage to bury my poniard deep enough in the heart of Andreas. All will be immediate tumult and uproar; and we may push on the confusion till the government of Venice be wholly overturned.---Where are the scarfs by which we are to distinguish our partizans?"

Gonzaga.---They are already delivered."

"Then there is nothing more necessary to be said on the subject. We will not see each other again till we meet, secretly armed, in the palace of the Doge.---Farewell; success to our enterprize!"

All.---"Farewell---success to to-morrow's enterprize!"

The next morning, every thing in Venice seemed as tranquil as if nothing more than ordinary was on the point of taking place.

The inhabitants of the ducal palace were in motion early. The impatient Andreas forsook the couch on which he had passed a sleepless night; and with every succeeding hour, the heart of Rosabella palpitated with greater violence and an increase of agitation.

The afternoon arrived. The most illustrious persons in Venice were assembled in the great saloon; among whom were the Cardinal Gonzaga, Conterino, Falieri, and Memmo, sometimes gaily conferring with the Doge, and sometimes silently revolving the bloody project, the execution of which was to take place at midnight.

The chimes announced half-past four o'clock. The cheeks of Rosabella became still paler than before, and Andreas whispered somewhat to his chamberlain. Presently the tread of armed men, and a clattering of weapons, was heard without the doors of the saloon. All conversation was instantly suspended. The Doge advanced slowly into the midst of the

assembly. Every eye was fixed upon him. The hearts of the conspirators beat painfully.

"Be not surprised, my noble friends," said Andreas, "at these unusual precautions; they relate to nothing which need to interfere with the pleasures of this society. You have all heard but too much of the Bravo Rugantino, the murderer of Conari, Manfrone, and Lemellino! and to whose dagger the Prince of Monaldeschi has but lately fallen a victim.—This outcast of hell has the brave and accomplished Flodoardo engaged to seize: and before another hour expires he may stand in this saloon!"

A confused murmur ran through the assembly. Some expressed their terror; some their doubts; and the conspirators drew closer to each other, and confessed by looks which seemed to say that Flodoardo, and not Rugantino, would fall in this contest.

The clock struck *five*. All listened, and trembled as they counted the strokes. Had not Camilla, Rosabella's attendant, supported her, she would have sunk upon the ground. The venerable Andreas shuddered, lest the dagger of the Bravo should have prevailed.

Footsteps at length were heard approaching, the doors of the saloon flew open, and Flodoardo, enveloped in his mantle, rushed forward. His hair streamed in wild disorder; the rain dropped from the waving plumes of his helmet. Melancholy and anxiety were depicted on his fine features, and he threw gloomy looks around him, as he bowed in salutation of the assembly.

"Illustrious Venetians!" he said, with the commanding tone of a hero, "I come to put an end to your anxiety; but first, noble Andreas, repeat your promise, that Rosabella shall become my bride, provided I deliver the bravo Rugantino into your power."

"Bring me Rugantino, alive or dead," cried the Doge, "and she is your's."

"Well, then! Rugantino is in my power—is in your's!"

"Is he dead or living?" demanded Contarino, eagerly.

"He still lives, Seignor."

"Thank heaven!" cried Rosabella; "Not one drop of blood has stained the innocent hand of Flodoardo!"

"Is Rugantino already in this palace?" asked Falieri, with an agitated voice.

"He is---and now about to appear."

At that word both old and young flew to take shelter near the chair of the Doge:—the conspirators, suffering the torments of the damned, were grouped together at one side of the apartment.

Flodoardo approached the folding doors; he paused a few moments, concealing his face in his cloak—"Rugantino!" at length he cried, extending his arm towards the door—"Rugantino!" he repeated in a loud and angry tone, and throwing from him his mantle and his helmet—Flodoardo was gone, and in his place stood the Bravo Rugantino!!

A cry of terror resounded through the apartment: Rosabella sunk down on the ground; the senators stood rooted to their places, and the Doge doubted the information of his senses; while calm and terrible, stood Rugantino in all the pomp of his strange and awful ugliness, with his Bravo's habit on; his girdle filled with pistols and poniards; his distorted yellow visage almost covered by his black and bushy eye-brows. He gazed for a few moments in silence, and then exclaimed:—"Doge of Venice, you wished to see Rugantino; here he stands, and is come to claim his bride!"

Andreas clasped his hands in agony, while the terrible assassin strode towards Rosabella, and attempted to raise her. She shrunk from his touch with horror.

"Rosabella," he said, "wilt thou retract thy promise?—Look, I, the Bravo, and thy Flodoardo are the same!! and passing a handkerchief over his face, his horrible scars, his bushy eye-brows disappeared, his features were replaced in their natural symmetry! and lo! the handsome Florentine stood before the assembly, dressed in the habit of the Bravo Rugantino. "Rosabella, wilt thou not still be the Bravo's bride?"

"God forgive thee, man, for torturing me so cruelly!" she exclaimed, and threw herself into the arms of Camilla.

The Doge had by this time recovered from his stupor, and trembling with passion, he rushed towards Rugantino: but the Senators held him back by force, while the Bravo advanced with the most insolent composure, and demanded the hand of Rosabella.

"Monster!" cried Andreas. "Oh, how artfully has this plan been laid to ensnare me!--Tell me, ought I to keep my word with this miscreant?"

"No! no! by no means," exclaimed the Senators. "Call in the guards, and secure him."

Rugantino laughed wildly, and grasping a dagger, cried aloud: "He who stirs from his place dies on the instant. But, what! will you withhold from me my just reward? Have I delivered up Rugantino in vain? O my good Cardinal Gonzaga, you will intercede for me. I have acted by you and your friends with honour; say a word in my behalf, good Lord Cardinal?"

"Away, miscreant! I know you not," cried Gonzaga. "Venerable Andreas, call in the guards."

"Is there no hope?—Does no one feel compassion for Rugantino?—What! no one? [A pause.] Then is my fate decided!—Doge, call in your guards!"

Rosabella, with a shriek of agony, threw herself at the feet of her father, crying, "Mercy! mercy! pardon him! he is a sinner; but, oh! Rosabella loves him still!—Father, dear father, reject not my suit, but spare him, or I also die!"

"She is mine," shouted the Bravo, with transport—"Rosabella loves me as I would be loved!—Fate cannot part us!—And now to business." With these words he put a whistle to his lips;—the doors instantly flew open; the guards rushed in; and ere they had time to recollect themselves, all the conspirators were in custody, and disarmed. Tale-telling confession spoke in every feature; and when they would have denied the accusation of treason, a word from Rugantino awed them into silence.

"Look, Venetians," he exclaimed;—"Look on this list. See how many of ye would have bled around the mangled corps of your Doge this night, had it not been for Rugantino. Disguised as a Bravo, I entered the midnight assemblies of these matchless villains, whose daggers would have laid your city waste.---All this and more have I done for Rosabella! and yet will you withhold from me my promised bride!"---Again he sounded his whistle:---a secret door flew open, and there stood the Doge's much lamented friends, Conari, Maufrene, and Lemellino.

The guards led out the conspirators, while Andreas rushed into the arms of his long-lost companions; and the roof echoed with,---"Hail, saviour of Venice!"

"Rugantino," said Andreas, extending his hand towards him—

"I am not Rugantino the Bravo," said he, smiling, while he tore off his ruffian's habit, and appeared in a splendid and princely garb.---Neither am I Flodoardo the Florentine. In me behold the Prince of Milan, so long driven from his dominions by the treacherous usurpation of Prince Monaldeschi!"

"Monaldeschi!" repeated Andreas with a look of anxiety.

"Fear not, my lord.---Monaldeschi fell by my hand, in honourable combat. The blood which stained his sword, flowed from my veins.---His attendants are at hand to testify it. In his last moments, conscience asserted its empire; and he wrote on his tablets the most positive declaration of my innocence of the crimes he had blackened me with; and instructed me how to regain my usurped dominions; and Milan is by this time informed of the plots which procured my banishment;---plots which made me wander through other countries in various disguises. As a beggar, I first entered Venice; an accident threw me in the way of hearing that, which gave me a suspicion of the conspiracy which I have now defeated. I then assumed the habit of a Bravo; and all the terrible deeds that were done in Venice, were

attributed to me. I did not murder Carlo Foscari. I never beheld him: but my dagger did punish Parozzi, who engaged me to do that dreadful deed by Rosabella.---Rosabella I had seen and loved; and under the name of Flodoardo, I sought to engage her affections. Lemellino was my confidant, my only confidant. From him I learned the secret entrances of the palace, by which I approached and retired from your chamber. He furnished me with keys of the doors of the public gardens, by which Andreas and the Senate alone were allowed to enter; which enabled me to elude pursuit; and he also prevailed on Manfrone and Conari to lie concealed in a retreat known only to ourselves, till I had probed the very soul of the conspiracy.

“The conspirators are in chains; and my plans are accomplished.---And now, Venetians, you may lead me to the scaffold when you will!”

“To the scaffold!” cried Andreas, wiping away a tear: “No! no! I would give my ducal bonnet to be such a Bravo as thou hast been. Didst thou not once say to me, ‘thou and I are the two greatest men in Venice:’---but, oh, how much greater is the Bravo than the Doge! Take thy reward:---Rosabella is thine!”

“Triumph!” cried he; “Rosabella is the Bravo’s bride!”---And he clasped the blushing maid to his bosom.

THE END.