THE CITY OF
VENICE
THESIS
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"There is a glorious city in the sea,
The waves in the broad, the narrow streets,
Ziling and flowing; and the salt seaweed
Blooms in the marble of her palaces.
Its tracks of men, no footsteps to and fro,
Leads to her gates.

"A century from land and sea stands this city of Venice, for many years 'Queen of the Adriatic.'"

It first appeared as a collection of palaeo-man's huts, which, according to the ancient legends, afforded protection for the bands of pirates, driven from Aquileia and the surrounding country, by hordes of barbarians, that under the leadership of Attila, the Huns were overrunning central Europe.

Here, surrounded on all sides by the sea, entirely cut off from..."
their former homes, with only such of their possessions as they
were able to hastily snatch from the ruins, these people were
thus exiled, in the most pitiable case of the word, and, like their
progenitors, were obliged to turn to the sea for means to sustain
life.

Just as the last remains of the Therian empire were being de-
stroyed by the Thellian invaders, was laid the corner stone of our
empire, destined for over a thousand years to stand invincible
among the nations of Europe; which would draw from all
parts of the world, pilgrims, who would gaze with astonishment,
at the riches and splendours, thus displayed.

The first settlement was made upon the Island of Rialto, by
which name the city came to have been first called, for, ac-
cording to tradition, the “merchant of Rialto” was a common
name for the “merchant of Venice.”

Rialto was an ancient port of Padua, to which Venice was
subject until 457 A.D., when an independent republic was re-established. The officers of this republic were called tribunes. They were elected annually, one being chosen for each island.

In 697, the office of duke or doge was instituted. This was an elective dignity, and for many years one of great honor and power. The doge was elected for life, allowed to appoint his own ministers, and make peace and war. From being an almost absolute ruler, in the early days of the republic, the doge was changed, in its later days, to a mere puppet in the hands of the nobility.

After the office was first inaugurated, three doges were elected in succession, who ruled from 697 to 737, when the people revolted and the old republican government again established. This experiment proving to be a failure, they gladly returned to the ducal government, as the only remedy in this time of need, and until Ludovico il Moro
was defined by Napoleon in 1797, and the Republic of Venice
pronounced as thing of the past, as their form was ever
attempted.

Here was a long line of one hundred and ninety-dagen, that
ruled over Venice, and it would indeed be hard for history to
account for many or succession of rulers, possessing greater ability to fill their places.

During the reign of Constantine Participatio, in 830 A.D., an
incident occurred, which has exercised a great influence on
the character of Venice. This was the removal of the body of
St. Mark from Alexandria to Venice, through the stratagem of
a party of Venetian sailors. The body was placed in a
church, built expressly for the purpose, upon which have been
expended the greatest pains and wealth. Here are shown the
most beautiful pieces of art, specimens of Greek, Roman, Gothic,
Byzantine, and Saracenic workmanship.

The emblem of St. Mark, the winged lion, was made the
emblems of the state, and on no occasion, whether of joy or distr
trice, as long as Venice remained independent, did her citi
gens ever fail to rally at the cry of "Viva San Marco!"

But, as before stated, the power of the doge became more and
more limited. This one was not allowed to assist him in the
government, and as though all confidence in his judg
ment was lost, he was compelled to act only in accordance
with the advice of five elected councillors, and in cases of
great importance, with that of the most prominent citizens.

In 1172, the Great Council, consisting of four hundred
and eighty members, was established. To it was given the
power to elect the doge and the other chief officials.

In 1297, a council of forty was appointed, to elect the
Great Council. They were forbidden to appoint any one
whose ancestors had not enjoyed the same honor.

In this way, the power was kept in the hands of an
The original nobility, such was the condition of the Venetian government, during the Thirteenth Century.

In the Fourteenth century, the doge was no longer allowed to select his own ministers, but a senate was instituted, over which he presided, and to which was entrusted all affairs of foreign and domestic relations.

Later, the doge was obliged to take an oath, upon his election, that put a check to any undue power, that he could possibly exercise.

Thus, shorn of all its ancient glory, one would hardly suppose that the office of doge would have any attraction for a man ambitious for power, yet it was still considered a post of honor and was eagerly sought after.

Many doges during the Middle Ages, might, under different circumstances, have been great men, but so firmly had the power of the aristocracy been established, that they dared
not assert their rights and were obliged to be content with
the powers assigned to them. Only one doge ever ventured
to play dictator, but before his plans were completed, they were
discovered, and he was immediately executed.

In 1310, was established the Council of Ten, in reality
composed of executive members, the doge and six con-
cilors, besides the six regular members. This composed a
body of arbitrary rulers, who carried out all their intentions,
regardless of their magisterial; assumed what powers they
pleased, and thought not in accordance with the laws of the
state. They constituted themselves a court for the trial of
criminal cases, but more often prisoners were convicted
without any trial or cast into prison to suffer as
living death. By the order of this council were perpetra-
ted deeds of the utmost cruelty and injustice. They put
in each place and their proceedings were kept closely inclosed.
At any time might this council have been abolished and several times it was attempted, but corrupt had become the constitution, that the state would have been ruined had such a thing been brought to pass.

Before the tenth century, Venice had become a state of considerable power, and was granted a prominent place among the other states of Europe, and allowed a voice in the settlement of affairs of mutual interest.

In 1159, after the death of Adrian IV, there were presented five applicants for the papal throne, Alexander III and Clement IV, each professing to be the legitimate successor to St. Peter. The latter was strongly upheld by Barbarossa, emperor of Germany; but the former was driven from Rome and remained in exile for twenty years. Venice, thinking to profit commercially by so doing, first aided Clement but finding there was nothing to be gained by it, she transferred her support to Alexander and
accorded him with great honor and ceremony. The immediately
brought on a war with Germany, in which the victorious
was successful. The German prince, Othon, was taken prisoner, and
the emperor so humbled, that he came, voluntarily, to Venice
and prostrated himself before the Pope.
Then the doge returned from the war with the captive Othon,
he was met by Alexander, who presented him with a gold ring,
saying: "Take this ring and with it take, on my authority,
the sea as your subject. Every year on the return of this happy
day, you and your successor shall make known to all pro-
vincity, that the right of conquest has exalted the Venetians
to service as a spouse to her husband."

"It was during the battles, that the glory of Venice began."
At this time, all Europe was inflamed with a religious zeal,
and all nations were hastening to Palestine.
Though it all Venice stood cold and calm. She was the
last to take up the cross and theirs not until she had coldly estimated all chances of conquest and glory.

The Fourth crusade was taken up by the French and in order to get the assistance of Venice, they were obliged to pay them a large sum of money and to raise this sum, they committed "an outrage on act of conquest." They bought and took Zara, a dependency of Hungary, because, as they said, she refused to join them in their expeditions.

Thus instead of sailing to Palestine, they directed their course to Constantinople, "where they contemplated the lofty walls and gaudy towers that enclosed it around; the gay palaces and glittering churches that seemed immemorial; the immense dimensions of the city, denoting it as the "emaus of the earth." They could hardly believe their senses, nor was there any man, however bold, whose heart did not tremble within him. This was no miracle for men since the creation of the
world, had such an enterprise been attempted, by such a handful of men."

After a stubborn resistance, the city was taken, and the amount of valuable spoils captured, of every kind, gold and silver, tapestries, silks and furs, would now appear almost fabulous.

Pictorial libraries were entirely destroyed, and thus the works of famous authors of antiquity were lost to the world, the most beautiful statues in marble and bronze were crushed to atoms; but the barbaric desires of the conquerors were fully satisfied by the great number of sacred relics, that they obtained.

Through the energy of their doge, Enrico Dandolo, the famous bronze horses, that stand over the portal of St. Mark's Cathedral, were obtained. They were supposed to be of Greek workmanship, and said to have been brought from Alexandria to Rome, by Augustus Caesar, and from there taken to Constantinople by Constantine, and from there to Venice in 1204.
By this enterprise, Candolas became the greatest of the Venetian doges.

Through the aid of these expeditions, Venice greatly increased her commerce, which was a source of great wealth to the state.

By her position, she was able for centuries, to control all lines of trade. Quite early, she engaged to a small extent in ship-building, and the demand for vessels to carry the merchandise increased her market in this line. The ships returned laden with spices and silks from Syria, and the coffins of incense were soon filled with gold.

So Genoa also was led to indulge in trading enterprises and soon became a rival of Venice. This former city extended her trade into the Black Sea and established her principal post at Baffa.

Here she endeavored to obtain a monopoly of the trade, which caused the dispute between the two cities, for "Venice could not give insults to her honor but never rivalship in her commerce."
From 1538, when the first war broke out, until the war of Chioggia in 1378, there was an almost constant strife between them.

In the last war, Genoa was so completely humbled, that she no longer presented as formidable obstacles to Venice.

The trade of the Venetians extended was nearly all parts of the known world. They established ports in Africa, and extended their commercial interests as far west as England, and into all the European countries.

So early as the seventh and eighteenth centuries, the ships of Venice brought from the Eastern nations, silks, woolen stuffs, dye woods, ivory, perfumes, spices and other things too numerous to mention. They also brought a great many slaves, which they sold to the Moors in the Indies.

In their hands, the Venetians were able to make many discoveries. By the use of their navigation is claimed the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, and the islands. If they were really entitled to all that is claimed
for these, were not the most famous discoveries and inventions known, would be laid at their door.

Venice was the first to recover from the effects of the Black Death, and from that time, she advanced rapidly in civilization. By her buildings, bridges, dikes, and great hydraulic works, plainly it shows that some knowledge of mechanics, mathematics and mechanics. Foundry must have been practiced by the Venetian workmen.

Many important manufactures were established. One was the manufacture of a very fine quality of glass, upon the Island of Murano. When the Portuguese discovered the passage to India by the way of the Cape of Good Hope, other nations were enabled to engage in commercial pursuits, and Venice no longer held the control of the sea.

Fried from all the material benefits, that Venice reaped in her trade, and intercourse with men, she was also much improved intellectually.
They obtained a more general knowledge of the proceedings of their nation, and of their manners and customs.

In the result of all this, the Venetians were more highly polished than most other European nations and their taste for beauty and splendour was more highly developed.

In all their undertakings, they showed strength of purpose, firmness of will, and calmness in cases of danger.

Before 1380, little had been done toward extending their power, but by 1420, the Venetians had established their power over a large part of Northern Italy.

The last half of the century was spent in wars with the Turks, who obtained possession of a great deal of Venetian territory. In 1503, a treaty, most humiliating to the Venetians was made. Following close upon this was a second disaster. In 1578, the League of Cambrai, between Louis XII of France, Maximilian I of Germany, and Ferdinand of Spain, was formed.
This was done with the full consent of the Pope, Julius II, who was anxious to recover some of the Papal states, that were in the possession of Venice. In 1516 a treaty was made by which Venice saved most of her territory, but lost wealth and power, and had her population greatly reduced.

The sixteenth century was spent in vain attempts to repair the damages done, or at least conceal them from the world. But even concealment was impossible, and from this time dates the decline of Venice. Her nobles were again persuaded to waste energy as in former days, and the indolence was to place the power in the hands of a few.

But Venice was, "Aarchance was drawn in her day of use."

Then where she was a boast, a marvel and a chess."

From this time Venice never again took a prominent part in European affairs. In the eighteenth century she did not interject in the several wars that occurred, and the other nations but
all respect for her.

Because of her neutrality, they either complained of neglect or that she showed partiality. Such was the feeling of France and Austria towards her, and when Bonaparte attacked the little republic, she fell without a struggle, although she still had means of protection. The patriotic Spaniards were anxious to maintain their independence, and at the time, there were sixteen thousand troops ready to shed their blood for their city. But her nobles had become so degenerate, that by submission, they thought to obtain the favours of the French generals, and for that alone they were ready to give up so much.

It availed them nothing, however, for Bonaparte never hesitated to sacrifice the interests of Venice if in any way they interfered with his own. After fourteen centuries of power, splendor, and crime, the little Republic was obliged to surrender.

There is no city, unless it is Rome, that still retains so great a
fascinations as Venice, and few have attained to so high a degree of culture.

The study of the classics was pursued by a few nobles, but not by society as a whole. Not but what their ability was as great, but the discouragement and the rewards given at Venice, for literary productions, was not sufficient to inspire her students with any high ambitions.

There were no public libraries opened, as had been done in other cities of Italy, and Petrarch's valuable legacies were so poorly cared for, that they soon became entirely destroyed, and the library given to the state by Cardinal Bemarione, very nearly met the same fate. "In belles, as in fine arts, Venice waited till the rest of Italy had bloomed."

The Venetians prided themselves especially upon their art. architecture, judging from the remains, they truly deserved all praise. They decorated their churches, palaces, theatres and
private dwellings with all the magnificence and beauty, that was possible for the genius of architecture. They took many ideas from the Romans, also traces of Asiatic styles could be seen in many Venetian buildings.

There have been four enclosed areas in the world, that have won the admiration of all beholders. One was the Acropolis at Athens; another, the Roman Forum; a third, the Place des las bouches at Paris; and the fourth, the Piazza San Marco, at Venice, the smallest of the four but by no means the most inferior, and the boast of the Venetians. "One niche, one arm and one Piazza San Marco." was not entirely devoid of truth.

Facing this square are some of the finest buildings in the city. The Library of St. Mark, built by Sansovino, in 1536, which is still "the crowning triumph of Venetian art," the cathedral of St. Mark, whose "golden columns glittering in the sun" and the Doge's Palace, of which...
Believe this speaks: "giving dawn upon the margin of the green
wavering brook before the dome, and filling all this drear, I came upon
barely a place of rich enveloping verdant grandeur, that all the
rest was poor and faded in comparison with its absorbing loveliness. It was a great piazza, as I thought, anchored, like all
the rest, in the deep vectors. On its broad brow was a palace,
more majestic and magnificent in its old age than all the
buildings of the earth, in the high prime and fullness of
their youth. Statues and galleries, so light that they might
have been the work of fairy hands, so elusive that centuries had
battled them in vain, wound round and round this palace
and unfolded it with a cathedral gorgeous in the wild lucene.

"The city of Venice was so unique, both in its situation and the
character of its government, that the painting, necessarily, partook
more or less of the same peculiarities."
Being situated upon an open sea, unrestricted in any way, the
Venetians could hardly conceive of pictures, but of enormous size, and
their love of color, increased their brilliancy. "Light, color, air and
space are the elemental conditions of Venetian art."

So different from other Italian cities, Venice alone was undisturbed by fear at work in central Europe. She hardly felt the
influence of the Middle Ages, knew nothing of the stern rule of a
defeat, and the grandeur and beauty of the city had never
been disturbed by war.

There was one power, that had ruled absolutely in other parts
of Europe, but had never had a foothold in Venice, for although a
devout Catholic, yet she never hesitated to treat with defiance the
commander of any pontiff, who attempted to encroach upon her power.

The Venetians lived and enjoyed life as they found it, and
their artists confined themselves, almost entirely, to painting scenes
from real life, such as the scenes of her greatest deeds. Thus, the
The glory of the Republic was ever kept before the people. Religious pictures were painted purely for the aesthetic effect and not for the real meaning, but by their "simplicity, vivacity and injustice." They won universal admiration.

The Venetians are said to have accomplished three things: First, they created a beautiful city; second, although they did not create an entirely new style of architecture, they improved and developed the old, and furnished many eminent architects, such as Titian, Tintoretto, Lombardo and Sansovinos; third, they originated a school of painting, which is still highly esteemed, and some of the most noted painters of the world are claimed by the Venetians. Such are Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese.