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## AT THE OFFICE OF THE JEFFERSONIAN.

### From Gleason's Pictorial. THE ALCHEMIST. A Tale of Venice.

BY H. C. PARSONS.

In a dark and narrow street of Venice in the early part of the fourteenth century stood an old and weatherbeaten mansion, grim and lofty. It had been the residence of a Venetian nobleman, but at his death had been suffered to decay. The arches had mouldered away, the marble columns decayed, the fountains no longer played in the courtyard, the hall was no longer crowded by armed retainers. It had continued in this state for years, when, to the astonishment of the neighbors, it was announced that the old palace had found a tenant. A middle aged man, a female servant and a child had taken possession of it. Strange stories soon began to circulate concerning them. It was noticed that the man scarcely ever left the house, and the servant only to purchase the necessaries of life. Night after night a light shone in a lofty window, and a thick smoke passed unobscuredly from the chimney. The curiosity of the neighbors was raised, but could not be gratified; the servant was morose and sullen, and refused to answer any questions concerning her master—and when accompanied by the child never suffered it to stray from her side. So they lived, year after year, until at the time our tale opens, the man and servant had become old, and the child was a beautiful woman. But still the light burnt in the lofty room still the smoke poured from the chimney. Let us enter the mysterious room, and witness a sight never seen in our day.—Reclining upon a couch was an old man, whose body appeared weak and decrepit, while his eyes sparkled with a lustre that showed his mind was still active. Before him was a furnace raised some feet from the floor so as to be level with his hand. On it were crucibles and retorts, lead, gold, and acids, in fact, all the apparatus then thought necessary for the transmutation of baser metals into gold. The old man was an alchemist. For years he had labored on in an ever ending task till his whole being seemed bound Prometheus like—and from this enthralling spell external circumstances seemed to have no power to raise him. He gazed intently at the mixture he was preparing.

"Yes, yes," he muttered, "gold, bright glittering gold, will soon be mine. A few hours and the precious secret, sought so long and desired so much, will be in my power. If Alphonzo comes and brings me the money he has promised all will be well." The noise made by the opening of his door, at this moment, aroused him. He longed to see his visitor.

"Ah, Alphonzo," you have brought the money. Give it to me that I may call Bianca. She will purchase all I wish.—Give it to me, give it to me—"

"Yes, Gueppo, I have brought the money—but before I give it to you, you must hear my terms."

"Well, well," replied the alchemist, impatiently, anything you wish, I will consent to it."

"Be not too sure of that," replied the other, with a laugh; "here what I have to offer. This money I will give to you without security, if you in turn will give to me the hand of your daughter, Irene."

"Never," cried the old man starting from his couch, "never will I see her so disgraced. What, wed thee a nameless ruffian, a bravo, a man who sells his knife for gold? Sooner would I see her in her grave. O, God, how am I reduced that he should dare to make such an offer!"

Meanwhile the bravo sat gazing at the old man with an unmoved countenance. No doubt he expected an exhibition of rage, for raising, he said:

"Well, Gueppo, since the subject displeases you I will say no more about it now. I will give you until to-morrow morning to consider my proposal; if you then promise me your daughter's hand I

will furnish you with all the money you may desire to prosecute your search. If you refuse me beware, for I can be a warm friend or a bitter enemy."

The bravo left the room, and the old man fell back exhausted. Scarcely had he departed when a gentle knock was heard upon the door and Irene entered. To say she was beautiful would ill convey an idea of her surpassing loveliness.—Her black hair fell in ripples down her beautiful forehead, and in clusters of curls rested upon her shoulders. Her countenance beamed with an expression of innocence and mirthfulness. She looked indeed like an angel in that dark and gloomy room. So thought the old man as he folded her in his arms, and smoothed her tresses with his thin hand.

"Bianca has gone out, father, and I thought that I would see if you wished for anything."

"Nothing my child—but stay, yes, take that phial and paper to the apothecary who lives upon the Piazza at the end of this street. He knows what you wish."

Hastily kissing her father, she left the room, and in a few moments emerging from the house she joined the throng of people who were crowding towards the Piazza di San Marco. As she left the door of the apothecary and turned towards the street that led to her home, she felt a hand upon her arm—she turned.

"Irene!"

Before her stood a young man whom she addressed as Henri, handsome in person, and though dressed in a common garb had that expression upon his countenance which denotes nobility of soul.

"Come, dear Irene, we will be observed here."

They entered a gondola, and as a boatman rowed along the canal, they screened by the curtains, could indulge in conversation undisturbed.

"My father has at length arrived, Irene," said Henri, "and I am sure that he will consent to our union. To-morrow I shall ask your father's approval, and you are sure of his consent. He is a strange man, from the reports I hear concerning him. What does he do?"

Irene looked fearfully around and whispered: "He is an alchemist."

"An alchemist?"

"Yes, he has been one ever since I can remember. He has parted with all his property to obtain a great secret, and though his life is drawing to a close he still perseveres as eagerly as he did many years ago. I sometimes think," said Irene, musingly, "that I did not always live with him. I remember very faintly a beautiful lady, who cried over me, and I called her mother—and then I remember nothing more of her. If I ask my father how my mother looked he never answers me, unless it is to bid me hold my peace.—But the night is drawing on, Henri, and I must hasten to my father."

He conducted her to her door, bade her good night, and promised to meet her the next morning. Light hearted was their parting, for little did either of them think how much misery awaited them upon the morrow.

The morning sun was scarce two hours old, upon the 'city of the sea,' when Alphonzo the bravo stood within the chamber of the alchemist.

"Have you considered my proposal?" said he, in a loud harsh voice.

"I have," replied the old man.

"How will you answer it?"

"As I did yesterday. Never shall Irene wed such a wretch as you."

"Tis well; remember my words, I can be a bitter enemy."

Turning upon his heel the bravo left the apartment. A moment after a piercing shriek ran through the house, the splash of oars was heard upon the canal, and all was silent. The old man started—"Surely that was not Irene's voice.—The villain would not dare to insult her. Bianca, Bianca," he cried.

The old servant entered weeping and wringing her hands.

"Speak quickly," said the alchemist; "tell me what has happened."

"O, Irene, Irene whom I loved as a child—"

"What of her? woman, would you drive me mad? Tell me quickly, what was that noise I heard?"

"O, signor, spare me."

"Tell me, I command it."

"I will, signor," said the sobbing servant, drying her tears. "As Irene and I was standing by the outer door, Signor Alphonzo, that dreadful man, passed us, and ascended the stairs to your room.—He had been gone only a few moments when we heard some one rapidly descending. It was the bravo—in an instant he stood by Irene's side, and as quick as thought he had seized her in his arms and rushed with her from the house. She shrieked aloud and I rushed forward to stop him—he struck me to the earth.—As I arose he stood by the bank of the canal—a gondola that had been conceal-

ed behind a turning, rowed swiftly towards him, he sprang into it, and before I could move he was out of sight."

"O, God, that I have lived to see this day!" said the alchemist, as he bowed his face and wept.

"Weeping, Signor Gueppo," said a mild, sweet voice near him.

The alchemist sprang up and looked fearfully around.

"That voice, that voice, surely I do not dream."

"O, no, Signor Gueppo, I am really before you."

The old man turned towards the spot where the speaker was standing. By the doorway was a lady dressed in black.—She was apparently past the middle age, but time had left but few furrows upon her noble brow. She had evidently been beautiful, but her whole countenance showed marks of great suffering, mingled with an air of resignation. The alchemist put back the gray hair from his brow and gazed upon her.

"Tis the same face, the same voice," he muttered, "but how can I tell her all?"

"My coming has surprised you, no doubt, but you little know how much I have longed for this day, for any day in which I can reclaim my child."

"Your child," said the alchemist wildly.

"Yes, Irene entrusted to your care.—You surely have not forgotten me?"

"No, no, I well remember you."

"Then where is Irene? why is she not here?"

"Gone, gone—alas! that I should live to tell the tale."

"Gone? what mean you, man? Tell me, I implore you, where is she? She has not left you—or you have not deserted her?"

"But last night she was in this very room."

"Then where is she now? Keep me no longer in suspense."

"Tell her, Bianca, for I dare not."

The lady turned quickly to the old servant—her face was very pale, and her whole frame trembled with agitation.

"What is concealed from me, Bianca? Just Heaven, she is not dead?"

"O, no, I think it would be better if she were. This morning she was carried off by the chief of the bravos, Alphonzo, the Spaniard."

"O, Heaven, this vengeance is too terrible," said the lady, and she fell fainting. The servant raised her tenderly.

"Bear her to your room, Bianca—restore her as you can, and then finish your fearful story."

The servant carried the lady from the room as the alchemist fell back upon his couch, and the big tears rolled down his cheeks. Irene was the only being he had ever loved, the only one who would shed a tear for him when he should be taken away. All his love rushed back upon him as he thought of her love and beauty, while a cold shiver ran through his frame as he thought of the fate that awaited her in the hands of the bravo.

What could he, an old man, do against the chief of that murderous band that then infested Venice? He had no gold, while Alphonzo, he knew, would use any bribe to secure to himself the prize he had so long desired. These meditations were interrupted by a knock at the door, he turned as it opened, to view the intruder. A richly dressed gentleman stood before him—it was the same one Irene had met the evening before.

"You are Gueppo, who lived lately in Genoa," said the young man, in an open hearty way.

"Signor, I am."

"You have a daughter, Irene?"

"Why do you ask me?"

"Because I come to demand her in marriage."

"Marry Irene?"

"Yes, old man. I have known her long and well, and have found in her virtues that would grace a throne. I have her consent to ask yours for an union."

"And who are you?"

"I am Henri, Viscount of Chantry, son of the Duke of Fenelon," said the young man, drawing himself proudly up.

"Viscount of Chantry?"

"Yes. I wooed and won your daughter, Irene, as a poor fisherman. Last night my father arrived in this city and has generously given his consent to my union. All we ask now is yours."

"Alas! it is impossible."

"Impossible? what mean you?"

"Irene is no longer in my dwelling."

"Not here? Why, how pale you look. What is the matter with her? She is not ill?"

"A worse fate than death awaits her."

"Worse than death! what can that be?"

"This morning she was forcibly seized and torn from this house by Alphonzo the bravo."

"The bravo?"

"Yes—he dared last night to offer himself to me as a suitor for my daughter's hand, I scornfully rejected his base advances, though he would have bribed me with gold. In revenge he this morning carried her off. You know what fate alone can await her."

"I do, I do," said Henri, in a broken voice, "would that I had been here. But, said he, starting up, 'this is no time for it inaction. I will save her though I perish in the attempt. Farewell, old man—I will return before to-morrow's sun is two hours old with your rescued daughter. Fear nothing for me.'

"God speed you," said the alchemist, as

the young man dashed from the room—but stay one moment. Ah, he is gone. But what avail would it be to inform now that she is not my daughter? He will find that she is not beneath him in rank nor wealth."

Henri had rushed down the stairs, out of the door, and thrown himself into his gondola almost without a thought. Then for the first time the nature of the service he had undertaken flashed through his mind. He knew, as all did at that time, the terrible nature and the fierce courage of the chief of the bravos. He knew that he must have concealed Irene in one of his many secret places, where he could defend her with all the power of his outlawed band.

To discover the hiding place was as difficult and dangerous as the attack upon it would be. He knew not how to proceed. He reached the mansion of his father and retired to his chamber. There he resolved plan after plan in his mind, but all were dismissed as worthless. A servant entered his room and announced that an ill-looking man below desired to see him instantly upon important business. Henri gave orders for his admission; he waited for a moment, when a tall, herculean built man entered the room. A dark hat concealed the upper part of his face, while round his mouth he had tied a large handkerchief. When the servant had withdrawn he turned to Henri.

"Are you the Viscount of Chantry?"

"I am."

"You love Signorina Irene, the daughter of Gueppo, the alchemist?"

"And what is that to you?"

"Much. Would you recover her?"

"I would shed the last drop of my blood to rescue her."

"Tis well. She is now in the hands of Alphonzo, the Spaniard."

"She is."

"I am one of his band."

"You?"

"Yes, start not, I came here to serve you. Listen. This morning Alphonzo seized the daughter of Gueppo as she stood by her father's door. I was one of those who rowed his large gondola. She was taken to a most secret hiding place; she is there now."

"I had supposed as much."

"As yet she has not been harmed.—This day Alphonzo is obliged to perform a service for a wealthy duke, but to-night he will return to accomplish his fell designs. The Signorina must be rescued to-night; or all is lost."

"But how can this be done? How can this hiding place be discovered?"

"I will guide you to it."

"You?"

"Yes. This morning, for some fancied neglect of mine, Alphonzo struck me. I would have driven this dagger to his heart as he stood in the middle of his band, but I thought of another and nobler revenge. An Italian never forgives a blow. I will guide you and such force as you may need to the stronghold of Alphonzo. Once there the arm will be strong that drives the dagger to his guilty heart. Do you trust me?"

"I do—for there is something in your countenance that tells me you will not deceive me. At what time shall I be ready?"

"An hour after sundown. We have a long row upon the canal before we reach the den. Besides, at that time most of the band will be absent, and will not assemble until midnight. If we are prompt and strong we cannot fail in the conflict."

"Tis well. I will this afternoon make every preparation, and shall expect you here at the time appointed. Till then farewell."

The bravo left the room.

The hour had arrived and Henri stood in front of his father's mansion waiting the arrival of the bravo. Near him, in some large gondolas, concealed by the curtains, were a number of retainers and soldiers well armed and eager for the conflict. Just as Henri was beginning to doubt the bravo's promise he came towards him.

"I was detained to accomplish a work of Alphonzo's," said he, as if in apology. "You are not late. Are you now ready?"

"I am. Will you accompany me in my small gondola? I can guide you better in this—let the others follow us closely."

"I will accompany you—but let us hasten."

Rapidly giving his orders to his men Henri leaped into the little boat where the bravo had already taken his station. For a long time they rowed in silence.—The shades of twilight became fainter and fainter, while the darkness of the night increased. They passed through the principal canals, and entered a portion of the city unknown to Henri. The darkness had increased so rapidly that he could hardly see the tall form of the bravo as he quickly plied his oar. At length he spoke:

"Are we almost there?"

"Not yet, signor. This is open sailing here in comparison to what it soon will be. The other boats are following us!"

"They are; but I am fearful that they will find it difficult in a few moments."

"Thus saying he gradually slackened the speed of his boat. Slowly and cautiously did he advance, scarcely dipping his oar in the water. The boats that followed observed and imitated his caution. The place indeed appeared to be danger-

ous. Parts of the canal were obstructed by ruins that had fallen into it. Huge piles of stone, in some places, threatened to dash the boats to pieces—while on the bank tottering towers and columns appeared ready to fall and crush them. Amidst all these obstructions the bravo steered the boat as if he had long been accustomed to traverse the way. Suddenly he stopped his rowing and turned the boat to the shore. The others followed his example.—They landed at what appeared to have been steps, but now so broken as to be almost useless. With difficulty they ascended, and when they stood upon the firm bank Henri looked eagerly around.—Before him were the ruins of an old palace. The marble walls were almost level with the ground—it seemed indeed a confused heap of columns and arches; it was as silent as a tomb.

"There, signor," whispered the bravo, "there is the stronghold of Alphonzo."

"But I see no entrance. That is only a mass of ruins."

"That was once a palace of the Cenci. Beneath it are large and spacious vaults; within these has Alphonzo made his fearful home."

"How can we gain an entrance?"

"This is my plan: Let most of the men go to the front. I will give them a password which will secure their admission. They will enter the common banquetting hall where all the band in the ruins will be assembled; they must be slain or made prisoners. You, signor, come with me. We want a few men.—I will lead you to a secret entrance that will conduct us to the chamber where your destined bride is confined. Is the plan a good one?"

"It is indeed. But let us hasten, we have not a moment to lose."

The orders were given, and the major part of the band marched to the secret entrance that led to the large hall. Let us follow the movements of the bravo and Henri. Rapidly marching towards an angle in the wall they found themselves before a marble column which still lifted itself as a sorrowful witness of the universal desolation. The bravo raised a trap-door at the base of the column and revealed a flight of steps, down which the whole party rapidly descended. They passed through a long, vaulted passage until they reached the end of it.

"A door opens here by a spring," whispered the bravo.

At this moment they were startled by a piercing shriek from a woman, mingled with yells and cries at a great distance off, which indicated that the first band had already obtained an entrance.

"Tis Irene's voice," said Henri.

"Confusion! I cannot find the spring. Hear the loud shouts of your brave soldiers. A moment and we are lost. Ha, I have it, I have it."

The bravo threw open the door and the party dashed into the room. Irene was struggling in the grasp of Alphonzo, who had evidently paused to listen to the noise in the far off room. With a scream of joy Irene tore herself from him, and threw herself in Henri's arms.

"Who are you who dare thus attack Alphonzo, the bravo? Beware of my vengeance."

"Ha, ha, Alphonzo," shouted the bravo, "your last hour has come—remember the blow you gave me. This is an Italian's vengeance!"

And springing forward he plunged his stiletto deep into the villain's heart; he fell without a groan.

"On, on," cried the bravo—"on, comrades, your brothers call. Death to the followers of Alphonzo!"

They dashed through the passage way, along the vaulted hall into the large banquetting room. The battle was dreadful. The bravos were more numerous than had been supposed, and fought with desperation. They had almost gained the upper hand when with loud shouts Henri's band dashed through the door and fiercely attacked them. Well did they maintain the reputation they had acquired in those bloody times, but it was all in vain; their boldest were in a few moments slain, and the remainder of the fearful and murderous band surrendered themselves as prisoners.

The morning sun had risen bright and glorious as Henri conducted Irene to the dwelling of the Alchemist. The night passed before they had been able to leave the ruins of the palace. Now bright and mirthful they parted, with a promise on Irene's part that they should meet again. Irene passed in at the open door and softly ascended the stairs that led to her father's room. As she passed Bianca's room she heard her faithful nurse weeping and lamenting. She opened the door and entered. Bianca started back in alarm when she saw her, but the next moment frantically clasped her in her arms.

"O, Signorina Irene, I never hoped to see you again; how happy you look; I was telling your mother—"

"My mother!" said Irene, starting.

"Yes, your mother. Speak softly, she is asleep. Hely virgin! she is here."

Irene turned quickly around. Before her stood a lady whose eye was red and swollen with weeping. Her countenance was very pale, and bore an expression of gentleness and love. Irene felt the room rolling before her; she would have fallen but Bianca caught her.

"My mother!" she murmured.

"Yes, Irene, your living mother; who now after years of separation, claims you as her child. I do not, Irene, desert your

love; but how have I treated you since you were born! Listen to my sad story, Irene, before you judge. A look of unutterable love was in the lady's eye as sitting opposite Irene she began her story.

"I will not recount to you, my dear Irene, any of the events of my life before my sixteenth year; suffice it to say, that I was young and thoughtful. They told me that I was beautiful. While traveling through Italy with my father, I first met your father. He was the third of the Duke of Dedington. We met, and from the first moment we loved each other.—Day after day passed, and still we met and parted. At length he told me of his love, and I made him the same confession. Well knowing that our parents would bitterly oppose the match, for I had already promised a wealthy baronet, we determined to be married privately. At length it could be no longer concealed. I was staying at a friend's near Genoa, when you were born. My husband took you but a few hours after you first saw light, to a jeweller's wife who promised for a large sum to bring you up as hers.

Three weeks after this we left Italy.—For many years we lived separately in England. My husband's brothers died, and he became the Duke of Dedington. Then our happiness was publicly acknowledged. But our marriage was of short duration; a fever destroyed my husband before I had been a month a dutchess.—I have passed over all the events that occurred after I left Italy until my husband became the duke; but I must tell you the agony I endured in being separated from you. The goldsmith's wife wrote to me concerning you, but suddenly her communications abruptly ceased, and a letter from her husband informed me that she was dead. After this I heard no more of you. In vain I wrote; I received no answer to my repeated letters. I was not rich enough then to take a journey to Italy. The time rolled slowly away; my husband became a duke, and I a widow. Then the love I had cherished in my breast so long for you, my daughter, burst forth. I felt that I could not live without you. I came to Genoa; to my horror the goldsmith had left that city. I heard that he was in Venice; I came hither, and yesterday morning I found in Gueppo, the alchemist, and learned that you had been torn from him. Since that awful moment I have not slept. I could not think of you, and picture you in my mind. My desertion of you has no excuse but that of strong necessity; can you forgive me?"

"My mother!"

"Irene!"

They were clasped in each other's arms. Above them how different was the scene. The alchemist lay upon his couch, gazing upon the crucible. A liquid boils and hisses within it. Eagerly does he gaze upon it, his whole frame trembling with emotions. "Ah, the labor of long, long years is to be rewarded," he muttered.—"Gold, gold, bright gold, and will soon be mine. Burn on, fire, liquid boil, and I will soon become your again." He raised himself upon his wasted arm and looked again upon the crucible. A ghastly palor spread over his countenance. He fell back upon his couch. He attempted to rise, but the motion increased the sickness; he felt a gnawing at his heart. "Can this be death? O no, no, no. I am too near the summit of my wishes to fail now." Again he raised himself upon his wasted arm and stirred the coals with difficult energy; for a moment he looked upon the boiling liquid; the rod dropped from his nerveless fingers, and he fell back upon his back upon his couch. His eyes seemed starting from their sockets. He was dead.

Henri and Irene sat together in the room where Irene had held the interview with her mother. She softly whispered.

"You wooed and won me as the dowerless daughter of an alchemist. Will I prove less dear to you as the daughter of the Duke of Dedington?"

"The daughter of the Duke of Dedington!"

"There is my mother, she will explain all. Deserted as I was in childhood, I do not regret it now, as that desertion has shown to me the wondrous strength of a mother's love."

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Notice is hereby given that an application will be made to the next Legislature of the State of Pennsylvania, for the creation of a corporate body, with discounting and banking privileges, to be located in Stroudsburg, Monroe county, Pa. The name of the intended corporation will be "The Stroudsburg Bank," and the amount to be one hundred thousand dollars with authority to increase the same to two hundred thousand.

Sydenham Walton, Stoddell Stokes, Silas L. Drake, John Edinger, Joseph Trach, James H. Walton, Edward Brown, Robert R. Deputy, John DeYoung, J. H. Stroud, Joseph Fenner, S. Stokes, Wm. D. Walton, C. D. Brodhead, Wm. D. Walton, R. H. Bower, Stroud Hurston, Geo. H. Miller, R. S. Staples, Jas. N. Darling, John Bays, Daniel Bays, Balsar Petherman, Samuel S. Dreher, John N. Staples, Frederick Kiser, Joseph Staples, Charles Petherman, M. H. Dreher, David Keller, Peter Shaw, G. Burnett, Jacob Dennis, S. J. Hollinshead.

June 30, 1854.