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THE RIVAL BROTHERS.

A TALE OF VENICE.

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WHO should be trusted now, when one's right hand
Is perjured to the bosom? Proteus,
I am sorry I must never trust thee more,
But count the world a stranger for thy sake.
The private wound is deepest.

Shakespeare.

THE delicious twilight of an Italian evening, was bathing with its purple hues the spires and domes of Venice, and shedding a golden radiance on the smooth waters of the Lagune, which were studded with innumerable gondolas crossing and recrossing each other in various directions, gaily adorned, and resounding with strains of music, or the heart-stirring melody of gleeful and happy voices. One only among them, whose richly ornamented prow, and canopy of silver tissue, bespoke its occupants of no ordinary rank, floated in silence over the waves, sending forth no note of joy, nor interchanging word or sign with any that glided by it.

On its luxurious cushions reclined two young men, twin sons of the Justiniani, one of the noblest and proudest families of the Republic, who so exactly resembled each other in person and attire, that it would have been impossible for a stranger's eye to detect the slightest difference between them. —But a practised observer soon saw how unlike was the expression of their features, and how evidently dissimilar it declared the character of the two brothers to be.

As their gondola moved noiselessly over the bur-nished waters, the spell of silence seemed to enchain them both; but with each it evidently arose from an opposite cause. The eyes of Angelo sparkled with the light of inward happiness, and roved from object to object, till their gaze rested upon the bright heaven above, the soft glory of whose calm cerulean depth, seemed as it were to mirror back the peace and joy that reigned within his soul. Ziani's attitude was one of quiet yet melancholy abstraction, — his head drooped listlessly upon his breast, and his eyes remained immovably fixed upon the silvery foam that curled around the gilded prow of the gondola.

Abruptly his reverie was broken, — they had entered the grand canal, and a blaze of light falling across the water, flashed with sudden brightness upon his eyes.

There was a sumptuous fête at the Ursolo palace, in honour of its young and lovely heiress, who on this evening attained her fifteenth year, and as the gondoliers flung down their oars, Angelo rose and sprang upon the marble steps which led to its princely entrance. But Ziani remained motionless upon his seat, — a deadly sickness came over him, and vainly he strove to rise, in obedience to the impatient gesture of his brother. Angelo waited an instant, and then sprang towards him.

“Let us hasten,” he exclaimed, “every instant that detains me from the presence of the divine Isaura is an age of torment! would that you, my brother, might be roused by such an influence to the perception of these exquisite emotions that thrill my heart with extacy!”

A deep sigh burst from the bosom of Ziani as he replied,

“Tarry not for me, my brother — I am in no mood for gaiety, — wherefore, it matters not. I ask you only to leave me, that I may exercise the evil spirit of disquiet by lingering here amid the gentle influences of this lovely night.”

“It must not be, Ziani; — a warmer and a brighter smile than that, which yonder cold moon sheds down upon you, shall chase every evil passion from your soul, and waken it to that rapturous enjoyment, which lovely and enchanting woman only can bestow. And now let us begone, for my impatience brooks no longer delay.”

As the young noble uttered the last words he leaped from the gondola, and began rapidly to ascend the marble steps towards the illuminated vestibule