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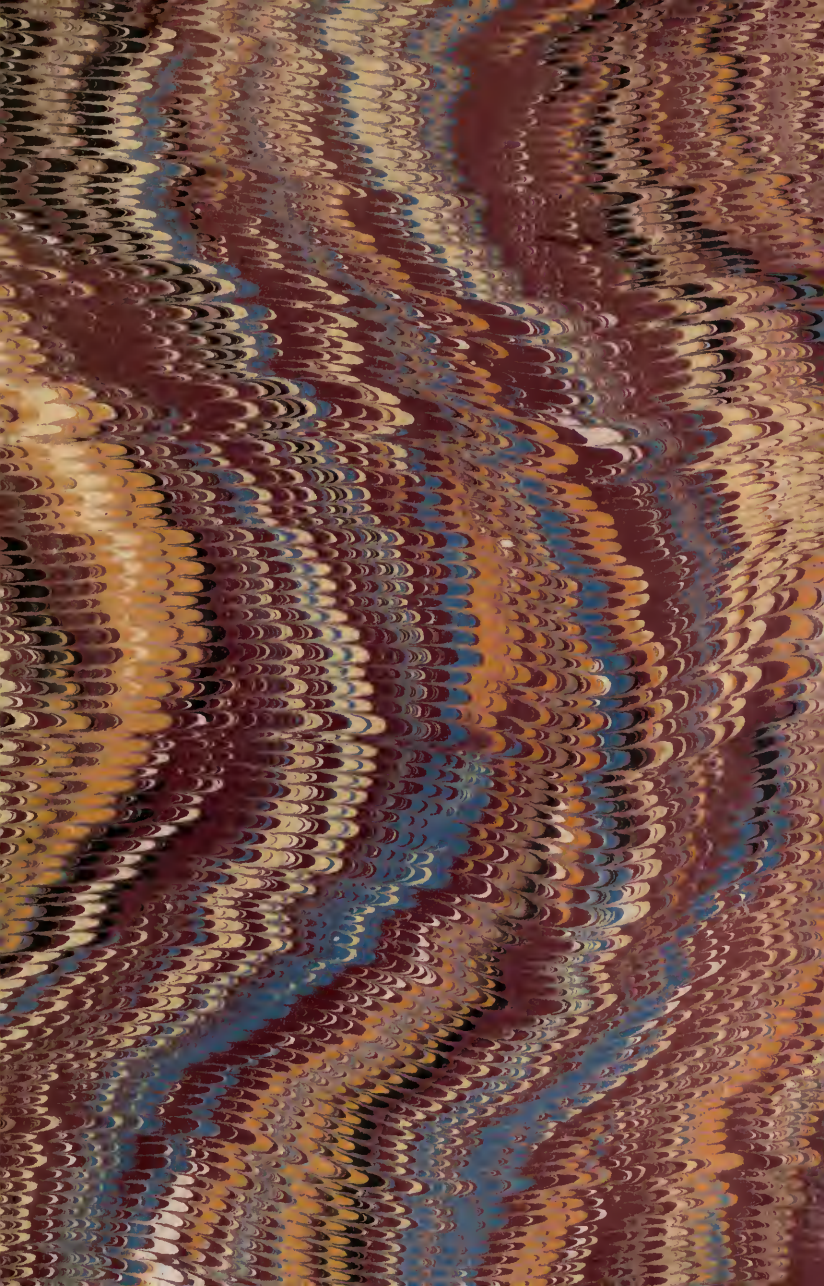
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THE  
BRAVO.

A Tale.

INV. 1896.

BY J. FENIMORE COOPER.

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Giustizia in palazzo, e pane in piazza.  
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COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

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NEW EDITION.

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1856.

THE BRAVO.

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PREFACE.

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It is to be regretted the world does not discriminate more justly in its use of political terms. Governments are usually called either monarchies or republics. The former class embraces equally those institutions in which the sovereign is worshipped as a God, and those in which he performs the humble office of a mannikin. In the latter we find aristocracies and democracies blended in the same generic appellation. The consequence of a generalization so wide is an utter confusion, on the subject of the polity of states.

The author has endeavored to give his countrymen, in this book, a picture of the social system of one of the *soi-disant* republics of the other hemisphere. There has been no attempt to portray historical characters, only too fictitious in their graver dress, but simply to set forth the familiar operations of Venetian policy. For the justification of his likeness, after allowing for the defects of execution, he refers to the well-known work of M. Daru.

A history of the progress of political liberty, written purely in the interests of humanity, is still a desideratum in literature. In nations which have made a false commencement, it would be found that the citizen, or rather the subject, has extorted immunity after immunity, as his growing intelligence and importance have both instructed and required him to defend those particular rights which were necessary to his well-being. A certain accumulation of these immunities constitutes, with a solitary and recent exception in Switzerland, the essence of European liberty, even at this hour. It is scarcely necessary to tell the reader that this freedom, be it more or less, depends on a principle entirely different from our own. Here the immunities do not proceed from, but they are granted to, the government, being, in other words, concessions of natural rights made by the people to the state, for the benefits of social protection. So long as this vital difference exist between ourselves and other nations, it will be vain to think of finding analogies in their institutions. It is true that, in an age like this, public opinion is itself a charter, and that the most despotic government which exists within the pale of

Christendom, must, in some degree, respect its influence. The mildest and justest governments in Europe are, at this moment, theoretically despotisms. The character of both prince and people enter largely into the consideration of so extraordinary results, and it should never be forgotten that, though the character of the latter be sufficiently secure, that of the former is liable to change. But, admitting every benefit which can possibly flow from a just administration, with wise and humane princes, a government which is not properly based on the people, possesses an unavoidable and oppressive evil of the first magnitude, in the necessity of supporting itself by physical force and onerous impositions, against the natural action of the majority.

Were we to characterize a republic, we should say it was a state in which power, both theoretically and practically, is derived from the nation, with a constant responsibility of the agents of the public to the people; a responsibility that is neither to be evaded nor denied. That such a system is better on a large than on a small scale, though contrary to brilliant theories which have been written to uphold different institutions,

must be evident on the smallest reflection, since the danger of all popular governments is from popular mistakes, and a people of diversified interests and extended territorial possessions, are much less likely to be the subjects of sinister passions, than the inhabitants of a single town, or county. If to this definition we should add, as an infallible test of the genius, that a true republic is a government of which all others are jealous and vituperative, on the instinct of self-preservation, we believe there would be no mistaking the class. How far Venice would have been obnoxious to this proof, the reader is left to judge for himself.

# THE BRAVO.

## CHAPTER I.

"I stood in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs,  
 A palace and a prison on each hand;  
 I saw from out the wave her structures rise,  
 As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand:  
 A thousand years their cloudy wings expand  
 Around me, and a dying glory smiles  
 O'er the far times, when many a subject land  
 Look'd to the winged lions' marble piles,  
 Where Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred isles."

BYRON.

THE sun had disappeared behind the summits of the Tyrolean Alps, and the moon was already risen above the low barrier of the Lido. Hundreds of pedestrians were pouring out of the narrow streets of Venice into the square of St. Mark, like water gushing through some strait aqueduct, into a broad and bubbling basin. Gallant cavalieri and grave cittadini; soldiers of Dalmatia, and seamen of the galleys; dames of the city, and females of lighter manners; jewellers of the Rialto, and traders from the Levant; Jew, Turk, and Christian; traveller, adventurer, podestà, valet, avvocato and gondolier, held their way alike to the common centre of amusement. 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 compelled and melancholy 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 perma-

ment objects of the place, rendered the scene the most remarkable of Christendom.

On the very confines of that line which separates western from eastern Europe, and in constant communication with the latter, Venice possessed a greater admixture of character and costume, than any other of the numerous ports of that 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 councils 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 prosperity. Men lived among her islands in that state of incipient lethargy, which marks the progress of a downward course, whether the decline be of a moral or of a physical decay.

At the hour we have named, the vast parallelogram of the piazza was filling fast, the cafés and casinos within the porticoes, which surround three of its sides, being already thronged with company. While all beneath the arches was gay and brilliant with the flare of torch and lamp, the noble range of edifices called the Procuratories, the massive pile of the Ducal Palace, the most ancient Christian church, the granite columns of the piazzetta, the triumphal masts of the great square, and the giddy tower of the campanile, were slumbering in the more mellow glow of the moon.

Facing the wide area of the great square stood the quaint and venerable cathedral of San Marco. A temple of trophies, and one equally proclaiming the prowess and the piety of its founders, this remarkable structure presided over the other fixtures of the place, like a monument of the republic's antiquity

and greatness. Its Saracenic architecture, the rows of precious but useless little columns that load its front, the low Asiatic domes which rest upon its walls in the repose of a thousand years, the rude and gaudy mosaics, and above all the captured horses of Corinth which start from out the sombre mass in the glory of Grecian art, received from the solemn and appropriate light, a character of melancholy and mystery, that well comported with the thick recollections which crowd the mind as the eye gazes at this rare relic of the past.

As fit companions to this edifice, the other peculiar ornaments of the place stood at hand. The base of the campanile lay in shadow, but a hundred feet of its gray summit received the full rays of the moon along its eastern face. The masts destined to bear the conquered ensigns of Candia, Constantinople, and the Morea, cut the air by its side, in dark and fairy lines, while at the extremity of the smaller square, and near the margin of the sea, the forms of the winged lion and the patron saint of the city, each on his column of African granite, were distinctly traced against the back-ground of the azure sky.

It was near the base of the former of these massive blocks of stone, that one stood who seemed to gaze at the animated and striking scene, with the listlessness and indifference of satiety. 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 a glance aside, or changed a limb in weariness. His attitude was that of patient, practised, and obedient waiting on another's pleasure. With folded arms, a body poised on one leg, and a vacant though good-humored eye, he appeared to attend some beck of authority ere he quitted the spot. A silken jacket, in whose tissue flowers of

the gayest colors were interwoven, the falling collar of scarlet, the bright velvet cap with armorial bearings embroidered on its front, proclaimed him to be a gondolier in private service.

Wearied at length with the antics of a distant group 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 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, the words flowing from him in the soft 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 wast 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 given with the rough familiarity of a seaman.

“La Bella Sorrentina is no housekeeper of a curato! She is not a damsel to take a siesta with a Tunisian rover prowling about in her neighborhood. Hadst ever been beyond the Lido, thou wouldst have known the difference between chasing the felucca and catching her.”

“Kneel down, and thank San Teodoro for his care. There was much praying on thy decks that hour, caro Stefano, though none is bolder among the mountains of Calabria when thy felucca is once safely drawn upon the beach!”

The mariner cast a half-comic, half-serious glance upward at the image of the patron saint, ere he replied.

“There was more need of the wings of thy lion than of the favor of thy saint. I never come fur-



ther north for aid than San Gennaro, 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, Ali di San Michele! he might better have chased the cloud above the volcano, than run after the felucca in a sirocco!"

"Thou wast chicken-hearted, Stefano?"

"I!—I was more like thy lion, here, with some small additions of chains and muzzles."

"As was seen by thy felucca's speed?"

"Cospetto! I wished myself a knight of San Giovanni a thousand times during the chase, and La 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 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 borne upon by an infidel."

"And thy feet warmed with the thought of the bastinado, caro mio?"

"I have run too often barefoot over our Calabrian mountains, to tingle at the sole with every fancy of that sort."

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

"Well, the happiest of us all must take such as fortune brings. If my soles are to be shod with

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