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ANGELO
TYRANT OF PADUA

ENGLISH / FRENCH

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PREFACE

In view of the present status of all those momentous questions, which go to the very roots of society, it long ago occurred to the author of this drama that it might be profitable as well as elevating to develop upon the stage something like the following plan: — Given a plot dealing wholly with the affections, to present two serious, sorrowful figures, the woman in society and the woman not in society, that is to say, in two living examples, all women and woman. To represent these two women, who embody in themselves all womankind, as often moved by noble impulses, but always unhappy. To defend the one against despotism, the other against contempt.

To point out the temptations which the virtuous instinct of the one resists, and the suffering with which the other washes away her stains. To place the blame where it belongs, that is to say, upon man, who is the stronger, and upon the constitution of society, which is absurd. In these two typical hearts to cause the resentment of the woman to yield to the pious veneration of the daughter, the love of a. lover to the love of a mother, hatred to devotion, passion to a sense of duty. In opposition to these two women, thus imagined, to place two men, the husband and the lover, the despot and the exile, and to exhibit in them, by divers collateral developments of the plot, all the relations, regular and irregular, that man can sustain with woman on the one hand and society on the other. And then, over against this group, which craves and possesses and suffers,

at times radiant, and at times overspread with gloom, to place the envious man, the fatal witness, who is always on hand, whom Providence stations on the outskirts of all societies, all governments, all prosperous careers, all human passions; the tireless enemy of everyone above him; changing his form according to the time and place, but always the same at heart; a spy at Venice, a eunuch at Constantinople, a pamphleteer at Paris. To station him, as Providence stations him, in the shadow, gnashing his teeth at every smile, this clever and abandoned wretch, who has no power save to injure, for all the doors that are closed to his love are open to his vengeance. Lastly, above the three men, between the two women, to place the dead Christ upon the cross, as a sacred bond, a symbol, an intercessor and counselor. To nail all this human suffering to the back of the crucifix.

Then, of all these elements, thus arranged, to make a drama; not concerned altogether with royalties, lest the possible application be lost sight of in the grandeur of the proportions; not altogether on the middle-class level, lest the insignificance of the characters interfere with the development of the idea; but dealing with persons of princely rank and with domestic incidents: with the former, because the drama should be great; with the latter because it should be true to life. And in this work, for the gratification of the craving of the mind to feel the past in the present and the present in the past, to mingle the divine element with the human, and the historical element with the social. To picture, by the way, apropos of this idea, not man and woman alone, not these three men and these two women alone, but a whole century, a country, a whole civilization, a whole people.

To build upon this thought, following the lines of history, a plot so simple and so true, so instinct with life and vivid, that it can serve to hide the thought itself from the eyes of the audience, as the flesh hides the bones.

That is what the author of this drama has sought to do. His sole regret is that the thought did not come to one better fitted than he to develop it.

Today, in the face of success clearly due to this underlying thought, a success which has exceeded all his hopes, he feels the need of setting forth his thought in its entirety to the sympathetic and enlightened multitude who gather evening after evening to witness his work, with an interest which places a heavy responsibility upon him.

It cannot be said too often for anyone who has reflected upon the needs of society, to which the endeavors of true art ought always to correspond, that to-day more than ever before the theatre is a place of instruction.

The drama, as the author of this work would like to make it, and as a man of genius might make it, ought to impart philosophy to the audience, direction to the thoughts, muscles, blood and life to poetry, an unbiased opinion to thinking men, a cooling drink to thirsty‘ souls, a balm to hidden wounds, to everyone good counsel, and to all a law.

It goes without saying that the essential conditions of art should be, first of all and in every respect, complied with. Curiosity, interest, amusement, laughter, tears, unflagging observation of whatever is true to nature, and the marvelous envelope of style, all these the drama must have, else it would be no drama; but to be complete, it must have also the desire to instruct, coincident with the desire to please. Shrink not from fascinating the audience with your drama, but let the lesson be within it, so that it may always be found when one chooses to dissect the lovely, entrancing, poetic, impassioned creation of your brain, gorgeously clad in gold and silk and velvet. In the most captivating drama there should always be a serious undercurrent of thought, just as there always is a skeleton in the loveliest woman.

The author, as will be seen, does not gloss over any of the stern duties of the dramatic poet. He will perhaps someday

attempt, in a special work, to explain in detail what he has sought to accomplish in each of the dramas he has produced during the past seven years.

In presence of so vast a problem as that of the stage of the nineteenth century, he is deeply conscious of his own insufficiency; but he will persevere none the less in the work he has begun. With all his insignificance, how could he draw back; encouraged as he has been by the approval of the choicest minds, by the applause of the multitude, and by the loyal sympathy of all the eminent men who are numbered among the critics of today? He will go on then with firm tread; and whenever he deems it necessary to expound to all the world, in its smallest details, a useful idea, relating to society or to mankind at large, he will place the stage over it like a microscope. In the age in which we live the horizon of art is greatly widened. In the old days the poet spoke of “the public;” today he speaks of “the people.”

MAY 7, 1833.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ANGELO MALIPIERI, Podesta
CATARINA BRAGADINI
THISBE RODOLFO
HOMODEI
ANAFESTO GALEOPA
ORDELAFO
ORFEO
GABOARDO
REGINELLA
DAPHNE
A BLACK PAGE
A NIGHT WATCHMAN
AN USHER
THE DEAN OF ST. ANTHONY'S
THE ARCHPRIEST
Scene—Padua, 1549.
Francisco Donato, Doge.

FIRST DAY. THE KEY

A garden, illuminated for an evening party. At the right, a palace brilliantly lighted, with a door opening upon the garden, and a balcony with arched openings, on which the guests can be seen walking to and fro.

Music within the palace. Beside the door a stone bench.

At the left another bench, upon which the form of a man sleeping can be distinguished in the darkness. In the background, above the trees, the silhouette of Padua, as it was in the sixteenth century, against a clear sky. Toward the close of the act day breaks.

SCENE l

THISBE, in a rich party dress: ANGELO MALIPIERI, with the ducal vest and the gold stole: HOMODEI, sleep; he wears a long brown woolen frock, buttoned in front, and red small-clothes; a guitar lies beside him.

THISBE.

Yes, you are master here, monsignore, the mighty podesta; the lives and deaths of all are in your hands, you are omnipotent and your will is law. Venice did send you hither, and where’er your face is seen, it is as if one saw the majestic features of the Serene Republic. When you pass through a street, the windows close, the passers-by slink off, and all who are within the houses tremble. Alas! these timid Paduans have scarcely more self-confidence and pride when you are by, than if they were the rabble of

Constantinople, and you the Turk. Yes, so it is. But I have been at Brescia. Ah! ’t is another matter there. Venice would never dare to maltreat Brescia as she does Padua. Brescia. would defend herself. When the Venetian arm is raised to strike, Brescia bites, but Padua licks the hand. It is a burning shame. But though you be everybody’s master here, and claim that title over me as well, listen to me, monsignore, while I speak frankly to you. Not on affairs of state, do not fear that, but on your own affairs. I say, monsignore, you are a strange man, you pass my comprehension, for you ’re in love with me, and still are jealous of your wife!

ANGELO.

Jealous of you as well, signora.

THISBE. Indeed you have no need to tell me so. And yet you have no right, for I do not belong to you. I pass here for your mistress, your omnipotent mistress, but none the less I am not, as you know.

ANGELO.

Your fete is most magnificent, signora.

THISBE.

Oh! I am only a poor actress, permitted to give fétes to senators; I strive to entertain our master, but my efforts meet with ill success to-day. Your face is gloomier than my mask is black. ’T is vain for me to multiply torches and girandoles, the shadow still remains upon your brow. You do not pay in gayety, monsignore, for the music that I furnish for your pleasure. Come, laugh a bit, in God’s name!

ANGELO.

Yes! will laugh. Said you not that the young man who came with you to Padua was your brother?

THISBE.

Yes, and then?

ANGELO.

You spoke with him but now. Who was the other man, with whom he was?

THISBE.

His friend, one Anafesto Galeofa, of Vicenza.

ANGELO.

And your brother’s name?

THISBE.

Rodolfo, monsignore, Rodolfo. Twenty times already I have told you that. Pray have you nothing more agreeable to say to me?

ANGELO.

Forgive me, Thisbe, I will ask you no more questions. Do you know with what marvelous charm you played Rosmonda yesterday, and that this city ’s very fortunate to have you, and that all Italy is lost in admiration of you, Thisbe, and envious of these Paduans whom you compassionate so deeply? Oh! this applauding crowd is a sore trial to me. I die of jealousy to see you stared at by so many eyes. Ah! Thisbe! Pray, who was that masked man with whom I saw you talking in the corridor this evening?

THISBE.

“Forgive me, Thisbe, I will ask you no more questions." Very good! That man, monsignore, was Virgilio Tasca.

ANGELO.

My lieutenant?

THISBE.

Your sbirro.

ANGELO.

What business did you have with him?

THISBE.

You would be rightly served if I chose not to tell you.

ANGELO.

Thisbe!

THISBE.

No, no, I ’ll be indulgent; this is the story.

You know that I am a mere nobody, a daughter of the people, an actress, a thing that you caress to-day, and trample on to-morrow, all in sport. Well, humble as I am, I had a mother. Do you know what it is to have a mother? had you a mother? Do you know what it is to be a child, a poor, weak, naked, miserable, hungry child, alone in all the world, and then to feel beside you and about you and above you, walking when you walk, stopping when you stop, and smiling when you weep, a woman—no, you are still too young to know that she's a woman—an angel, who watches over you, who teaches you to talk and laugh and love! who warms your fingers in her hands, your body on her knees, your heart against her heart! who gives you of her milk when you are young, and of her bread when you are older, and of her life all the time! whom you call mother, and who calls you, "my son," so sweetly that the words rejoice God's heart? Well, I had such a mother. She was a poor woman, with no husband, who sang ballads in the public squares of Brescia. I used to go with her. We lived on money that was thrown to us. Thus I began. My mother's custom was to stand beside Gatta-Melatta's statue. One day, it seems that in the song she sang——but did not understand—there was some slur on the signoria of Venice, which much amused some of an ambassador's retainers, who were standing by. A senator passed by. He looked and listened, and said to the officer who followed him: "That woman to the gallows!" In the Venetian state that is soon done. My mother was seized upon the instant. She said nothing, —where was the use? —but kissed me, and a great tear fell upon my forehead; she took her crucifix and let them bind her. I can still see that crucifix of polished copper. My name, Thisbe, was roughly written at the foot with a dagger-point. I was sixteen then. I watched them bind my mother, unable to cry out or speak or weep, as cold and rigid and lifeless as if I were dreaming. The crowd was silent, too. But there was with the senator a young girl, whose hand he held, his

daughter doubtless, and suddenly she overflowed with sympathy. A lovely girl, monsignore. Poor child! she threw herself at his feet, and wept so bitterly, such supplicating tears, and from such lovely eyes, that she obtained my mother's pardon. Yes, monsignore. When my mother was unbound, she took her crucifix, and gave it to the lovely child: "Signorina, keep this crucifix," she said, " 't will bring you luck!" Since then my mother, blessed soul, has died. I have grown rich, and I would give the world to see that child once more, that angel who did save my mother's life. She is a woman now, and therefore wretched. Who knows? perhaps she may have need of me. In every city that I visit, I send for the sbirro or barigel or captain of police and tell him my story; and to him who finds the woman that I seek I will give ten thousand golden sequins. That's why you saw me in the corridor just now talking with Virgilio Tasca, your barigel. Are you content?

ANGELO.

Ten thousand golden sequins! But what in Heaven's name will you give the woman herself when you have found her?

THISBE.

My life, if she will have it.

ANGELO.

How will you recognize her?

THISBE.

By my mother's crucifix.

ANGELO.

Bah! she will have lost it.

THISBE.

Oh, no! one does not lose what comes to one in that way.

ANGELO. (He spies Homodei.)

Signora! Signora! there's a man yonder! do you know that there's a man yonder? Who is the man?

THISBE (laughing heartily).

Why, yes, of course I know there's a man yonder. And he's sleeping too! and such a sleep! Pray be not so alarmed at sight of him.

It's my poor Homodei.

ANGELO.

Homodei! who the devil's Homodei?

THISBE.

Homodei's a man, monsignore, just as I, Thisbe, am a woman. Homodei, monsignore, is a guitarist, whom the primicerius of Saint Mark’s, one of my warmest friends, sent lately to me with a letter, which I will show you, jealous creature! And with the letter came a present.

ANGELO.

Eh! What's that?

THISBE.

A genuine Venetian present. A casket which contains naught but two flagons, one white, the other black. In the white flagon is a most powerful narcotic which causes sleep like death for twelve long hours. In the black flagon there is poison, that fearful poison which Malaspina administered to the pope in an aloes pellet, as you have heard. The primicerius wrote to me that I might find it useful on occasion. A charming gift you see. The reverend primicerius also said that the poor fellow who did bring the letter and the present was an idiot. He has been here—surely you must have seen him—for a full fortnight, eating in the pantry, sleeping in any corner, as his wont is, playing and singing, awaiting his departure for Vicenza. He comes from Venice. Ah me! my mother used to roam about in the same way. I will keep him here until he choose to go. He entertained my guests some little time this evening. But the festivities do not amuse him, and he's gone to sleep. That's all there is to that.

ANGELO.

You answer to me for this man?

THISBE.

Go to, you are pleased to joke! A mighty cause for such a show of terror! a guitar player, an idiot, a sleeping man! Signor podesta, in Heaven’s name what is the matter with you? You pass your life in asking questions about this and that one, and you take offense at everything. Is it jealousy, or fear?

ANGELO.

Both.

THISBE.

Jealousy I can understand, for you feel called upon to watch two women. But fear! you, the sole master, who do yourself rule the whole town by fear!

ANGELO.

The best of reasons wherefore I myself should tremble.

(He goes close to her, and speaks in a low voice.)

Listen, Thisbe. As you have said, my power has no limit here. I am the sovereign lord and despot of this town. I am the podesta, whom Venice fastens upon Padua, the tiger’s claw upon the lamb. Yes, I am omnipotent. But, absolute as I am, above me, Thisbe, there's a power, mighty and terrible, and shrouded in mystery: ’t is Venice. Venice, you needs must know, means the state inquisition, the Council of Ten. Oh! that Council of Ten! let us speak of it in whispers, Thisbe, for it may be listening somewhere here. Men who are known to none of us, and who know us all; men who are visible in no state ceremony, but (whose agency is visible) at every scaffold; men in whose hands are all our heads, your head and mine, the doge’s too, but men who wear no gown or stole, nothing to designate them to the eye, nothing to make it possible for one to say: “That man is of the Ten," some mystic symbol worn beneath their frock, no more; agents everywhere, sbirri everywhere and headsmen everywhere; men who do not show to the Venetians other features than those forbidding mouths of bronze, that stand always open beneath the porches of Saint-Mark’s; ominous mouths, deemed by the rabble

dumb, but which speak none the less, and speak in loud and fearful tones, saying to every passer-by: “Denounce!" He who is once denounced is seized; once seized, and all is said. At Venice everything is done mysteriously and secretly and surely. Condemned, beheaded; naught to be seen, naught to be said; impossible to cry out, useless to look; the victim has a gag, the executioner a mask. What was I saying of the scaffold but a moment since? I was wrong. At Venice one dies not upon the scaffold; one disappears. Suddenly a man is missing in a family. What has become of him? The leads of Saint-Mark’s, the wells, the Orfano canal can say. Sometimes the noise of something falling in the water is heard at night. Pass quickly then! Add to these horrors balls and festivals, music and torches, gondolas, theatres, and five months of carnival, and there's your Venice. You, Thisbe, my lovely Thalia, know but this side; I, Angelo, the Senator, know the other. You see, in every palace, in the doge’s, in my own, unknown to him who dwells therein, there is a secret passage, a constant traitor to all the halls and rooms and alcoves, a dark corridor to which others than yourself have access, and which you feel winding about you, uncertain where it lies; a mysterious mine, where men are ever going to and fro intent on something. And private hatreds too, that one must reckon with, are crouching in that darkness. Often at night I sit upright in bed and listen, and hear footsteps in the wall. Under such fearful pressure am I living, Thisbe. I am over Padua, but this is over me. My mission is to humble Padua. My orders are to make myself dreaded and feared. I am a despot only on condition that I am a tyrant. In God’s name never sue for mercy for any one, whoever he may be, to me who can deny you nothing, or you will be my ruin. Full freedom is accorded me to punish, none at all to pardon. Yes, so it is. Tyrant of Padua, I am the slave of Venice. I am well watched, you see! Oh! the Council of Ten! Place a single workman in a cellar and bid him make a lock; ere the

lock ’s finished the key is in the pocket of the Ten. Signora, the valet who serves me is a spy upon me, the friend who greets me is a spy upon me, the priest who hears me in confession is a spy upon me, the woman who says to me: “I love thee!”—yes, Thisbe—she, too, is a spy upon me.

THISBE.

Ah! signor!

ANGELO.

You never told me that you loved me, Thisbe; I do not speak of you. I say again that everyone who looks at me is an eye of the Council of Ten, everyone who listens to me is an ear of the Council of Ten, everyone who touches me is a hand of the Council of Ten, a formidable hand, which feels about at first a long while, and then seizes suddenly. Oh! magnificent podesta as I am, I am not sure I may not see some wretched sbirro appear to-morrow without warning in my room, and bid me follow him; and he will be naught but a wretched sbirro, and I shall follow him! Whither? to some deep cavern, whence he will come forth without me. To be of Venice is to have one’s life hanging by a thread. A dark and difficult position is this I occupy, signora, leaning over this fiery furnace which you call Padua, my face covered always with a mask, doing my tyrant’s work, surrounded by precautions, and by risks and terrors, constantly in dread of an explosion, and trembling every moment lest I be stricken dead by my work, as the alchemist by his poison. Pity me, signora, and do not ask me why I tremble.

THISBE.

Ah! God! yours is indeed a terrible position!

ANGELO.

Yes, I am the tool wherewith one people inflicts torture on another. Such tools are soon worn out, and often break, my Thisbe. Ah! I am very wretched! There is but one bright

spot in the world for me, and that is you. And yet I feel sure that you love me not. At least you love no other?

THISBE.

No, no. Be calm.

ANGELO.

I mislike the tone in which you say that “no."

THISBE.

I’ faith, I say it as I can.

ANGELO.

Oh! be not mine, —I can be reconciled to that,—but in God’s name be not another’s, Thisbe! Pray God I never learn that any other . . .

THISBE.

Think you that you are handsome when you look like that?

ANGELO.

When will you love me, Thisbe?

THISBE.

When all Padua loves you.

ANGELO.

Alas! —Even so, remain at Padua; I do not wish you to leave Padua, do you hear?

If you go hence, my life goes with you.

Malediction! someone comes this way. We have been seen talking together for a long while. Even that may cause distrust at Venice. I leave you.

(He stops and points to Homodei.)

You' answer to me for that man?

THISBE.

As for a child who might lie sleeping there.

ANGELO.

Your brother comes. I leave you with him.

(Exit Angelo.)

SCENE II

THISBE: RODOLFO, dressed in sober black, with a black feather in his cap: HOMODEI, still asleep.

THISBE.

Ah! ’t is Rodolfo! yes, ’t is Rodolfo! Come, for I love thee!

(She turns in the direction in which Angelo went off.)

No, shallow tyrant, he is not my brother, but my lover. Come to me, Rodolfo, my brave soldier, my generous, noble-hearted exile. Look in my eyes. Thou art so fair, and I do love thee!

RODOLFO.

Thisbe . .

THISBE.

Why didst thou wish to come to Padua? Now, as thou seest, we are trapped. We cannot leave the city. In thy position, wherever thou dost go thou needs must say that thou rt my brother. This podesta’s in love with thy poor Thisbe; he has us in his grasp, and will not let us go. I never cease to tremble lest he discover who thou really art. And oh! what torture ’t is! But never fear! this tyrant shall have none of me. Thou hast no fear of that, Rodolfo? And yet I would that thou wouldst fear it. I would that thou wouldst once be jealous of me.

RODOLFO.

You are a noble-hearted, fascinating woman.

THISBE.

Ah! but I am jealous of thee! oh! so jealous! This Angelo Malipieri, this Venetian, who also prates of jealousy, doth actually fancy he is jealous, and mixes up all sorts of other things therewith. Ah! monsignore, when one is jealous, one does not think of Venice or the Ten, of sbirri, spies, or the canal Orfano; one has but one thing in his thoughts, and

that his jealousy! I cannot bear to see thee speak to other women, my Rodolfo, even so much as to speak to them; it drives me mad. What right have they to words from thee? Oh! a rival! never give me a rival! I would kill her! For see, I love thee! Thou art the only man that I have ever loved. My life has long been sad, but now ’t is radiant. Thou art my light. Thy love is like a sun new risen for me. Other men have found me cold as ice. Oh! why did I not know thee ten years since? It seems to me that all those portions of my body that have died of cold would still be living. What happiness that we can be alone and talk an instant! What madness to have come to Padua! We live in such constraint. Dear Rodolfo! Yes, yes! he is my lover! What do I say? my brother! I am fairly mad with joy when I can speak thus at my ease with thee; thou seest that I ’m mad! Dost thou love me?

RODOLFO.

Who would not love you, Thisbe?

THISBE.

If you say “you” to me once more, I shall be angry. Good lack! I must go show myself a moment to my guests. For some time it has seemed to me that thou art melancholy. Tell me it is not so.

RODOLFO.

No, Thisbe.

THISBE.

Thou art not jealous?

RODOLFO.

No.

THISBE.

Ah! but I wish thee to be jealous. Else it must be because thou lov’st me not. But come, no moping, Thisbe. Look, how I tremble still, and thou art not alarmed? does no one here know that thou art not my brother?

RODOLFO.