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**Title:** "Venice," by Amos Slaymaker

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The traveller finds no trace of sadness in the varied sensations with which he gazes upon the mighty relics of ancient grandeur. Amid the tottering shafts and ruined arches of Palmyra he may stand unmoved by other emotions than those of astonishment or admiration, but cold indeed must be his heart if the contemplation of Venice in these her last days bring not to his eye the tear drop of pity. Like the bright creations waste of waters but she reared her proud fane amid the earth and then to sink slowly and sadly into her ocean tomb. In her day of glory she sat upon her regal throne and beheld kings and princes suppliant at her feet. The sails of her commerce were whitered every sea and in search of profit or adventure her hardy sons were to be found <sup>upon</sup> every shore. The winds were her tributaries and from north and south and east and west wafted her successes confined to the ocean alone. Her were lions of St. Mark was still triumphant. And the holy war and winged form floated in triumph over the walls of imperial Constantinople herself. Candia the ancient rival of Troy pined under her yoke and from the proud title of mistress of three eights of the Roman empire we may form some estimate of the extent of her possessions on the continent. And when the myriad multitudes of Mahomet sweeping over Asia like an army of destroying

locusts threatened the subversion of Christianity she  
was its most powerful protectress and alone an it  
unopposed from her hundred voices hurled defiance  
into the teeth of the haughty infidel. She has however  
other claims upon our admiration than these; the fame  
of her poets and painters will be even more lasting  
than that of her warriors and statesmen. The glorious  
productions of Titian will endure when his marble palaces  
have crumbled in to dust and the song of Tasso  
will be still sweet when the silence of desolation  
reigns over the walls which first resounded to its  
melody. But it is not necessary to speak farther of  
her great names, they have been so frequently and long  
in the sounding trump of fame that few can be  
unacquainted with their histories

Unto us she hath a spell beyond  
Her name in story and her long array  
Of mighty shadows whose dim forms descend  
Above the doge's city vanished sway  
Towards her our feelings are akin to those which we  
experience on returning after a protracted absence to  
some one of the hallowed scenes of childish happiness.  
In our minds her name is associated with all the bright  
romance of boyhood when the glorious treasures of  
literature were just opening our astonished gaze when  
Desdemona and Pierre were to us real characters

whose joys and sorrows excited in our bosoms all the quick<sup>ing</sup> <sup>guth</sup>  
sympathy of gentle feeling. ~~Even now I behold her~~  
She is indeed to us the city of the heart. Even now  
I behold her again as she was once

The pleasant place of all festivity

The revel of the earth the masque of Italy

The Italian moon has cast her mantle of soft splendour  
over tower and pinnacle illuminating the scene with a  
brightness undreamed of in colder climes. The long narrow  
canals glitter in the pale light like molten silver save  
where lashed into foam by the swift passage of the  
magnificent gondola. The balmy breath of night steals  
upon the sense laden with sweetness. Each leafy grove  
and shadowy arch pays its glad tribute of soft sound to  
swell the viewless tide of melody and from all that fair  
city goeth up to the calm firmament no sound save that  
of joy. But soon a horrid change takes place. The lovely  
moon looks down upon the same enchanting scene and  
the same lovely atmosphere envelops the whole. But  
ever and anon breaking in upon the voiceless harmony  
of night like the music of the infernal pit come on  
the whispering breeze strange tones of terror. No note  
of gaiety is now heard save the mad revelry of drunkenness  
and instead of the lay of love and the light guitar each  
passing gale sighs of sacrifice and murder. The cry of blood  
goeth up from her streets continually like a fearful vapour  
from that seething cauldron of crime

And dost thou seek the potent spell which wrought  
such mighty misery on Venice? Go find it in the  
vacillating and treacherous policy of her rulers, in the  
base ingratitude with which she treated her heroic  
sons and in the red handed bigotry with which she dunn  
to the vain and childish dogmas of the Romish faith  
The inquisition like the fell vampire of India fastened  
upon her vitals and with his broad wing soothing her  
Her best and noblest died heart sick in noisome dungeons  
whose darkness was deeper than the palpable obscure  
which of old fell on stubborn Pharaoh. Even hope  
herself dared not cross the ~~bridge~~ bridge of sighs and in this  
and tears To cap the climax of her woes she has now  
to the eternal infamy of European nations been  
consigned to a grinding tyranny which must ere long  
put a period to her very existence The work of destruc-  
-tion is fast proceeding. The mansions of her nobility  
are already in ruins and of the noble themselves  
few now remain save a few poor, heart crushed,  
wretches lingering by the grave of departed joys  
Her once spacious harbour is fast filling up  
and in a few centuries more old ocean will  
have hidsten in his bosom even the grave  
of this his love best and most favoured child

A. Haynes

Commencement Oration of Amos Slaymaker, Class of 1838  
Transcribed by Sarah Skalak, June 2008  
Edited by Tristan Deveney, July 2008

## Venice

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locusts threatened the subversion of Christianity she was its most powerful protectress and alone and unassisted from her hundred isles hurled defiance into the teeth of the haughty infidel. She has however other claims upon our admiration than these; the fame of her poets and painters will be ever more lasting than that of her warriors and statesmen. The glorious productions of Titian will endure when her marble palaces have crumbled into dust and the song of Tasso will be still sweet when the silence of desolation reigns over the walls which first reechoed to its melody. But it is not necessary to speak farther of her great names. They have been so frequently and long in the sounding triumph of fame that few can be unacquainted with their histories

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And dost thou seek the fateful spell which wrought such mighty misery on Venice? Go find it in the vacillating and treacherous policy of her rulers, in the base ingratitude with which she treated her heroic sons and in the redhanded bigotry with which she clung to the vain and childish dogmas of the Romish faith. The inquisition like the fell vampyre of India fastened upon her vitals and with his broad wing soothing her into a dream of religion drained her very hearts blood. Her best and noblest died heartsick in noisome dungeons whose darkness was deeper than the palpable obscure which of old fell on stubborn Pharaoh. Even hope herself dared not cross the bridge of sighs and in this his capital grim despair held constant feasts of groans and tears. To cap the climax of her woes she has now to the eternal infamy of European nations been consigned to a grinding tyranny which must ere long put a period to her very existence. The work of destruction is fast proceeding. The mansions of her nobility are already in ruins and of the noble themselves [prone?] now remain save a few poor, heart crushed, wretches lingering by the grave of departed joys.

Her once spacious harbour is fast-filling up and in a few centuries more old ocean will have hidden in his bosom even the grave of this his loveliest and most favoured child.

A. Slaymaker