

# ELECTION OF THE DOGE

1268

Then the noble Doge Rainiero Zeno<sup>1</sup> died and was buried, clad in cloth of gold; and seventeen days after Lorenzo Tiepolo<sup>2</sup> was elected Doge.

At that time there were six councilors in Venice who remained in the palace until the new Doge was elected, and their vicar was Nicolao Michele. And he assembled all the people in the church of Saint Mark, and spoke to them very wisely of all that belonged to the electing a Doge of Venice, and all that the Doge must swear to observe; and the people approved that which had been established.

And this was how the election was made: The noble councilors assembled that day the Great Council; and for each one who was in the council there was made a little ball of wax, and inside thirty of these balls was a piece of parchment on which was written *Lector*. Then each one took a ball, and the councilors and the forty broke them in the sight of all; and when there was found within the word *Lector*, he who had drawn it went and sat down in a certain place, and those who found nothing written went behind. Thus when all was done there were thirty electors.

When they were assembled together, Nicolao Michele spoke to them of the manner in which the election was to be made. And when they had sworn their oath before the council, they remained in their room above in the palace, and the others went away. Then these thirty men made balls of wax, and in nine of them was a parchment with the word *Lector*; and each one took his ball and those who found the word within tarried and the others went away.

Then these nine assembled together and chose forty Venetians; and they had power to choose from the council, and from outside the council, seven of them agreeing together. And when they were agreed, they made known to Nicolao Michele, and to the councilors, and to the three heads of the forty the names of the forty men whom they had chosen; and they sent to fetch them to the palace. And they made forty balls of wax, of which twelve had within the word *Lector*; and they put the forty balls in a hat. And there was brought in a child of the age of eleven years; and as each one came up, he said to the little child, "Put your hand into the hat, and take out a wax ball for such a one" (naming him); and the child took it and gave it to the councilors, and they broke it before him; and if there was written within *Lector*, they made him sit down, and if not they sent him away.

Then the vicar made the twelve chosen swear to observe all that the wise men had established; and they went into a room and chose twenty-five men, eight of them agreeing together. Then they made known the names to the vicar and to the others; and they assembled them together, and made twenty-five balls, and within nine of them was the parchment with the word *Lector*. And they came one after the other up to the hat, and the child drew a ball for each and the councilors broke them.

And they made the nine chosen swear the oath, and they went into a chamber and chose forty-five men, seven men agreeing together. Then the vicar and the others assembled the forty-five, and made forty-five balls of wax, and in eleven of them put the parchment; and the child drew for them.

And the eleven having been sworn, went into a chamber, and chose forty-one men, nine men agreeing together. These forty-one were to choose the Doge, twenty-five agreeing together. So they made the forty-one swear to observe the rules that the people had approved, and to support and defend the Doge who should be chosen. So these forty-one men chose Lorenzo Tiepolo; and they were of the nobles of Venice. Also in all the elections there was no man chosen who was not thirty years old at least.

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<sup>1</sup> Rainiero Zeno, Doge of Venice (1253–1268)

<sup>2</sup> Lorenzo Tiepolo, Doge of Venice (1268–1275)

There was great joy in Venice when Lorenzo Tiepolo was chosen; for the people remembered the goodness of Jacopo Tiepolo,<sup>3</sup> his father, and the great things he had done, and Lorenzo had learned of him well. And they assembled in the church of Saint Mark, and he was declared to be elected Doge; and they stripped off his clothes and led him before the altar, and there he took the oath, and there was given him the gonfalon of Saint Mark, and he took it. Then, amid great rejoicing, he went up to the palace, and on the stairs he stopped with the gonfalon in his hand, and the chaplains of Saint Mark cried aloud, "Let Christ conquer! Let Christ reign! Let Christ rule! And to our Lord Lorenzo Tiepolo, by the grace of God, illustrious Doge of Venice, Dalmatia, and Croatia, and Lord of the fourth part and a half of the Empire of Romania, be safety, honor, long life, and victory! May Saint Mark be your aid!" Then the Doge entered the palace, and the chaplains went to Saint Agostino, where there was the Dogaressa, and sang praises to her.

Eva March Tappan, ed., *The World's Story: A History of the World in Story, Song and Art* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), V:51–54.

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<sup>3</sup> Jacopo Tiepolo, Doge of Venice (1229–1249)