

The Northwest Review.

"AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM."

VOL. I.

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1885.

NO. 7.

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MONARCH AND CITIZEN.

BY ROBERT BURDETTE.

In the palace we hear a wailing cry
As the heavy hours go wearily by,
And the night unrestful comes;
For what is life when mirth is dead,
And sleeplessly tosses the crowned head,
And pitiless fate in royalty's bed
Hath scattered the cracker crumbs?

For there is no peace in the soft, white skin,
And the costly robes that pride walks in,
The new silk hat and the diamond pin,
The shirt that buttons behind;
Oh, happier far is the lumber man,
With a reeked nose and a face of tan,
And a ten-cent hat and a palm-leaf fan,
And a happy, contented mind.

THE AMULET.

CONTINUED.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION—THE ASSASSINATOR SLAIN.

A black shadow gliding like an almost impalpable spot, might be seen moving along the street of Saint John.

Thick clouds covered the sky. Not a star was visible. Here and there—at the corners of the streets and alleys—flickered a small lamp, lighted before an image of the Virgin; but these slight flames, far from diminishing the obscurity, shone in the foggy atmosphere as glowworms in the woods, which glitter but do not give light.

Silence reigned in the deserted streets. If the inhabitants, behind their oaken windows, heard occasionally some sound interrupting the stillness of the night, it was the hurried step of some benighted artisan who made as much noise as possible with his feet in order to frighten away the robbers; or it was the slow tread of a highwayman, who, listening attentively and peering through the darkness, was on the watch for his prey; or it might be the watchmen, who cried the hour and made the pavement resound under the stroke of their halberds as if to give evil-doers a warning of their approach.

The shadow gliding at this moment along the street of St. John was that of a man completely enveloped in a large cloak, his head so covered by the hood that his eyes alone were visible. As in passing before an image of the Virgin a feeble ray from a lamp fell upon him, one might have seen as he hurried along that his hand rested on the hilt of his sword.

Was this person an evil-doer, bent upon the commission of some crime, or, fearing danger, was he securing to himself the means of defence?

However that may be, he pursued his way undisturbed and reached a narrow winding alley, from beneath the ground of which seemed to proceed the confused noise of many voices.

The man stopped at the entrance of a cellar, to which admission was gained by a ladder, and listened to the joyous sounds which issued from within.

He put his hand in his pocket and chinked some pieces of money.

"The sign of the Silver Dice!" said he, sighing. "How merry they are! The dice are rolling upon the table. Shall I not risk a shilling? Only one?"

Yielding to the irresistible temptation, he placed his foot upon the ladder; but a sudden thought seemed to arrest him. He sprang back, trembling, and hastened from the cellar. A little farther in the street he stopped and murmured in an anxious voice:

"Heavens! what was I about to do? Risk the money upon dice? I would certainly have lost the whole. Pietro Mostajo, do not forget the Superintendent of Lucca! I am saved. Infernal temptation! I was about to stake my head. But, perhaps, I would not be unlucky. I might win a fortune. The temptation returns. No, no, I must go seek Bufferio, and I have no time to lose. He lives yonder: a low dark door beside the pump."

As he said these last words, he proceeded down the alley, but soon stopped near the pump, and said in an undertone: "Bufferio lives here. How dark it is! I can hardly see the door; but I am not mistaken. Here the terrible ruffian has his lair. Strange, how I tremble! Perhaps it is a warning of some misfortune about to happen to me! Suppose they should take my money and murder me to conceal the theft. What shall I do? Shall I tell my master that I could not

find Bufferio? Alas! the Superintendent of Lucca!"

After a moment of anxious thought he walked towards the low door, saying, with a sigh:

"Come, come; I can do nothing else. Of two evils choose the least!"

Although his words indicated an energetic resolution, his hand trembled as he raised the knocker of the little door and twice let it fall.

It gave out a deep hollow sound, as though it were the door of a vault for the dead.

A long time passed, and no noise within gave evidence that his call was heeded.

The visitor became still more terrified in the supposition that no one was in the house, and that consequently he would be obliged to return, without concluding the affair, to his master, who would not believe him.

In the little dark door was a small opening, protected by a grating. Behind the iron bars two eyes were fixed on the person who had knocked, and if he had been left apparently unnoticed, it was probably because two inquisitive eyes endeavoured to pierce the darkness in order to recognize the untimely visitor.

A harsh voice at last asked from behind the grating:

"Who knocked?"

The man in the cloak started back. The unexpected question so close to his ear made him tremble violently. However, he soon controlled himself and replied in Italian:

"Woman, I do not understand the Flemish tongue. You must know Italian, as Bufferio is a Roman. Tell me if Bufferio is at home."

"Who are you?" she replied, in Italian jargon.

"Who am I? I come to arrange a secret affair with Bufferio, and I do not choose to tell my name."

"You are an agent of the bailiff, and you wish to deceive me. Goon your way, and leave me in peace. Bufferio is not at home."

The man took some pieces of silver from his pocket and rattled them together.

"You are mistaken, woman. I have need of the services of Bufferio for an important affair. He may gain a few crowns of gold. I come with the cash in hand; you understand."

Two bolts grated in their rusty staples and the door opened.

"Enter, signor," said the woman, "and follow me."

"I do not see you; it is as black as Erebus; where is the staircase?" cried out the other.

"Follow me, signor. Give me your hand; I will precede you."

She seized the hand of the visitor, and whilst guiding him to the staircase, she said:

"Your hand trembles, signor. Are you afraid?"

"I afraid!" said the other, in a faltering voice. "Afraid of what. The darkness makes me totter."

"It may be, signor; but I thought your hand was cold and trembling. Here is the staircase; now follow me."

The man ascended the staircase behind her, stumbling up the well-worn steps, striking his head and elbows against invisible objects, and grumbling and swearing as if to show that he was not agitated by fear.

Having reached the first story, the woman opened a door and introduced her companion into a room lighted by the smoking flame of an iron lamp. She showed him a miserable chair, and said:

"Sit down, signor, if you please, and wait a while. I will go call Bufferio, he is engaged at play in the neighborhood. Should any one knock at the door during my absence, pay no attention to it; I will lock the door on the outside and take the key with me."

The man looked at her surprised and troubled. Her bony limbs, the gray locks which fell upon her cheeks, her large mouth and long teeth, made her appear to his eyes a hideous being, a worthy companion for Bufferio.

He listened to the sound of her receding steps, until he heard the key grate in the lock of the door.

Then he looked around him and examined with mistrust and surprise the

apartment of Bufferio and the objects it contained.

The room was neither well furnished nor clean: a table, three rickety chairs, an oaken bench, a few earthenware vessels near the fireplace, and a bed, constituted all the furniture. It was not, however, these common objects which fixed the gaze of the visitor. What he could not see without shuddering, was the number of strange arms suspended all around the walls of the room. In the midst of rusty swords, sharp daggers and knives of every size and shape, he saw short clubs with iron heads, steel chains like the bit of a horse, ropes with running knots, and various other articles whose use was inexplicable to him, although he was convinced that these singular instruments were intended for no good purpose.

On the table, beside the lamp, was a large knife, and near it a piece of linen and some sand for scouring, showing that the woman had been occupied in cleaning these arms when the knock at the door interrupted her.

All these instruments of murder filled with terror the heart of the man who was contemplating them. He turned his eyes away from them, trembling as he reflected upon the horror of his position. However, a few moments only were left him, for the door of the house soon opened and he heard steps on the staircase.

The woman entered and said: "Bufferio will soon be here. When he has the dice in his hand, it is difficult to tear him away. Nevertheless, he will come. I think, signor, that he has drunk deeply. Look well to yourself, and if you value your life, do not irritate him, for he would make as little scruple of maltreating you as he would of crushing a worm. Apart from that, he is the best man in the world."

She seated herself at the table, took up the knife and linen, and continued her occupation, whilst observing the stranger with a suspicious eye.

He had pulled the hood of the cloak over his face and seated himself in silence, fixing his eye vaguely upon space, like a man wearied by long waiting. He was deeply agitated, and from time to time his whole frame shook. Every time that he glanced towards the table he met the penetrating look of the frightful Megeera, who, while continuing to clean the blade of the large knife, considered him from head to foot, and seemed endeavoring to discover who he was and with what intention he had come.

At last, no longer able to resist his feeling of anxiety, he rose and said:

"Woman, show me the way out. I have not time to wait longer. I will return to-morrow, during the day."

"I hear Bufferio whistling in the street," she replied. "He is even now placing the key in the door."

The stranger, as if perfectly satisfied with this intelligence, fell back in his chair, with a suppressed sigh, and listened in an agony of fear to the heavy footsteps on the staircase.

Bufferio appeared at the door, and looked distrustfully at the man who had interrupted him at his game.

The ruffian Bufferio was of giant build. He was obliged to stoop in order to enter the door. His head was thrown back defiantly, and his hand rested upon the hilt of a dagger which was held by his girdle. A broad-brimmed hat shaded his face; his whole dress was of dark-brown cloth, scarcely distinguishable in the darkness of night. Under his prominent eyebrows twinkled very small eyes, and a cruel, withering smile played about his mouth.

He made an imperious gesture to the woman and pointed to the door. She left the room grumbling, but gave no other evidence of dissatisfaction.

The ruffian shut the door, took a chair, and said to the stranger, in a rough and coarse voice:

"Perche me disturba? Why do you disturb me? Who are you?"

This question was very embarrassing to the stranger. He replied, stammering: "Is it necessary, Signor Bufferio, that you should know my name before doing me a service for which I will pay you liberally?"

On hearing these words, the ruffian struck his forehead with his hand, as if he thought he recognized the voice of

the visitor; but he did not stop to reflect longer.

"Come tell me quickly what you want; they are waiting for me at the tavern of the Silver Dice, and I have no time to lose."

"It is an affair of importance, Signor Bufferio."

"Yes; my wife told me I might gain a few crowns of gold. Speak. Why do you beat about the bush in this manner? What embarrasses you? Do you think you are dealing with a dishonest man? Fear nothing. Not a hair of your head shall be touched in my house."

This assurance restored the stranger's confidence, and he said, in a more steady voice:

"Signor Bufferio, you must know that I have an enemy who insults and outrages me, and who threatens to drive me to ruin."

"I understand. You wish to be avenged by my instrumentality."

"Yes, signor. How many golden crowns do you ask for such a service?"

"That depends upon the rank of the individual, and upon the kind of service you desire. A few blows with a stick, a scratch on the face, do not cost as much as a mortal wound."

"The wound must be mortal, signor."

"And who is your enemy. A nobleman or a common citizen. Rich or poor?"

"He is a nobleman, signor, and the possessor of an ample fortune."

"A nobleman. And who are you, who make yourself responsible for payment?"

"I am a poor servant out of service." The ruffian smiled incredulously.

"Ah!" said he, ironically, "a poor servant out of service! Come, throw back your hood. You have had hair; you often play at dice; your name is Julio; you live near the bridge De la Vigne with the Signor Simon Turchi. Is not that true. You were trying to deceive me."

Julio, thus unexpectedly recognized, was mute from astonishment, and, trembling from head to foot, stared at the ruffian, who did not appear in the least displeased, but said, in an encouraging tone:

"Be calm; you need not be disturbed because I know who you are. My trade is to keep the most important affairs secret. Fear nothing, I will not betray you."

It was some minutes before Julio had recovered himself sufficiently to speak.

"I am sorry that you know my name," said he; "but no matter. I desire to know, Signor Bufferio, what price you demand for ridding me forever of my enemy."

"Your enemy," said the ruffian, laughing. "A gentleman your enemy. You are still endeavoring to deceive me. You mean your master's enemy."

"No, my personal enemy, who has calumniated me to my master, and who has striven to have me ignominiously discharged."

"And you offer me golden crowns. How long is it since servants became possessed of such treasures. You request to have a mortal wound inflicted upon a gentleman. Well, you must give me fifteen gold crowns."

"Fifteen crowns!" exclaimed Julio, with assumed astonishment. "So large a sum! I do not own that much."

"Then pay me twelve; but it must be in advance, before I strike the blow."

"I will pay you immediately, before leaving."

"Give me your hand, Julio; it is a bargain. Now tell me exactly what you or your master requires of me."

"Not my master: I alone."

"It is all the same. What am I to do, and when is it to be done?"

"This very night, Bufferio."

"To-night. This will oblige me to renounce my game with the Portuguese sailor; and yet I might have won some gold pieces there."

TO BE CONTINUED.

Be Happy Now.

A quaint writer gives utterance to the following valuable secret: "This looking forward to enjoyment don't pay. From what I know of it I would as soon chase butterflies for a living or bottle up moonshine for cloudy nights. The only way to be happy is to take the drops of happiness as God gives them to us every day of our lives."