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THE ANGEL OF DEATH.

BY ADELAIDE ANNE PROCTER

Why shouldst thou fear the beautiful angel,
Death,
Who waits thee at the portals of the skies,
Ready to kiss away the struggling breath,
Ready with gentle hand to close thine eyes?

How many a tranquil soul has passed away,
Fled gladly from fierce pain and pleasures dim,
To the eternal splendor of the day;
And many a troubled heart still calls for him.

Spirits too tender for the battle here
Have turned from life, its hopes, its fears, its charms;
And children, shuddering at a word so drear
Have smiling passed away into his arms.

He whom thou fearest will to ease thy pain
Lay his cold hand upon thy aching heart;
Will soothe the terrors of thy troubled brain
And bid the shadow of earth's grief depart.

He will give back what neither time, nor might
Nor passionate prayer, nor longing hope
Can restore
(Dear as to long blind eyes recovered sight)
He will give back those who are gone before

Oh! what were life, if life were all? Thine
Are blinded by their tears, or thou wouldst see
Thy treasures wait thee in the far-off skies,
And death, thy friend, will give them all
to thee.

THE AMULET.

CHAPTER X.

SIMON TURCHI'S ALARM—CRIME BEGETS CRIME.

(CONTINUED.)

Julio arose with difficulty from his chair, and staggered to the cupboard.

Simon Turchi thrust his hand in his doublet, and drew out a very small phial. He hastily poured nearly the whole contents into Julio's glass, and immediately concealed the phial; and although he trembled in every limb, he said calmly:

"A little higher Julio—to the left; that is the right bottle."

The servant brought the bottle to his master, who uncorked it; but as he was about to pour out the wine, he said:

"Empty your glass, Julio; this is a different wine, and the mixture would spoil both.

Julio drank the wine, but no sooner had he swallowed it, than he exclaimed:

"What was in my glass? It had a strange, bitter taste. Did you put poison in it?"

"What a silly idea!" said Turchi turning pale.

"You are capable of such a deed, signor."

"The lees gave the bad taste, Julio. Take another glass, and it will pass away. Emptying his glass again Julio said:

"You are right; it is gone. I never tasted anything in my life more disagreeable."

Turchi watched his servant narrowly. With assumed carelessness he said:

"Take care, Julio, to be up by day-break. Go on foot to the village of Lierre; buy a good horse there, and make all possible haste to reach Diest; that is the shortest route, and you will be more likely to escape notice than on the highway. Once in Cologne, you are out of danger; but be careful not to remain there. Merchants from Antwerp frequently visit that city; you might possibly be recognized and arrested. You must leave the territories of the emperor when the affair is forgotten, and when I'm married with Miss Van de Werve I will have acquired a considerable fortune, I will send for you, and you will live with me as a friend rather than a servant. You shall spend your days in pleasure, and will never have cause to regret what you have done for me. But Julio, you do not answer? Is not such a fate-desirable?"

"I am overpowered by sleep," stammered Julio, almost unintelligibly.

A triumphant smile flitted across Turchi's face.

"To-morrow at two o'clock he continued," the officers of justice will make a domiciliary visit here, but the bailiff will permit no search that intimates a suspicion. Since you have filled the cellar with fire-wood and empty casks, the bailiff will be satisfied that all is right. Perhaps Julio, I may be able to recall you in two or three months."

Julio's head had fallen upon the table but from time to time he started and muttered some indistinct words, showing that he was not in a deep sleep. With-

out once removing his eye from him, Simon continued to speak, although he was convinced that Julio no longer heard his words.

Suddenly Julio groaned. His head, and limbs fell as though he had been struck by death; but the heaving of the chest and the deep scarlet of the cheeks proved that he was in a heavy sleep.

Simon quietly contemplated him for a while longer with a smile of satisfaction. Then he arose, approached his servant shook him violently, and cried out:

"Julio, Julio, wake up?"
Julio did not stir.

"It succeeds according to my wishes," he said. "The poison is doing its work. He is deaf and insensible; he reposes in an eternal sleep. Life will be extinguished by degrees until sleep makes way for death. But I must not tarry, I must act quickly and forget nothing. And first the money?"

He searched Julio's pocket, and found in it one hundred and twenty crowns. After counting them on the table, he exclaimed:

"Eighty crowns spent already! It is impossible. He has either lost them at the gaming-table, or been robbed while he was sleeping in the tavern."

Still doubtful, he examined his garments, and found in a purse under his girdle the twenty crowns which he had destined for his mother.

"Ah, ha!" said Simon, laughing; I had not all; I hear the sound of gold."

He put the twenty crowns with the rest of the money, and having satisfied himself that no more remained on the person of Julio, he was about to transfer the crowns to his pocket, when a sudden idea occurred to his mind.

"If I leave all this money on his person, they might think he had been paid to commit the deed, if I leave nothing, there will be no reason to conclude that he killed the Signor Geronimo to rob him. I wonder how much money Geronimo generally carried about him. I should suppose five or six crowns or perhaps ten. I will leave six crowns and all the small change. And the keys? He must keep them or, of course, he could not have entered without my knowledge. But should he be roused to consciousness by the death-agony, he might have sufficient strength to get out. I will leave him all the keys but that of the outer building. Iron bars render the place secure; he could not even enter the garden. Now I will put the phial in his doublet—no, in the pocket of his girdle; it will be easy found. I will remove the bottles and everything which could indicate the presence of two persons."

He locked up the bottles and glasses, arranged the chairs, and wiped up the wine which had been spilled on the table and the floor.

While thus engaged, he muttered to himself:

"I must not remain longer. I myself must go to the bailiff and accuse Julio of the murder. Shall I go this evening? No; they might come and find him alive, and a powerful antidote might perhaps rouse him from sleep. To-morrow, then—to-morrow morning. But how shall I explain the affair? When and how did he reveal his crime? Night will suggest a means. All is done. I will go home and appear calm and cheerful."

He threw his cloak around his shoulders, took the lamp from the table, and walked to the door. There he stopped for a moment to contemplate his victim and precipitately descended the staircase. At the foot of the steps he extinguished the light, traversed the garden, opened the gate, and disappeared in the darkness.

CHAPTER XI.

FOOD AT LAST—DEATH OF JULIO.

When Julio left the cellar for the purpose of procuring bread, Geronimo cast himself on his knees, full of gratitude to God, to return thanks for the unexpected deliverance.

Julio had said "soon," but an hour passed, then another, then many more, and he came not.

A painful doubt began to take possession of Geronimo's mind. Had an accident happened to Julio? Had he perhaps cruelly abandoned his victim? Had he set out for Germany with the certain-

ty that hunger would kill him whom the dagger spared.

The unfortunate cavalier had no means of measuring the flight of time. What in the immutable darkness of his prison seemed to him a century, might in reality be only a few hours, and the promised bread would soon appear to his eyes as the star of safety—in a quarter of an hour, in a minute—that very instant.

With such reflections Geronimo sought to endure patiently the pangs of hunger. He put his ear to the keyhole and ceased breathing that he might catch the slightest sound. Alas! hour after hour passed in unbroken silence. Although Geronimo knew not whether it was day or night, his increasing sufferings were to him a sure indication of the passage of time. For a while he encouraged himself by the thought that Julio would not bring him the promised until dawn, and that he would give him at the same time food and liberty.

This hope by degrees diminished, and at last vanished entirely. The suffering young man could no longer deceive either his body or his mind; it became evident to him that the hour which he had hoped would restore him to freedom had long passed.

He had been abandoned—devoted to a cruel martyrdom, a frightful death! He was then to die in the midst of the torments of hunger—to die slowly in indescribable suffering, and fall into the yawning grave prepared for him!

Struck with terror by the conviction thus forced upon him, the unfortunate cavalier arose despairingly and ran panting and crying around the cellar, as though he could thus escape the death which menaced him.

The pain of his wounds, was increased by this violent feverish agitation. His breast heaved under his difficult respiration, but the gnawing hunger which agonized him made these sufferings seem light. Falling to the ground from exhaustion, he commenced, as soon as he had gained a little strength, his struggle against the tortures of hunger. At times his despair was cheered by the thought that even yet Julio might come. But Julio was plunged by the influence of poison into a mortal sleep, and in all probability would appear before Geronimo at the judgment-seat of God.

Hoping against hope; the young man seated himself on the ground. The violence of his sufferings seemed to abate and leave him at rest for a few moments. His thoughts wandered to all he loved upon earth, but the respite was of short duration. Soon the agony he endured drew from him piercing cries. During the long martyrdom no torment equaled the present. It seemed as though he were being devoured by flames, or as if molten lead were coursing through his veins.

He writhed in convulsions, beat his breast, and in heartrending accents called upon God for help. But nothing relieved his horrible sufferings.

He filled the air with his groans and screams, he beat the door with blind fury, tore the flesh from his fingers in his useless efforts to make an opening in his prison-walls, and ran from side to side as though the pang of hunger had driven him mad.

At last, exhausted and convinced that there was no escape, and he must soon enter into his last agony, he threw himself upon the ground, bowed his head and joined his hands in prayer, begging for resignation to meet the death which would end his cruel martyrdom. His mind now appeared clear, and he was perfectly conscious, for after a while he shed a torrent of tears. His lips moved, giving utterance to confused sounds, but by degrees his words became more distinct, and fixing his eye in the darkness on the spot where he knew the grave had been dug, he said:

"No more hope! All is over. I must die! The grave yawns to receive me. Alas! what a place for my mortal remains! Forgotten, unknown, concealed by the darkness of a horrible crime! Not a tear will fall upon the tomb of the unfortunate victim; not a cross will mark the spot where I lie; not a prayer will be whispered over my body! Death approaches. Ah, I must not thus cling to life; I will pray and lift my hands in

supplication to God. He alone—"
He stopped under the influence of emotion.

"Heavens, did I not hear a noise?"
He listened breathless for a time to catch the indistinct sound he thought he had heard; but he was mistaken.

"Why should I hope when hope is no longer possible? Let me rather seek strength in the consideration of the better life which awaits me. The death I endure will purify me from all my sins. If God, in His impenetrable designs, has appointed this to be my earthly fate, He will, in His mercy, take into account before his judgment-seat what I have innocently suffered here below. Consoling hope, which encourages me to look with confidence into eternity.

"And yet my life was so happy. Everything in the world smiled upon me; my path was strewn with roses; the future spread out before me like a cloudless sky resplendent with stars. God had not only given me health, fortune, and peace of heart, but also the hope of uniting my fate with that of a lovely young girl, Mary Van de Werve, the incarnation of all that men admire, and heaven loves: virtue, piety, modesty, charity, beauty, love. Alas, alas, must I leave all that? Must I say a last adieu, renounce my hopes, and never see her again? Die and sleep forever in an unknown tomb, while she lives."

A cry of anguish escaped him. But it was caused rather by his train of thought than by the adieu he had just spoken, for he added in a suppliant voice:

"Pardon, O Lord, pardon! Thy creature clings to life; but be not angry with the weakness of my nature. Should I die by the terrible death of starvation, I humbly accept Thy holy will, and I bless Thy hand which deals the blow! God of mercy, grant that I may find grace with Thee!"

Calmed by this invocation, he resumed with less emotion and in a tone which proved that his soul had received consolation:

"And if I be permitted in my last hour to offer to Thee my supplications, I pray Thee, O God of mercy, to spare my uncle, and let not my misfortune deprive him also of life. He was my father and benefactor; he taught me to live in the fear of Thy holy name. By the cruel sufferings which I endure, by my terrible death, have pity on him. Let Thy angels also guard and protect the pious and pure young girl who is before Thee as an immaculate dove! Jesus, Saviour of mankind, on the cross you prayed to your heavenly Father for those who crucified Thee. Demand not an account of my blood from my enemy. Pardon him, lead him back to the path of virtue, and after death grant him eternal rest! My strength fails; the sweat of death is on my brow. O my God! in this, my last hour, grant me the grace to die with Thy love alone in my heart, and Thy holy name only upon my lips!"

The last words of this prayer had scarcely fallen from his lips, when he cried aloud, arose trembling, and eagerly fixed his eyes upon the opposite wall, upon which a faint streak of light flickered.

"O my God! what means this?" he exclaimed. "Light! light! a voice! It is some one coming? Is there still hope? I shall not die! Cruel dream! Frightful illusion! But no, it is indeed a light, it becomes brighter. I hear a human voice. Alas! this suspense is worse than death!"

Tottering from weakness, and supporting himself by the side of the wall, he gained the door, and trembling between hope and fear, he put his eye to the keyhole in order to discover who was approaching his person.

He saw in the distance a man with a lamp in his hand; but his gestures were so strange, and his countenance so singular, that he was at a loss to know whether it were a human being, or only a creation of his own disordered brain.

Still he heard confused sounds in the passage; a voice seemed to complain, curse, and call for aid.

By degrees the mysterious apparition drew nearer, and Geronimo recognized the servant of Simon Turchi; but why was Julio writhing in such horrible convulsions? Why was his face so horribly contorted? Why did he threaten and rage in such harsh accents?

TO BE CONTINUED.