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THE REQUIEM OF THE DYING YEAR

BY MRS. A. MAC GILLIS, WINNIPEG.

Slowly, sadly, softly ring the bells,
Ringing for the dying of the year;
Bearing in his bosom gentle Spring's
Golden Summer lying on his bier.

Slowly, sadly, solemnly the bells
Ring a doleful dirge for dear ones dead.
'Oh, how many of our loved this year,
Laid to rest within their narrow bed.

Slowly, softly, sweetly ring the bells,
Tender tones that tell of hours gone by,
Hours when love with rosy fingers touched
Heart and life, till all of life was joy.

Slowly, sadly, sullenly the bells
Ring of want and care, of wrong and crime
Days of "hope deferred" and dark despair,
Problems for the good in every clime.

But hark! the Old Year dies, the New Year's
born,
Ring silver bells, a sweet and joyful strain
With the New Year our buried hopes revive
Once more we feel that life is not in vain

Ring, silver bells, that nature is not dead,
Nor our dear ones, but living fuller lives;
Ring out the thought that Doubt and Truth
are wed,
Ring in that Right must reign, that Faith
survives.

Ring for the New Year sweet and merry
chimes
Ring for the hour when parted friends
shall meet
Ring for true love, ring for the BETTER
TIMES
That soon, we trust, our country's sight
shall greet.

THE AMULET

CHAPTER IX.

GERONIMO RESURRECTED.

(CONTINUED.)

'Are you ready, signor?'

'A moment more, one moment for prayer!' said Geronimo.

He joined his hands and uttered a fervent prayer; but although he apparently accepted his fate with resignation, it was equally evident that his soul struggled against the death which was hanging over him.

By degrees, however, prayer brought resignation and consolation to Geronimo for the nervous trembling of his limbs ceased and his voice became more distinct and calm.

Julio fixed his eyes on Geronimo, and his heart was touched when he thought he heard him ask pardon of God for his enemies; but when the lips of the young man pronounced his own name in ardent supplication, and he distinctly heard his unfortunate victim praying for the soul of his murderer, Julio dropped his knife, and said, with a deep sigh:

'My courage has forsaken me! I have not the strength to accomplish this cruel act!'

'Ah!' exclaimed Geronimo, as Julio pronounced these words, 'it is a voice from heaven speaking to your heart. Harken to it. Have pity on me! spare my life!'

Julio was too absorbed in his own thoughts to heed Geronimo. In accents of despair he muttered:

'Frightful situation! Beside the very grave I have dug for him, he prays for my soul! And can I shed his blood? But there is no help for it. I must—I must!'

The young gentleman remarked the struggle in Julio's soul, and he mustered up all his strength to approach him; but Julio, seeing Geronimo's design, picked up his knife, took the lamp, and left the cellar, saying:

'It is useless, signor. Fate is more powerful than we are; and struggle as we may against its inevitable decrees, they must be accomplished. The sight of your sorrow has deprived me of all courage. I go to regain strength. I will soon return. Be prepared, for this time I will act without delay.'

He closed the door and walked slowly down the passage. Having reached his room, he stamped with anger, uttered desperate words, struck his forehead with his fist, vented his impatience, because he could see no solution of his difficulties. He paced the room like a madman, fought the air, stopped, resumed his walk—until exhausted he threw himself into a chair. Sorrow, anguish, and rage, by turns were depicted on his countenance. He lamented the necessity of the murder and complained in bitter terms of his sad fate. But in vain he tortured his brain—not a ray of light came to illumine his darkness. The pitiless "I must do it!" was the invariable refrain.

By chance his eyes fell upon the two bottles which he had placed upon the table, and as if the sight had inspired him with a sudden resolution, he seized

one of the bottles, uncorked it, and putting it to his lips, drank a long draught, stopped a moment for breath, then emptied the bottle.

He remained some time immovable as if to test the influence of the wine upon his mind, swallowed half of the second bottle, drew his dagger, took the lamp, and descended the stairs, saying:

'Now my courage will not fail me! No more words, a single blow and all will be over! I must strike him in the back; he wears a cuirass on his breast.'

Opening the door of the cellar, he placed the lamp on the ground without speaking, and raising his dagger, he walked directly towards Geronimo, who lifted his hands imploringly.

Within a few steps of his victim, Julio, with an exclamation of surprise, stopped suddenly as if immovable. His eye fell upon an object which Geronimo held in his hand and extended to him, as though it had power to turn aside the mortal blow.

It was a flat copper medal, in the centre of which was a cross and other emblems, and attached to it was a bright steel chain.

Julio, forgetful of what he was about to do, sprang forward, seized the strange medal, examined it closely, and said, in astonishment:

'This amulet in your hands, signor! What does it mean? How came you by it?'

Geronimo, whose every thought was fixed upon death, was too much startled by the sudden transition to reply immediately.

'Speak, tell me whence comes this amulet. Who gave it to you?'

From Africa—from a blind woman,' answered Geronimo, almost unintelligibly.

'From Africa? And the woman's name?' said Julio, beside himself with impatience.

'Mostajo. Theresa Mostajo.'

'Theresa Mostajo! You are then the liberator of my poor blind mother.'

'Then you will spare my life! God of mercy, I thank thee, there is still hope!'

But Julio heeded not the words of the young man.

'This amulet,' he said, 'recalls my native village. I see again my father, mother, friends. I see myself as I was before dissipation led me to sin and vice. This amulet, brought by my grandfather from Jerusalem, protected my father against many dangers, saved my mother's life; and you, signor, you owe to the same amulet escape from a violent death, for it turned away my master's dagger from your breast. Strange and mysterious power which thus shields the victim from his executioner.'

'Julio,' said Geronimo, 'keep me not in suspense. Say that thou wilt not take my life. Be merciful to the man whose name is blessed by the lips of your mother.'

'Fear not, signor; rather than shed one drop of your blood, I would pay the penalty of my own guilty life on the gallows. But I must reflect upon our peculiar situation, for my mind is not clear; perhaps I may discover a means of escape. Do not disturb me, I beg you.'

He withdrew to the corner of the cellar where he had been previously seated and remained motionless for some time, without giving any sign of the agitation of his mind.

Geronimo regarded him at first with a look of joyful anticipation; by degrees, however, his face wore an expression of sadness and surprise; it seemed to him that Julio had fallen asleep. He was mistaken, however, for Julio arose after a while, and said:

'Now I see my way clearly. I will save you, signor; but on doing that, I might as well avoid securing a halter for myself. You must have patience until tomorrow. It is now about nine o'clock in the evening, and the time, I know, will be very long to you. But you must submit to a condition which is necessary for the preservation of my own life. Tomorrow, at daybreak, I shall quit the city and country. Before leaving, I will set you at liberty. Do not attempt to shake my resolution; let me go now, signor, and expect with confidence your deliverance.'

Geronimo joined his hands, and said,

feebly:
'Thanks, thanks, and may the good God show you the mercy you have shown to me. I have yet a favor to implore, a benefit to ask.'

'Speak, signor, what do you wish?'

'It is long since I awoke from my death-like stupor. I know not how long, and I am tormented by hunger and thirst; you have kept life in me by the wine so kindly bestowed, but now my body demands nourishment. Give me bread.'

'Bread,' said Julio, 'there is not a mouthful of food in the house.'

But seeing Geronimo's eyes fixed in supplication upon him, he added:

'It is not late; perhaps I may find some shop still open. I will return presently; remain quiet, and have no anxiety, signor.'

He took the lamp, left the cellar, closing the door after him, and ascended to his room. There folding his arms, he began to muse:

'How strange, the young merchant who, at the risk of his own life, defended my mother from the Moslem master, who paid her ransom, and liberated her from slavery—that merchant was Geronimo. By some mysterious influence the amulet protected his heart from the blade of his vindictive enemy; and when I am about to shed his blood, behold the amulet paralyzed my arm. It is incomprehensible.'

The current of his thoughts changed. Seizing the half empty bottle, he drank its contents.

'Strange,' said he, 'how the bad effects of liquor are controlled by the emotions. I have taken enough to deprive me of consciousness, I feel my mind as clear as though I had not touched a drop. This last draught, however, has mounted to my brain. So it is decreed that my master, Simon Turchi, must die upon the scaffold? It is disagreeable for both of us, but I could not help it. I shall not know what to do when the two hundred crowns are spent; necessity will force me to seek other resources, even at the risk of the gallows, and in all probability the fatal noose will encircle my neck. Bah! if it is predestined, who can prevent it? My master and I will deserve only what we deserve. But I am forgetting the starving young gentleman; I must go out to procure him some food. It will be a fine opportunity to drink a pint of wine at the "Swan"; that cannot be closed yet, for gamblers do not keep early hours. Only one pint in passing; not more, for if my reason became clouded, I cannot answer for the consequences; but there is no need to fear that, for my life is at stake. I will return in half an hour.'

He extinguished the lamp, and hastily traversed the garden.

CHAPTER X.

SIMON TURCHI'S ALARM—CRIME BEGETS CRIME.

Some time after the hour of Change, Simon Turchi had returned home, and was apparently preparing to go out again for he had changed his doublet for one of a darker color, and his cloak lay on a chair beside him.

The signor was in high spirits; he carried his head proudly, a radiant smile illumined his countenance, and from time to time he rubbed his hands with an air of triumph. Julio had left for Germany. Nothing could have prevented his departure, for he had not been seen in the city. Simon Turchi has therefore no cause for fear, for if, contrary to expectation, his garden be searched and the corpse of Geronimo be discovered, the murder could easily be fastened upon Julio.

Already, by vague remarks to his servants and acquaintances, Turchi had prepared the way for making the accusation in case of necessity. He had exhibited great anxiety at Julio's absence the night before and during that day. He said that he had sharply reproved his servant for his dissipated habits and his neglect of duty. Julio had left him in evident anger.

The servants, who could not comprehend their master's anxiety, thought that he might be in some tavern, drowning his feelings with drink and awaiting the night to return home. To this Tur-

chi answered that he had remarked for some time Julio's strange manner, that he seemed so absentminded, was often heard to sigh and weep—in a word, something weighty seemed pressing on his conscience.

Early in the morning he sent Bernardo to the pavilion to see if Julio were there. Bernardo reported that there was no evidence of his having been there except two empty bottles upon a table. Simon pretended that he had had the bottles placed in the room, and Bernardo thought no more of the affair.

Simon Turchi would have satisfied himself by personal examination if Julio had thoroughly performed his work before his departure, but he feared to excite attention by his appearance in that direction; or, perhaps, he might even be obliged to assist at the search of his garden, should the bailiff refuse to exempt it. He determined to go to the cellar at nightfall, when the search must be interrupted to examine the arrangements made by Julio. When therefore twilight was commencing to replace the glare of day, and Simon was certain of not meeting the officers of the law, he threw his close around his shoulders, turned with a light step and joyous heart the corner of the street, and took the direction to the square of Meir.

He had gone but a short distance, when he met Messire John Van Schoonhoven.

A smile lighted up Turchi's countenance. He was delighted to be accidentally brought into the bailiff's company, as he would thus learn the result of the researches already made.

After a polite salutation, Messire Van Schoonhoven said: 'I am happy to meet you. I was on my way to your house.'

'To my house?' said Turchi. 'Have you news of my friend?'

'No, signor; I wish to see you concerning an affair which, although not serious, necessitates a conversation with you. I would have spoken to you on this subject this evening when at Mr. Van de Werve's, but the place was inappropriate to such discussions.'

'Return then with me,' stammered Turchi, with ill-disguised anxiety.

'Where were you going, signor?' said the bailiff.

'I was going to take a walk along the Scheldt, in order to seek some diversion to the grief I feel for the disappearance of the unfortunate Geronimo.'

'What I have to say, signor, need not interfere with your walk. I will accompany you a part of the way and enjoy with you the evening breeze.'

The bailiff turned and walked by Turchi's side.

Looking around, to assure himself that they were not overheard, Messire Van Schoonhoven said:

'The affair in question would not require so many precautions were I not bailiff and you my friend. But in consequence of these two reasons, my mission becomes painful, and I must claim in advance your forbearance. You know that my agents are searching every house, building, and garden in the vicinity of the Hospital Grounds where Geronimo was last seen. The greatest part of this quarter has been carefully examined without any result.'

Simon Turchi perfectly understood the bailiff's design, and although his heart beat painfully, he mastered his emotion, and said in an indifferent tone:

'And you think, Messire Van Schoonhoven, that my garden should be searched in like manner? It is very natural. No one is above the law—the knight and the peasant are there equal.'

'Believe me, signor, that the thought of so disrespectful a conduct towards an honorable nobleman, and that nobleman my friend for years, would never have occurred to me. But the search became a necessity without any fault of mine. The presence of at least twenty of my agents in that quarter attracted the curious. A crowd followed those engaged in the search, and when it was noticed that your summer-house was the only one exempted the magistrates were openly accused of injustice. The people were told that this was done by my order; but so great was the commotion that the affair reached the ears of the burgomaster and the constables, and these gentlemen waited on me, urging me to visit your garden likewise, so as to remove all cause of complaint.'

TO BE CONTINUED.