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## THE STARS.

BY A. S. B.

Though in a desert wild I am alone,  
Or in a darksome wood, or thro' a grove  
Of silent pines companionless I rove,  
At midnight's calm and holy hour, when  
none  
Have ever trod before, I do not feel  
Lonely or desolate, if the sky above  
Is spangled o'er with meteors, nature's real  
And priceless jewels that our Sav. or's love  
Alike to noble born and lowly grants;  
For, as I gaze on heaven's gleaming dome,  
Each star doth seem an angel's countenance  
That sweetly looks adown from its far home  
To brighten with its love my lonely way,  
To cheer my weary heart till break of day.  
—Baltimore Catholic Mirror

## THE AMULET

CHAPTER VIII.

SIMON TURCHI TRIES TO CONCEAL HIS CRIME.  
CONTINUED.

Overpowered by these reflections, Simon Turchi bowed his head upon his breast; his hands worked convulsively, and at intervals heart-rending sighs escaped him.

Confusedly arose before him a horrible vision; he saw the scaffold erected; he beheld the sword of the executioner glitter in the sunlight; he heard the shouts of the populace calling down the vengeance of heaven upon his guilty head and devoting his name to eternal infamy; he seemed to feel the mysterious stroke from the uplifted blade, for his frame shook violently, and he uttered a piercing cry of anguish.

He thrust his hand into his doublet, and drew from it slowly a small phial half filled with a yellow liquid, and held it before him with a shudder of disgust and horror.

'Poison, deadly poison!' he muttered. 'He who has the courage to take a few drops will sleep a sleep from which there is no awakening. And is this my only refuge from the ignominy of the scaffold? Instead of wealth and happiness, is a miserable death to be the price of my crime? No, no; I must chase away these horrible thoughts.'

He replaced the phial in his doublet, and abandoned himself again to his dark reflections; but as last he conquered, in a measure, his dejection, and he said, less despairingly but still sorrowfully:

'And yet! everything was going on so smoothly! I had recovered my note; the possession of the ten thousand crowns enabled me to conceal for the present the ruined condition of my affairs; Mary did not appear indifferent to me, and Geronimo being out of the way, I was certain of succeeding with her in the course of time. I would in that case become rich and powerful; her dowry would be sufficient to save me from poverty and a humiliating discovery. Alas! why do the people accuse the magistrates of want of zeal? Things more surprising than the disappearance of Geronimo have happened lately without any disturbance among the populace. It was the public feeling that forced the bailiff to make extraordinary efforts to discover what had become of him; it will be the cause of my destruction! Can there be a mysterious impulse to this unwonted excitement of the multitude? Vainly would I struggle to escape! Would it not be God himself pursuing me?'

The recurrence of thought struck terror to the soul of Simon Turchi, and he buried his head in his hands. Suddenly he started up, and although his lips twitched ed convulsively, he said, in a firm strong voice:

'Ah! ah! fatality is a spur which inspires the most cowardly with courage. Avaunt, foolish fears! I must struggle on to the end. The bailiff seeks a corpse; he pledges his honor to discover one. Let him find it! Suppose he should find it elsewhere than in my summer-house? In a sewer, for example? Ah! anxiety had clouded my mind! Still, still I have means for triumph! Oh, if Julio would come! Could I only imagine in what tavern the rascal is gambler, I would send Bernardo for him.'

Saying these words, he approached the window and looked out.

'There comes the loiterer! He walks as composedly as if nothing weighed upon his conscience. He cares not for the preservation of my honor and my life, since the death of Geronimo he hates and despises me. I must appear angry, and indignant, for should he suspect the fear and anxiety torturing my soul, he would be insolent, and perhaps would

laugh at my anguish.'

As Julio approached the house, Simon attracted his attention by loud talking, and having succeeded in this, he made signs of his impatience and anger until Julio reached the door. He then closed the window, and assuming an expression of rage he turned to meet his servant.

When Julio on entering saw his master standing with folded arms and menacing countenance, a slight and ironical smile flitted across his face.

'Wretch!' exclaimed Simon, 'did I not order you to await me here after Change? Look well to yourself, or I will avenge myself by your blood. You laugh! beware, or I will crush you like a worm.'

'Come, come, signor, why give way to such useless anger? It is not long since Change. It is not my fault that you have been obliged to wait.'

'Have you not been going from tavern to tavern, gambling, as you have been doing the last five days?'

'Yes, truly. I was intolerably thirsty; but if I was not here in time, you must blame the clock of Notre Dame; it could not have struck right, I am sure. So be calm, signor; you know that your anger makes no impression on me. Make haste and tell me what you want to do. We lose precious time in this nonsensical sort of talk. I left some friends to come and receive your orders, and I must add that I intend returning to them as soon as I have fulfilled your commands. You need not shake your fist at me, nor get into a passion; it will do no good.'

The disrespectful language of his servant wounded and provoked Turchi; but perhaps seeing how useless it was to give expressions to his feelings, he suddenly changed his manner. Tears filled his eyes; grief was depicted upon his countenance, and seating himself, he sighed and said:

'Forgive me, Julio, for my harsh words; they were spoken in impatience. It is too early yet for you to do what I wish, and I was wrong to complain of your long absence.'

The servant, surprised at his master's humble language, regarded him distrustfully.

'Is there any danger?' he demanded.

Turchi took his hand, and said, pitifully:

'Alas, Julio, my friend, to-morrow, in all probability, we will be cast, menaced into a dungeon, there to await an infamous death.'

'Is it not your own fear, signor, which inspires such a thought?' asked Julio, trembling.

'No; I have heard a terrible piece of news. Geronimo was seen in the quarter of the Jews, and he was going towards the Hospital Grounds. The bailiff has determined to search to-morrow morning all the cellars in that vicinity, and to dig the ground on the spot where my garden lies. The police agents are to proceed at daybreak to the Hospital meadows, and as they cannot fail to remark that the earth has been newly turned up, they will certainly discover what they seek. You pushed Geronimo into the arm-chair; you buried his body; consequently you will accompany me to the scaffold, unless, in your capacity of servant, they may choose to hang you or break you on the wheel. O Julio! does not this information awaken you to a sense of our perilous condition?'

'From whom did you learn all that?' asked the affrighted servant.

'From the bailiff himself.'

'From his own lips?'

'Yes, my friend, from his own lips. In spite of my courage and coolness, I think I may say that you have no stronger desire than myself to die by the hand of the executioner.'

Julio put his hand to his throat and said, dejectedly:

'The affair looks serious. I seem to be straggling; I feel the ground my neck. It is all your fault, signor. Why did you murder your best friend. Did I not warn you that so frightful a crime would come to light.'

'Call it crime, if you will; but at least my just vengeance is satisfied, and now neither complaints nor recriminations can recall the past nor shelter us from danger.'

'But, signor, what can we do to escape punishment?'

'There is a means, easy and certain. There is a means; but, Julio, it requires good will and resolution. May I rely upon you for this last effort?'

'What would not one be willing to do in order to escape the gallows or the wheel?'

'Then listen to me. I told you that the bailiff will search the cellars. If he finds the corpse in my house, we are both ruined.'

'Certainly, signor.'

'But suppose it should be found in another place, far from this spot, who would suspect us of the murder?'

'An excellent thought!' exclaimed Julio, joyfully. 'We must carry the body to a distant street and leave it there.'

'Not so. They would naturally suppose that it had been removed to that spot from some other place. A better plan is to throw it into the sewer in the Vlemink Field. The officers of justice will then conclude that Geronimo fell under the hand of some unknown assassin.'

'That is still better! Ah! signor, you frightened me without cause. I place very little value on my life, and yet the thought of a certain death shatters my nerves. Now I am myself again. But how shall we manage to transport Geronimo's body to the Vlemink Field?'

'It was for that purpose, Julio, that I said Simon Turchi, 'it was because I needed our aid to execute a project which will save us both. Nothing is easier. You will disinter the body, and you will throw it into the sewer.'

'Alone?' said the servant, in a tone which prognosticated a refusal.

'Why not alone, since you are able to do it.'

'It is very easy, signor, for you to say: 'Take the body on your shoulders and traverse three or four streets.' Signor Geronimo is heavier than you suppose, and I doubt if by the exertion of all my strength I could carry it twenty steps.'

Simon Turchi took his servant's two hands in his, and said, supplicatingly:

'Julio, my friend, be generous; it is not a difficult task for one like yourself. Reflect that it is our only means of safety; it is as much for your interest as mine. I will recompense you largely, and I will be grateful to you all my life.'

'Well, signor, if you say so, I will try it; but I am afraid it will turn out badly. I shall be obliged to rest on the way, and that will take more time than will be prudent. And then how shall I be able to replace the body on my shoulders. It requires two to transport it with sufficient rapidity.'

'Two!' said Turchi, 'You know well that we can confide our secret to no one.'

'To escape death, one would submit to anything. Suppose you help me yourself, signor.'

'I!' replied Turchi, shuddering, 'I carry a dead body through the streets! I, a nobleman! No, no; better a dungeon and death.'

'What a strange sentiment of honor,' muttered the astonished servant. 'Would to God, signor, that you had sooner remembered that you were a nobleman, we would not thus be seeking, in mortal anguish, the means to save our lives. Consider the affair as you will, you must confess that if I carry the corpse alone, ten chances to one we shall be discovered.'

While the servant thus spoke, Turchi seemed preoccupied by torturing thoughts. After a moment he said, with a sigh:

'Alas! there is no other means; it is dangerous, but necessity demands it. Julio, go to the summer-house, and I will send Bernardo this evening to help you. 'What' said Julio, ironically, 'will you reveal your secret?'

'No; I will command him, under penalty of his life, to do whatever you order him; threaten to stab him at the least show of resistance, and he will obey you.'

'Impossible. Signor Bernardo is a good pious man. He would inform upon us. I might as well put the halter around my neck. I will have none of his aid.'

Simon Turchi, in despair at the failure of all his efforts to succeed in his design, paced the floor impatiently. Suddenly he stopped before his servant, and with

sparkling eyes he said, in a suppressed voice;

'Julio, there must be an end to all this hesitation. We have no choice, and whatever may be the means, we must not deliberate in presence of the death which menaces us. Stab Bernardo, and throw him into the sewer above the body of Geronimo.'

'Oh, signor, murder Bernardo!' exclaimed Julio, in horror. 'And do you suppose he would not defend himself,—that he would not give the alarm. In that case, your servant would be recognized, and thus they would put them on the track of the criminals. Your mind wanders.'

Grinding his teeth in his agony, Turchi tossed his arms convulsively, and at last said, hoarsely,

'You must not undertake it alone. You have not the wish to succeed. Coward that you are, for what are you fit but to boast and drink and gamble in the taverns. Would that I had never seen you. Leave the corpse in the cellar; let the bailiff discover it there; we will see which of us will meet the most courageously an infamous death.'

A prey to the keenest emotion, he fell back in his chair; and while uttering bitter invectives against his servant, he tore his hair in real or feigned despair.

The sight of his master's desolation seemed to make some impression upon Julio; he regarded him compassionately, and at last said, kindly:

'Come, signor, calm yourself. All is not lost, and if my good-will can save you, I will show you that Julio has the courage and resolution to carry him through a difficult enterprise. Since you think I am able to take the corpse alone to the sewer, I will attempt it. Perhaps I may overrate the difficulties. Be calm and rely upon my word.'

The Signor knew that once having made up his mind, his servant would unhesitatingly execute what he had undertaken, and he comprehended by his manner that his promise was seriously made. He pressed his hand, and said, joyfully:

'Thanks, Julio, I owe to you my honor and my life. I will never forget it, and when once I will the sword, now hanging over my head, is removed, I will reward you magnificently. Go now to the country-house, disinter the body, and carry it up to the ground-floor. This will give you less work later. Fill the grave thoroughly, and as far as possible destroy all appearance of the earth having been recently dug.'

Julio let his master's words fall unheeded on his ear; he suddenly struck his forehead with his fist, as if an unwelcome idea had forced itself upon him.

'What is the matter,' asked Turchi, anxiously.

'Fool that I am!' exclaimed Julio. 'Speak lower,' said Simon. 'What troubles you?'

'Did you not notice, signor, how bright it was last night. It is clear weather, and the moon is full! How could I carry a dead body to the sewer with such light to betray me. It is impossible; I cannot think of it.'

These words forced from Simon a cry of anguish. He seemed crushed under the fate which was visibly pursuing him. The cowardice and ill-will of his servant had not cast him into utter despair like this last obstacle; for he well knew that either by threats or promises of reward he could overcome Julio's resistance; but what could prevent the moon from shining. It was clear that no way remained which would prevent the moon from shining. It was clear that no way remained which would prevent the moon from shining. It was clear that no way remained which would prevent the moon from shining.

It was then true that for him there was no escape from ruin; that a mysterious power opposed all his plans; perhaps God himself was interposing to prevent him from saving his life.

The supposition made him shudder; nevertheless he tortured his mind to discover some plank of safety; a thousand tumultuous thoughts presented themselves. Might they not bury the body in the basin of the fountain, or conceal it under the stones of the grotto. But none of these plans could be accomplished without leaving traces which would lead to certain discovery.