

The Northwest Review.

"AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM."

VOL. I.

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1885.

NO. 14.

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SONNET TO MY ALMA MATER.

BY FREDERIC J. HALM.
Ne'er knight of old his lady's ribbon wore
With feelings nobler or more chivalrous
Than we, oh mother! those you gave to us
To deck our helmet's crests, when from thy
door
We sallied forth, an eager band, to meet
The serried ranks of Wrong. For though
there, be
A host of others world-preferred to thee
Who dwell 'at sequestered in thy quiet retreat
By many-curved Pataasco, there is none,
Tho' all the storms of weather her praises
roar,
Who proved a truer mother to each son
Of hers than thou, O Gallic Blanche thrice
over.
To e'en the least of us, whose constant
prayer
Is that we may thy colors e'er with honor
wear.

THE AMULET

CHAPTER VII.

GRIEF AT GERONIMO'S ABSENCE.—TURCHI'S HYPOCRISY.

CONTINUED.

It was only when the servant threw open the door and announced Signor Turchi that the young girl, aroused from her reverie, rose hastily and went eagerly to meet him, as though she expected him to be the bearer of important news. Mr. Van de Werve and Deodati met him also at the door; Mary involuntarily took both his hands in hers, and all three regarded him inquiringly.

"Alas! my friends, I know nothing," said Turchi, in a voice which seemed but the echo of a bruised and broken heart. "All my efforts have proved unsuccessful. I have vowed before God to save no expense or trouble in order to discover what has become of my unfortunate friend; but so far impenetrable darkness covers the terrible secret. What shall we do? Let us hope that the bailiff and his officers may be more fortunate than myself, who have only my anxiety and affection to guide me."

The words of Simon Turchi effaced the last lingering hope from Mary's heart, and she seated herself, exhausted from previous emotion.

Turchi drew a chair beside her, regarded with an expression of profound compassion, and said:

"My poor Mary, your affliction is in itself I know by my own sorrow how your loving heart is suffering from this terrible suspense!"

The young girl lifted her eyes to his face, and she saw the tears running down his cheeks. Then she began to weep bitterly, and sobbing, she said:

"Thanks, thank, Simon! I will beg Almighty God to recompense your affection and generosity."

Simon's countenance at this moment presented a singular appearance, from the remarkable contrast between the pallor of his cheek and the deep scarlet which marked the margin of the scar on his face. The hypocrite could shed tears at pleasure and assume an expression of extreme sorrow, but the scar was not submissive to his will, and in spite of his deepening red betrayed the wicked joy of his heart at the gentle and affectionate words of the young girl.

These words encouraged him to hope that he might fully attain the prize for which he strove. He had, it is true, taken from his murdered friend the proof of the debt of ten thousand crowns; true he had, as he supposed, buried all evidence of his crime in the subterranean vault; but this did not satisfy him. In order to feel that he had received the price of the frightful assassination, in order to remain rich, powerful, and honored, he required the hand of the beautiful Mary Van de Werve. He well knew that a long time must elapse before the consummation of his hopes; still, from the very day that he had committed the murder he commenced to lay his schemes, weigh his words, and so direct his plans that sooner or later he would certainly take Geronimo's place in Mary's heart. He felt secure of the consent of the young girl's father. It was on this account that he feigned excessive sorrow, and gazed upon Mary with tearful eyes, as though the sight of her grief pierced him to the heart.

He took Mary's hands in his, and said:

"Do not yield to despair, Mary; All hope is not lost. Last night a thought—a strange thought—occurred to my mind. And if it be correct, there are still well-founded reasons for expecting Geroni-

mo's return."

"Speak, Simon," said Mary, anxiously. "Tell us this thought."

Signor Turchi cast down his eyes in feigned embarrassment.

"Impossible! Mary; it is a secret which I have no right to divulge."

"Alas! is even this consolation refused me?" she exclaimed, despairingly.

"This is unkind, Simon," said Mr. Van de Werve. "Why do you cheer us up and awaken our curiosity only to cast us down by your silence? Give no names; but at least give us some idea of the reasons we have for hope."

Simon Turchi shrugged his shoulders. "Ah, signor," said Deodati, reproachfully, "you are ungenerous. This morning before 'change you were about to confide the secret to me, when you were interrupted by the approach of friends. Tell it to me now."

Simon glanced expressively at Mary, as if to convey the idea that her presence prevented him from complying with the old man's request.

"Mary," said Mr. Van de Werve, "I beg you to go to your room. These varying emotions are more than you can bear; if I learn anything of interest, I will, my child, communicate it to you at once."

The young girl rose without reply, but she glanced reproachfully at Simon Turchi.

"Do not blame me, Mary," he said; "I am deeply grieved to cause you pain; only rest assured that what I do is caused by affection for Geronimo and yourself."

Without noticing this excuse the young girl obeyed her father, and slowly left the room.

"Now," said Mr. Van de Werve, "what is the secret you wish to impart to us?"

"I am greatly embarrassed," replied Simon Turchi, shaking his head doubtfully; "my intention was to speak only to Signor Deodati of the affair; perhaps it would be indiscreet in me to reveal to you also, Mr. Van de Werve, a secret which, under different circumstances—"

"For the love of God, abandon these useless evasions!" said Signor Deodati, roused to a high pitch of excitement by his impatience. "Why should not Mr. Van de Werve know that which, in your opinion, would give us a clue to my nephew?"

"Since I am forced to speak," said Turchi, with a sigh, "approach and listen."

As soon as Deodati and Mr. Van de Werve had drawn their chairs nearer to him, Simon said in an undertone, as if he feared his words might be overheard:

"Have you not remarked, Mr. Van de Werve, that for some time past Geronimo has been disturbed and anxious; that even in the midst of cheerful conversation he appeared absent-minded; in a word, that some great trouble seemed weighing upon him?"

"I have noticed it," said Mr. Van de Werve.

"And you, Signor Deodati?"

"I have also remarked it. But what do you infer from this?"

"About a month ago I interrogated Geronimo as to the cause of his melancholy, and he informed me in, confused, vague terms, that he had lost a considerable sum at play."

"At play!" exclaimed Mr. Van de Werve, overpowered by astonishment.

"Was Geronimo a gambler?" exclaimed Deodati, with ill-suppressed indignation.

"It is the custom at Antwerp to play for money, and often for considerable sums of money," continued Simon Turchi. "I never remarked that my friend Geronimo had a passion for play. However that may be, I could never discover to whom he had lost the amount, nor would he tell me how much it was. His melancholy look and agitation were caused by the circumstance I have just mentioned. He was tortured by the certainty that his uncle would discover, upon examination, the loss of a large amount, which was not accounted for on his books. I proposed to advance him the deficit, but he absolutely refused, because he preferred to meet his uncle's just anger rather than deceive him."

This revelation was stunning to the old Deodati. Nothing could have more keenly wounded the honorable, high-toned nobleman than the thought that Geronimo had been so dishonest and ungrateful as to use the funds of the establishment in gambling.

Trembling with emotion, he asked: "You say the sum is considerable. What is the amount?"

"I have no idea, signor. Perhaps you might discover it by an examination of the books."

There was a short silence. Mr. Van de Werve's eyes were fixed upon the ground. Signor Deodati passed his hand across his brow, and was absorbed in painful thoughts.

Simon watched for a few moments, with an inquisitive eye, the effect of this revelation upon his two companions, trying to penetrate their very souls. Then he said to Deodati:

"You look on the bad side of the affair, signor. If there were not a brighter, reverse side, I would have considered the confidence of my friend sacred, and guarded his secret until death. Up to this time we all feared, nay, considered it certain, that Geronimo had fallen under the assassin's steel. Now I begin to think that, in order to escape his uncle's anger, he has left the city and country."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Van de Werve.

"Impossible?" repeated Turchi, "he would have gone ere this, had I not persuaded him that he would obtain his uncle's pardon. Even on the day of your arrival, Signor Deodati, when Geronimo met me on the dock-yard on the bank of the Scheldt, he begged me to inquire for an English vessel which would leave on that or the next day, and secretly to engage his passage on board. You may well know that I combatted that foolish project, and left him only when he promised me to abandon the idea."

"Could he so lightly have sacrificed my daughter's love?" said Mr. Van de Werve. "Were his expression of affection for her only hypocrisy? No, no; nothing can induce me to believe that."

"His love was real," replied Turchi, "and its very depth, perhaps, blinded his judgment. He thought that the discovery of his losses at the gaming table would inevitably deprive him of all hope of Mary's hand. My poor friend! he wished to fly from the fate which threatened him, that he might not witness the affliction of his beloved uncle."

No one replied to Simon's remarks, and he said, with hypocritical surprise:

"How sad you both are! You should rather rejoice at my revelation. Is it not a happiness to think that Geronimo, although guilty of a fault, is still alive, and not to be forced to believe that he is forever lost to our affection by a frightful death?"

Old Deodati rose and said:

"My friends, I must leave you; my mind is troubled; I am ill. Besides, I wish to discover by the books the truth or falsity of Signor Turchi's statement. Do not attempt to detain me, I beg you. Adieu! May God guard you!"

Simon Turchi prepared to accompany the old man; but whilst they were speaking together the bailiff, Messire John Van Schoonhoven, suddenly entered, and without the formality of a salutation he exclaimed:

"Gentlemen, I have news!"

Turchi trembled and turned pale; but as the unexpected announcement of the bailiff had startled the others, his emotion was not attributed to terror.

"For the love of God be calm, gentlemen, and do not anticipate too much. I do not know what has become of the unfortunate Geronimo, but I have just cause to hope that we will soon find him—at least we have a clue. I have learned, beyond doubt, that on the day of his disappearance, about five o'clock in the evening, he was seen beyond the Square of Meir. A monk from the Dominican Convent, who knows him well, saluted him and noticed the direction he went. Acting upon this information, one of my most intelligent subordinates has been tracing him. A banker saw him pass through the quarter of the Jews. This is all I know at present, but these facts are sufficient to determine the direction of our researches, and may perhaps lead to a fortunate issue. By early dawn tomorrow I will collect all my agents at my disposal; I will divide them into small bands, and I will order them to search every house, cellar, and garden in a certain part of the city, and that in the most thorough manner, without leaving

a spot unexamined. I myself will superintend the work, and will visit in person each band of workmen to see that the commands are properly executed."

Simon Turchi had covered his face with his hands, in order to conceal his terror.

Surprised by this emotion, the bailiff said:

"What have I said, Signor Turchi, to excite so much feeling?"

"Ah, you know not how much suffering you cause me," replied Simon. "I thought I was about to learn from your lips that my friend was safe, and what do you promise me if your search proves successful? Only his dead body!"

It is true," said the bailiff. "It is no use to deceive you. My opinion is that he has been assassinated in some by-street near the hospital grounds, or in one of the dark alleys between the parishes of Saint George and Saint Andrew. But I am determined to discover the truth. Dead or alive, I will find him, even if it be necessary to tear up the pavements of all the cellars, and dig up all the gardens to the depth of ten feet. The whole city is in a state of excitement; the people complain of the authorities of Antwerp as though we were accomplices in the crime. This affair shall be brought to light, I pledge my honor and my name."

"I thank you for your zeal and solicitude," stammered Turchi. "May God direct your steps! How we will all bless you, if you restore Geronimo alive to us."

"I have little hope, little hope, signor; but all things are possible," said the bailiff, shaking his head.

Deodati took his hand, and said:

"Messire Nan Schoonhoven, I am most grateful to you. Excuse me for not remaining longer in your honorable company; but I am indisposed, and I must return home. May God protect you, signor."

"And are you going also, Signor Turchi?" asked the bailiff.

When Simon gave him to understand, by a glance of the eye, that he could not let the old man go alone, he took his hand affectionately, and said:

"I understand, signor; you are right. Adieu! until to-morrow."

Turchi offered his arm to Deodati, and supported his tottering steps. They took leave of Mr. Van de Werve, who accompanied them to the door, and admiring Simon Turchi's kindness, he followed them with his eyes as long as they were in sight.

CHAPTER VIII.

SIMON TURCHI TRIES TO CONCEAL HIS CRIME.

After having accompanied Deodati to his residence, Simon Turchi went to his own dwelling near the bridge "De la Vigne".

He was greatly excited, either by extreme anxiety or by a feverish impatience; for he descended to the ground-floor, entered his office, pretended to be looking for some papers, went up stairs again, paced the room, opened the window, looked up and down the street, closed the window petulantly, and at last, stamping his foot, he angrily exclaimed:

"The miserable gamster! he is in some tavern drinking, gambling, amusing himself, while I am here on burning coals, almost overpowered by anxiety and terror! Julio, Julio, if I escape the fate which now threatens me, I will have my revenge for your ingratitude!"

Again he went to the window, and again he was disappointed. Thoroughly discouraged, he threw himself on a chair, heaved a heavy sigh, and after a moment's silence exclaimed in accents of despair:

"Alas! alas! is it then true that my crime cannot remain concealed? Who was it to my great misfortune, who sent the Dominican brother just to the spot to meet Geronimo, and thus furnished the bailiff with a clue to the murder? Who put the Jewish banker on his track, so that the constables might be led to my garden? Who suggested the idea to the bailiff to search the cellars? Was it chance? But chance is blind, and does not proceed with such precision to the fulfillment of a purpose. How frightful if God himself conducted justice! if the Supreme Judge, who cannot be deceived has condemned me to an infamous death! How vain then all hope, all effort to escape!"

TO BE CONTINUED.