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THORNS

BY ADA MOSHER.
When earth seems full of weariness and woe,
And thorns are spread where'er my footsteps go,
How sweet it is beneath my cross to know
God loves me best, and He would have it so.
What though the path be long, the desert wild,
His hand is leading me—I shall not fall
He watcheth o'er the safety of the child
Who is content to trust His love through all.
What though upon my weary forehead brow
Life's roses nevermore shall bloom again,
But in their stead the thorns are worn now
That seem to pierce my very heart with pain.
But let them stay, and be the roses sacrificed;
The thorns are dearer to me when I see
The sweet, pale, patient face of suffering
Christ
Filled with such love in so much agony.
And shall His child, His child for whom he died,
Remove with selfish hand from out her way
The thorns that pierced her Savior Crucified?
Ah! no; I'll whisper to my heart and say:
"Be strong! this is the narrow path of dole,
The sacred feet of sorrowing Christ have trod;
Thy 'Via Dolorosa,' O my soul,
That leads thee up to heaven and to God."
—Baltimore Catholic Mirror.

THE AMULET

CONTINUED.
CHAPTER VII.
GRIEF AT GERONIMO'S ABSENCE.—TURCHI'S HYPOCHRISY.

Behind her was seated an old woman, her duenna, with her rosary in her hand. She gazed upon the young girl with deep compassion; from time to time she shook her head, and wiped away the tears which dimmed her eyes whenever Mary's sighs became heavier.

For some time the silence was unbroken; Mary even appeared somewhat calmer, when suddenly, influenced by some peculiarly painful thought, she extended her arms to heaven and cried out:

"My God and my Savior! through thy precious blood spare his life! Have mercy on him! reject not the prayer of my broken heart!"

Again her head fell upon her hands, as if this burning petition had exhausted her strength. The duenna approached her, took her arm, endeavored to lift her, and said, authoritatively:

"My lady, you must rise and cease your prayer. God may be displeased with you for thus deliberately endangering your health. Come, obey me."

Mary rose without reply, took the seat offered her by the duenna. She was very pale, and her eyes were swollen from weeping.

The duenna looked upon her with an eye of pity; she took her hand, and said, gently:

"Mary, my child, you cannot continue this; such an excess of sorrow would shorten your days. And what pain to the poor Geronimo on his return, to find you condemned to a short and suffering life. Through love for him, I beg you to control yourself."

"On his return?" repeated Mary, raising her tearful eyes to heaven.

"Why not?" replied the duenna. "Why despair before being certain of the evil you dread? More extraordinary things have happened."

"Already five days—five centuries of suspense and fear! Ah! Petronilla, what a frightful night I have passed. I saw Geronimo extended on the ground, the pallor of death on his face, a large wound was in his breast, and his lifeless eyes were fixed on me as if with his last breath he had bade me adieu."
"These are illusions caused by grief, Mary."

"More than twenty times I saw him thus; in vain I strove to shut out the horrible vision; day alone brought my relief."

The duenna took her hand, and said, tenderly:
"You are wrong, Mary, to cherish your grief in this manner. Your dreams at night are but the reflection of your thoughts by day. I, too, saw Geronimo in sleep more than once."

"You, too, Petronilla, you saw Geronimo?" exclaimed the young girl, with emotion, as though she feared the confirmation of her own terrific dream.

"Why not, Mary; do I think of him less than you?"

"You saw him dying, did you not?"
"On the contrary, I saw him return joyfully and cast himself into the arms of his uncle and embrace your father. And you, my child, I saw you kneeling on this same 'prie-Dieu,' thanking God

that your dreams were false and 'deceiving.'"

Mary smiled as she listened to the duenna's consoling words, but scarcely had Petronilla ceased speaking than she suspected the artifice.

"You deceive me through friendship and compassion," she said, sadly. "I am grateful to you, my good Petronilla; but tell me to what cause you can attribute Geronimo's absence. Come, call upon your imagination; find a possible, a probable explanation."

"Disconcerted by this direct interrogation, the duenna shook her head.
"There is no plausible reason," said Mary.

The old Petronilla, in the greatest embarrassment, stammered out a few words as to an unexpected journey, secrets he might be unable to divulge; she even suggested that his friends might have prevailed upon him to join in a party of pleasure; but all these were such vague suppositions that Mary plainly saw in them an acknowledgment that she could find no reasonable explanation of Geronimo's absence.

Mary's tears flowed faster.
"Oh, Petronilla!" she exclaimed, in heart-rending tones; "the light of my life is forever extinguished. Geronimo, so young, so good, so noble, so gifted, the unfortunate victim of a mysterious murderer! frightful thought. And no room for hope. Mercy, my God, mercy. My heart is breaking; never more will I see him in this world."

And uttering a cry of anguish, she covered her face with her hands.

"I acknowledge, Mary," said the duenna, dejectedly, "that Geronimo's absence is inexplicable; but why look on the worst side and accept it as truth? You know that during the last four days every possible effort has been made to discover Geronimo. Mr. Van Schoonhoven, the bailiff, has pledged his honor to find him dead, or alive."

Mary wept in silence, and heeded not the words of the duenna.

"Perhaps, my child," the old woman resumed, "this very day the doubt which has caused so much suffering for five days may be cleared up. Do not close your heart against all hope. I remember that once an individual was sought for weeks, and found alive when there seemed almost a certainty of his death. The bailiff was speaking of it this morning to your father, and I recollect having heard my parents relate it. It happened to a banker, Liefman, who was considered very wealthy."

The young girl regarded the duenna with an air of doubt.
"They found after several weeks of absence? Had he gone on a journey without giving notice to any one?"

"No; he was discovered in the cellar of a house in the little by-street of Sureau. Robbers had laid in wait for him in the darkness of night, and cast him bound into a subterranean cave, in order to obtain a heavy ransom. The agents of the bailiff discovered him and liberated him unharmed. If God has so decreed, why may not the same have happened to the Signor Geronimo? You are silent, Mary. You cannot deny that a similar train of circumstances may have been the cause of his disappearance. Is it not so? but you yield to despair, and even in the act of begging consolation from Almighty God, you reject obstinately every motive of consolation."

"Pity me, dear Petronilla," answered the young girl; "your kind words are a solace to me, but I dare not open my heart to the whisperings of hope. If I accept your explanations, and afterwards heard of Geronimo's death, it would be double suffering to me. No, no, rather let me encourage the feeling that there is no room for hope."

"It is impossible to make any impression upon her," said the duenna, in a disappointed manner, and as if she were resolved to cease her efforts and to abandon the young girl to her grief.

The silence was broken by the sound of voices in the hall.

"I hear the voice of the Signor Deodati," said the duenna; "perhaps he brings tidings."

Mary rose quickly to descend; but Petronilla wished to detain her, saying: "My child, in pity to a sorrowing old man, restrain your grief. Control your-

self, Mary, for yesterday each word you uttered pierced the heart of the poor Deodati like a dagger. It would be cruel and guilty in you to cause his tears to flow anew; at his age such affliction wears down the strength and shortens life."

"No, Petronilla, I will hide my feelings and I will appear hopeful. I saw that the old man was overpowered by anxiety and trouble. Trust me, Petronilla, and let me go; I must know from the Signor Deodati if he has received any information."

The duenna accompanied the young girl to the door of the room where Mr. Van de Werve and Signor Deodati were conversing together, but she let her enter alone.

As soon as Mary's eye fell on the old man, and she read in his face the sorrow of his soul, she uttered a stifled cry of anguish. She cast her arms around his neck, and rested her head on his shoulder.

The Signor Deodati, deeply moved, seated her by his side, and said, with tender compassion:

"My poor Mary, we have no tidings yet of our Geronimo. Are we not unhappy? Why did not God recall me to himself ere this? Did I leave Italy and come hither to drink the bitter dregs in my chalice of life? Could I weep like you, Mary, I might find some relief, but old age has dried up my tears. Alas! alas! where is my poor Geronimo, the child whom God gave me, to close my eyes on the bed of death? I would give my fortune to save him, and the little that remains to me of life to know that he still lives."

Tears filled Mr. Van de Werve's eyes as he contemplated his daughter and the desolate old man; but he controlled his emotion, and said:

"Mary, I requested you to stay in your own apartment, because you cannot moderate the expression of your sorrow. You have disregarded my desire. I willingly pardon you, my child, but if you wish to remain longer Signor Deodati, you must exercise some self control; otherwise I shall send for your duenna to take you away."

He then added in a more gentle manner:

"Now, Mary, I beg, I supplicate you, comprehend the duty devolving upon you. Be courageous, and do your best to console our unhappy friend."

With a heroic effort Mary raised her head, and although still weeping, said:

"You are right, father. We grieve as though there were no room for hope; but—"

"So great was the violence she was doing herself that she could scarcely draw her breath; but conquering this emotion she resumed:

"Ah, signor, we cannot know. God is so good, and Geronimo has so pure a heart!"

"God is indeed good, my child; but his designs are impenetrable. If I could only imagine some probable cause to explain my nephew's absence. But nothing—nothing!"

"The bailiff gave us, this morning, a reason for supposing that Geronimo may yet return to us unharmed."

"You speak of the banker Liefman, do you not, father?"

"Yes, my child. He disappeared suddenly. A fortnight had passed in useless inquiry; his parents had the service for the dead offered for him, and he was found alive and well in a cellar, where some robbers had imprisoned him, in order by it to obtain a large sum of money."

"And the same may happen to Geronimo," said Mary, with a confidence she did not feel, in order to aid her father in his kind intentions.

Signor Deodati shook his head incredulously.

Mary took his hand tenderly, and said cheerfully:
"We must hope, signor. Perhaps the Lord in his mercy will grant that our fears may not be realized. Would we not for the remainder of our lives offer our grateful prayers to heaven?"

"Yes, yes; during our whole lives. And I would go in my old age to our Lady of Loretto to express my boundless gratitude to the Madonna. But suppose he

has fallen under the assassin's sword!"
Mary shuddered at the thought, but she interrupted the old man.

"Signor, Geronimo possessed an amulet which had rested on the tomb of our Lord. He was convinced that it would preserve him from a violent death, and he always wore it around his neck."

"I know the circumstances under which the amulet was given him," replied Deodati. "I myself had some faith in this talisman, because it was a recompense of a good action; but we have no proof that the woman who gave it to Geronimo had any certain knowledge of its efficacy. However, Mary, we will still hope. Your sweet voice has mitigated my sorrow. May my poor nephew be restored to me. The happiness I expected in my old age may yet be a reality. You, Mary,—pure image of piety, goodness, and love,—you will be my child! And when old Deodati will be called to leave this world, he will see you and Geronimo by his dying bed, like two angels, pointing out to his expiring soul the path to heaven. Oh, no, no, this would be too much happiness. My mind wanders. And yet, Mary, let us hope!"

The young girl was deeply moved by the picture of that happiness which she had thought was lost to her forever. Her eyes were suffused with tears; her limbs trembled, and had not a stern look from her father reminded her of her duty, her oppressed heart would have found relief in sobs.

Mr. Van de Werve thought it better to change the conversation, and said to Deodati:

"Let us not forget, signor, that we are men, and that it becomes us to bear up courageously under a painful suspense, and in a manner to which a young girl might be unequal. Have you heard nothing since morning? Have you not seen Signor Turchi?"

"I spoke to Signor Turchi about an hour before change," said the old gentleman, more calmly. "The good Turchi seemed even more dejected than we. Within the last five days, he has lost so much flesh that one would scarcely recognize him. He does not give himself a moment's repose. From morning until night he is running about from place to place, seeking Geronimo as though he were a beloved brother."

"Truly," said Mary, "this is a generous heart. Poor Simon! I have sometimes been unjust to him; but it is in affliction that we learn who are our true friends. For the rest of my life I will respect and esteem him."

"He will meet me here, presently," replied Deodati. "He may have some particular communication to make to me, for he seemed to desire a private conversation. The arrival of some merchants of his acquaintance prevented him from speaking to me. I almost quarreled with Signor Turchi."

"Quarreled!" said Mr. Van de Werve, in astonishment.

"Yes; but it was to his praise, at least. He told me that it was his intention to offer a large reward to the first person who would bring certain tidings of Geronimo."

"How grateful I am for his generous friendship!" said Mary.

"Of course," continued the old man, "I would not permit it. Whilst thanking him for his kindness, I told him that I offer the reward myself. I left Signor Turchi in company with the merchants, and went to the town-hall for the purpose; but when I arrived there, I found a decree of the burgomaster already issued, promising three hundred forins for any information of Geronimo. I spoke with the bailiff at noon. He told me that, notwithstanding the most active search, no trace had yet been discovered of Bufferio's wife, nor of his companions: All of them must have left the country immediately after the ruffians' death. But this afternoon the bailiff expects to hear the result of several important researches ordered by him this morning. If he receives any communication of consequence he will come himself to impart it to us. I hear the clock strike five. Signor Turchi will soon be here."

"During this explanation Mary remained immovable—her eyes cast down. She had probably heard only confusedly what had just been said, for her thoughts were evidently far away."

TO BE CONTINUED.