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PRAYER.
BY AIMEE CAREY.

Prayer is the language of the soul,
The expression of the heart's desire.
The yearning with our being's power
As up to God our thoughts aspire.

Prayer is a ladder which rests here
And reaches to the mercy seat;
On it our plea for help climbs up
And showers blessings at our feet.

Prayer is a shield which Christians use
In war with their souls' sworn foes;
With it before them, safe they stand,
Protected from all deadly blows.

Prayer is a weapon of defence
The Christian uses on life's way;
Before it all hell's host shrink back
In terror from its mighty sway.

As in life's warfare you engage,
Have faith in God, and let faith's hand
Wield this strong weapon and prevail;
For without prayer you cannot stand.
—Baltimore Catholic Mirror.

THE AMULET

CONTINUED.
CHAPTER VI.

SIMON TURCHI WREAKS HIS VENGEANCE ON GERONIMO.

At first no sound reached his ear, but soon he heard Geronimo calling for help, and his master mocking and menacing him; at least he judged this by the tones of their voices, for he was too far off to distinguish the words. Urged by feeling rather than curiosity, he descended the staircase, and listened at the door of the room in which so horrible a crime was about to be committed.

He heard Geronimo say, in an earnest, pleading tone:

"Dear Simon, your mind is deranged. You, my friend, kill me! It is impossible. Put down that dagger; at least let me not die without confession. If it be the ten thousand crowns exasperating you, I make you a present of them; tear down my presence the acknowledgment of the debt, and I will never speak to you of it again."

"Mary, Mary Van de Werve!" howled Simon Turchi, with biting sarcasm.

"I will renounce her hand and leave for Italy, and never again will I see a country so fatal to me, to her, to all I love."

"It is too late—too late. You must die!"

"No, no, Simon; in pity to yourself do not imbue your hands in my innocent blood. God sees us; your conscience will torture you; never again will there be peace for you on earth, and your poor soul will be miserable for all eternity. No, Simon, do not kill me."

Then came a frightful cry, as though he were crushed, and Julio heard a sound which seemed like that of a dagger against metal.

This blow, however—if it were a blow—was not mortal, for Geronimo raised his voice with the strength of despair, and cried out:

"Help! help! Simon, let me live! Mercy! mercy!"

Then a mournful groan escaped his lips, while, as his voice died away, he prayed:

"My God, my God, forgive him. I am dying."

On hearing the conclusion of this horrible tragedy, Julio retired to the foot of the staircase. He had hardly reached it, when the door of the room opened, and his master appeared.

Disfigured as Simon Turchi's countenance had been by the thirst for revenge, crime made it still more frightful. The signor could hardly have been recognized. His hair stood upright; his eyes rolled in their sockets; a hard, hoarse sound escaped his lips; blood dripped from his hands.

He ran by his servant without speaking to him, ascended the staircase, and having reached his room he threw himself panting upon a chair.

Julio, who had followed him, placed himself before him, and asked:

"Well, signor, is the deed accomplished?"

"It is; let me take breath," said Turchi, breathing heavily.

After waiting a few moments, Julio resumed:

"Did he offer any resistance, that you are so fatigued, signor?"

"Resistance? No; but when I attempted the first time to pierce him to the heart, the blade of my dagger struck against metal, and grated harshly. He wears a breastplate, Julio. Could he

have suspected my intentions?"

Turchi's dagger had evidently struck the amulet which the young man always wore around his neck.

"Possibly," replied Julio, "Geronimo may wear some guard on his breast; it is the place against which a poignard is always aimed, and no one is secure in the darkness of night from the assault of an enemy or an assassin; but what is there in this circumstance to move you so deeply?"

"So much blood spouted from the wound. The sight of the blood, together with Geronimo's piteous cries, struck me with anguish and horror. I tottered so that I feared I would fall before completing the work; but happily I gained the strength to finish what I had commenced. I pierced his throat with my poignard, and hushed his voice forever."

"And he is really dead?"

"Not a drop of blood is left in his veins."

Simon Turchi had recovered from his excessive emotion. He arose and said:

"I must wash the blood from my hands, and efface the least spot that might betray me. Then I must go on 'change and transact some business with people who will remember to have seen me there at that time. Later, I will call on Mr. Van de Werve. I must be seen in different places and speak with many people. Go down, Julio, and drag the corpse to the cellar. Then clear away every sign of blood. I need not tell you that your life, as well as mine, depends upon the care with which you perform this task."

"I know it, signor. The blow has been struck, and I am not a man to neglect the precautions necessary to escape the gallows, if I can."

"I have accomplished my task, Julio; go do yours."

"Drag the corpse, by myself, into the cellar? No, no, signor; you must help me."

"I have not the time, Julio. I must go immediately to the city."

"It is of no consequence to me. I will not remain alone in this cut-throat place."

"And what if I ordered you to do so?" exclaimed Turchi, trembling with anger.

"You would do so in vain, signor. You will work with me until all is done."

"Pietro Mostajo, do you dare to defy me, and that too at the very moment when the blood is boiling in my veins? Do as I command, or before night the authorities of Lucca shall know who you are."

"Ah," said Julio, with a scornful laugh, "Pietro Mostajo and the authorities of Lucca have lost their power over me. As long as I had no proofs of crime against you, I had cause to fear you; but would you dare now to reveal my real name; now that by one word I can deliver you into the hands of the executioner? Hereafter, signor, you will speak to me neither so harshly nor so haughtily. In this affair there is neither master nor servant. We are two men, guilty of the same crime. Draw your dagger if you choose. Vain threat. Can you do without me?"

Simon Turchi grit his teeth in impotent rage; but soon recovering himself, he took his servant's hand, and said beseechingly:

"You are right, Julio; we are rather two friends than master and servant. Let me then, as friend and companion, implore a favor at your hands. You must see that it is important for me to go without delay to the factory to change my dress. For the safety of both of us I ought to leave immediately for the city, in order to prevent suspicion. Geronimo is not heavy; you can, without difficulty, drag him down stairs."

The servant shook his head, but was evidently hesitating.

"Come, Julio; I beg, I entreat you to do what the safety of both of us requires. You still hesitate, Julio? I will reward you generously. This very evening I will give you two crowns if you tell me you have done faithfully and carefully what I have requested."

"Will you be here, signor, when I return from the cellar?"

"I don't know, Julio; as soon as I have washed off the blood, I shall leave. Make haste, and possibly you may find me here. In all events I will wait for

you this evening at the factory, and besides the two crowns, I will give you a whole bottle of Malmsey."

"Agreed," said Julio, "I will do my best to please you."

He descended the staircase, and when he reached the room where the horrible murder had been committed, he stood for a moment with his arms folded. He tuned pale and shook his head compassionately.

The poor Geronimo was extended in the chair, with his eyes closed. His head had fallen on the arm of the chair; his two hands were joined, as if in prayer for his cruel murderer. His garments were saturated with blood, and his feet rested in a pool of blood. There was a large wound in his neck and another in his breast; his face was not in the least stained, and although it was covered by the pallor of death, his countenance wore a sweet, tranquil expression, as though he had gently fallen asleep.

"Poor Signor Geronimo," said Julio, sighing heavily. "Beauty, generosity, wealth, all fallen under the blade of a wretch! What is man's life? He, however, will in heaven, with God, be indemnified for his horrible death. And we? But the present is not the time for reflections and lamentations; my pity will not restore this corpse to life. I must now close my eyes to the future, and fulfill my horrible task."

He knelt behind the chair, and passed his arm under it, and turned a screw. The springs opened and loosed their hold upon the inanimate body.

Julio held it by the arms and dragged it through the hall until he reached a staircase conducting to a cellar. There he left the corpse, entered an adjoining room, and returned with a lamp. Holding the light in his hand, he descended until he reached a subterranean passage. Very deep under the ground, and at the end of this passage, was a kind of vaulted cellar closed by a heavy door. Julio opened the door, and by the light of a lamp examined a grave which had been dug in one corner of the cellar, and on the sides of which lay the earth which had been excoavated.

After a rapid survey, he placed the lamp outside the door against the wall of the passage, and returned for the dead body.

When he had carried his burden as far as the subterranean passage, he panted for breath and seemed overcome by fatigue. He, however, exerted all his strength in order to finish as soon as possible his painful task, and dragged the corpse into the cellar. There he let it fall upon the side of the grave already prepared for its reception. After resting a few moments, he was about to cast it into the grave and cover it with earth, but he desisted, saying:

"Bah, the poor young man will not run away. Perhaps Signor Turchi has not left yet. At any rate, I will first wash away the blood stains, and then I will return to bury the body."

He took the lamp and left the cellar, without closing the door.

On reaching the room he found that his master had gone. The solitude disquieted him, particularly as it was now nearly dark, and he could hardly hope to finish before night cleaning the blood-stained floors and staircase.

He appeared, however, to submit to necessity, and prepare for his work by getting water and brushes.

The evening was far advanced, and still Julio was occupied in scouring. How it happened he could not understand, but new spots of blood were continually appearing, even in places that he had washed several times. This was particularly the case in the room where the murder had been committed. Do what he would, he could not efface the marks of blood. The sweat poured down his cheeks and he vented his rage in angry words against his master.

It may have been fatigue, or perhaps the deepening shades of night rendered his nervous system sensitive to the slightest impression; for at the least sound of the wind through the leaves of the trees, at the least grating of the weathercock as it turned on its pivot, he stopped his work and looked anxiously around him.

He succeeded, however, in stifling

these emotions, and continued his labor on the fatal spot where the chair had stood.

Finally he arose, took the lamp, examined attentively the whole floor, and said, with a kind of satisfaction:

"At last I have finished! He who could discover a spot there could see through as stone. My arms are almost broken; I can scarcely straighten myself. Now for my last task! a grave is soon filled; in a half hour I shall be far from this accursed place."

Saying these words, he left the room, and taking the lamp descended again the staircase leaning to the cellar.

When he had reached the middle of the subterranean passage, he suddenly stopped, turned pale from terror, and looked tremblingly around him. He thought he had heard something, an unusual, mysterious sound, faint but distinct.

Having listened for some time, he concluded that his imagination had deceived him. Summoning up all his resolution, he walked on towards the cellar, and through the open door he saw the corpse of Geronimo lying as he had left it.

As he was approaching the cellar, full of anxiety and slackening his pace, suddenly a human voice fell upon his ear. There was an articulate sound, no spoken word, but only a hollow groan.

Julio, in an agony of terror, dropped the lamp. The oil extinguished the flame, and thus left in total darkness he fled from the cellar as rapidly as he could by groping along the wall. His heart beat violently, and his limbs tottered under him.

He recovered himself a little only after attaining a different apartment and lighting a lamp. Here he remained a long time seated and buried in thought; various expressions of fear, anger, and even rallery flitted across his face.

At last he arose, drew a knife from its scabbard, and trying its sharpness, murmured:

"I cannot bury him alive! Therefore I am forced to deal the death-blow! No, no, I will not; I have even braved the vengeance of my perfidious master in order not to imbue my hands in his blood, and I will not now be guilty of it. But what can I do? I have no other alternative. I must either bury him alive or kill him. And I cannot stay here all night."

He took up the lamp and slowly and silently he cautiously descended the stairs leading to the cellar; after some hesitation he entered; Geronimo's body still lay in the position he left it.

Julio had taken this time a much larger lamp, and it lighted the whole cellar; he heard no sound from the breast of the unfortunate victim, although he saw plainly that life was not extinct, for there was a slight heaving of the breast.

After listening a moment, Julio muttered, with a kind of joy:

"No additional cruelty is necessary. He is in his death agony, and he will soon die. I will shut the door and finish my work to-morrow. But my master will ask if all is done? He need know nothing of this circumstance. But I long to get away; and may the vengeance of God fall upon this spot to night, and blot out all memento of it!"

Shortly after he left the garden, and with rapid strides threaded the obscure streets to rejoin his master, and also to cast off his blood-stained garments.

CHAPTER VII.

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

Mary Van de Werve was in her own apartment, kneeling before a silver crucifix; she seemed bowed down by a weight of woe. Her head rested upon her clasped hands. She had been weeping bitterly; for there were traces of tears upon the "prie-Dieu."

Had a stranger surprised the young girl in this attitude, he might have thought that sleep had overpowered her during prayer; but the gasping breath and heaving chest sufficiently attested that she had not sunk in sleep, but that she was plunged in an expressible sorrow.