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Count Hugo of Craenhobe.



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COUNT HUGO.

TALES OF OLD FLANDERS.

Count Hugo of Craenhove,
Wooden Clara,
And the Village Inn-Keeper.

Three Tales in one Volume.

By HENDRIK CONSCIENCE.



Philadelphia . . . J. B. Lippincott & Co.

Baltimore . . . Murphy & Co.

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Count Hugo of Craenhove,

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THREE TALES.

From the Original Flemish of

HENDRIK CONSCIENCE.

BALTIMORE:
MURPHY & CO., 182 BALTIMORE STREET.

PHILADELPHIA:
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.

1856.

Preface to the American Edition.

THE three tales in this volume are so varied in their character that they may be said to present a very fair idea of their author's literary versatility.

IN "COUNT HUGO OF CRAENHOVE"—independently of the charming romance that invests the story—there are dramatic descriptions of scenes during the plague that desolated Europe in the fourteenth century, which fully equal—if they do not surpass—in vividness, the tragico details of Boccacio and De Foe, and, in fact, realize its dreadful incidents with that palpable distinctness which we have only found in the celebrated "Representation of the Plague" preserved in the *Museo d'Istoria Naturale* at Florence.

"WOODEN CLARA" is a picture of a mother's trials under the most afflicting and embarrassing difficulties that can assail married life. It is touched throughout with the most careful delicacy and minuteness, and enchains our attention not only by the interest of the tale but by the surprising novelty of the situations and occurrences.

"THE VILLAGE INNKEEPER" has been translated expressly for this edition. It differs from most of M. Conscience's stories in the broad satiric mirth with which he ridicules the egregious presumption of an ignorant, low-born upstart; while the pathos of its concluding scene displays that finer discernment of the human heart which is always to be found in the works of our author.

Baltimore, Oct. 1856.

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COUNT HUGO OF CRAENHOVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE TWO SHEPHERDS.

ABOUT the year 1360, there lay between the villages of Wyneghem and Santhoven, some three leagues from Antwerp, a wild and gloomy forest. The oak—the wood-king of the North—lifted there his towering crest toward heaven, while the faithful ivy clung around and covered with love-wreaths his rugged trunk, and the odorous sprays of the honeysuckle adorned his broad foot as with golden sandals. Near to each other, like children of one mother, rose the beech, with its shining leaves, the silver-stemmed birch, and the poplar, with its ever-rustling leaves; while the slender willow, like some lovelorn maiden, bent its drooping branches over the numerous water-pools.

The borders of the forest had about them an aspect of enchantment. The bramble threw its purple twigs from stem to stem, and wove around an impenetrable curtain, while at its foot cowslips

and daisies glistened like scattered pearls. Deeper in, however, every thing bore a different character. The ground showed evident tokens of some mighty revolution; here and there stretched barren tracts of sand; treacherous fens and stagnant marshes consumed the half-decayed branches of uprooted willows; in place of the bright green honeysuckle, the dull and yellow moss enveloped the trees, which, spotted over with fungi and excrescences, as with so many leprous tumors, seemed like an aged and toil-worn company, who stood awaiting their final hour.

Never did a beam of the noontide sun pierce through the tangled branches and penetrate to the damp earth; a continual dusk, a gloomy stillness, ever brooded over the spot, save when from time to time a solitary owl uttered its funeral screech, or a swift fox sped with rustling steps through the fallen leaves, breaking for a moment the deathlike silence only to render it still more awful.

Beyond the forest stretched a wide and immeasurable waste, and on the verge of the horizon hung an impenetrable curtain of black pines.

On a spring morning in the year 1366, ere the sunbeams had pierced through the dense night-mist, there sat two shepherds on the wild heath. One was an old man of more than sixty years, with snow-white hair, and shoulders bent with age: the other was still a youth; but seventeen years shone as yet on his ruddy and engaging countenance;

his blue eyes glanced softly beneath his broad forehead, and his hair, blended as it were of silver and gold, floated in graceful negligence down his neck. Both were clad in coarse garments, and were employed in stitching their thick woollen stockings, while at some distance on either side their flocks browsed on the scant grass and the few flowers which the wild heath afforded.

After a few moments, the elder shepherd, laying aside his work, drew from his srip a book, which he opened. No sooner did the younger man perceive this than the iron needles fell from his hand, his eyes glistened with curiosity, and, drawing near his companion, he bent himself over the open pages, and looked with eager attention at the characters. Then, with a deep sigh, he said—

“Thou canst read, Albrecht? Hast thou learned from this book how to govern the winds? to make good and bad weather? to bewitch the cattle? or to remove a charm? Oh, I would give twenty of the best years of my life, could I but understand those characters as well as thou!”

The old shepherd smiled at this outburst, and replied—

“Is it thus, Bernhart? Dost thou already believe what the old wives of Santhoven say? Because I know how to read, folks proclaim me a magician; I have, however, in my whole life had no other book in my hand than this one, and what dost thou think it contains?”

“How should I guess? Tell me, I pray.”

“Well, then, it is the narrative of the passion of our dear Lord and Saviour. In my youth I dwelt with an old priest; he it was who wrote the book for me, and with much labor taught me to understand the characters. May God be merciful to the soul of the good man! At the end of the book he likewise wrote for me certain powerful remedies most useful in diseases of sheep. In the knowledge of these remedies, Bernhart, lies all my magic skill.”

Bernhart, however, was not content with this.

“Oh, let me but hold the book in my hand for once!” he begged, impatiently.

The old shepherd gave it up willingly. Bernhart threw himself upon the ground, laid the book open before him on his knees, and with almost feverish attention turned over one page after another. There was something wonderful in the demeanor of the young shepherd, and, above all, in that motionless head, from which drooped on either side his fair flowing locks. With a benignant smile old Albrecht gazed down upon him, and at last said—

“Wouldst thou likewise willingly learn to practise magic, Bernhart?”

The other lifted up his glowing forehead, and answered—

“Practise magic! No, no! but I would willingly give two fingers of my right hand to him who would teach me how to read.”

“Readily would I teach thee, could we more

frequently let our flocks graze together ; but that, as thou art well aware, happens scarce ten times in the year ; thou wouldst in this way learn to read with some difficulty."

The words affected the young shepherd deeply. With a heavy sigh he gave back the book, resumed his needles, and, bending down his head, a heavy tear rolled from his eyes. For a long while there was a painful silence between the two shepherds ; at length Albrecht turned compassionately toward his sorrowing companion, and said—

"Bernhart, this desire of knowing how to read is a singular malady. I cannot conceive why thou shouldst grieve thus ; it is only by a fortunate chance that I myself understand it. Why shouldst thou not be able to console and calm thyself in this, seeing that, for the most part, knights and noble dames, yeomen and burgesses, know as little about the matter as thou ? And even if thou couldst read, where dost thou hope to obtain a book, since thou wilt never be rich enough to purchase one?"

Bernhart shuddered despairingly at these words ; his tender limbs seemed almost convulsed, and deep grief showed itself on every feature.

"Assuredly, Bernhart," continued old Albrecht, "thy eagerness for knowledge is not natural ; it must have a hidden cause. Truly thou art a marvellous youth ; no one knows whence thou art ; thou knowest neither father nor mother, and dost speak and act altogether differently from us. Still so young, and thy life already shrouded in dark mys-

teries ! I have pity for thee ; for I see but too well that thou dost suffer, and art unhappy."

These loving words sank deeply into the heart of the young shepherd, and he now ventured to disclose to his friend his inmost feelings. Drawing nearer, therefore, to the old man, he took him by the hand, and said—

"Albrecht ! no one knows me here. Promise me to observe silence, then thou shalt learn at least who I am ; then will I reveal to thee why this eagerness for knowledge so possesses me, and why deep grief harrows my bosom. I am of noble lineage, Albrecht ; thou wilt not credit it, but it is nevertheless true, thy companion, the shepherd Bernhart, may style himself Burgrave of Reedale."

"Thou of noble blood !" cried the old shepherd, amazed ; "thou Burgrave of Reedale ! Speak on, I can keep your secret."

Bernhart wiped the tears from his eyes and sat himself down upon the heath, and Albrecht following his example, he began thus—

"Ay, sit thee down, likewise, Albrecht ! for my history is long and mournful. I still am young, yet have I suffered much. Listen. Scarce ten years have gone by since I was living with my father and my mother in a noble castle in the environs of Grimberg, in Brabant. My days were spent in the exercises which became a boy of noble descent ; my father, who was a famous warrior, taught me to wield the sword, and to tame the fiery steed ; and although still very young, I soon

gained much adroitness. Our fortune was not large, and our table would often, to say the truth, have been ill calculated to bear testimony to our station, had not our constant practice in the chase compelled the woods to yield us abundant game. In order to be able to accompany his prince, John, the conqueror of Brabant, with becoming honour in the war against the Flemings, my father had mortgaged his only country-house to certain usurers of Brussels. On this account the duke had made him large promises, none of which, however, he kept. Thou hast perchance heard, Albrecht, how, in 1356, the Flemings, under Count Louis Van Male, captured Brussels, and got possession of the whole of Brabant. My father was one of those who, with Everard Serclaes, made an attack upon Brussels. One night they penetrated into the town, and, seconded by the townspeople, drove the Flemings forth. Flushed with triumph, my father hastened to the walls in order to plant thereon the standard of his prince, when an arrow pierced his side, and on the day following he was no more.

“I was meanwhile with my good mother in the castle at Grimberg. We had heard of the capture of Brussels, and already rejoiced in the expectation of soon having my father with us again. Comforted and tranquillized, and reckoning securely on happier days, my kind mother said: ‘Duke Wenzel will certainly now, at least, richly remunerate the few knights to whom he owes his throne.’

Hereupon she kissed me tenderly, gave me more than one shining kreutzer, while tears of hope and love glistened in her eyes. Tranquil and happy, we sank to slumber.

“In the middle of the night a loud cry suddenly struck upon my ear, and, O God! I beheld naught but flames around me; the dense smoke nearly suffocated me; I heard my mother cry for ‘Help!’ and outside the castle was wild shouting and the clash of arms. Every object danced before my eyes, and all consciousness, nay, life itself, seemed ebbing fast away from me. Then suddenly a swarthy human form dashed through the flames, approached my bed, and encircling me with both arms, fled with me through the glowing pile. Quite bereft of my senses, I let myself be borne along. What further happened to me I know not.”

Overpowered by bitter remembrances, Bernhart remained silent awhile; tears streamed down his cheeks, but no sigh accompanied them. The old shepherd at first did not venture to speak; at last he began—

“And thy mother, then, Bernhart?”

“My mother, sayest thou? my poor mother? Oh! burnt, burnt to ashes; only her calcined bones were found.”

A cry of horror escaped from Albrecht's breast, and his eyes, long dried up, were bedewed with tears. Bernhart mutely pressed his hand; and thus they sat for a long time in silence. Bernhart first spoke, and thus continued his narration:

“The officers of the Flemish, who had been driven out from Brussels, had recognised my father during the affray, and after their expulsion from the town they had hurried forthwith to our castle, and heaped up piles of wood which they set on fire. Now was I a poor orphan, bereft of all; I was still too young to serve as a soldier; my ancestral castle was a heap of ruins; and even had it not been so, what advantage could it have procured me, seeing that it belonged entirely to the usurers? What remained to me, without possessions, without parents, without a relation? I saw but one opening before me. I might procure employment somewhere as a page, and so at least attain a position suitable to my age and my noble birth. At first I resided in the dwelling of a neighboring peasant, with the brave-hearted fellow, in fact, who, at the peril of his life, had saved me from the flames. Some days afterward, a knight, who had been on a pilgrimage to our dear Lady of Halle, passed by the ruins of our castle; he entertained a heartfelt pity for our ill fortune, which grieved him so much the more because he had been a cordial friend of my father’s. The peasant conducted me to him; my bloodshot eyes and sorrow-stricken features affected him deeply; he accepted me as a page, and promised to the good peasant that he would treat me his whole life long as his own son. I followed him. The deportment of this knight was somewhat inexplicable. On the first day he spoke not a word during ten whole

hours, let the bridle of his horse hang unconcernedly over its neck, and bent his head forward like one wrapped in slumber. His eyes, which were scarce ever bent upon me, lay half hid under his bushy eyebrows, and seemed to me like the surface of some dimmed mirror. No wonder, then, that anxiety and dread sunk into my heart, and that more than once I was haunted by terrible forebodings; but then the words of the knight, which I but seldom heard, were so soft and sad, that at last compassion took the place of disquietude. After a journey of two days we perceived the tower of Antwerp in the distance, and stood, an hour later, before the bridge of a large, stately castle, which was flanked by four towers and surrounded by strong fortifications; and scarcely had the warder perceived us when he blew his horn, the portcullis was raised, the bridge fell, and the heavy door creaked on its hinges. A large band of retainers and men-at-arms, all as mute and still more mysterious-looking than my benefactor, received us with great show of honor, and I soon became aware that we were standing under the knight's own roof. After I was somewhat rested and refreshed, Count Arnold Van Craenhove (so was my generous benefactor called) ordered an old domestic to saddle two horses, and take me with him to Antwerp, and there get me clothed in his livery. Five days we remained in the town, and then I received my new dress. Oh, how handsome I felt, Albrecht! The right side

of my attire was of sky-blue silk, the left a rose-red; on my head waved a rose-colored plume, in a brownish cap, and around my neck wound a silver chain, from which there hung on my breast a silver hunting-horn. So handsome was I and so gay, that they scarcely could tear me away from the mirror, and were fain to threaten to take away my silver hunting-horn if I did not cease blowing. On the sixth day we returned once more to the 'Lanteernenhof.' Immediately upon my arrival I was led before Count Arnold. He seemed well content with my array, and not less with my proud bearing; yet (and this I had already noticed on the road) his voice soon again became hollow and dull, his smile forced and painful, and when I covered his meagre hands with kisses, he let me do as I would, but remained cold to all my demonstrations of affection. After some moments of the deepest silence, he rose from his seat, took me by the hand without speaking a word, and conducted me across several apartments to a beautiful chamber, where a maiden of my own age was seated by the window and gazing with wearied air upon the prospect without. As soon as our eyes met, a mutual smile hovered on our lips, mutual joy beamed in our countenances.

"'Aleidis, my sister,' said Count Arnold, in his hollow voice, 'I bring thee a playmate and a brother. Thou wilt now no more yield to sadness, wilt thou? Be you happy in each other's company.'

"And with these words he left me there, and

withdrew. Abashed, and without venturing one step forward, I fixed my eyes upon the ground; the young maiden, however, hurried up to me impatiently, seized my hand, drew me with her to the window, and asked, in a friendly tone—

“‘How art thou called? and whence dost thou come? Wilt thou remain here always? And canst thou already sound thy horn bravely?’

“I answered all these questions as well as I could, although she scarce left me time to speak; she then rapidly drew a stool before her own, and said, half entreatingly—

“‘Sit thee down here in front of me.’

“And when I had sat down, she looked with still greater curiosity at each of my features, and at every part of my dress. After this scrutiny had lasted some time, she began twisting one of my locks round her fingers, saying—

“‘What smooth, pretty hair you have, Bernhart! It is like silver threads.’

“I, who had bashfully fixed my eyes upon the maiden, replied—

“‘Not so beautiful as your fair locks, Aleidis! for they are like the gold that is woven in your bodice.’

“With a friendly smile, she continued—

“‘And what lovely blue eyes are yours, Bernhart! they look as gracious as the heavens.’

“‘Not so lovely, Aleidis, as yours, which are more beautiful than the glistening silk of my garment!’

“‘And what blooming cheeks and lips you have, Bernhart! they are more rosy than the feathers that wave upon your head.’

“‘Oh, not so beautiful as thine, Aleidis! which show like the coral around your neck.’

“This dialogue seemed to gratify Aleidis; on a sudden she sprang from her seat, pulled me away from mine, and said—

“‘Bernhart! you will always remain with me, will you not? You must not go away, do you hear? for then I shall be so lonesome, so disconsolate, so forsaken! You will be my brother, and we will always, always play together, shall we not?’

“We immediately set to work at our play, ran hither and thither, skipped and leaped about, until fatigue compelled us to rest; and then I blew upon my silver horn, or recounted to Aleidis how dreadful a calamity had fallen on our house. I made her weep, and at intervals again forced her to laugh. So intimate, in short, did we become, that she could not be persuaded to partake of the mid-day repast until they allowed me to sit down beside her. In the evening she wept bitterly because the day had flown by too rapidly, and she must needs separate from her playmate, in order to betake herself to rest. What more need I add, Albrecht? Each day rendered Aleidis more dear to me, and me more dear to her: never were we found apart. Two young vine-tendrils do not entwine more lovingly, two lambkins of one mother do not keep company

with each other more faithfully than we did. Abandoning myself unsuspectingly to my feelings, I did not perceive that my good fortune had already thus early found many to envy me.

“It behooves thee to know, Albrecht, that Count Arnóld was scarcely ever to be seen; the apartments which he inhabited in the castle always remained closed, both against us and the whole household, one man excepted, who, altogether as pensive and taciturn as the count, seemed to possess his entire confidence. A strange being was this man, and I still tremble while thinking of him. Nature had bestowed features which were any thing but agreeable; and my dread of him, inspired by the awful and harsh expression of his face, painted him in the most forbidding forms. Thou knowest how dull and yellow are the eyes of an owl; even such, Albrecht, were his. Thou seest my dog there, the hairs on whose back stand straight up, like the leaves of the pines; such was his hair. Thy book is cased in two tablets of oak; even thus dull and unseemly was his face at all times. Hast thou ever seen a fox which, taken in a snare, snarls at the hunter and threatens to bite? such was his sweetest smile. So fleshless and curved were his fingers, that I can only liken his hand to a falcon’s claw. His name, too, resounded in my ear like a blasphemy: he was called ‘Abulfaragus!’ This man, who throughout the castle and its vicinity was reputed an astrologer, and one versed in the abstruse sciences, never met me without fastening

upon me his distrustful and searching glance. Oftentimes, when with Aleidis I was playing about under the trees in the court-yard, I all at once perceived his yellow prying eyes looking out from behind some spreading trunk; and more than once he crawled through the bramble-branches, like any hound, in order to listen to our conversation. All this kindled in my bosom the deepest hate toward this man. I was not the only being who trembled before him: every inhabitant of the castle quaked at his voice, partly because the ever-invisible Count Arnold spoke by his mouth, partly also because each one feared that he would, by some supernatural means, take vengeance for the least disobedience shown toward his authority.

“Near the ‘Lanteernenhof’ grew a little copse of elms, and beneath their impenetrable foliage lay a tombstone, with an inscription graven upon it. In this spot, when he was not required to be with Arnold of Craenhove, Abulfaragus was wont to linger. No one knew what the soothsayer did there, nor why he stayed so long. Everybody shrunk from this sepulchral monument through sheer terror, and hardly did we dare to play in its neighborhood. Aleidis well knew that this stone covered the grave of her parents, who had been removed from her by an untimely death, yet never had she ventured to enter the elm-copse.

“The servants of the castle had received orders from the astrologer to gratify Aleidis in almost every thing she wished; and thus was she the real

mistress of the castle, or at least seemed to be so. When she wanted any thing, or wished at any time to give some capricious order, I was always the messenger to convey it to the servants. Thus I acted as master in her name, and on such occasions I often remarked no slight vexation in the looks of the old servants of the house. I, however, in my light-heartedness, took no heed. I answered them with sportive laughter, while I blew a merry peal upon my horn, by way of scornful greeting to these envious people. What mattered to me the disfavor of a world where one joyous bound brought me back to my paradise, where a loving angel awaited my coming?

“Thou knowest, Albrecht, that to the unfortunate, time drags onward with slow and weary steps, whereas, to him who quaffs joy from a brimming cup, it speeds more swiftly than the eagle’s flight. Thus had I reached my thirteenth year without having reckoned up a single day. During this period, by means of what Aleidis told me, and from words casually thrown out by the servants, I had been able to get some insight into the reason of the strange behavior and gloomy disposition of my protector. Listen then to what I learned.

“Two years before my arrival at the ‘Lanteernehof,’ Count Arnold resided there with his elder brother Hugo. Although the latter only bore the title of count, and was, by right of primogeniture, sole owner of the castle and its dependencies, he

lived on the most equal terms with his brother. Their attachment to each other went so far, that in order never to separate, and further, to insure the education of their young sister Aleidis, they promised each other they would never marry or even form acquaintanceship with any woman.

“During the first four years after the death of their parents, they remained faithful to their vow; but then they broke it with mutual consent, and betook themselves almost daily to a neighboring castle belonging to a foreign lady, styling herself Countess de Merampré. No one knew what means she employed to deprive everybody who came to her of their wits; many persons believed that she had recourse to magical arts and powerful love-potions. However this might be, people whispered under their breath that already more than twelve knights had perished through her means; and that it was almost an impossible thing for two individuals to come near her, without one thirsting after the life of the other. It seemed, however, that the two brothers Van Craenhove had not allowed themselves to be ensnared by her artifices, for they remained as heartily united as before. Another misfortune, however, befel them.

“One day, toward evening, Arnold rode out from the castle, and took the road which led to the abode of the countess. Some time after, his brother Hugo followed him, accompanied by Abulfaragus. They both remained absent a very long time, and already sleep began to weigh upon the

eyes of the sentinels, when suddenly a shrill cry, not unlike the screech of a bird of prey, was heard before the drawbridge. The guard distinguished the voice of Abulfaragus, upon which they let down the bridge and threw open the gate. Without deigning any one a look, or uttering a single word, the old man hurried to that part of the castle which was inhabited by the two brothers, and as speedily returned, laden with a heavy travelling-bag; again the bridge was lowered, and he disappeared in the darkness. Thou mayest easily conceive with what curious and anxious minds the night-watchers longed for some solution to this strange enigma. They were still lost in conjecture, when the piercing cry of Abulfaragus was heard anew. Again they opened to him, and this time he spake to them: he related, with brief words, that the Lords Van Craenhove had been attacked by a band of robbers, and had both been killed; that their bodies were still lying bleeding in the road, and that he had come for assistance to convey them to the castle. The astounded retainers obeyed with tearful eyes, and followed the impassible Abulfaragus with broken sobs. At a quarter of a league from the castle, they arrived at a cross-road, where they found Sir Arnold weltering in his blood; earnestly, however, as they sought for the body of Lord Hugo, they found no trace whatever of it, not even the mark of the spot where it had lain bleeding. Arnold's steed was grazing peaceably near him, but Hugo's was

nowhere to be found. What the astrologer had done with the travelling-bag no one ventured to inquire.

“Arnold’s body was borne to the castle and laid on his bed, and thereupon Abulfaragus ordered the household to repair to rest, and shut himself in with the body. On the following morning he announced that Arnold was not dead, and might perchance recover; he then caused his mid-day repast to be brought to him, and closed the door anew. For fourteen days he acted thus, and one morning appeared with Lord Arnold in the entrance-court. The latter was pale and worn, like one just risen from a lingering illness; on his forehead there was a deep scar, which I have remarked there to this day. This is all I am able to recount to you of the history of the house of Craenhove.

“Aleidis and I had reached our fourteenth year; although no longer so wild or frolicsome as before, we were still quite as inseparable as ever. At this period, Abulfaragus appeared one morning in our chamber, bearing under his arm a book; he sat down upon a stool, and with a gentler accent than was his wont, he spoke thus to Aleidis:

“‘Damsel, thou hast now attained thy fourteenth year: it is high time, therefore, that thou shouldst begin to learn whatsoever it becometh a noble maiden to know. Bernhart can teach thee nothing, for he is altogether ignorant.’

“For the first time in my life, some unknown feeling sent the warm blood to my forehead, and I

glared with angry looks at the old man. He only laughed, however, and continued, unconcernedly :

“‘Thy brother wishes thee, Aleidis, to adorn thy mind with graceful and elegant sayings, and with tales of the heroic deeds of knightly prowess. The time for play is over; at some future day thou must appear at the court of the duchess, and what would the world say if Aleidis Van Craenhove comported herself like some ignorant peasant girl?’

“The maiden read in my countenance what deep trouble was oppressing my heart; she stood forward, seized my hand with tender pity, and thus replied to Abulfaragus :

“‘I will not learn. How! wouldst thou then separate me from my brother here? Nay, in this thou shalt not succeed.’

“‘Thy brother, sayest thou? thy brother! Dost thou not then know,’ growled Abulfaragus, ‘that he is thy servant?’

“This insult forced from me a cry of indignation and sorrow.

“‘Vile caitiff!’ I shouted to the soothsayer, ‘art thou then so devoid of shame, as to call the Burgrave of Reedale a servant? Why does not noble blood flow through that despicable body of thine? then would I teach thee how one chastises such blasphemy. But, no! I will treat thee as one should treat a serf.’

“Blind with rage, and excited by the jeering smile which played on the features of Abulfaragus,

I caught up a willow rod and lifted my arm to strike him; but on the instant his yellow eyes shot through me a piercing glance, while an icy shudder crept through my limbs, without my being able to account for the secret power which had thus suddenly made me a coward. I sank back upon a couch as if crushed to pieces. Abulfaragus laughed aloud, while Aleidis wept with deep sighs.

“Abulfaragus, little heeding our state of mind, began to read from his book. At first we were steadfastly resolved not to listen; Aleidis went away and stood by the window, and I turned my back upon the astrologer. He had read but for a short while, when some mysterious influence attracted us to him; slowly and unwillingly we turned toward him, and soon were our ears eagerly open to his words. Oh, what glorious things did that book contain! and how captivating, how thrilling, became the voice of the hateful Abulfaragus! I was forced against my will to take pleasure in his reading; and as for Aleidis, she hung upon his lips.

“After reading to us aloud for two full hours, he closed the book, and quitted the apartment with these words:

“‘To-morrow we will continue.’

“Entirely given over to the impression of the beautiful things we had heard, we remained sitting there in silence for a length of time. At last we began to converse about what we had heard. Aleidis could not cease speaking of the Knight Walwin

and King Arthur, whose adventures Abulfaragus had read to us. During that entire day nothing was heard resembling our former conversations; and with all my efforts I could not succeed in turning Aleidis's attention to any thing else. She said to me repeatedly—

“‘Oh, why canst thou not read, Bernhart? How delightful that would be!’ Thy voice is so clear and sweet, and then we should no longer need that abominable Abulfaragus.’

“With a powerful effort I suppressed my chagrin, great though it was. Aleidis, however, longed thus earnestly after a pleasure which it was not in my power to promise her.

“The next day, and the day following, Abulfaragus came at the hour appointed for the reading. Never did he appear too soon for Aleidis, and always went too soon away. Although she still preserved the same love for me, I felt, nevertheless, that I was no longer all in all to her, and that Abulfaragus's readings absorbed in no small degree the thoughts and feelings of the young maiden.

“The thirst for knowledge, at which thou dost marvel, preyed upon me like a subtle fire; night and day I meditated by what means I might learn to read. Often did I endeavor to peer into the book over the old man's shoulder, but he shut it until I had resumed my seat. More than once I wished to break into some room by force, in order to seek for a book, but each time Abulfaragus was to be found leering behind me.

“One morning it occurred to me that there were characters written on the gravestone in the elm-copse; my curiosity quickly overruled my terror, and in deep agitation I penetrated into the thicket. Withered flowers bestrewed the earth round the tombstone, on whose characters I stared with flushing cheek and bewildered thoughts. Suddenly a distant rattling broke upon my ear; I turned round and beheld Abulfaragus, who was advancing toward the grave. Seized with alarm, and half dead with terror, I concealed myself under the thick foliage, held in my breath, and secretly observed the movements of my enemy.

“Abulfaragus slowly approached the stone, drew from under his cape a basket filled with flowers, and strewed them on the grave; so powerful was their balmy odor that it penetrated even to my hiding-place. Meanwhile I heard how Abulfaragus prayed, sobbing,—‘O Lord Jesus! through thy dear blood grant to the souls of my benefactor and my dear sister eternal rest! Amen.’ And then he bowed down his head upon the stone, and wept so bitterly, that I also could not refrain from weeping. The movement of my hand in wiping away my tears excited Abulfaragus’s attention. I saw his flaming orbs so keenly riveted upon me, that a cry of dread escaped me. The soothsayer seized me by the hand, drew me forth from the overshadowing leaves, and said, in a voice which deeply agitated me—

“‘Thou hast seen and heard, audacious wretch!

If thou darest to utter one word of this, death shall close thy mouth forever !’

“While I was entreating for pardon on my knees, Abulfaragus withdrew, casting on me, even from afar, a threatening look. I did not remain long in this spot, for the elm-copse had now become more awe-inspiring than ever. I wandered about for a long time, before I could entirely recover myself, and at length returned to Aleidis. However earnestly I strove to fathom the meaning of Abulfaragus’s words, and however willing I might be to clear up the mystery as to whether the mother of Aleidis had been the sister of Abulfaragus, on no account did I dare to speak of my visit to the place of entombment. Abulfaragus came daily to read in our apartment, and seemed now to have quite forgotten that I had spied his movements. I, however, began to waste away and lose all my color, so keenly did this unquiet desire to learn, coupled with jealousy of Abulfaragus’s knowledge, burn in my heart.

“One day—oh ! never shall I forget it—the old man had brought with him a fresh book ; for we had heard, the day before, the conclusion of the charming history of Floris and Blanche fleur. Aleidis fixed her earnest eyes upon him, and let not one syllable escape, so gratified was she with what Abulfaragus was reading. Suddenly the features of the old man assumed an expression inconceivably mild ; his eyes beamed with more noble fire, and his voice assumed a softer tone.

Turning directly toward Aleidis, he read the following words; even now I well remember them, so deeply did they impress me:

‘Lovely maiden, form’d so sightly,
In all virtues shining brightly,
Manners noble, modest, winning,
Never against pity sinning,
All to thee precedence granting,
To depict thee words are wanting.
Goodness, truth, and beauty claim thee,
Mirror fair of grace we name thee :
Pure thy lips, with music ringing;
Peace is thine from conscience springing;
Temple to all uses holy,
God has surely bless’d thee wholly.’

Inmost joy beamed from the features of Aleidis; the more overjoyed she was, however, the more did I feel my soul pierced through with chagrin and envy. Tears streamed in abundance down my cheeks, and I did not cease weeping until the old man withdrew. I followed his footsteps up to the door of his own chamber, there threw myself on my knees before him, and besought him, with agitated voice—

“‘Oh, Abulfaragus, for God’s sake give me a book! Teach me then to read. I will serve thee as thy slave! At least have pity on me; thou seest how the thirst for knowledge consumes me!’

“And with these words I embraced his knees and watered them with my tears; but he let me utter all my entreaties without returning one word; with calm and chilling demeanor put the key into

the door, and, spurning me with his foot, entered his chamber, from which a jeering laugh resounded in my ears.

“With broken heart, and weighed down by shame, I returned with lingering steps to Aleidis. I cast myself, like one exhausted, upon a low seat, and began to sigh and weep, and conduct myself like one deranged. Aleidis would fain have consoled me, but I repelled her from me, and desired not to speak with her any more. Her tears at length broke down my resolution, and I exclaimed:

“‘Aleidis, thou hast told me I was to be thy brother always: thou hast broken thy word; Abulfaragus is my mortal foe, he would fain destroy me. But this very moment he spurned me from him as one spurns a dog. A sister can scarce love him who treats her brother thus; she doth not yearn after his presence, nor find an odious voice like his agreeable. I am of noble blood, Aleidis; I cannot, and will not, any longer endure that a vile caitiff should jeer and insult me. Ah! thy friendliness toward me cannot any longer make me forgetful of the scoffing. To-morrow I abandon this place, and, relying on God’s mercy, shall go into the wide world; never shalt thou see me more. I know that my going away will no longer grieve thee. Thou hast thy Abulfaragus; he can say to thee better than I—

‘Lovely maiden, formed so sightly,
In all virtues shining brightly.’

Oh, I will learn to read, and will learn quickly, but then others shall listen to my speech !’

“At these stern words Aleidis drooped her head, as though oppressed by some grievous burden; suddenly, however, she sprang forward without hesitation to kiss me, but her strength failed her, and she fell senseless to the ground.

“I was on the point of calling for help, but Abulfaragus was standing there beside me, and the words died upon my lips: he looked upon me upbraidingly, yet scoffingly withal; took Aleidis by the arm, and with one glance of his eye called her back to life, and then rapidly quitted the room. Now did Aleidis reprove my severity with her bitter tears; she spoke to me with such tender words, she gave me so many assurances of attachment, that I soon was begging for pardon on my knees. We became good friends again, and promised each other to forget the past.

“On the following day Abulfaragus came as usual with his book and sat himself down to read. Hardly had he begun, when Aleidis’s forehead flushed over, she sprang rapidly toward the old man, laid hands on the book, and tore a good ten pages out; these she rent in pieces and cast upon the ground, while she calmly said—

“‘So will I always act, if thou still darest to come here with thy books—and now begone, unbeliever !’

“A stifled cry was the soothsayer’s only answer; he threw himself upon the ground, and with both hands gathered together the torn leaves.

“I saw two heavy tears roll from his eyes, which were doubtless occasioned by the destruction of so costly a book ; he then rose up quickly, and rushed out of the chamber, exclaiming with doleful voice—

“‘Wo! Wo!’

“From that time forth he left us at peace ; we lived again gladsome and content. The thirst for knowledge once enkindled, however, did not quit me, and I resolved, whatever it might cost, to learn to read. The more the faculty of memory was developed, the more earnest became the desire for knowledge, and the deeper grew my curiosity to know what that might be which both my invisible patron and Abulfaragus sought to conceal so carefully from me.

“One morning, when I had risen somewhat earlier than usual, I crept silently past the entrance to those apartments which had always remained closed to me. One of the doors was ajar : standing on tiptoe, I peered into the chamber with throbbing heart. Count Arnold was there, reclining on a couch like one who is paralyzed ; his eyes were fixed immovably on the wall, whereon was suspended a dark effigy, underneath which golden characters were written ; near to him sat Abulfaragus, reading from a large book. At the same moment I heard Count Arnold speaking :

“‘Thou sayest, Abulfaragus, that Bernhart must quit the castle. Thou reflectest but little on the sorrow which will seize Aleidis when we take from her the friend of her childhood.’

“‘It is a serpent thou art cherishing,’ answered the old man: ‘if he remain here any longer, he will discover the fearful secret, and upon thy father’s house a murderous blot will——’

“‘No, no! say no more of that,’ returned Count Arnold; ‘there are but two hearts in this castle which are familiar with joy; thou wilt not compel me to break these.’

“‘It must be!’ exclaimed Abulfaragus, with imploring voice. ‘Listen! This night at twelve the firmament was sparkling with stars: I found our several planets without any difficulty. Thy star was glimmering but feebly, like to a flickering lamp, beneath Bernhart’s. Suddenly the latter moved off from thine, but approached it anew, and beamed upon it with the light of joy and consolation. By the power of my art I at once compelled destiny to speak out clearly. If Bernhart retire not from here, then will he inflict two terrible blows upon thy house, and the name of Craenhove will be branded with lasting dishonor. If he go hence now, he will one day return and fill thy after-life with joy and happiness. So spake destiny to me.’

“‘Oh, Abulfaragus, how cruel art thou! how pitiless toward my poor Aleidis! No; let my sufferings be redoubled rather than that she should suffer!’

“‘Arnold, Arnold!’ exclaimed the old man, impatiently, and pointing with his finger to the golden characters underneath the effigy, ‘hadst

thou always believed this prophecy of mine, it would not now be torturing thee, and the sting of conscience and remorse would not be leading thee to the grave. Dost thou yet know what it containeth? "When a woman shall step between you, then shall your own blood stain the house of Craenhove." Was it not even so? Open shame alone is now wanting to thy name; well, then, be thou the first to cast mire in thy face! defile thy father's pure name; write upon his grave that his blood is a blood of dishonor! Summon courage for the foul deed!

"During this discourse I was trembling with alarm and terror, like the leaves of the quivering aspen; my last remains of strength were ebbing fast away, and I was obliged to cling to the wall in order not to sink down. I saw the head of Count Arnold drooping low upon his breast, as if bent under the weight of the old man's cruel words. After a long pause he again inquired, with earnest voice—

"Well now, Count Arnold, what seemeth good to thee?"

"That he should depart," was the reply.

"Thanks for that resolve!" cried the old man; "but fate requires that he depart hence as he came hither, poor and rejected, that he may be humbled."

"A heart-rending sigh broke from Arnold's breast, accompanied by this terrible sentence:

"Be it so! Do with him as it pleaseth thee."

"Thereupon I sank fainting on the threshold,

and my sobbing penetrated into the chamber. Abulfaragus drew near, opened the door wide, and leered at me like a very demon triumphing over the fate of a soul. With mocking laughter he advanced into the corridor. At a call from him, which resounded through the whole castle, I heard many doors open and shut, and the servants rapidly running and hurrying about; a secret voice told me that perhaps even now they were separating Aleidis from me forever. I sprang forward and hastened to the chamber where she was to be found erewhile; but the door was fastened. How loudly did I cry and shout! how fiercely did I beat the door till my hands ran blood! yet no answer came. I hurried through the castle in desperation, left no one tower, no one chamber, unvisited, and no doors at which I did not call aloud my sister's name; but one and all remained closed and silent as death. Oh, what a depth of misery was mine, Albrecht! Now I wept before Aleidis's chamber, now under the spreading trees of the court-yard, or wandered sorrowing along the broad corridors of the castle, but no succor came: my sentence had gone forth and was already half-accomplished—I had lost my Aleidis.

“Toward evening I was sitting in the court-yard upon the green turf. The old enchanting past, with all its radiant imagery, rose before my soul; and how painful was the remembrance! It was as though each one of these joys had bidden me an eternal farewell—just such a heart-rending

farewell as one utters to a friend whom one scarce hopes to see any more. At length I lost all consciousness; I neither saw nor thought any longer. I had become oblivious to every thing, and was slumbering with my eyes open. In this trance I must have remained for a long while, for when I awoke all my limbs were stiff. My first glance rested on one of the old retainers of the castle, who was standing motionless before me; he was a soldier of some sixty years of age, called Roger, who had always been most attached to me, and now gazed down upon me with pitying eyes.

“‘Get thee up, Bernhart,’ he murmured; ‘I have something to tell thee.’

“I rose up slowly, drew nearer to him, and listened with painful anxiety to his words.

“‘Bernhart, there is some terrible matter in train against thee. It seems thou hast committed some great misdeed; folks even say that thou hast spread a rumor among the country-people, which reflects seriously on our young lady; severe punishment awaits thy calumnious words!’

“I? my sister Aleidis? Albrecht, I was as though struck down by a thunderbolt. With a cry of desperation, I began tearing my hair; but the old warrior restrained my hands, and continued:

“‘Bernhart, dost thou know Abulfaragus? Art thou aware that he can extract poison from honey? that a murderer’s weapon is a plaything in his hands, and that infernal spirits work his behests?

Wert thou ever in the subterranean dungeons? Oh, every ill awaits thee! fly, therefore! I have left the postern-gate open; thou canst easily wade through the castle-moat. Hasten, then; thy misdeed is great, thy virtues, however——’

“At this instant the yellow eyes of Abulfaragus glared from behind a distant tree. The words died away upon the lips of the old retainer, and he rapidly withdrew, all trembling. What happened to me afterward, I know not; my eyes began to swim, the trees and battlements danced round with a rapid whirl, and I was forced to lie down upon the grass for fear of falling. Absorbed in the thought of my distress, I remained there a long while; the words of the faithful old man recurred to my mind, and I beheld cups of poison brimming over before me, and glittering steel pointed at my heart. Oh, Albrecht! the fear of death ran curdling through my veins. I shuddered with affright, and in my despair seized, as an anchor of safety, upon that expedient which the retainer had offered me.

“Favored by the advancing darkness, I glided from among the trees toward the outer part of the castle walls, where the postern-gate was situated. A few steps more and I should reach it; this sight restored my strength and courage. Amid my sufferings it was a consolation to me that I should never more behold the hateful Abulfaragus. But Heaven willed otherwise; the soothsayer was planted before the postern-gate! I stood as though riveted to the ground with astonishment, when he

advanced toward me, seized my hand in his bony grasp, and addressed me in a voice unusually gentle:

“Bernhart, my young friend, thou art truly unfortunate! On whose shoulders dost thou lay the blame? On those of Abulfaragus, dost thou not?”

“Ay, verily! and with good right!” I exclaimed. ‘Thou hast always tracked my steps like an evil spirit, and now, mayhap, there simmers on some fire the poison which is to destroy me.’

“A bitter laugh was the old man’s reply; he remained silent for a while, and then asked—

“Bernhart, hast thou heard what I said this morning to Count Arnold?”

“‘I heard but too well,’ I sobbed through my tears, ‘how thou didst calumniate me, and how cruelly thou didst demand my death-sentence.’

“‘Hast thou heard naught else?’ still inquired the old man.

“In order to drive my enemy to desperation, I acted as though the fearful secret were no secret to me, and quickly replied—

“‘Ay, indeed, more have I heard, but never would I dare to utter what I know, and still less what I conjecture. Count Arnold is my benefactor.’

“The silence which followed upon these words caused me no little wonder. The old man seemed suddenly to become more sad than myself. He drooped his head, and sighed painfully. After a

pause he lifted up his head again, and said, in accents of deep sorrow—

“‘Bernhart, my child, thou lookest upon me as a very wicked man, dost thou not? Didst thou but know, however, what I am doing, and wherefore I act thus—didst thou but know why I make myself an object of hatred, while all the time I have never done harm to mortal man—thou wouldst have compassion on Abulfaragus, nay, wouldst even lovingly embrace him, for thy heart is noble and pure.’

“How shall I portray my wonderment at such language, Albrecht? The man whom I believed a very fiend stood before me beseechingly, and his voice moved and agitated my very soul; my dread of him vanished.

“‘Abulfaragus,’ I said, with a sigh, ‘thou dost astound me; art thou indeed uttering truth?’

“‘Follow me,’ he replied, at the same instant drawing me onward by the hand.

“It would seem that nothing could withstand the voice of Abulfaragus, for these few words of his had dissipated not only my hatred and anguish of heart, but even all my mistrust. I followed him willingly to the door of his chamber; there, however, a slight shuddering seized me; I was about to enter for the first time that mysterious chamber which had awakened my curiosity for eight long years. I quivered all over when the door swung open, and I stepped into the room. What I there saw, however, affected me less than

I had expected. Everything was uncleanly and lying about in disorder; an iron lamp, casting around a dim light, permitted me to perceive a few skeletons of animals, some dried plants, and a few books, and—whereat I was not a little astonished—a large image of our Lady, around which two beautiful bunches of flowers spread a delightful fragrance. And this was all.

Abulfaragus bade me sit down, and, placing himself on a stool near me, took my hand, saying—

“Bernhart, thou art persuaded that I hate thee, and seek thy destruction; but thou dost err grievously, my friend: excepting those of the blood of Craenhove, I love but one being, and thou art that one. I have indeed given thee reason to fear and even to hate me; but that destiny, whose servant I am, has compelled me thereto. I saw thee arrive at the “Lanteernenhof,” and thy coming gladdened me. I left thee at peace till an invincible curiosity impelled thee to search into things thou shouldst not know. I then took a balance, cast thee into one scale, and the honor and welfare of the house of Craenhove into the other, and thou wert found wanting, and must needs become the victim. It was needful that thou shouldst depart hence. I tracked thy steps, therefore, and prepared for thee many sufferings, in order to render thy sojourn here wearisome; but Aleidis soothed all thy pains, and thou wert rendered unconquerable. Thou hast a right to

hate me, Bernhart, for often have I loaded thee with trouble and chagrin; and in order to cause thee to dread me, I have even seemed to find enjoyment in thy suffering. Thou art as yet too young, my son, to penetrate the motives which forced me to treat thee as I have done. Abulfaragus, my son, is bound like a slave to the house of Craenhove, and must, perforce, sacrifice every feeling, every inclination of his own, for the furtherance of its well-being. While loving thee with fervent affection, these bonds forced me to apparent enmity toward thee. Later on, thou wilt know wherefore I tear thee from Aleidis. Sufferings there are, wherewith thou art happily still unacquainted, which inflame and penetrate the heart like an all-devouring fire. What the stars have uttered thou knowest, and to-morrow, ere sunrise, thou must quit the castle; and thou wilt do so readily, wilt thou not? Thou wilt not compel me to be stern toward thee, to call for the retainers, to strip thee of thy garments, and have thee cruelly driven from the door? Therefore thou wilt submit thyself, act as I bid thee, and obey thy destiny. Promise me this.'

"I stood there with drooping head; scalding tears streamed down my cheeks, and I could only answer with my sighs.

"'Thou weepest, my son,' continued the old man; 'thou art thinking of Aleidis, art thou not? It grieves thee to be forced to abandon thy good sister.'

“‘Alas, forever!’ I cried in anguish.

“‘The stars announce that thou shalt return hither, my friend,’ returned the astrologer, ‘and remain here ever after.’

“These words sank softly into my bosom, and consoled me. I turned my grateful eyes upon the old man, and he no longer seemed hateful to me; his features bore a gentle, loving expression; he appeared to me even like a father who discourses with his son.

“‘Bernhart,’ he continued, ‘promise me to do my behests, and I, in a few words, will tell thee what endless bliss destiny hath reserved for thee.’

“I took his hand and promised him willing obedience.

“‘Well, then,’ he said, ‘when thou shalt have quitted the castle, I will take measures that no other youth ever approach Aleidis: all that a father can do for his own child will I do in thy behalf; I will keep for thee a pure and faithful bride. Destiny tells me that thou wilt one day call Aleidis thy spouse, and become lord of the “Lanteernenhof” and of Abulfaragus. Does this content thy love and thy ambition?’

“Struck dumb at the happy future which the old man’s words unveiled to me, and overpowered by my mixed feelings, I rose up precipitately from my seat, and, with tears of joy and happiness, sunk upon my knees before him; I could only cry out—

“‘Thanks! oh, thanks, Abulfaragus! Heaven grant that thou mayest not be deceived!’

“I deceived, child! I! Verily, I have oft been deceived; my art is not altogether infallible. Yet be consoled; I will abide here to insure a part of what I have foretold thee. If Aleidis become not thine, she shall never become another’s. Never, besides, have the stars spoken more clearly; but hear, Bernhart, what thou must do in order to deserve thy good fortune. In thy bedchamber thou wilt find the humble clothing of a peasant; put this on, and take with thee from this place nothing which belonged to thee. Sleep a while, if thou art able; before the rising of the sun I will awaken thee. It is forbidden me to offer thee counsel: thou must go and abide wherever inclination urges; but never take one step hitherward to behold Aleidis or the “Lanteernenhof.” A powerful impulse will reveal to thee when thou art to return; but this will never happen unless thou dost possess the full assurance of being able to return to Count Arnold his lost repose and his heart’s content. This much alone can I reveal to thee; the rest thou wilt soon discover.’

“Hereupon he took his lamp, and, conducting me to my bedchamber, took leave of me with words of peace and consolation.

“Difficult were it to relate to thee, Albrecht, the fantastic visions that hovered round me the whole night long,—so many and so various were the emotions which the past day had brought with it. Unfortunate I could not call myself, seeing that the future reserved for me so happy a lot.

To deserve Aleidis! the very thought thereof made me ready to undergo every hardship. Not only did I blindly submit, therefore, to the will of Abulfaragus, but I rejoiced with myself in my inmost soul at being destined to soothe, nay, to dissipate altogether, the anguish which so heavily oppressed my benefactor; and some day, perchance, I should be able to penetrate that secret which hung over the fate of the house of Craenhove, like some veil woven by enchantment. All this flattered my hopes, and almost made my banishment appear like something great and noble.

“When Abulfaragus opened my door and entered with his lamp, I was quite ready, and dressed in my old garments. I cast one long, sad look at my silver hunting-horn, and followed my conductor. The door opened, and the bridge was let down. When we were in the open country, Abulfaragus gave me a piece of bread and a roast fowl. Once again I pressed his hand, saying mournfully—

“‘Abulfaragus, thou knowest full well that Aleidis will not hear of my departure without pain, and that she will, mayhap, bewail the loss of her brother.’

“‘Be at rest as to that, my son,’ he replied, benignantly. ‘I will console Aleidis, and will do my best to convince her that thou wilt return; and with that intent, Bernhart, I will speak of thee day by day, for I earnestly desire that she should never forget thee.’

"Tears of gratitude gushed from my eyes, I pressed my arms around the neck of Abulfaragus, and eagerly kissed the man whom I had till then reputed the most malignant of mankind. He then addressed me a few more friendly words, and at last said—

"'Farewell, till we meet again!'

"I hastened onward with hurried steps, and continued my journey the greatest part of the day, without growing tired. When I had reached Santhoven, I approached a peasant's cottage, and asked for a little milk to quench my thirst. After I had exchanged a few words with the farmer, I learned from him that his shepherd had quitted him to take service as man-at-arms under some nobleman; I offered myself as substitute, and was accepted. I have now served these good people for two years, and am content with my lot: for I have the assurance that I shall one day behold Aleidis.

"But I would not willingly return to Lanteernehof without being able to read. I am fully conscious of the enjoyment Aleidis finds in listening to the history of the warlike deeds of knights and heroes; and this pleasure she once sacrificed for my sake; during two years her words showed me plainly how grievous must have been the sacrifice. An indescribable eagerness for knowledge still burns in my bosom. I believe even that Aleidis is not wholly the cause of this: some secret feeling, the reason of which I know not,

appears to govern me. This is my history, Albrecht: say, is it not a strange and sad one?"

The old shepherd had listened with so lively an interest and such deep attention to the narrative, that he did not immediately return an answer. He looked wonderingly at his young companion, and after some moments replied—

"Sad? ay, verily; but, what is still more marvellous, the name of Abulfaragus has often caused me to tremble. Art thou quite sure, Bernhart, that he is of mortal mould?"

"What other should he be, Albrecht?"

"Thou art young, Bernhart, and thou dost not know what I know. What if I tell thee that there are men who bind themselves to the devil, and receive for their slave and servant an evil spirit? What if I further reveal to thee that these men frequently repent too late of their execrable compact, and then, pursued by remorse of conscience and the fear of hell, immure themselves and shun the light of day?"

"Well, Albrecht, what is it thou wouldst say?"

"That it is not difficult to conceive that Count Arnold Van Craenhove may have sold his soul to the demon of darkness, and that Abulfaragus is the spirit whom the devil has granted him for his slave servant."

These words, uttered with a solemn voice, made a deep impression on Bernhart's mind; but he quickly recovered himself, and remarked, with an incredulous smile—

"Thou deceivest thyself, Albrect; Count Arnold went constantly to church, like any good Christian. And with regard to Abulfaragus, if what you say were true, he would scarcely have an image of our Lady in his apartment, and would assuredly not take so much care to deck it always with fresh flowers. Did he not besides call upon the Saviour when he knelt before the gravestone? No, that is not the undiscovered secret! That terrible night of the visit to the Countess of Merampré conceals something else. He who knows where the body of Count Hugo Van Craenhove is to be found, will be able to give information on every other matter."

"Have they never sought an explanation from this same Countess of Merampré, Bernhart?"

"How should one have been able to inquire of her? From that night forward she never was seen in Brabant!"

"I am lost in conjectures. That mysterious night witnessed perchance some direful deed of vengeance, some terrible murder;—but, however this may be, we ought not to cast suspicions on our neighbor by our own surmises. It grows late, Bernhart; the sun is sinking behind the trees: we must drive our flocks homeward."

With these words the two shepherds separated, each one going to collect his master's flocks. While Bernhart was thus busied, the old man came gliding toward him with stealthy steps, and whispered to him solemnly:

"Bernhart, hast thou ever seen the Were-wolf?"

The youth was terror-struck; and, turning his head in every direction round the heath, replied—

“No! why address this question to me?”

“Look then at the border of the wood, and thou wilt see him.”

Bernhart remarked, in fact, the dark shadowy form of a man, which appeared to advance slowly and cautiously along the thicket.

“Ha!” he exclaimed, “so that is the Were-wolf of which people talk so much! I had figured to myself a ravening beast of prey; and this appears afar off to wear the semblance of a man. What then is a Were-wolf?”

“Dost thou not know, Bernhart? A Were-wolf is a man who, on account of some sin which cries to heaven for vengeance, is doomed by God to wander, without rest or repose, all night long, under the form of a wolf. These Were-wolves avoid the villages and habitations of men, for fear that the doors and windows of the rooms should be fastened upon them; for so surely as this should happen, and the time of the Were-wolf’s transformation come about, he would dash his head against the wall, and doubtless perish the very same night.”

“Hast thou ever seen this man under the form of a wolf, Albrecht?”

“Ay, often. It is now more than ten years since he chose this wood as his resting-place; and from that time not a soul has dared to tread upon that ground, partly through terror, and partly from a

sacred fear of this judgment-place of God. During the night he wanders about or sits among the tombs of the churchyard; there he sighs and utters fearful moans. No one has ever heard him utter words; for he is dumb and cannot hold discourse. As to all else, he is as gentle as a lamb; whenever he goes by us he droops his head, and glides away with downcast eyes. No one can remember his ever doing either man or beast any mischief. Once even he offered a poor woman, who sat weeping near the wood, two gold-pieces; the woman, however, durst not take the gold, but ran away in utter terror. This, however, is a proof that he had not a bad heart."

During this explanation Bernhart had not once turned his eager gaze from the wolf; and as the latter at each step advanced nearer to the shepherds, they were able to discern his form more clearly. He seemed a man of unusually lofty stature, and was clad from head to foot in a hairy garment, which seemed not unlike the hide of some animal. In his right hand he held a long staff, on which he leaned, with head bent down; his left hand was clasped firmly to his body, as though he were carrying something underneath. This object doubtless attracted Bernhart's attention, for all at once he exclaimed:

"What is he holding under his arm? Is it not a book?"

"I cannot distinguish clearly," returned old Albrecht. Soon after, however, he added: "It cer-

tainly is a book; ay, and four times as large as my own!"

Bernhart fell into deep musing, and sighed, in a strange tone:

"The Were-wolf can read!"

As he looked again he observed the Were-wolf stooping at the edge of the wood, and disappearing among the bramble-bushes. His comrade had already twice reminded him to quit the heath; Albrecht was already at some distance with his flocks, while Bernhart still stood motionless in the very same spot. He was gazing fixedly on the place where the Were-wolf had vanished from his sight. At length, giving his dog the signal to depart, he quitted the heath, and, with a mind anxiously excited and full of visionary dreams, he took his way home, while from time to time he repeated his first exclamation:

"The Were-wolf can read!"

CHAPTER II.

THE WERE-WOLF.

ALL sleeps upon the heath. The leaves of the tender plants are still folded together; the flowers have not yet opened their cups, and look like animated beings, which, with closed eyes, lie sunk in calm self-forgetfulness. The night has flown, but the day has not yet broken. The west is still covered with a dark impenetrable veil; the east is slowly brightening, like a transparent sea on which shines a yet uncertain light. Of all the stars, one alone twinkles in the firmament; it is Lucifer, the harbinger of the rising sun.

On the border of the forest there hangs a heavy veil of mist; but it is now ascending, and has already reached the tops of the trees; soon will it have mounted aloft, and been scattered in the blue depth above. Like to a discreet maiden that quietly tarries for the awakening of her mistress, so lies the earth in deepest calm, awaiting the approach of its lord. A rosy glistening colors the east, and the morning star grows pale. Yonder a goldfinch is shaking the dew from off his downy plumage. He quits the bough on which he had been resting, wings his flight upward, and settles on the loftiest tree in the forest. Joyously he

gazes toward the east, where the sun is slowly beginning his career; clear, silvery warblings come pouring from that little throat, and joyfully bid welcome to the light of day. Happy bird! that dost behold the torch of heaven before the children of men!

The signal is given, and a thousand feathered songsters awake, a thousand hymns of praise give glory, as with one voice, to the Creator. Higher and higher still mounts the lark; she would fain pour forth her homage before the very throne of God itself.

The smiling sun now rises above the pine-grove. His clustered beams dart their radiance over the heath like so many endless magic wands, and whatever they reach at once receives light and life.

Listen how the grasshopper and the cricket bring their morning prayer to the Creator! See how the flowers open their eyes, and uncloseth their coronals and chalices as if they would fain receive into their very hearts a glowing ray from the all-loving God. Hail! all hail! thou glorious masterpiece of the great Artificer!

If such a hymn of praise echoed not aloud from the lips of Bernhart, in the depth of his soul, at least, the praise of his Creator was intoned in still richer melody; already for a full half-hour had he been kneeling on the heath, and witnessing with prayerful heart this awakening of nature, while his sheep were browsing on the dewy grass.

However devout was Bernhart's prayer, he

looked, nevertheless, at the spot where the Were-wolf had vanished on the day before. Suddenly he trembled in all his limbs; he saw the Were-wolf creeping forward on hands and feet under the bramble-brake, and then, getting up, retire along the edge of the wood. This time he held nothing under his arm.

The book must have remained after him in the wood; and many other books, perhaps, might be lying in the Were-wolf's den. But, could any one summon up courage enough to approach this abode,—to penetrate into his lair? Would not a frightful death be the forfeit? would not the Were-wolf tear him asunder and scatter his quivering limbs to the beasts of the wild wood?

Poor Bernhart! there he stands on the open heath, leaning upon his staff, and he looks down upon the ground like one distracted; his forehead burns, his knees sink under him, an incomprehensible power draws him onward to the wood. Now he ventures one step—another still—and then more; but he quakes and is terror-stricken, for now he stands directly before the bramble-thicket, the boundary of the Were-wolf's territory. Will he be hardy enough to stoop himself down like the Were-wolf, and tread the footpath that leads on to the dreadful abode?

An hour before mid-day, Bernhart is still standing before the bramble-brake, with sunken head and fixed gaze and feverish agitation; eagerness for knowledge was struggling in his heart against

the fear of death. The contest must now have ended, for Bernhart bent himself down slowly to the ground, and crept suddenly on hands and feet under the thicket.

He was soon able to stand upright and look about him, so as to find out where he was. Nothing unusual presented itself to his bewildered gaze, save a melancholy and desolate scene which lay wrapped in a dim half-light, and in a death-like repose. With throbbing heart and increasing agitation, Bernhart advanced onward, with slow and cautious steps, like some malefactor. From time to time the hoarse cry of some bird of prey broke upon his ear, and made him tremble in all his limbs; and again he would pause terror-stricken before some decayed tree, which, like a pitying mortal, stretched forth its withered hands and seemed to wish to hold him back. But a feverish curiosity drove him irresistibly on toward that lair at the end of the path which the Were-wolf's steps had worn. At length he reached a glen where the trees happened in their growth to have left an open space, decked with a carpet of turf and flowers. A small and almost imperceptible brook wound its way along this natural prairie, just as a serpent hurries rapidly under the thicket in order to shelter himself from the scorching rays of the sun. Here all breathed life and gladness: the sun cast his perpendicular beams upon the luxuriant meadow, and lovingly caressed its thousand glistening flowers; birds sang in full choir

on the neighboring trees: in a word, this little spot was like a garden of delights, which nature in some capricious moment had planted in the desert.

Any other wanderer but Bernhart would surely have paused in this enchanting place; would have quenched his thirst in the clear brook, and, while his ear listened to the many-voiced song of birds, would have allowed his eyes to linger with ecstasy on the divers-colored carpet of flowers which lay before him; but Bernhart's one thought was—"Where can the books lie hidden?"

After gazing round him for a while, he perceived in the distance, at the opposite end of the prairie, a lofty sand-hill, and, between the tangled copse-wood, an opening in the same, which probably formed the entrance to the Were-wolf's abode. He turned his steps in that direction, but the nearer he approached, the slower grew his pace. With each moment his dread increased, and he remained standing aghast before the Were-wolf's strange dwelling, where, however, nothing very terrible could be discerned, either from without or within. At the first glance, one could perceive that it was the unassisted handiwork of some human being. He who had constructed it had first of all dug deep in the hillside a broad, square cavity, like to a chamber, over which he had fastened a kind of roof composed of heavy branches, and covered it with a thick layer of leaves and twigs. One extremity

of this covering afforded sufficient protection from the wind and rain; in the other was to be found an aperture, which served for a window and let in the light of day. The dwelling of the Were-wolf was not small; for a man of lofty stature could conveniently pass in without stooping.

Although the whole appearance of this abode was little calculated to inspire awe, Bernhart did not dare to enter. Some undefined terror seemed to seize him, for he drew back a few steps and looked on every side with an air of alarm, to see whether the Were-wolf had yet appeared. Perhaps he would have returned to the open heath, but as he again passed by the entrance, he perceived the large book lying on a desk-like frame within the cave. His resolution was quickly taken; the book drew him onward like a magnet, and, as a ravening beast rushing on its prey, he sprung forward with one bound and fastened on the outspread pages with both hands.

How happy was poor Bernhart now! A rapturous smile played upon his countenance, his eyes sparkled with the fire of curiosity, his breast heaved, his heart beat with impetuosity, and his fingers moved with impatient haste. Now, indeed, he held in his own hands a large and beautiful book! Had Bernhart not fixed his gaze so intently upon the letters, he would have remarked more than one strange object in that hut. The desk, on which the book lay, was made of twisted

boughs and fastened in the ground; in one corner of the cave was to be found a couch constructed after the same fashion, stuffed with moss and half covered with a tattered woollen counterpane; in the centre stood a wooden cross, on one arm of which hung a knight's surcoat covered with dark-brown stains, like those of dried blood. Underneath was suspended a sword all covered with spots of rust, apparently caused by wet, which had somehow been spurted over it. On the side of the couch was an open travelling-bag, and underneath there lay, as it seemed, some scattered gold-pieces. Farther on, a quantity of dried roots of all kinds were hung upon the wall; and lastly, was to be seen a discipline, and a girdle with numerous iron spikes running inward.

These objects, however, did not attract Bernhart's attention: he was absorbed in the contemplation of the book, and occasionally turned over a leaf without even knowing what he was doing. Had it not been for this slight movement and the deep breathings of his chest, one might easily have taken him for a lifeless effigy.

But see! what figure is that which appears yonder at the door? Is it a man? Yes; it is the Were-wolf with his heavy staff and brown garments! From his deep sunken eyes there gleams, as it were, a fire; his hollow cheeks grow pale, and wrath convulsively distorts his mouth. He stands still and motionless, while he fixes his

gaze upon the shepherd, whose countenance he cannot altogether distinguish.

Poor Bernhart, thus joyfully and self-absorbed feasting his eyes upon the book! Could he but see the flashing eyes that are fixed upon him from behind!

For a long while the Were-wolf gazed wrathfully into the hut; by degrees, however, his features assumed a softer look, and he appeared again to grow quite calm. The old shepherd had apparently spoken true, when he asserted that the Were-wolf could not speak; for instead of words there escaped from his bosom a heavy groan, which broke upon the ears of Bernhart like a thunderclap. The youth at once sprang up in alarm, and, turning his head toward the door, saw the hollow countenance of the Were-wolf turned toward him, and his glaring eyes fastened upon him. With a loud cry he fled to the other end of the hut, and lifted up his hands toward the Were-wolf in an attitude of speechless entreaty.

The Were-wolf advanced one step nearer to him; but the affrighted shepherd, who saw only death before his eyes, sunk down upon his knees, and crept onward till he came directly before the Were-wolf; then, seizing one of his hands and bathing it with his tears, he cried out—

“Oh! if it be possible for thee, have compassion upon me! Mercy! mercy! harm me not, I pray thee!”

A smile replete with kindness and benevolence beamed from the countenance of the Were-wolf; he took both Bernhart's hands, raised him up from the ground, placed his thin fingers caressingly upon his fair hair, and, to the great wonderment of the youth, said, in a gentle voice—

“Poor child! what fearest thou from me? I am, indeed, an unfortunate being, who am obliged thus severely to expiate my crimes; but I do no one any harm. Calm thy terror, my son, and be no longer afraid of me.”

Bernhart, all amazed, looked gratefully at the Were-wolf, and kissed his hands with fervor; suddenly, there dawned in his breast a feeling of affection for the unhappy man who had treated him thus benignly, while he himself had only expected death at his hands.

With a smile still full of entreaty, he continued :

“Thanks, master! oh, thanks! I shall ever be mindful of thy goodness, and remain as silent as the grave respecting this presumptuous visit of mine to thy abode. Forgive me! I will quickly leave the wood.”

With these words he cast yet one sad glance upon the book, as if he wished to bid a last farewell to that object of his longing desire. When he turned round again, he beheld the Were-wolf sitting on the edge of the bed, and looking fixedly on him, while a flood of tears coursed down his cheeks.

This sight drew Bernhart back: he looked

compassionately at the unhappy man, and tears of sympathy began to fall from his own eyes.

"Master!" he said, with his soft voice, "master! thy suffering pierces my heart. Thou hast been so kind toward me, that I would give much to be able to console thee: but what can a poor lad like myself do? Should I ever have it in my power to render thee any service, I am wholly at thy disposal."

The Were-wolf rose up slowly, took Bernhart by the hand, and led him out of the hut, saying—

"Come, my son, that I may gaze upon thy features; it will be doing a kindness to me, and will be a consolation in my suffering."

He conducted the shepherd to the little brook, sat down upon the grass, and said, pointing to the ground before him—

"Sit thee here before me, my son, and marvel not at the tears of joy which thy countenance causes to gush forth. Ten years have already gone by, since any smile from the face of man hath beamed upon the Were-wolf, since any friendly word hath reached his ear. And then—shall I confide it to thee?—there is but one being in the world, who is dearer to me than the apple of my eye, and whose gracious countenance still makes me cling to life. This being has blue eyes like thine, fair locks like thine, fresh blooming cheeks, and a voice as sweet as thine. Hence the secret power of thy countenance over my soul.

Forgive an unhappy being this strange and perhaps foolish emotion."

Bernhart seized one of the Were-wolf's meagre hands and stroked it softly, by way of showing his affection, and, if possible, comforting him in some measure for his sorrowful lot. Thus they remained sitting for some moments in silence side by side. At length the Were-wolf resumed:

"But tell me, my son, how thou couldst dare to enter this dreaded wood? Curiosity doubtless hath spurred thee on; and thou hast had sufficient courage to obey it!"

Bernhart's soul was now moved in its very tenderest part; he could not help revealing the all-consuming desire for knowledge which burned within his heart; and, though trembling in every nerve, he still pressed the Were-wolf's hand lovingly, and thus replied:

"Oh, master! scarce do I dare to tell thee my thoughts; yet, nevertheless, thy kindness encourages me. Reject my presumptuous prayer, if it please thee not to grant it; but be not displeased with me! There burns in my soul an incomprehensible desire to learn how to read; and were it permitted me to explain, I could tell you also how this desire sprung up within my breast. It has become so strong, that the very sight of a book exercises over me an irresistible power: I thus feel my forehead glow, my heart beats impetuously, and I tremble with eager desire, like a very child."

"I have observed it," murmured the Were-wolf.

"Well, then," continued Bernhart, "I perceived thee yesterday, passing by the border of the wood with a book under thy arm. That was enough. From that moment I have had no rest; I did not sleep this last night, and I felt myself impelled toward thee by some secret power. I struggled desperately against this unknown agency, for I dreaded thee much; but all in vain! My fate was fixed, and I would have hurried through fire and water to seek out that book. Shall I confess to thee what bold, audacious hope filled my bosom? I dared to hope that the Were-wolf might teach me to read!"

There was a short pause, during which the young shepherd peered anxiously and tremblingly into the hollow eyes of the Were-wolf.

"Well, then, my son," said the latter, "thy hopes shall not be disappointed; the Were-wolf will teach thee."

A shout of joy resounded over the meadow. Bernhart sprang forward, sat himself down near the Were-wolf, twined his arms round his neck, and wept with joy upon his shoulder, while words of gratitude poured from his lips. A moment after he started up again, leaped about like one distracted round the Were-wolf, and continued, without stopping, his cry of joy—

"Then at last I shall learn to read! Thanks, thanks, dear master! I will pray to God for thee,

and kiss thy hands, as those of my best benefactor. To read,—to know! Heaven be praised for such goodness!"

The Were-wolf stood up, and approaching Bernhart, said, in an earnest tone, "I must forewarn you that the fulfilment of my promise depends on certain conditions, which must be inviolably kept. Mark well then what I say, and impress my words deeply in thy soul; for if thou shouldst forget any one of them, I can never see thee more."

"Oh, speak!" exclaimed Bernhart; "I am prepared for all; never will I do any thing that may be displeasing to thee!"

"Attend well, then! Thou must never put thy foot in the wood, save in the early morning, ere yet the sun stands in the south. Never must thou return to the hut of the Were-wolf, happen what may; never must thou ask the Were-wolf any question concerning his manner of life or his exercises of penitence; and still less must thou speak to him of thy parents, thy sister, or thy brother. Let this last name, above all others, never drop from thy lips. Beware of penetrating by night into the wood. Thou knowest the punishment, which, through God's will, I am obliged to undergo: it is dreadful, and even perilous to witness. Guard faithfully in thy breast the secrets of this wood: an incautious word might cause me my death. This is all that I have to say to thee. And now, my child, behold the sun hath reached the south; one of my hours approaches. Leave me

therefore. When thou returnest in the morning, seat thyself beneath yon oak, and imitate the cry of the wood-owl. It will be heard in my hut, and then I will come to thee with the book."

At these words he pressed once again the hand of the young shepherd, and turning round, he proceeded with slow steps toward his hut.

Bernhart lifted up his staff from the ground, and took the path by which he had come. How beautiful, how resplendent, now appeared to him this woody solitude! How glorious the sunlight, which shone warmly on his glowing cheek as soon as he had crept from the bramble-brake, and stood upon the open heath! How ravishing, how sweet, the song of the birds, and the solitary chirp of the grasshopper!

With light and bounding steps he hastened toward his flocks, called to him his faithful dog and his favorite sheep, and began telling them that he was to learn to read; he sang all his choicest songs, and danced untired upon the heath, until the sinking sun called him homeward.

CHAPTER III.

THE STORM.

ON the following day, as soon as Bernhart had led his sheep to the heath, he crept forward under the bramble-brake and hastened toward the abode of the Were-wolf. No sooner had he begun to utter the appointed cry, than the Were-wolf came out from his hut and approached the youth with a benevolent smile. He sat down near him under the tree, and after he had opened the large book, he began, without other explanation, to show him the letters and to name them. When he had devoted two hours to this instruction, he got up, drew forth from under his garment another book, and offered it to Bernhart with these words:

“My son, take this little book as a present from me; it will serve thee to repeat to thyself what I have taught thee. Thou must summon all the faculties of thy soul in order to retain well what I convey to thee, and when thou art alone strive to recollect the characters again. I have sufficient confidence in thee to be convinced that thou wilt not show this book to any one, and that, in case it happen to be perceived, thou wilt be silent respecting its owner.”

Bernhart carried the book with rapture to his lips, and answered—

“Oh, fear nothing, master! I will fasten the book in a sheepskin cover, and wear it, suspended to a cord, on my naked breast. In this way no one will be able to discover it. I will only draw it forth when far from the reach of all mankind, in order to learn it undisturbed.”

“Until to-morrow, then, my son,” said the Werewolf, and withdrew.

Bernhart quitted the wood and betook himself to his flock. Seating himself on the ground with blissful pleasure, he opened the book upon his knees, and, quite absorbed in himself, he repeated carefully what he had heard. Occasionally a joyful smile gleamed over his features, as he recognised a letter, and greeted it as an old friend; at other times grief and disappointment might be read upon his countenance, and he would rub his forehead with impatient gesture when his memory had proved unfaithful, and he could not recall the name of this or that character.

Thus did Bernhart spend the first day of his school-time, and so also were spent the days following. He was not always able to quit his flocks and repair to the wood, for he was frequently obliged to lead them for pasture to some distant spot. Thus five or six days would often pass, before he could visit the stranger; but then he studied all the more diligently the little book which he constantly wore next his heart.

Since his acquaintance with the Were-wolf, Bernhart was not regarded with so much favor by the farmer in whose service he was. This change was occasioned by Bernhart's negligence: for instead of leading the sheep to the richest pastures, he was nearly always to be found in the neighborhood of the wood, where little herbage for cattle was to be found; and often had the passers-by looked about for the shepherd in vain.

It will not appear wonderful that Bernhart in a short time made great progress, and that before a year had passed he was able to read through his own book, and even to repeat by heart the beautiful prayers which it contained. From time to time the Were-wolf allowed him to read in the larger book; and this greatly rejoiced the heart of the young shepherd; for the volume, which contained the "Wonders of Nature," by Pliny, gave him a description of many strange animals. Hitherto Bernhart had never questioned the Were-wolf upon any matter, neither had the latter manifested a desire to learn any thing more precise concerning his young scholar; as yet he did not even know his name. Notwithstanding this, Bernhart felt himself drawn toward his benefactor with a feeling of love and gratitude. Frequently already had he shed bitter tears at the thought of how many pains the Were-wolf must needs endure without its being permitted him to seek for consolation or alleviation for his suffering. His grateful sympathy was increased yet more, when, after the

lapse of a year, he remarked that the Were-wolf grew visibly thinner and thinner, and was evidently sinking by degrees into the grave. With deeper grief still, Bernhart soon saw that it was only with painful effort that the old man could leave the hut in order to repair to the tree, that his eyes had lost their brilliancy, and his voice had become dull and almost unintelligible.

Once, as the Were-wolf was striving to explain to him a passage in the large book, he suddenly lost the power of utterance, and heaved a sigh, which showed that his breast was now too weak to be able to endure the fatigue of continued speaking. Bernhart's feelings here overpowered him, and he exclaimed, in a flood of tears—

“Oh, master! thou art ill, and thou doest nothing to restore thyself. Thou dost then wish to die?”

Instead of answering, the Were-wolf lifted up his book from the ground, and turned slowly toward the hut, saying, in a melancholy voice, “Until to-morrow, my son.”

Bernhart saw him depart with fainting steps. When he had wept a long while in the same spot, he returned, full of grief and anxiety, to the open heath. During that entire day he thought of the illness of his benefactor, and poured out many a secret tear over his unhappy fate. When the day was declining he took his way homeward, and as they passed into the field he counted over, in presence of the farmer, the sheep of his flock. Five

of the sheep were wanting. Thereupon the long-suppressed indignation of the farmer found vent; in stern language he upbraided the shepherd with his negligence, and loaded him with invectives. At the same time he ordered him to tie up his knapsack, and without further delay drove him from his house.

When evening had wrapped the earth in gloom, the young shepherd lay weeping on the heath, not far from the well-known bramble-brake. The unhappy youth knew not whither to bend his steps, and had laid his head down upon his bundle in order to wait for the morning, and then to acquaint the Were-wolf with his misfortunes.

In spite of his deep trouble, he at length closed his eyes in sleep. Scarcely had he slept two hours when the heavy sultry air began to weigh upon him like a covering of lead. His breathing became oppressed, perspiration covered his body, and from time to time he would draw his hand unconsciously toward his chest as though to fan himself. All, even the inanimate things of nature, seemed in anxious expectancy; not the smallest breeze, or a sighing zephyr, stirred the leaves; the heath seemed one illimitable grave. Only from afar one might hear the croaking of the frogs as they sent forth their greeting to the approaching rain.

Shortly there showed in the far horizon a sombre veil, which slowly lifted itself higher and higher, and spread itself out wider, like a mourning crape, which the hand of God was stretching over the

anguished earth. Ever and anon from behind the horizon there flamed forth a light gleam: the silence of night became more awful, the air more oppressive—until at length the threatening volcano sent forth a messenger, as though to say, “I come!”

The harbinger breeze murmured caressingly through the leaves, and gently swayed the tops of the tender plants; but soon after the storm rapidly developed itself: a fiery arrow flew athwart the broad expanse; a dreadful thunderclap shook the lowly couch of the young shepherd. Awakened and still deafened with the sound, he started from his slumber, opened his eyes, and gazed upward. At that moment twenty flashes shot from the heaped-up clouds, and directly after a hurricane swept howling over the wild heath, bowing or snapping the strongest trees, and bearing the torn-off leaves in rapid whirl toward the heavens. The clouds broke; the rain burst down in torrents, like a second deluge. Alarmed and terror-stricken, Bernhart fell down upon his knees and prayed. Then he rose up and hurried toward a large beech, in order to find shelter from the storm; but before he could reach it a serpent-like flame ran down the trunk of the tree, and broke it like a straw, while its splendid crest was hurled to the earth with a fearful crash. The lightning hissed without intermission over the heath; Bernhart’s terror increased with each moment, and, whether it was that he expected help from the Were-wolf, or that he was spurred onward by the destiny that ruled him, he crept under the

bramble-brake, and hastened, all distracted, to the hut. As soon as he had reached the oak-tree he uttered, despairingly, the accustomed cry; but no reply reached his ear, nor, though the lightning lit up the heath with its dazzling splendor, could he see the old man approach. At first it occurred to him that the Were-wolf, in pursuance of God's chastisement, was to wander about that night as a wolf, and that he would perchance return under that guise. The hut he dared not approach, for that would have been to break his plighted word. He went back therefore by the path he had come, and threw himself down upon the ground at some distance from the brake. The storm went on careering toward the north, and presently an awful calm sank down upon the earth.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXPLANATION.

ON the following morning the sun rose clear and resplendent in the blue horizon, throwing its beneficent light upon Bernhart, and quickly drying his wet garments. He took his bundle from the ground, and repaired again to the oak-tree in the wood, and uttered his usual cry; but the call remained unanswered as before: no one emerged from the hut. Bernhart repeated it several times, but in vain. Terrible forebodings now filled his breast: he thought of the possible death of the Were-wolf; then, perhaps, that he was only ill; but how, then, could he help himself?—he who was only able to walk a few steps. This thought quickened Bernhart's resolution to go to the very hut, and, if necessary, to fall a sacrifice even to his own generosity.

He advanced toward the hut; but scarcely had he looked within, when a cry of alarm burst from his lips, and, quaking with affright, he remained standing like one rooted to the spot.

In front of the cross lay the Were-wolf, half-naked, and stretched out like a corpse; blood gushed in thick drops from his bared back, and his fainting hand still grasped convulsively a dis-

cipline, wherewith he had scourged himself thus pitilessly.

After Bernhart had gazed in mute horror at this fearful spectacle, he sprang into the hut, encircled the Were-wolf with his arms, and cried out, weeping, "Master, master, awake! it is I, thy scholar; oh, do not thus die!"

The Were-wolf opened his eyes, and looked at the young shepherd unsteadily, and with a sad smile.

"My son," he said, "I forgive thee for having broken thy word. Thou hast now discovered a secret of my bitter life. To-day, alas! I shall not die; but I hope that God will soon grant to me a resting-place in the grave."

At these words he rose up, drew on his hairy garment, and seated himself on the edge of the bed; he looked unusually pale, his lips were livid, and his eyes fixed and glazed.

Bernhart could no longer bear the sight.

"Oh, master!" he exclaimed, with doleful voice, "wherefore dost thou punish thyself thus? That cannot be God's pleasure! If thou hast indeed committed a deadly sin, it cannot be so grievous as the punishment thou dost inflict upon thyself."

A disdainful smile hovered over the Were-wolf's features. "Not grievous!" he exclaimed. "Listen, young man: since death is now near to me, and thou wilt never guess who thy benefactor is, I will confide to thee the secret of my crime. Thou hast read in the book which I gave thee how Cain

killed his brother Abel, and how he was therefore cursed by God in his posterity. Well, then, my son, the Were-wolf likewise hath murdered his brother, and God hath cursed him till his death ! Behold this sword : it is the very one that slew my brother ; on this garment his innocent blood still remains.”

A painful silence followed these words. Soon, however, the Were-wolf gazed anew at the affrighted Bernhart, and in a broken voice continued his recital :

“My son, I will reveal to thee in a few words my misdeeds : the history of my life will be the last instruction I can impart to thee. I had a brother, and we loved one another with the deepest attachment. We also had a sister, whose features are very like thine ; therefore am I gladdened by thy presence. We lived long together happy and content, till a woman excited jealousy in our hearts. I loved her with a burning ardor ; my brother not less earnestly : but he was handsomer than I, and seemed to be rewarded with a return of love.

“Jealousy burned like poison in my veins, but could not prevail over brotherly love ; I concealed my affliction, and suffered in silence. As I was returning one day with my brother and an old domestic from a visit to this lady, he began to jeer and scoff at my unrequited love. The long pent-up rage began to burn in my breast. He still went on with his scoffings. I lost all reason, and indigna-

tion made me blind; involuntarily I seized the sword which hung from my saddle, and, cleaving the head of my brother, he dropped down dead upon the ground. I sprang from my horse and threw myself upon his body; his blood spurted out upon my surcoat; I tore my hair in despair; with heart-rending tears I called him by his name, but all was in vain; no answer was returned."

The Were-wolf here paused to recover breath. Bernhart stood motionless before him; he shuddered visibly, and his whole bearing betrayed his impatience to learn the continuation of his narrative.

The Were-wolf continued:

"It was not long permitted to me to bewail my crime over the dead body of my brother. The old domestic soon came with a travelling-bag, which he attached to my steed; he then tore me away from the body, compelled me, by an irresistible power, to mount my horse, and urged me to fly, that our house might not be covered with eternal shame.

"Blindly, and bereft of consciousness, I gave spurs to my horse, and let it gallop on the whole night long. Two years I wandered about in foreign lands, and after their expiration I made my confession, and the penance appointed me was, to pass my whole life in solitude and in practices of penitence. I chose this wood for that purpose. I am not a Were-wolf, my son; but, in order the better to conceal my secret, I submitted to this

appellation, which the country-people had given me. Now thou knowest thy benefactor."

Bernhart would fain have spoken, but his surprise was so great, that for some time he could not utter a word; at length his bosom became lighter, and he cried out, like one distracted—

"Abulfaragus! Aleidis! Arnold! Oh, master! thou art no murderer; thy name is Hugo Van Craenhove!"

Who could describe the expression which came over the features of Hugo at these words? His eyes flashed suddenly with new fire; he leaned his head toward Bernhart, as if he would fain crave a clearer explanation of his words.

The youth, however, again cried out—

"No, Count Hugo, thou art no murderer! thy brother lives!"

With a loud cry and a flood of tears, Hugo sank from the bedside to the ground, dragged himself toward Bernhart, seized his hand, and sighed out these words:

"What sayest thou? Oh, speak! Have I not slain my brother? Am I not then a murderer? Does he live, and hast thou seen him alive since that dreadful night? O God! could I but believe this! But thou dost err; I have certainly killed him; there, there hang the tokens of his blood!"

"No, master!" exclaimed Bernhart; "I mistake not. Arnold Van Craenhove lives, I repeat it: he it was that gave me the sweet Aleidis for my

sister. I have spent eight years of my life in the 'Lanteernenhof,' and am acquainted with the events of that dreadful night. The blow thou didst deal thy brother was not mortal: he only bears a deep scar upon his forehead. Now has it become clear to me why Abulfaragus banished me: it was that I might lead back thee, my master, to Count Arnold."

Hugo now no longer doubted the truth of Bernhart's words. He cast himself down before the cross, and poured forth with loud voice a fervent thanksgiving to the Almighty. When he rose up again, a blissful smile beamed over his countenance, and with unspeakable joy he repeated—

"So, then, I am no murderer! Heaven be praised for its mercy!"

Then he sat down fainting upon the couch, and tears of joy coursed unrestrained down his cheeks, where a settled smile still continued to linger.

Bernhart stood silent awhile, and held his hands before his face, as though given over to deep emotion. After a few moments he drew near to Hugo, and said, earnestly—

"The all-beneficent God hath made me unhappy for a short time, in order to use me as the instrument of his inscrutable designs: my mission is now half accomplished. As Abulfaragus formerly predicted, I shall now quickly return to the 'Lanteernenhof,' in order to change, by one

single word, the suffering of thy brother into joy."

An expression of deep pain glanced darkly over Hugo's features :

"My brother," said he, thoughtfully, "my brother! shall I ever dare to appear before him? Will he not load me with reproaches? And yet, oh God! I must see him, crave his forgiveness, feel his brotherly kiss upon my cheek, and press my sister Aleidis to my bosom. And then, then will I give up my spirit beneath the shadow of the towers of my ancestral castle."

"Thy brother?" said Bernhart, interrupting him; "thy brother will receive thee as an angel sent by the Lord to bring him pardon. He hath suffered as grievously as thou; he also is worn with sorrow, and droops his head under the bitter weight of remorse. The intelligence that thou art living will restore to him all his vigor and joy; and he will bless me as his deliverer!"

A fresh pause followed these words. Count Hugo was the first to break the silence; he bent forward, grasped Bernhart's hand, and said, in a sorrowful voice—

"My good son, thou wilt perchance marvel at the request I am about to make thee: it is probably the last service which thou wilt have to render me."

"Any thing, every thing," exclaimed Bernhart; "I have never yet been able to do any thing for my benefactor who taught me to read."

"Well, then, good youth, I wish to accompany thee to the 'Lanteernēnhof!' Hast thou strength and courage enough to support my fainting limbs?"

"Thou art then so feeble!" sighed Bernhart. "We have two good leagues to go from this spot! Will thy strength sustain thee? If it be agreeable to thee to stay here till to-morrow evening, I will return with some wagon to convey thee hence."

"My impatience is too great," returned Hugo; "and dost thou not comprehend, my son, that servants and men-at-arms would accompany me? In this wise I never will return."

"I will do as thou wishest," said Bernhart; "I am ready."

Count Hugo gratefully pressed the hand of the youth, and said, while he pointed before him—

"My son, this abode of the Were-wolf must not remain standing here, like a leaf in the unhappy history of his life. Take from the couch both moss and leaves, tear up the stakes from the ground and lay them thereon, and cast the reading-desk also upon the heap."

When this was accomplished, Hugo seized the blood-stained garment and laid it upon the pile. Bernhart followed his movements without venturing to utter a word, although the greatest astonishment was depicted on his countenance. He laid the cross down at some distance. Hugo

was busied with a flint in striking sparks from the sword, which he caused to fall upon the heap of dry grass. Now for the first time Bernhart understood his intention. He ran quickly back, seized the large book and took it under his arm, as an old friend whom he would fain rescue from the flames. Pointing to the travelling-bag, he inquired—

“But this gold, master?”

“If thou wouldst take some with thee,” returned Hugo, “do so.”

Bernhart took two of the golden coins, and put them with his little book into the leathern srip. The expression of his countenance made it evident that he was not taking the money without some peculiar design.

Suddenly the dry grass took fire and blazed around the hut. The old man seized Bernhart by the hand, bade him take the cross with him, and walked before him to the oak-tree. When they looked around, they beheld dense clouds of smoke ascending into the air; tongues of flame mounted over the roof, and quickly encircled the hut.

“Now, my child,” sighed Hugo, “let us with united hearts pray to God yet once more in this wood.”

With these words he knelt down slowly, and lifted his hands in prayer. Bernhart imitated his example, and while the hut became a prey to the

flames, they both sent up a heartfelt prayer to God, amid the silence of the forest, and bade a last farewell to the solitary spot which had so long been watered by the tears of Count Hugo. After the hut was reduced to ashes, they rose up, planted as a remembrance before the oak the wooden cross, and with slow steps entered the footpath. A moment later they stood upon the open heath.

CHAPTER V.

THE REUNION.

COUNT HUGO had relied too much upon his strength. Scarcely were they both out of the wood, when he felt a trembling in his limbs. He sat down exhausted, and let his head droop dejectedly upon his breast. Bernhart meantime broke an oaken staff from the thicket and returned to Hugo.

"Be of good heart now, master," he said; "I will become thy prop, and carry thee, if need be. We will journey on slowly; only take courage!"

He helped the feeble Hugo to stand up, and then placed his shoulder under the count's arm, and obliged him to lean upon it. With sinking steps they toiled on over the heath, interrupting their journey with frequent pauses to take rest.

For a little while there was a silence between the two; but by degrees they began to hold comforting discourse with each other. Bernhart was doubtless relating the history of his changeful life, for his eyes now shone with unwonted fire; the name of Aleidis resounded amid the lonely trees, and the fields assuredly heard the thrilling avowal of the secret feeling of his heart. Although Hugo

experienced great fatigue, there nevertheless shone from time to time a smile upon his features, when he learned the noble birth of his young companion, and felt assured that reciprocal love had bound together the hearts of Bernhart and Aleidis. The young man's account convinced him that Arnold bewailed his scoffing, and had never ceased to love him in spite of the deadly wound which Hugo had inflicted. This comforting assurance inspired him with new strength; he struggled manfully against his weakness, and thus about two hours after mid-day they reached a little wood near Wyneghem.

There the strength of the count abandoned him. He sank down by a tree, and lay fainting on the ground, like one dead; yet his features were lighted up with a blissful smile, his eyes sparkled, and a color rose upon his hollow cheeks. The energetic spirit rose triumphant over the exhausted body, and he believed that after a kindly repose he would again be able to proceed with his journey.

Wonderful was the tender solicitude of Bernhart. He looked anxiously about, and his eyes sought for some object which might serve as a pillow for the feeble head of the old man. As he found none, he let himself down upon the ground, drew Hugo's head gently toward him, and leaned it on his breast, and there he remained sitting motionless.

Not a sigh was to be heard under that tree, not a motion revealed life in those two forms, until at

length Count Hugo, after he had rested half an hour, said to Bernhart—

“My son, I am thirsty.”

The youth, thus released, turned himself round heedfully, and replied, while he rose up—

“Remain lying quietly here, master; I will look about for some drink.”

And with these words Bernhart passed on between the trees, and as soon as he could no longer be seen by Hugo, he ran with all his might to the village of Wyneghem. There he changed one of his gold-pieces for a pitcher of beer, a piece of boiled meat, with some butter and bread. Laden with these provisions, he returned in haste to Hugo, who was sitting upright against the tree, and seemed to be somewhat rested from his fatigue. He ate and drank of all that Bernhart offered him, and rejoiced his young companion by an appearance of restored strength and courage.

Two hours after sunset they beheld from afar the towers of “Lanteernenhof.” The same feeling possessed both; their hearts beat faster, they trembled, and fixed their eyes earnestly on the distant battlements without revealing their emotion by a single word.

One might think that they would now have hastened with redoubled steps and heightened impatience toward the end of their wanderings.

But it was just the contrary. Overpowered by their feelings, both sank to the ground, and were

for some time lost in silence at the sight of the towers, while tears rolled over their cheeks in silvery pearls.

Hugo first broke the silence.

“Oh, my son, couldst thou look into my heart! Couldst thou know what endless joy possesses and seizes me! Yonder they are, those towers of my ancestral home! After thirteen years of suffering—thirteen years, during which remorse has gnawed at my heart—I behold them again with the blessed feeling that I am no murderer. Ah! the leaves of the trees that overshadowed the sports of my childhood will yet once more rustle over the gray head of the feeble, sinking Hugo. I shall find anew rich remembrances of my forefathers, and fold my brother, my Aleidis, my faithful Abulfaragus, with ecstasy in my arms. Ah! may the all-beneficent God accord me yet a few days—and then, then will I gratefully and cheerfully——”

A singular cry from Bernhart interrupted him in his speech.

“Look! look!” exclaimed the young man, while he pointed in the distance. “Dost thou see under those trees an old man who is gathering herbs? Yes, yes, it is he!”

Before Hugo could follow with his eye the direction in which Bernhart pointed, the latter had already risen in impetuous haste, and was now running forward as fast as he could between the trees toward the old man. Hugo, without recognising the stranger in the distance, saw him press

Bernhart to his breast three times, and kiss him fervently. They soon advanced rapidly to the spot where Hugo was sitting, and as they approached him he first recognised his faithful Abulfaragus. He rose with a cry of joy, and sank into the arms of the astrologer. The latter could not speak for emotion, and his tongue only muttered unintelligible words; he sat himself down upon the grass, and a stream of tranquil tears flowed from his eyes. Hugo sat down by his side and took his hand; Bernhart sat on the other side in the like position. After a few moments Abulfaragus dried the tears from his cheeks; with wonder and love he contemplated the countenance of Hugo, and with eyes gazing heavenward, exclaimed—

“I thank, I thank thee, O God, that I behold him once again before I die!”

Then he fixed his eyes again upon Hugo, and said—

“Thou art weak and ill, master, but fear not that death shall tear thee from us; more than once have I combated him, and, besides, the noble blood of Craenhove flows in iron frames. Courage and hope, Count Hugo! happiness and joy awaits us all.”

“So it is then true, Abulfaragus, that my brother Arnold hates me not?”

“Hate thee?” said Abulfaragus, amazed; “hate thee, Count Hugo? Thy face betrays how much thou hast suffered, but I can scarce believe that thy life has been more wretched than that of

Arnold. Thou didst believe thou hadst killed thy brother; Arnold holds himself, on account of his mocking words, as the cause of the misdeed, and, perhaps, of a self-murder. After he had travelled about for two years, and had sought during that time for some token of thy being still alive, he buried himself as one dead in the walls of the 'Lanteernenhof,' under the conviction that he himself had taken away thy life. Thou mayest easily conceive how this double sting of conscience must have irrecoverably troubled his repose. Thou art thin and worn, he is still more so; thou art happy to behold him again, and he will perchance lose his senses for joy at the sight of thee."

"Well, then, let us hasten to him," cried Hugo, "so that I may behold him again, and receive his pardon!"

"My lord count!" returned Abulfaragus, quickly, "thy wish neither can nor ought at once to be fulfilled; thy sudden appearance might easily have a fatal issue. Besides, thou knowest that the greater part of our life has been spent in tears and affliction, in order to conceal the dreadful secret. It ought not yet to be unveiled. Should Count Hugo Van Craenhove enter the 'Lanteernenhof' in this poor guise by day, the servants and retainers would seek for the solution of the enigma; and who knows whether they might not succeed in discovering it? Remain here till evening; I will return to the castle, and there give orders

that no one go forth. Meanwhile I will send thee Aleidis, and will myself return betimes to fetch thee. Have patience yet a little while; it is but a few minutes added to thirteen long years. It is the last sacrifice thou offerest to the honor of thy house!"

With these words he pressed the hand of the count, and with hasty steps entered the path to the "Lanteernenhof." Filled with hope and joy, Hugo began to hold happy converse with Bernhart, and so shortened the delay. Suddenly they beheld in the distance a noble dame, who seemed to approach them. She was of a tall and slender figure, and wore black robes, and a transparent veil which half concealed her countenance. Although Bernhart knew her not, he listened, nevertheless, to the voice of his heart, sprang up quickly, and ran toward her with all his might, while he called out, with ecstasy—

"Sister, dear sister,—Aleidis, Aleidis!"

With outstretched arms he rushed toward her, but at a little distance stood suddenly still, as though paralyzed; he let his arms sink down, while, all abashed and embarrassed, he bent down his weeping eyes. Poor Bernhart! he had thought to find again his sister, the little Aleidis; but instead of her, he now saw standing before him a tall damsel of surpassing beauty. She looked upon him without even the smallest semblance of easy, unconstrained friendship; on the contrary, a blush covered her alabaster forehead at his first

glance. Then Bernhart first felt in what coarse and unseemly garments he was clothed; how his hair was all in disorder, and his face grown pale. Confusion filled his breast; and at that instant, perhaps, he discovered for the first time that some other feeling besides that of brotherly love was unwittingly striking root in his heart. It must be that the eye of love penetrates into the depths of the heart; for Aleidis understood at one glance the young man's pain, and, instead of saluting him with the brotherly name of Bernhart, she said to him, with her silvery voice—

“Burgrave Van Reedale, art thou pained in beholding thy sister again?”

The young man raised his head, and smiled gratefully upon her for these comforting words; and while he, thrilling and ravished, allowed his eyes to rest upon her, she said, in a low, and as it were, anxious voice—

“Bernhart, I have thought of thee alone during the long and sorrowful separation; but hast thou not forgotten Aleidis?”

This avowal drew from Bernhart's breast an exclamation of wonder, and from his eyes a flood of joyous tears.

“Forgotten! oh, heavens!” he exclaimed; “forgotten thee, Aleidis! utter not such words, for my heart is almost bursting at beholding again my sister and my friend.”

And he clasped her hands in his, and bedewed them with tears of love and gratitude. Hand in

hand, all trembling with emotion, they both approached Count Hugo; and now began a touching struggle of sisterly affection. Aleidis sat near her brother without uttering a word, her arms twined about his neck, and her glistening blue eyes fast fixed upon him. From time to time Bernhart's shy and furtive glances wandered toward the beautiful Aleidis; for her graceful attractions agitated his sensitive soul too keenly, and inspired a feeling in his heart which astonished and abashed him. This feeling was still heightened when Aleidis's eyes met his own, and rested softly and mildly upon him. Meantime the sun was disappearing under the horizon, and twilight was beginning to steal over the fields. Abulfaragus now came back to them.

As soon as Bernhart perceived the old man, he ran to him, and threw himself with wild joy upon his neck, exclaiming—

“Oh, thanks, thanks, good and noble Abulfaragus! thou hast done for me what a father does for his son: thou hast kept for me a beautiful and loving sister. May Heaven prolong thy days for this, and bestow upon thee——”

Abulfaragus tapped the young man on the shoulder, and replied, with joyous pleasantry—

“Young friend, thou seest that what joy now bestows upon thee might formerly have proved a misfortune to this noble house, and thy own ruin. Abulfaragus hath not persecuted and banished thee without design. Now all danger is passed

away; my happy child, I have not only kept a sister for thee——”

He approached his mouth to Bernhart's ear, and went on mysteriously:

“For the sacristan of Deurne has received orders to deck the church for the celebration of a splendid wedding. Dost thou know the bridegroom?”

With these words he quitted the astonished Bernhart, and went on to Hugo. He apprised him of his brother's condition; and, as soon as he perceived that the darkness favored their entrance into the castle, he urged his departure. During this short journey, all observed a strict silence; the approaching meeting kept their minds on the rack and in anxious thought. Hugo trembled in every limb; his heart beat with irregular throbs. He was now to appear before his brother, whom he had almost slain. At length they proceeded over the bridge, and entered the courtyard. Hugo could no longer hold himself upright, but begged for some support. Bernhart took his right arm, and Aleidis his left, and thus they advanced slowly to Arnold's room. The door opened, and then, in wondrous tones, there resounded the words, “Brother! brother! Pardon! pardon!”

Both brothers sank weeping into each other's arms. One long kiss—a few unintelligible words followed—and then the worn-out frames gave way together, and dropped with heavy fall to the

ground. As they held each other fast embraced, those present believed that over-excitement had thrown them into a momentary swoon. Abulfaragus was the only one from whose lips burst forth a piercing cry, which resounded through the whole castle; he threw himself sobbing upon the bodies of the brothers.

Alas! thirteen years of suffering had not been able to break down their vital powers. One single moment of joy had done this. They were dead, and their souls had mounted upward together to the judgment-seat of God.

Had any one, ten years later, cast a glance into the solitary castle, he would have found it in no way altered.

Were it permitted him, at the same time, to wander in the evening under the over-arching trees of the court-yard, a small thicket of oaks would soon have arrested his attention, in the midst of which stood a gravestone, with the following inscription:

B. O. M.

Walter Van Craenhobe

and

His Spouse

Maria,

And their Children

Hugo and Arnold.

May God have mercy upon their souls.

Before the gravestone he might have seen five persons kneeling: an old man, who tottered like a child under the weight of years; a man with fair hair and blue eyes; a most beautiful matron with fair hair and blue eyes; and two children, a little boy and a little maiden, with hair and eyes of the same color as their father Bernhart and their mother Aleidis.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STORY OF ABULFARAGUS.

ON a winter evening, in the year 1374, most of the occupants of the 'Lanteernenhof' were assembled in the large hall of the castle.

Abulfaragus, now eighty years of age, was seated in an easy elbow-chair by the fireside, and looking silently at the dancing flames. On a footstool near him sat a boy of some five years, who, with his little head pressed against the knee of the old man, slumbered peacefully. A little farther on, at a heavy oaken table, might be seen the beautiful Aleidis Van Craenhove, with a little daughter on her bosom, in earnest conversation with the Burgrave Bernhart Van Reedale, her husband.

Outside the castle the weather was apparently very stormy, for the window-frames rattled fearfully in their leaden fastenings, and occasionally there came such violent gusts of wind, that Aleidis more than once turned round her head in anxious alarm. Still more vehement was the howling of the storm on the castle roof. In the chimney it blew back the flames of the hearth-fire

with irresistible force ; its sharp whistlings played around the turrets, and the rapidly-revolving weathercock creaked wildly on its hinges.

Painful thoughts kept possession of the hearts of Bernhart and Abulfaragus, not perhaps because either of them dreaded any thing, or had any occasion for alarm : it was simply the natural effect of the storm. Aleidis, on the contrary, sat there in inexplicable anxiety ; the loud voice of the storm and its wailing tones affected her feeble nerves, and caused her to remain trembling and agitated on her seat. The paleness of her face alarmed her spouse not a little, and with all thoughtful effort he strove by kindly words to turn her attention to other subjects. It might easily be seen that he was suffering anxiety on her account, for every feature betrayed his emotion. Suddenly a smile played about his mouth, as though some happy thought had occurred to him, and, turning to Abulfaragus, he said—

“Abulfaragus, my old friend, is it then well to be disconsolate, so long as one dwells not under the same roof with adversity?”

“No, my lord,” answered the old man, without looking up ; “the hours of pain and misfortune are but too numerous without this ; but man is a part of creation, and therefore I marvel not that his spirit should be overclouded, when the face of heaven is shrouded in tempest.”

The hollow voice of the old man terrified Bernhart not a little, and scared away from his mind

the thought which had caused him to smile. He inquired—

“Doth this hour tell thee any thing sorrowful, Abulfaragus, that thy words sound thus mournfully?”

The old man turned his gaze upon Bernhart, and said, in still more doleful tones—

“The storm, my lord, exercises an irresistible power over the hearts of men: it compels the soul to self-contemplation; it awakens the memory, unrolling before it pictures out of the distant past, and showing us the most awful moments of our life. Thus it is that it overclouds the spirit.”

“It is so, indeed,” replied Bernhart; “before me also, during the last half-hour, the most terrible moments of my life have been passing. I was thinking, Aleidis my beloved, how fearfully I suffered when destiny so suddenly and so cruelly tore me from thy side; again I fancied myself overwhelmed by that old grief.”

Whether it was that the noble lady wished to reward Bernhart for these loving expressions, or that his words had rendered her deaf to the fearful noise of the storm, she smiled and pressed his hand with warm affection. Bernhart inquired of the old man—

“But of what art thou thinking, Abulfaragus? Thou seemest to me as if overpowered by some deep affliction.”

“I!” sighed the old man; “I am thinking of my father, and my mother, and my sister.”

"Of thy father and mother?" cried Bernhart and Aleidis in one breath, and with a look of surprise. "Hast thou not always told us thou didst never know them?"

"I held it to be unadvisable to cause discomfort by the recital of the mishaps and evil fortune which befel them; and even now, I pray you question me no further: your hearts would be too deeply filled with sorrow and compassion."

"And were it even so," replied Bernhart, "could we pass the evening more profitably? Permit us to weep with thee over the sad fate of thy parents; tears of sympathy are sweet, and help to relieve the burdened spirit. Is it not so, Aleidis?"

"Ay, truly, Abulfaragus," said the noble lady. "Thou hast awakened our curiosity and our interest; and however sad thy history may be, I pray thee to share it with us. I long to know the fate of the parents of our friend and guardian."

"Their fate, noble dame?" cried Abulfaragus, with trembling voice. "That of my father, torn to pieces by wolves,—is that sufficiently dreadful?"

"Oh God!" sighed Aleidis, "what an awful secret hast thou always kept from us!"

"Is it not so?" continued the old man. "Such remembrances are too dreadful for one to be able to share them with others. It is better that they be still buried in my breast."

"Oh, no!" interrupted Aleidis; "recount to us thy history; thou hast already so often promised,

and we have just now a long evening. It will hinder the storm from alarming us any further."

Bernhart joined his request with that of his spouse; and both entreated so long and so earnestly, that at length Abulfaragus consented. Thus he began :

The Story of Abulfaragus.

"In the year 1308, there dwelt at Damascus a Jewish physician, by name Ab-el-Farach, who had acquired among the Arabs much knowledge of various kinds, and who was renowned throughout all Syria for his learning and skill. Persons came to him from Aleppo, Jerusalem, and Bagdad; yea, even the inhabitants of Scanderon and Bas-sora did not hesitate to undertake perilous journeys in order to consult him. This Ab-el-Farach was my father. I can yet remember that we dwelt in a sumptuous house, to which a spacious garden was attached, in which I played every day with my good mother Abigail and my sister Rebecca. We possessed slaves and servants in great number; and every one, Jew, Christian, and Saracen, esteemed and loved us.

"At that time, the Christian band of nobles, who were called Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, undertook a crusade against the Saracens, in order to wrest it from the Mohammedans, and lay with their fleet before the island of Rhodes. Universal terror spread itself over the Saracen land, for all dreaded the invasion of Syria and Palestine by the

Christians. How it came to pass I know not; but suddenly a rumor was spread abroad that the Christians and Jews were in secret league with the European host, and were prepared to deliver up the towns of Syria, by treachery, to the Knights of St. John. All the inhabitants of Jerusalem who did not believe in Mohammed were assassinated; in still larger streams ran the blood of Jews and Christians at Aleppo; and already, in the streets of Damascus, men incited one another to follow this example.

“On the evening of this day I was sitting with my mother and sister on the flat roof of our house. I was just ten, and my sister seven years old; and we took little notice of the silent affliction of our mother, so much the less because we knew not its cause. We played together, inhaling the balmy fragrance which the wind wafted toward us from the west, and pointing out to one another the most beautiful stars in the heavens; when suddenly we remarked in the court-yard underneath our house a man who was secretly leading a horse and a camel, and was endeavoring to conceal the animals from view. Then the house-door was opened with violence, and again shut. A scarce audible cry escaped from the breast of my mother, and our attention being thus drawn to her, we then first perceived that she trembled.

“With anxious hurry she took us by the hand, and drew us silently on with her to the lower apartments, into which my father was just enter-

ing. Without leaving time to my mother to speak, he closed the door cautiously, and said, with agitated voice—

“‘Abigail, if we remain here until the morning sun returns, its first beams will shine upon our dead bodies. We must away hence with all possible speed. Togrul Almahadi tells me that the slaughter of the Christians and Jews is to begin to-morrow, and that we, as the richest, are destined to fall the first victims. Ask no further now, but take these garments of our slaves and put them on, that you may be taken for a Turkish woman. Let the children also be attired in like manner. I am going to pack up some gold and pearls. A horse and a camel stand ready in the court-yard. Hasten, and say nothing to the slaves; they would betray us.’

“Toward midnight we set out. Our mother was seated on the camel, and each of us on either side of her in a kind of pannier; my father, well armed, rode forward on horseback, in order to show the way. Assuredly the anxiety of our parents must have been great, for we frequently passed by groups of Saracens; but we always made our way through them unnoticed, or else my father contrived to avoid suspicion by making them suppose that we were Turks travelling to Aleppo. After proceeding on our journey for some nights,—for during the day we kept ourselves concealed,—we came to Scanderon, and thence to Simta, not far from Rhodes. At last my

father succeeded in reaching secretly the Christian ships; there he offered his services, and very soon gave such proof of his ability and knowledge as a physician, that the Knights of St. John gladly consented to his proposals. On the following night, a small galley cruised along the coast, and took us in. Under cover of the darkness we reached the ship in safety, and soon found ourselves in a commodious cabin.

“The siege of Rhodes lasted more than a year. Day by day the most sanguinary conflicts took place, and many of the knights were wounded. My father, by his skill and attention, saved so many of them from death, that the Christians felt themselves under the deepest obligations to him, and honored him as their greatest benefactor. Our condition was sufficiently endurable; for our galley, being set apart for the reception of the sick, never took part in the conflict, and we soon felt ourselves at home with the sea and its storms. It happened that there was in the fleet a knight of Brabant, whose eagerness in the pursuit of knowledge soon led him to form a cordial friendship with my father. Their mutual attachment increased from day to day, and at length became so intimate, that the two friends scarcely ever quitted each other, and at times they would watch together, the whole night through, the course of the stars. The affection of this good knight extended likewise itself to us: he often played with Rebecca and myself for hours upon the deck of the

ship, and made himself a child again, in order to join our amusements, and render our sojourn at sea as agreeable to us as possible.

“My mother loved us with the greatest tenderness, and her heart glowed with gratitude toward the noble-minded Christian knight, who showed himself so friendly to us poor Jewish fugitives. From our earliest years the Christians had been pictured to us as cruel and detestable—as the sworn enemies and persecutors of our race. The behavior of this knight, however, awakened our gratitude to such a degree, that every evening, as we sat alone with our father, we spoke with increasing admiration of our benefactor and protector. The Christian religion awakened our interest and excited our astonishment more and more. We conversed with each other on the prowess and magnanimity which the Christian faith had infused into the souls of these knights, and of that sublimity of Christian love which alone had induced our protector to transform into a paradise of friendship and brotherly love our former melancholy existence.

“Our father must certainly have often talked with his Christian friend on the subject of religion; for at times, when he returned to us, he was full of thought, and would say, ‘It is not, after all, so utterly impossible that the “Crucified One” may have been the Messiah!’ By-and-by he went still further, and even took pains to convince us that no other Messiah was to be looked for, since

the God-man of the Christians was the promised One. But in truth our father's exhortations were superfluous: we had long been Christians at heart; and for three months we had possessed a little image of the Saviour, and had prayed secretly before it that the 'Crucified One' would preserve the life of his servant, the Brabantine knight.

"One day, while we were yet at our morning repast, my father came into our chamber, and sat down upon a couch without uttering a word. On his features there shone a remarkable expression of happiness and joy; his eyes sparkled, a smile played around his lips, his whole countenance seemed illumined with a mysterious glow; it was as if a sunbeam had pierced through the deck and was playing upon his forehead.

"After a moment's silence he rose up, and said to us, in a glad and solemn tone—

"'Abigail, thou faithful companion of my fortunes, and you, my children, listen attentively to what I have to communicate; but think not, from what I am about to say to you, that I shall compel you to follow my example. Come hither, my son, and thou also, Rebecca, that I may kiss you once more before I proceed further.'

"However much the joyous expression of my father's countenance was calculated to inspire us with confidence, we were nevertheless possessed by a certain feeling of anxiety. Tremblingly we received the fervent kiss, and my mother wept in

his ébrace. We could not explain to ourselves what we had to hope or to fear.

“Suddenly my father exclaimed, in a tone of exalted enthusiasm—

““Oh, my children! there is only one Messiah, and that Messiah is JESUS, and I am his servant! His voice hath spoken to my heart, his mercy hath filled me with light and joy!”

“With these words he drew forth a silver crucifix from under his garment, hung it on the wall, and said—

““Jesus is my Saviour and my God!”

“My father evidently expected to be met with expressions of grief and lamentation, on account of his change of faith, and for this reason he had given the explanation thus cautiously; but to his great joy he found it far otherwise. My mother’s eyes were suddenly lighted up with the same fire; like a Christian, she threw herself down before the image of the ‘Crucified,’ and my sister and I knelt beside her. She lifted her hands to heaven, and prayed thus to the Incarnate One:

““Jesus, Son of David, Thou art He of whom Esaias spoke: “Therefore the Lord shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel!” May thy name, O Messiah! be honored by all that have breath and life! Thou art the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, the God of my husband and my own!” And we answered joyfully, ‘Amen, Amen!’

"Tears of emotion and joy streamed from my father's eyes; he knelt down behind us, encircled us with his arms, and prayed silently for a few minutes, as though he were beseeching the Lord mercifully to accept the offering of our common prayer. Then he raised us all from the ground, embraced us again and again, and exclaimed, with ecstasy—

"**WE ARE CHRISTIANS!**"

"This was the most glorious day of our life. We experienced an inward and unforeseen gladness of the soul, and we burst into tears, while we felt within us a foretaste of the bliss of heaven. Toward mid-day the Brabantine knight came into our room and shared our joy; nay, he was still more joyful than we; for in our conversion he recognised the highest blessing which his friendship had procured for us.

"Much time was not required to make us acquainted with the mysteries of our new faith; our hearts received with joy the doctrine of Christ, and we were soon prepared for the reception of baptism. The Brabantine knight was to be my godfather, and other noble lords were to stand sponsors for my mother, my father, and sister. On the appointed day a bishop arrived at our ship with a numerous retinue, and we received at his hands the holy rite. All the noblemen who were present at the solemnity wished us happiness; but the Brabantine knight especially was filled with the greatest joy; he kissed me a hundred times.

and called me his son Walter, for that was the new name I had received. My father was called Joseph, my mother Susanna, and my sister Maria; Ab-el-Farach became Abulfaragus.

“While they were congratulating us on every side, and the knights were joyfully celebrating our conversion, we suddenly perceived on the coast of Rhodes a large number of Turkish galleys putting to sea and steering their course toward us.

“Rapidly through the whole Christian fleet resounded the cry, ‘To arms! To arms!’ The knights hastened away each to his own vessel; all was got ready for the combat, and our ships at once made sail toward the enemy. As we were ordered to go below, however, and our galley did not take part in the engagement, we scarcely heard any thing of the conflict.

“After the fight had lasted about an hour, intelligence was brought to us that the Christians had been victorious, that four Turkish vessels had been destroyed, and that the rest of the fleet had put back to shore. We heartily rejoiced at the good tidings, and thanked God with fervent prayer. Suddenly we heard the sound of heavy footsteps overhead; with anxious foreboding we hurried up the gangway, and there we saw a wounded knight borne upon the deck of the vessel.

“A sudden outburst of tears from my father at once told us who it was they were carrying along all bloody and lifeless. A cry of agony arose from our breasts, and my sister fell weeping into the

arms of my mother. Springing forward, I cast myself on my knees near the pallid face of the knight; I called him by his name, kissed his blue lips, and bedewed his pale forehead with my tears. Alas! my sponsor, our noble benefactor, had received a deadly wound: an arrow had pierced obliquely through his neck.

“The wounded man was placed upon my mother’s bed, and my father then entreated all present to withdraw, and leave him alone with the knight. When this was done, he said to us—

“‘Let us cease to weep and lament, for we cannot save him thus. Let the women kneel down and pray; as for thee, Walter, run quickly for some water.’

“My mother and sister threw themselves upon their knees; I hurried up the gangway, and soon returned with a pitcher full of water.

“Without speaking a word, my father began to wash the wound, in order to discover whether any of the larger vessels in the neck had been injured. His forehead glowed with feverish anxiety during this examination; I saw him tear his hair with anguish, and at length sink down on the edge of the bed as if in utter despair. My tears broke out afresh; for now I could no longer doubt of my benefactor’s death.

“After some moments my father raised his head, and began to examine the wound afresh. Soon after his features assumed an expression of

hope, and with a calmer voice he said to my mother and sister—

“‘Oh, pray, pray earnestly; for with God’s help he may yet recover!’

“A cry of joy was their only answer, while their heads bent lower still in fervent supplication. All the afternoon I assisted my father in the preparation of salves and cooling drinks; during the night we both remained beside the still motionless body, anxiously watching for the least symptom of returning life.

“The third day was at length a day of happiness and joy for us: a slight sound had been audible in the throat of the wounded man, and my father said—

“‘He will live!’

“From that moment the condition of the invalid visibly improved; on the twelfth day he was able to fix his eyes upon us, and to reward us for our solicitude with his kindly looks. During fourteen nights my mother and sister watched by his bedside alternately. His wound had meanwhile closed, and before a month was over he had regained his former health and strength. His affection for us after this knew no bounds; my father had become to him as a brother, and he never after called me any thing else but his son Walter.

“In the year 1310, on the 16th day of May, the Christians at length captured the island of Rhodes, and expelled the Turks. Many knights

then returned to their own country, and we resolved, in like manner, to quit the fleet, and seek somewhere in Europe a fixed abode. Our friend besought us to accompany him to Brabant. As we possessed but little in the world, and needed a protector, and as we felt it almost impossible to part from our benefactor, we consented to his proposal with grateful hearts. Soon after, we set out under the escort of our friend *Walter Van Craenhove*."

"Heavens! my father!" exclaimed Aleidis, amazed. "Abulfaragus, why hast thou so long kept this name secret from us?"

"Noble lady," replied the old man, half smiling, "yes, it was thy father, my sponsor, and the bosom friend of my parents. Thou canst not believe how deeply I loved that most valiant of all Christian knights! Oh, the blood which flows in thy veins is the noblest which the sun shines upon in the three parts of the world! If I have not named his dear name to thee sooner, it was only that I might not torture thee with the description of his dreadful illness, or make thee a partaker in that anguish which filled our breasts at his bed of sickness."

Aleidis was silent; her glistening eyes and parted lips showed with what unwonted curiosity her heart was beating. Abulfaragus remarked this, and presently continued his narrative.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PLAGUE.

“AFTER a long journey, we arrived at the town of Luttich, on the Maes. My father found there so many of his former fellow-believers who spoke our mother-tongue, that he took the resolution of settling in the town as a physician. The good Count Van Craenhove obliged us to accept a considerable sum of money from him, with which we purchased a house in the street of the Jewish money-changers, and there took up our abode. Walter Van Craenhove meanwhile proceeded to his castle of ‘Lanteernenhof,’ accompanied by our fervent prayers and heartfelt gratitude.

“We resided in Luttich for more than a year, in happiness and peace. My father in this interval initiated me into the sciences of the Arabs, particularly in the art of healing, and in astrology, or the knowledge of the stars. He soon acquired in the Luttich territory the same celebrity which he had formerly enjoyed in Syria. Both nobles and ecclesiastics were daily cured by his means, and he gained, moreover, considerable sums by the prediction of future events. He was called

the rich astrologer Abulfaragus. His prosperity, doubtless, excited ill-will and jealousy in the hearts of many, and more than once we heard that people were secretly endeavoring to throw suspicion upon him as a magician; added to which, the Jews calumniated and slandered him on account of his conversion to the Christian faith. We possessed, however, powerful friends, and so many sick knights and prelates were constantly in need of my father's aid, that we were amply secured against all danger.

“About this period, there was promulgated throughout Christendom a brief from the Pope, calling on both knights and citizens to arm themselves for battle against the Turks. In all the public squares, in the market-places and streets, the papal envoys preached a universal crusade. In their enthusiasm, they described, with the most touching pictures, and with tears in their eyes, how the blood of the Christians of Palestine was poured out in torrents; how the Saracens desecrated, every day with fresh and blasphemous insults, the tomb of the Saviour. Often they spoke, too, of the sufferings of the Messiah; and related how, by that wicked and execrable race,—for so they called the Jews,—he had been condemned and crucified. It may easily be supposed that the adherents of our former creed would be ready to murmur at hearing such discourse. Slowly, in fact, there grew up a deep hatred between the people of Luttich and the Jews who

resided among them; and this aversion became by degrees more intense and alarming. It was commonly asserted and believed that the Jews had been guilty of all kinds of wickedness, so that whenever an assassination was committed, the people invariably ascribed the crime to their agency. However unjust it is that the innocent should suffer with the guilty, I cannot help acknowledging that many Jews were led by their fanaticism to commit crimes which fully justified this open and general aversion.

“In this conjuncture, and while the crusade was still preached, there suddenly appeared throughout Europe a fearful malady. It was called the ‘LEPROSY.’ Whoever was seized with it felt his heart beat impetuously, and a cold sweat break out on every part of his body; his face and hands assumed a dull yellow color; and two hours after, they were sown all over, as it were, with large blue spots. These, on the following day, changed into hard tumors, which soon became so many running and incurable sores.

“Most of those who were seized by this awful pestilence died in a few days; others held out longer, and lived whole months, to the great terror of their fellow-townsmen. The most fearful thing in this malady was its infectious character; whoever pressed the hand of a friend who had been attacked, with that single touch received death; whoever went into an infected house, or handled the clothing of the leprous, on the following day was

covered with the fatal spots ; even money became a vehicle of contagion.

“An indescribable terror seized the hearts of all at the breaking out of this fearful malady ; doors and windows were closed, and not a living soul was to be seen in the streets. Luttich, during the first days of the plague, seemed like an abode of the dead. My father was almost the whole day from home, occupied in the labors of his profession. Having carefully anointed himself with the extract of certain herbs of which he knew the qualities, he was able to carry help and consolation into the dwellings both of Christians and Jews, and he succeeded in rescuing from death about ten, perhaps, in every thousand. The scenes which he described to us on his return home at night were truly awful. Children might be seen pitilessly driving their sick fathers down the stairs with long staves, and thrusting them into the street ; mothers would cautiously throw from a distance a rope round the neck of their infected children, and drag them out of the house ; brothers would keep their sisters away from them, and would fiercely threaten them with uplifted axe if they approached. Scarcely could one believe it. The dearest ties of blood and family were rent asunder ; every one hated and mistrusted his neighbor ; people fled into holes and cellars, and prepared to slay any one who ventured near them, were it father, spouse, or child. And if an infected creature was seen in the streets in search of food, or who had been driven forth

by his own family, scarcely could he take a step without an arrow shot from some neighboring window piercing his miserable frame.

“After six or seven days of this terrible death-like life, a sudden frost came on, and every thing indicated a severe winter. This change of the weather brought about a favorable change in the disease; only a few fresh cases were remarked; the patients no longer died as before, and the ulcers appeared to spread no farther.

“The town council and the cathedral chapter ventured once more to assemble; here and there people began to resume their work, and the town gradually recovered an appearance of life. Forthwith stringent but necessary laws were promulgated with regard to the lepers, and every possible measure was taken by the authorities to stay the infection. Whoever was attacked by the disease was to bear about with him a white wand, and whoever killed a leper not bearing this mark received a fixed reward from the mombour or burgo-master. Persons were forbidden to approach a leper within ten paces; an infected person was not allowed to go into either churches or houses, or to cast any thing into the street, or even to give an animal a crust of bread; and any one infringing these regulations was liable to be put to death. In short, the poor lepers dared not show themselves; the sword of the ‘man-slayers,’ appointed for this purpose, quickly terminated their wretched existence.

“As the greater part of the infected consisted of the poor, a very great number of them died of hunger and cold; others, urged by necessity, entered forcibly by night into the shops of the bakers and corn-dealers, and carried off their contents, so that the trade in provisions became actually dangerous.

“Partly through compassion, partly also to prevent the spread of the contagion, the bishop recommended some houses to be purchased outside the walls, and fitted up as hospitals or pest-houses.

“The towns-people, who saw in this a means of ridding themselves of the dreaded presence of the lepers, willingly brought their offerings of money, and in a short time a certain number of houses in the vicinity of the town were ready to receive the sick.

“In these no change had been made, except that the windows were walled up, and a large square space behind the houses was surrounded by a lofty wall; the doors, too, were strengthened, and in the front gable, at about a man's height from the ground, a large hole had been pierced, which was secured by heavy iron bars in the fashion of a prison window. All lepers found in the street after the first order was given to repair to these receptacles, and who did not immediately follow the ‘man-slayers’ to one of these lazar-houses, were put to death. In less than eight days all these houses were crowded with miserable beings, who, pressed by hunger, had been compelled to let

themselves be seen in the streets. The more wealthy lepers, however, found people willing for a large bribe to procure food for them and throw it to them from a distance.

“Awful and heart-rending was the fate of the poor imprisoned lepers. When the door of the pest-house once opened to receive them, it only unclosed again to receive some new inmate and companion in suffering. Their food was conveyed to them on the point of a long pole through the iron grating; the unfortunate beings might then be seen casting themselves half naked and with trembling hands upon the scanty nourishment; while their tears and lamentations were enough to soften a heart of stone. It was a hideous sepulchre, peopled by living beings. And when one of their number came to expire, what a fearful task was it for the survivors to be condemned to dig his grave with their own hands in that square enclosure!”

Abulfaragus now began to fear that his narrative was producing an injurious effect on the mind of Aleidis. He therefore asked :

“Were it not better, noble lady, that I should delay the remainder of my history until to-morrow? thou weepest so bitterly, and yet thou hast not heard the most dreadful part of my narrative. Night and darkness render the nerves more susceptible; in the clear sunlight one listens to awful things with less fear.”

“I have not heard the most dreadful part of thy history?” sighed the noble dame. “Alas! what

can be more dreadful than the suffering of these unfortunate lepers?"

"The fate of my father!" cried Abulfaragus, while a flood of tears burst from his arid eyes. "Oh that I might bury it in oblivion!"

All sat still a while, sunk in painful thought. At length Bernhart said—

"Yes; relate to us to-morrow the remainder of thy painful narrative. We should be unable to sleep after listening to so dreadful a tale; and thou thyself art, moreover, too much excited."

Soon after, the three friends quitted the hall and betook themselves to their apartments.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAZAR-HOUSE.

STATELY and resplendent rose the sun next day in the clear blue heavens. Very early Bernhart and Aleidis were present in the hall, expecting from Abulfaragus the continuation of his history. Mid-day, however, approached, and their old friend had not yet appeared. At last a domestic entered with a message that Abulfaragus was unwell.

Much troubled at this intelligence, they both repaired to the apartment of the old man, and there found him lying on his bed. They saw, or fancied they saw, that he was only suffering from a passing indisposition, and they endeavored to cheer him with affectionate words.

"Abulfaragus," said Aleidis, after a while, "I take blame to myself for having caused you all this suffering. My thoughtless curiosity made me ask from thee a history which has awakened many harrowing recollections in thy mind, and has thus painfully affected thy nerves."

"In truth, noble lady," answered Abulfaragus, "this history has deeply affected me; not so much on account of what I have already related, as of

that which still remains to be told. When I promised this narration, I calculated, indeed, too much upon my own strength; I feel that it will be impossible for me to finish it. Alas! little do you know what fearful events remain behind."

"Thus, then, we shall not know the history of thy life. My curiosity is not satisfied, Abulfaragus, for the name of my father is inseparably interwoven with thy lot. I do not wish, however, that thou shouldst proceed with thy narrative at once; that this would be imprudent, I can well understand; but wilt thou not at some future time make us acquainted with what yet remains of thy story?"

"My lips, noble lady, will never be able to recount the cruel fate of my parents; I feel that I should sink under the recital."

With these words, he put his hand under the pillow and brought forth a manuscript, which he gave to Aleidis, saying—

"Behold here, noble lady, the entire history of my life down to the death of thy father, my sponsor and benefactor. Thy husband will read it to thee, and then thou wilt know more than I could relate. Meanwhile, be not solicitous about my health; I am not ill, and only require a little rest to be once again re-established."

Bernhart and Aleidis repaired with the manuscript to the hall, and there the Burgrave read as follows:

"During the continuance of the frost, the violence of the dreadful malady was checked; it ap-

peared to make no farther progress, and already the severity of the enactments began to be relaxed. Scarcely, however, had the frost given way, when the plague began to spread again like a devouring fire. Within a few days the newly infected numbered more than a hundred; men began as before to avoid each other; additional 'man-slayers' were appointed, and whoever did not repair to the lazaret-house at the first signal from these legalized executioners, fell under the stroke of their hatchets or were pierced through with their long lances. Even the citizens undertook this cruel office with willingness; wherever they met with a leper, they believed that they fulfilled a duty in pursuing and killing him as they would a rabid dog.

"My father persisted in generously waiting upon any one who required his assistance; and he was sometimes absent from his home the whole day, employed in comforting the sick and saving life wherever it was possible. However much he loved us, our tears and entreaties could not prevent him from visiting the houses of the infected; he considered it a sacred duty to continue his offices of mercy toward his suffering fellow-men, and for this he was ready to brave every danger. He believed, moreover, that he was sufficiently protected from infection by the precautions he had adopted, and so he continued his visits and his journeys daily without the least fear of the consequences.

"One evening, the usual hour of his return had

long past without our seeing him. My mother trembled with anxiety, fearing that some evil had befallen him, but she kept these apprehensions to herself, in order not to alarm us needlessly.

"I was just then occupied in teaching my sister to read, and being both intent upon our book, we did not remark how pale our mother's face had become, nor with what anxious attention she listened to every noise in the street. After some time Maria shut the book, and looking around her with alarm, she inquired—

"But, mother, where is our father then?"

"Our poor mother made no answer; tears rolled down her cheeks; she looked sorrowfully upon my sister, and without saying a word drew her to her bosom. I, who for my part thought that my father was probably spending the night at the death-bed of some rich person, did not comprehend the anxiety of my mother, although her tears involuntarily called forth mine. All the words of consolation I could use were without any effect upon their minds; a secret misgiving caused them both to anticipate some terrible misfortune, and both continued weeping until morning. The sun arose higher and higher in the heavens, but, alas! our father came not.

"The lamentations of my mother and sister filled the house; they tore their hair and rent their garments in the intensity of their grief; and I, who thought myself so courageous, could only stand near them and weep helplessly; not a word of

consolation now escaped from my lips. At last I awoke out of this state of unconsciousness, and told them I would go and seek my father, or endeavor at least to learn something of his fate. My mother kissed me with unusual tenderness, as though she feared that I also might not return, and cast herself, together with my sister, in prayer before a crucifix. I sought to comfort my sister and inspire her with some hope, although all the while I was but trying to deceive myself; at last I quitted the room with a breaking heart.

“No one of our friends could tell me where my father was; no one had seen him on the preceding day. In vain I wandered through the town with drooping head and silent tears; no one could give any answer to my questions. At midnight I was standing on a bridge, a prey to the most painful feelings, and with my eyes despairingly fixed upon the water that rolled beneath. Presently I was aroused by the noise of many voices near me; and turning round, I saw a leper driven forward by the ‘man-slayers’ at the point of their lances. The piercing cries of the unfortunate being found a deep echo in my heart, and I followed him compassionately for some time, without even knowing whither I was going or what I was doing, until at last I reached the gate and passed into the open country. There I saw them open the door of the pest-house, drive the leper in, and shut the door again; an awful stillness reigned during the whole scene. Overpowered by the most bitter grief, I

seated myself upon the grass before this yawning sepulchre, and saw in imagination the whole life of these lepers pass before me. I saw them wander on, a company of living corpses, united in a fellowship of death, shrinking from each other at the sight of their horrible sores, and wasting away in loathsome disease and in mutual hatred. Oh, with what deathlike torture did the thought oppress me, that within these walls there were mortals who with fury in their every feature gazed down upon their already dying limbs, while their heart still possessed sufficient strength to feel the whole horror of their fate!

“In such horrible thoughts I lay sunk, when suddenly my own name broke upon my ear. A cry of joy burst from my lips, for I had heard the voice of my father. I stood up and looked around me; but, O God, what did I see! I was struck as with a thunderbolt, and with a wild mocking laugh I fell senseless to the ground.

“Oh, could I but express what I suffered at that moment! The sight which presented itself was so terrible, that the strongest expression of boundless grief, a jeering laugh, was my only utterance. I had seen my father behind the iron grating! He who gave me life lay entombed, forever entombed, in that devouring whirlpool! O God! in thy mercy Thou didst stand by me in that hour; how otherwise should I have survived that crushing blow?

“As soon as my consciousness returned, I sprang up with a loud cry, and rushed against the iron

grating ; but five or six ‘man-slayers’ immediately held me back, threatening me with death if I persisted. But once again my bewildered gaze rested on the revered head of my father, and then a flood of hot tears rolled down my cheeks. Only five paces removed from my poor father, I leaned upon the cross-bar which stood in front. Nearer I dared not approach, for four ‘man-slayers’ stood ready with bent cross-bows to pierce me through with their iron shafts as soon as I put hand or foot through those bars. After I had relieved my oppressed heart with abundant tears, I raised my head and remained standing speechless, and with clasped hands, my eyes fast fixed upon my father. His beloved voice penetrated distinctly to my ear, while he said, in accents of heavenly patience—

“‘Walter, my son, take courage ! the Lord hath called his servant home. I endure the blow with resignation, how hard soever it may be. Weep not thus, my son ; preserve rather the strength of thy soul in order to support and console thy mother and thy sister.’

“‘Oh, my unhappy father !’ I exclaimed, with choking voice, ‘can I not then save thee ? Must our science remain powerless before this fearful malady ?’

“‘My child, what would art avail ?’ he replied ; ‘were I cured here a hundred times in an hour, I should be a hundred times infected anew. I will tell thee the whole truth, Walter, so that thou mayest prepare thy mother and thy sister before-

hand for the painful shock. Be courageous, my son; I conjure thee too, by the deep affection thou bearest me, to prepare thy mother slowly and warily for these tidings; I belong to the dead, and soon——’

“He still continued to speak in this heart-rending language, but anguish had made me deaf and blind. I no longer understood his words; every thing swam before my eyes, and a deafening ‘rush’ filled my ears; only from time to time I could still distinguish the voice of my father, saying—

“‘Walter! Walter! my son!’

“I know not how long I remained thus with my head leaning on the cross-bar. When I awoke out of this stupor, the ‘man-slayers’ were still standing there with their bows bent, and my father’s face still smiled upon me from behind the iron grating. With a forced calm, proceeding from exhaustion, I sighed:

“‘Alas, father! what ill fortune, then, hath brought thee to this loathsome prison?’

“Upon this he related to me, in a few words, how, on the morning of the preceding day, he had passed over the Maes in a boat, for the purpose of visiting some rich lepers; how his confidence in the infallible strength of the remedies had deceived him, and his face after mid-day had become covered with blue spots. In this state some ‘man-slayers’ had perceived him, and, without listening to argument, had driven him, like any other leper, to the pest-house.

“The sun was already sinking in the horizon, and more than once had my father urged me to go home and console my mother and sister. I remained, however, with my head leaning upon the cross-bar, and my eyes fast fixed upon the iron grating. I should doubtless have passed the whole night thus, had not one of the ‘man-slayers’ compelled me by force to quit this position. He drove me forth toward the road to Luttich, and said, as he quitted me—

“‘Shall I tell thee what to do, instead of weeping like a woman about a misfortune which cannot be avoided?’

“I looked at him with hopeful eyes, as he continued:

“‘Bring thy father to-morrow wherewith to eat and drink; for the greatest torment in this lazarus-house is hunger and thirst. Forget not, however, the feeding-pole, ten feet long, otherwise thou wilt be compelled to throw the food a great distance, and that does not answer well. Good-evening.’

“How these words made me thrill! I felt them glowing in my heart like burning coals. As wretched as it was possible for man to be, I went back to the town with heavy, toilsome steps. There an idea occurred to me which brought consolation to my mind: I had thought of a way of gaining admittance to my father. Laughing joyously in the midst of my misfortune, I hastened on toward a house where I knew that a leper dwelt, who had been befriended by my father.

When I was on the point of entering, however, I thought once more of my mother and sister. I held back, wept again, and then quickly withdrew. For a moment I had made the resolution to betake myself to the leper; to beg from him, as a boon, a share in the contagion, and then to let myself be shut in by the 'man-slayers' with my father; but, happily for us all, the picture of my mother and sister rose up before me, and prevented the fatal step.

"Alas! what was I now to say to these unhappy women? I was as a messenger whom death had deputed to announce his coming, and, like a murderer, I was about to crush, as between two stones, the hearts of those dear ones who still remained to me. This, in truth, was my fearful errand. The overpowering feeling of my utter misery threw me into a kind of unconscious stupor, otherwise, perchance, I should not have ventured to approach our dwelling, though all the while it was as if my feet were hurrying me rapidly onward. On arriving at the door, my consciousness again returned in all its clearness. I traced my misfortunes over anew with terrible distinctness, even to the minutest detail, and again arose before me the thought of my terrible mission. I trembled so violently that my knees bent under me, and I sank down before the threshold of the house. At last, summoning up courage, I proceeded with unsteady steps to the apartment of my mother and sister, where a scene

of indescribable anguish awaited me. There, in the farthest end of the room, sat my mother with her head buried in both hands; her eyes red with weeping, even as though some of the vessels had burst; her mouth convulsively distorted, and allowing her fast-set teeth to be seen. Near her sat my sister, in a similar state. Both looked steadfastly but with rigid gaze upon me, as upon some indifferent stranger.

“Deeply moved at this terrible spectacle, I paused for a moment in the same state of insensibility; then, casting myself upon my knees before my mother, I kissed her with wild fervor. Every other utterance failed me. I received no answer; passively she allowed me to clasp her again and again in my arms. My sister, too, remained like one utterly insensible. At last, with rending voice, I cried—

“‘My heart is breaking! Mother, sister, let me hear your voice, or I die!’

“‘Alas, Walter!’ sighed my mother, gently.

“‘Poor brother!’ murmured my sister.

“These tokens of life in some measure calmed the despair which had seized upon my heart; they imparted to me a certain strength, and I be-thought me of my errand.

“‘What new misfortune, then, had occurred during my absence?’ I inquired. ‘Be not thus overwhelmed with sorrow, be not so utterly disconsolate! I have seen our father; perhaps he will be restored to us in a few days.’

“‘Thou hast seen him!’ exclaimed my mother, with a wild cry.

“‘I have seen him; be assured of this,’ I replied.

“‘Then hath thy guardian angel protected thee, Walter, since God hath left thee thy reason.’

“These words were an enigma to me; but they caused my sister to burst into tears, while she said—

“‘Ah, brother, speak not falsely, speak not falsely! Our father is in the pest-house; we know this already: the Jew Borach has seen him there!’

“I threw myself once again upon my knees before my mother, and embraced her and my sister at the same time. Our tears streamed down together; but not a sigh, not a whispered breath, disturbed the awful stillness of night which reigned around us. Lamentations are ordinarily the interpreters of grief; but here words were too weak to express our immeasurable wo.

“Why should I attempt to describe our condition during that fearful night? The endeavor to comfort our fainting mother alone effected any change in our unhappy state.

“The next morning found me busied in preparing the dreadful implement with which I was to reach my father his food. This was a pole to which was attached a long bar, at the end of which was fastened an iron bowl. When this was ready, I packed up a quantity of roasted meat, a

flask of Cyprus wine, bread and salt, and a few linen bandages, and then repaired to my mother and sister to take leave of them. Earnestly, however, as I strove, prayed, and entreated, they were absolutely determined to go with me, and to see once more our unhappy father. I knew too well that such a spectacle would only renew and augment their grief, and I employed every argument I could think of to dissuade them. All my efforts, however, were in vain: they resolutely insisted upon accompanying me.

“Thus, then, we wandered through the streets with drooping head, like so many mourners accompanying a body to its last resting-place. Our dejected looks, and the implements which I carried, served only to excite the attention of the passers-by so far as to keep every one away from us. Such a spectacle was nothing new, and produced no further impression: it merely told the spectator that we belonged to a family in which the pestilence had found a victim.

“Outside the gate, I turned round to my mother, and was not a little astonished when I perceived in her features an expression of comfort, nay, even of joy. I slackened my pace to allow her to come up to me, and said, in an earnest tone—

“‘Ah, mother, I see well that thy heart is courageous; may it remain so!’

“She continued standing for some time in the open fields, and we with her. At last she said,

with a voice which had in it something of a holy and heavenly character—

“‘My children, during the journey I have been praying fervently to our dear Lord and Saviour, and I felt, as it were, a beam of light penetrate into my soul, infusing into me new strength for the fulfilment of our painful task. Wherefore do we go to our father? Is it to rend his heart with the sight of our suffering?—to double his anguish by our own? No, truly: the unhappy should be comforted by those who are less so than themselves. Well, then, my children, let us force back our bitter tears into our oppressed bosoms, and let us manifest to our father not so much our affliction as our love; and if it should prove that we are weaker than our resolution, and our tears should nevertheless spring forth, yet let a gentle smile beam through them all in presence of our unhappy father.’

“‘These words exercised a wonderful influence on our minds, as they dropped from our mother’s lips. New life and strength arose in our breasts, and we became full of courage for the accomplishment of our duty, which now appeared in the light of a sacred mission. Thus comforting and supporting one another, we approached the house of the lepers. Already at some distance we perceived the ‘man-slayers’ bend their bows, and heard them call to us, in threatening tones—

“‘Remain before the cross-bar, under pain of death!’

“However much we felt ourselves strengthened, we could not avoid trembling very much as we approached the cross-bar. Fortunately we had some time to recover ourselves, for we perceived no one before the iron grating. Meanwhile one of the ‘man-slayers’ advanced toward us, and inquired whom we wanted to see. After we had mentioned my father’s name, he cried out, with a strong voice—

“‘Abulfaragus! Abulfaragus!’

“Thereupon my father’s head appeared before the iron grating. Unhappy as he was, he smiled lovingly upon us. Silent tears rolled down our cheeks, but through them there beamed an expression of sweet affection, and we saw clearly how great was the consolation my father derived from our tranquil frame. While I prepared to reach him the food and drink which I had brought, my mother comforted him with such words as her womanly heart alone knew. Oh, wonderful effect of love! all were unspeakably miserable, and yet at this moment a feeling of blessed joy found its way into our hearts. We submitted ourselves wholly to the will of the Lord, and cheerfully embraced the destiny which He had prepared for us. The very strings of grief seemed as if torn from our hearts; for had we not in the preceding night twice emptied the chalice of suffering to the very dregs?

“When I placed the feeding-pole upon the iron grating, and saw with what avidity my father

seized the food, there ran through my whole frame an ice-cold shudder. My mother and sister, too, became deadly pale; but soon the consoling words of my father again restored us to calm.

“What further need I say of this visit? We remained standing for some time before the grating, anxiously considering whether any means could be adopted by which our father might be cured. This deliberation, however, could not possibly lead to any result, as his recovery was not to be thought of so long as he remained in the lazar-house. At last, prevailed upon by his entreaties, and urged, moreover, by the threats of the ‘man-slayers,’ we withdrew, and returned silently home.

“On the three following days we repeated our journey in the same manner, and at each visit lingered a long time before the doors of the fearful prison.

“Meantime the pestilence, favored by the continuance of the mild weather, spread again more and more; during the last two days it had regained all its former virulence, and everywhere one was met with the intelligence of new cases and sudden deaths.

“At this awful period an outcry suddenly arose among the populace that the lepers were poisoning the fountains and conduits by washing their bandages in them; and it was asserted, moreover, that they were bribed to do so by the Jews, in order to bring about the destruction of the Chris-

tians, and thus prevent them from following the call of the Pope to go to war with the infidels.

“In France, people called Pastoureaux wandered about, in bands of four or five thousand men, seeking out Jews and lepers, and slaughtering them without mercy. Doubtless the rumor of these disturbances in France had reached Luttich, and given rise to the outcry. Whether the imputation of so infamous a conspiracy had any foundation in truth, I know not: this much is certain, that the sanguinary hatred which existed between the Jews and Christians was sufficiently great to excite the ignorant rabble on either side to the most horrible outrages.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FLIGHT.

“ONE evening a woman of our neighborhood came to tell us that large assemblages of people had been wandering about through the town without any one knowing for what purpose; she also told us, that in the vicinity of the town-walls some ten Jewish houses had been plundered, and she even pointed out the blazing of the flames which were reducing the houses to ashes. After many long and painful reflections upon the fate of our former companions, we were about to betake ourselves to rest, when suddenly a mysterious knock was heard at the door. Terror-stricken, I hastened to a window which overlooked the house-door, and opened it; through the darkness I could distinguish a man leaning close against the door, and who was, therefore, scarcely visible.

“‘What dost thou want, friend?’ I inquired.

“‘Does not the physician Abulfaragus live here?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘I have something to say to you, upon which his own life and that of his family depends.’

“‘Speak, then; what evil tidings hast thou to tell us?’

“‘I must not speak so loud, lest I be overheard.’

“‘Thou knowest that we dare not open our house to a stranger at so late an hour of the night.’

“‘I know it, and I commend thy prudence; there is no need, however, to open the house; only come and place thyself behind the door, and I will tell thee my message.’

“I closed the window immediately, and after acquainting my mother with what had happened, I went down and placed myself behind the door. Upon this the stranger said, with a stifled voice—

“‘A band of Pastoureaux has arrived from France, and the populace have joined them; already they have plundered many of the houses of the Jews, and to-morrow they have resolved to demolish every one that remains, and to slay all the lepers in the town. I have just come from the assembly they have been holding on the Cornillon. Abulfaragus once cured me of the leprosy, and gratitude for his kindness urges me to bring him this warning. Listen carefully, then, to what I have to say. Wicked men have asserted that Abulfaragus is only a Christian by outward profession, and that he is still a Jew at heart. They denounce him, moreover, as a God-despising magician, who by his devilish art has amassed unheard-of treasures. This last accusation was sufficient to condemn him; to-morrow, therefore, at sunrise, they will demolish his dwell-

ing, and will assuredly murder him, and those of his family who do not escape by timely flight. Tell him this. Farewell.'

"And with these words the unknown went his way. His communication had so deeply shocked me, that I remained in the entrance-hall for a long time, trembling, and unable to come to any resolution. By degrees, however, I summoned up my energies to struggle against this new misfortune. I knew what a heavy task had been laid upon me, and how my mother and sister depended for their safety solely upon my courage. I was not yet more than twenty years of age, but the blow which the fearful visitation of my father's illness had inflicted upon me had steeled my heart against fate; besides, I considered that I had nothing more to fear, and that I might endeavor to effect the deliverance of my father without the apprehension that his flight would be revenged upon my mother and sister.

"With my head full of confused, torturing thoughts, I rushed up the stairs and related to my mother all that the stranger had told me. My sister wept bitterly; my mother, on the contrary, endeavored to bear patiently this new affliction. This awful announcement affected them both (which, indeed, I had foreseen) less deeply than that of my father's malady.

"In the greatest haste, I gathered together every thing which I thought necessary and useful for our flight. My mother and sister followed me

like children; by my advice they put on three suits of clothing one above the other, and took with them a supply of food, a knife, a tinder-box, a flask of wine, a crucifix, a quantity of money, and other portable things. I took only a hunting-knife and a sharp hand-axe. As soon as we were all ready to leave our dwelling, I wrote the following words in Arabic on a small piece of parchment:

“‘Pursued by the Pastoureaux, we have fled and concealed ourselves in a cavern. To-morrow at midnight I will stand with a ladder at the northern side of the wall. Come and save thyself. Removed from thy companions in misfortune, our science may yet be able to restore thee to health.’

“I folded this missive, and attached to it a small piece of lead, fastened it about me, and took my departure with the two women.

“With the greatest circumspection, and favored by the impenetrable darkness, we hastened onward without a word escaping our lips. At the gate of Amercœur we encountered the sentinels, who refused to let us out of the town; and it was only by means of a handful of gold-pieces that we were enabled to make our escape. Once outside the gate, we took the road to Germany.

“The neighboring mountains were all well known to me, as I had visited them weekly for many years in order to collect herbs for my father. About a league from the town, in a very solitary

place, I knew of a secret cave with a narrow entrance, extending far under the mountain; the ground was level like the floor of a chamber, and here and there might be seen stalactites of various forms. Into this cavern I conducted my mother and sister; the opening was so small that we were compelled to crawl in upon our hands and feet. After a few encouraging words, I made them acquainted with my plan for saving our poor father, and told them I had resolved at once to go to the lazar-house and convey to him my letter. Both joyfully approved of my undertaking; and begged me even to hasten my departure, so that I might return before sunrise.

“In order to defend them from the attacks of the wolves, which, in consequence of the hard frost, had begun to traverse the forest of Ardennes in large numbers, I rolled, by dint of great exertion, two heavy stones to the mouth of the cave. This done, I set off for the town. Near the foot of the mountain I turned off to the right and journeyed on for a considerable time, until I found myself approaching the lazar-house. I then crept with the greatest precaution between the trees and bushes, in order to avoid being noticed by the ‘man-slayers,’ till at last I reached the foot of the wall. I threw the letter over. I could distinctly perceive the white parchment as it flew along, and I was fully convinced that it had reached its destination. I knew that it was almost certain to fall into my father’s hands, for he was

the only one there acquainted with Arabic characters, and whoever found it would be sure to show it to him in order to learn its meaning. Rejoiced at the success of my enterprise so far, I returned speedily to the cave.

“Before sunset I gathered a bundle of herbs and plants, with which I prepared a couch for my mother and sister; on this was spread a portion of their clothes, and at my request they composed themselves to sleep. When I found that both were asleep, (it was now about nine o’clock,) I took some of the money which we had brought with us, and left the cavern, after having rolled the stone again before the entrance.

“I had already passed the greater part of the day in creeping about the farm yards like a spy, but I had nowhere found what I was in search of. I saw ladders enough, but they were all fastened with chains and locks to the walls, so that there seemed no hope of my being able to procure one. In this state of disappointment and dejection, I was on the point of returning to the cave, when all at once I saw a chimney smoking in the distance. Hurrying through the thicket in the direction of the smoke, I found a solitary peasant’s hut with the doors standing wide open; and how did my heart beat with joy, when I perceived a long ladder lying on the ground behind the house, and within my reach!

“This was enough. I immediately withdrew, marking carefully the situation of the house, and

the road which led to it. With the smile of hope upon my countenance I now retraced my steps, and speedily found myself at the cave, where I consoled my mother and my sister with the happy prospect of my father's liberation. A refreshing sleep had invigorated them, and blissful hope beamed forth in their reanimated hearts. We ate a little, and then waited with impatience for the approach of night.

"Toward evening the heavens were covered with dark clouds; rain fell in torrents, and soon the deepest darkness overspread the scene. I interpreted this change of the weather as a good omen; it seemed to me as if God evidently favored my perilous undertaking. At last the wished-for hour of midnight approached. My mother and sister had already been long on their knees before the crucifix; I kissed them both, closed up the opening, and quickly set off on my journey. I had already left behind me a great part of the road, and was still hastening forward through the darkness, when I suddenly perceived behind me between the bushes two eyes, which gleamed like torches, and were steadfastly fixed upon me. I was not a little alarmed at this apparition, and so much the more because at the first glance I could not guess whether it was a man or an animal; I did not stop, however, but courageously pursued my way. From time to time I looked anxiously round, and each time I found the two glaring eyes at the same distance from me. Passing through

an oak-copse, I heard upon the dry rustling leaves the footsteps of the creature, which was still following me; a scarcely-perceptible gurgling sound told me that I had a wolf for my companion. As I knew that these animals seldom attack a man unless he stumble or make some sudden movement, I took care not to make a trip, and held my hunting-knife in one hand and my hatchet in the other, ready for defence. Trembling, and full of anxious suspense, I proceeded thus for more than a quarter of a league. The wolf had by this time ventured to approach nearer to me, and I became awfully certain that the danger was now imminent.

“Suddenly there resounded from afar in the wood a hollow cry, like the howl of wolves when they spring upon a horse, and, being too few in number to bear it down, call to their fellows for aid. Upon this my pursuer turned round, and I heard him speed like a dart through the copse to his howling companions. For a moment I slackened my pace and breathed more freely; then I clasped my hands and thanked God fervently for my deliverance.

“I now continued my journey with renewed courage. Arrived at the lonely cottage, I saw with joy that the ladder was still lying in the same spot. I raised it up, left upon the ground a sum of money ten times its value, and ran off stealthily like a thief.

“About midnight I reached the house of the lepers. I carefully measured my pace, in order, as

I approached, to place the ladder against the wall without noise. Now I took it on my shoulder, now crawled on hands and feet, then drew it after me on the ground, until at last I felt the stones of the wall. Doubtless the 'man-slayers' were slumbering at their post; for although I was almost close to their guard-house, I heard no movement whatever within. At last I mounted the ladder, and seated myself astride upon the wall. I trembled like a reed, and was so overcome with fear that my heart scarce continued to beat. I looked anxiously round the yard, and imagined I descried in the deep gloom the movement of a dark shadow. I inquired, with stifled voice—

“‘Is it thou, father?’

“‘It is I, Walter!’ was the whispered answer.

“‘Wait until I draw the ladder over and come down to help thee.’

“‘But listen, Walter,’ said my father. ‘If thou comest down, and dost not keep thyself at the distance of ten feet from me, I shall return to my fellow-sufferers, even were I distant from them a league. If thou desirest my deliverance, obey me in this.’

“While he was speaking I drew the ladder over the wall, and let it down into the court-yard. My father ascended, but he had scarcely reached the top of the wall when he obliged me to withdraw some distance from the ladder. Then he sat upon the wall, drew the ladder to the outer side, descended, and stood upon the free earth. We were

soon at a distance from the place of misery; and now that there was no 'man-slayer' to stand in dread of, I would willingly have approached my father; but however much I insisted, he always kept me unflinchingly at a distance.

"How painful this was to me I need not relate; I was, in truth, upon the point of approaching and touching him even against his will. When he perceived this, he said, but with a voice which caused a cold shudder in my veins, so different was it from the sweet voice of my father, that hollow and harsh sound which disease and suffering had given him—

"My good Walter, I understand how it must grieve thy loving heart that we should not be able to fold each other in a sweet embrace.'

"Alas, I am drinking a bitter chalice!' I replied, weeping.

"But, my child, dost thou not then know that the slightest contact would give thee the infection? Thou wouldst die, my poor son.'

"Alas, father,' I cried, 'let me embrace thee, for God's sake! Die, sayest thou? Dost thou then believe that it would appear to me other than a happiness to share the sufferings and death of my father? besides, it is not certain that I should catch the contagion.'

"My father's voice became more doleful as he thus spoke to me:

"Couldst thou behold my face and my body, then, my child, thou wouldst gladly fly me. Alas!

thou hast perchance already inhaled with thy breath the dreadful plague. On my knees I beseech thee, keep far from me.'

"In spite of the darkness, I saw my father in fact kneeling down, stretching out his arms toward me, and craving my obedience. Deeply moved and agitated, I remained standing, while he thus continued :

" 'Walter, cherish not deceitful hopes ; I am doomed to death, for the contagion has struck deep root into my vitals. What would it then avail that thou shouldst offer thyself as another victim, and leave behind thy mother and sister alone in the wide world ? It is not the expectation of an impossible cure that has urged me to quit the lazaret-house ; only my love for you, and the desire to behold you once again from a distance, has impelled me to this step. Dost thou wish that the thought should gall me that I have brought infection into my own family ? and this simply that I might be able to feast my eyes once again upon my children ? Walter, I must suffer and die without any hand to press mine, without any sweet embrace to console me, without its being permitted thee to close the eyes of thy dying father : thus runs the sentence which the Lord hath pronounced against his servant.'

"During these heart-rending words a stream of bitter tears rolled down my cheeks ; sobs and sighs were my only answer. A strange emotion suddenly came over me ; my blood boiled in my veins, and

rushed with terrible fury to my oppressed brain. I bit my clenched hand till it ran blood, and my soul was filled with dark and desperate thoughts.

“‘Is it not so, Walter?’ asked my father, entreatingly. ‘Thou wilt be obedient, and not touch me?’

“‘Father,’ I exclaimed, ‘life is then to me a burden which I can no longer endure. Should I have saved thee in order to see thee die helpless? Must I fly thee as a poisoned adder? Must I not embrace thee, nor close thy eyes, when the Lord calls thee to himself? Ah! thy son bends not his neck so low; he embraces and kisses his father in spite of the contagion! A share in thy malady—no other life, no other death, than thine, my father!’

“And with these words I threw myself upon his bosom, while my lips pressed his cheeks. For a moment he opposed me with all his might; but he soon felt how irresistibly I had clasped him in my embrace, and his head sank powerless on my breast. I felt the hot tears rolling from his eyes upon my hands, and soon my own were mingled abundantly with his.

“‘Oh, my child,’ he exclaimed, with deep emotion, ‘what hast thou done? I blame thee not for thy ardent love toward me; it is a blessing to me in my misfortune; but, alas, how is my heart torn with the certainty that disease and death are now thy inevitable portion! I am old, Walter, and there remain to me therefore but a few burden-

some years; but thou, still so young, dost sacrifice a whole life !”

“Elevated and strengthened by what I had done, I exclaimed—

“‘I shall not be infected; I shall not die! Knowest thou not what the howling storm uttered to me through the trees: “Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land”?’

“‘God grant that the spirit of the prophets may have spoken to thee at that moment, my child! But is it not in like manner written, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God”?’

“‘Let him do with me according to his ever-blessed will. If there still remain gall in the chalice, I am ready to drink it. I have already enjoyed a sweet earnest of my reward; thy kiss hath given me strength and courage. Come, let us hasten to our mother.’

“With these words I seized his hand, and we proceeded together to the cave. When we had advanced some distance, my father said, in a dejected tone—

“‘Walter, I bewail my deliverance as the greatest of our misfortunes. I marvel at thy love and courage, for they will surely destroy the thread of thy life. But how will it be with thy mother and thy sister? Do they love me less than thou, and will they also sacrifice themselves on the altar of their affection? I am in a terrible strait, and would

gladly, if thou wouldst consent to it, return to the pest-house.'

"'No, to that I will not consent,' I replied, firmly. 'Listen, father, to what I have to say. I have for thy sake followed the voice of my affection, and have perhaps on that account delivered myself up to the contagion. But I am conscious that, if my own life be at my disposal, I am sacredly bound to prevent my mother from imitating my example. Trust me, misfortune has within these few days brought me to the full growth of manhood. Neither of the women shall touch thee, and their love shall bend before my will, even should I have recourse to force and severity.'

"'I thank thee, my child,' sighed my father; 'but whither art thou leading me, and how wilt thou keep thy mother and sister at a distance from me?'

"'I have already considered this carefully, and I believe that I have found a means. About ten paces from the cave there is a smaller one. Dost thou not remember where we once found a plant unknown to us?'

"'The *aconitum* of the Latins, with its blood-red leaf?'

"'Ay, there. In that cave thou must remain. I will take care that my mother and sister do not quit theirs. In the daytime I will permit them to approach thee within a certain distance, so that you may be able to see and console one another

without danger. Then will we again joyously and eagerly consult our science. Have only good courage; thou wilt again recover thy health.'

"'Oh, my son,' cried my father, amazed, 'thy love for me has inspired thee with wisdom! Do as thou hast said: I abandon myself to thy guidance.'

CHAPTER X.

THE CATASTROPHE.

“MEANWHILE we had arrived at the cave which I had fixed upon for the dwelling-place of my father. I there prepared him a bed of dried branches and leaves, and laid him down; then I repaired to the other cave, and without entering, called out, with a loud voice—

“ ‘Mother, sister, are you there?’

“ ‘Ay, Walter!’ exclaimed the two voices.

“ ‘My enterprise has succeeded; our father is free, but he cannot come to this place until it is day. I am going back to him; be at ease, therefore, until I bring him.’

“The tone of their voices showed me with what joy they received these tidings. Once again I repeated my request, and then returned to my father. During the remainder of the night I consulted with him on the means to be employed for his recovery.

“At first he gave no heed to my proposal, so entirely had he given up all hope; at last he could no longer withstand my entreaties, and said, to my great joy—

“ ‘Walter, my instructor bestowed upon me at parting a small silver box, telling me that it contained a little salve, which infallibly cures the plague, and even stays impending death. It contains only what suffices for one man, and holds no more.’

“ ‘Where is this precious life-giving remedy?’ cried I, trembling with joy.

“ ‘Hast thou not remarked,’ continued my father, ‘that on one of the walls in our cellar there are graven many crosses in the stone, one of which is larger than the others?’

“ ‘Assuredly; and I often asked thee what that signified, yet thou wouldst never tell me.’

“ ‘Well, then, underneath that large cross there is a hole in the wall; a few strokes of the hammer will remove the stones, and in the hole is to be found a lump of asphaltum, in which the silver box is fixed.’

“ ‘I will go at once!’ I cried, with exultation; ‘I will go and bring thee health!’

“And I was on the point of rushing forth, when my father held me back, and exhorted me to defer my journey until the following night, as already a slight glimmering appeared in the east, and I could not possibly reach the town before sunrise. I submitted impatiently to necessity, and postponed my journey.

“Some time before sunrise I led my father to a recess, in which some rain-water had collected, and there I washed his body with pieces of linen

Notwithstanding the excessive cold, this ablution eased his pains in a wonderful manner. The nearer the sun approached the horizon, the more clearly I saw his countenance; alas! it was seamed with cancerous wounds, and full of livid spots. His eyes were deeply sunk in their sockets; his cheeks were hollow, and his mouth convulsively distorted. I wept aloud at this terrible sight, and as often as my eyes fell upon his countenance, a cold shudder ran through my whole frame.

“Scarcely had the sun shone upon the horizon, when I led my father a little distance in front of the larger cave, and made him sit down while I rolled away the stone from the entrance.

“‘Mother, and thou, Maria,’ I cried, ‘listen to what I have to say. Our father is not far from here, and I have come to seek you, that you may behold him. Be not troubled, however; come not within ten feet of him, otherwise he will return to the lazar-house, and I myself will lead him thither in spite of all your entreaties, nay, even if you should weep tears of blood in order to detain us.’ The same will happen if you touch me, for I also am infected.’

“Both women shuddered at these terrible words; instead of the joy which they thought awaited them, anguish now filled their hearts, and a flood of tears streamed from their eyes.

“‘Not touch, not embrace him!’ exclaimed my sister, in despair.

“In as calm a voice as I could command, I said, ‘Maria, tell me, dost thou wish the death of thy mother? Thou tremblest at the very thought. Well, then, if thou dost not follow punctually my directions, thy mother, as well as thyself, will be infected and die. And thou, mother, dost thou desire the death of thy child?’

“‘I understand thee, Walter,’ sighed my mother; ‘but fear not, we will submit like the slaves of inexorable misfortune.’

“Tranquillized by this promise, I led both the women to the spot where my father was seated. A cry burst from their bosom, and both sank senseless to the earth. There lay the two dear ones stretched out lifeless before me, and it was not in my power either to touch or to help them.

“My sister was the first to come to herself; she raised up my mother’s head from the ground, and began rubbing her face and hands, until at last both recovered sufficiently to be able to speak to my father, though with a flood of tears. It now occurred to me what danger we were in if any one should perceive us; I, therefore, left the women with my father, and ascended a neighboring height, in order to reconnoitre the surrounding country.

“I remained there a whole hour without perceiving a living thing; then, however, I descried in the distance two men advancing from behind a hill, and directing their steps toward the path

which led to our hiding-place. I soon discovered that they were not enemies, for they bore no arms, and their clothing betokened poverty and negligence. I rapidly descended from the height, however, and led back my father at once to his cave; and the women to theirs. I then rolled the stone before the entrance, and withdrew in another direction, while I bent myself down to the ground, as if I were gathering herbs and roots. I remarked that the two individuals advanced very hurriedly, and turned their heads round continually, as if they feared pursuit. As soon as they observed me, they held back, and appeared to consult with each other as to what they should do, for they were evidently alarmed at my presence. A moment after, however, they came up to me, and then I at once saw that they were lepers. They looked at me very distrustfully, and one of them inquired—

“ ‘Young man, hast thou seen any men-at-arms or “man-slayers” hereabouts?’

“ ‘No,’ I replied! ‘why should they come hither?’

“ ‘Hast thou not then come from the town to-day?’

“ ‘No; I live in one of the neighboring villages.’

“ ‘Are there any lepers in thy village?’

“ ‘Yes,—a few.’

“ ‘Hasten, then, and advise them to fly immediately from this district; for the Pastoureaux are

scouring the country, and are killing all the lepers they can find.'

" 'But if they have taken refuge in secret dens and caves?'

" 'Ah, that will be of little avail! Is it not possible to discover these hiding-places? and does not every one know that they are the usual resort of such as wish to conceal themselves? If thou hast a little money, young man, thou wouldst be doing a work of mercy in giving it to two unfortunate lepers.'

"I was not sufficiently aware of the new danger which threatened us, and I therefore answered—

" 'I have two gold-pieces, and will gladly bestow them upon thee, if thou wilt tell me what the lepers of my village have to fear, and what can be the motive of this fresh persecution.'

"The other leper, who had not yet spoken, replied—

" 'Oh! that is easily told. During the last night the lepers have broken out of the lazaret-house, and have fled, to the number of a hundred and eighty. The Pastoureaux and the "man-slayers" are pursuing them through the open country, and wherever they light upon them they slay them without mercy.'

"I gave them the two gold-pieces, and, returning quickly to my father, related what I had heard. As we did not dare to quit our asylum during the day,—more especially as our faces bore the unmistakable impress of our Jewish origin,—

I bade the two women hide themselves in the large cavern, while I crept with my father into the smaller. We spent the whole day in the greatest stillness, and in momentary fear of the arrival of the Pastoureaux; but happily no one came near us. After mid-day a heavy snow-storm came on, which lasted till far in the night; and this circumstance probably prevented them from extending their search so far.

“When thick darkness had at length settled down upon the earth, we crept out of our cave, and I proceeded to the other hiding-place to seek my mother and sister. Poor women! they were utterly cast down, worn out with weeping, languid, and almost paralyzed in body and mind. With difficulty could I draw one word from their lips, and then the tone in which it was spoken sounded so trembling and hopeless, that it cut me to the very heart.

“Whither should we bend our steps? First of all, it was absolutely necessary that we should go away as far as possible from Luttich. In the other towns of the bishopric, owing to the disease being less prevalent, the laws were not so severe; if, therefore, we could descend the Maes, and get as far as Maestricht, we should be in comparative safety, as the leprosy scarcely existed in that quarter, and there were no Pastoureaux. Accordingly we resolved to set out without delay, and even that very night to travel as far as our strength would carry us. My mother and sister

spoke not a word; they followed us through the snow like shadows.

“After we had left some two leagues behind us, my father no longer answered any of my questions. I felt that fatigue was overpowering him, for he leaned himself more and more heavily upon my shoulder. I was well aware that this violent exertion inflamed his wounds and caused him much suffering; but I could not stay to speak of this, for fear of retarding our flight. We were, moreover, in a region little known to us, and where it was impossible to find, amid the darkness, any secure place of refuge. I therefore held my father up, so as to bear nearly the whole weight of his body; and I comforted the two speechless women with words of love and hope.

“After some time, we advanced between two high hills, through a wild and desert region; when all at once my father’s limbs became paralyzed, and he fell like a weight of lead upon my shoulder. I tried to advance, but his legs slipped upon the snow. A cry of horror escaped from my lips, and he sank down powerless upon the earth.

“My mother and sister threw themselves upon their knees; they dared not approach us. Scarcely was a heavy sob wrung at intervals from their breast; they were as if petrified by their immeasurable wo. My father was not entirely deprived of speech; for while I was rubbing his forehead with snow, he sighed out, with feeble voice—

“Walter, my child, my hour is come! I am going to God! Listen well now. Go for the silver salve-box as soon as thou canst. If thou art not seized with the contagion, then preserve this precious remedy for another occasion; it may prove the means of thy restoration. Thou wilt close my eyes like a loving son; and when my soul shall abandon its loathsome habitation, thou wilt dig me a grave with thy hatchet, wilt thou not?”

“A heart-rending cry of grief was my only answer. Like one bereft of reason, I dragged my father over the snow to an eminence, while, in broken accents, I exclaimed—

“No; death shall not stand between us to-day! I go—the silver salve-box—Luttich—patience—I come—pray—pray!”

“And, rapid as an arrow, I flew in the direction of Luttich. It was a little after midnight. I ran faster and faster, until my heart beat so impetuously in my breast that I thought it would burst in pieces. When I came to Luttich, I found the gate open, and a great number of armed men going in and out. From their speech I at once knew them to be Pastoureaux; but the importance of my errand urged me to pass boldly through them, and penetrate into the town. Arrived at our abode, I found the house-door lying in the street, all the window-panes dashed into fragments, and the entrance blocked up, with the household furniture broken into atoms. The

warning of the stranger had thus been verified ; they had pillaged every thing. I crept as quickly as I could into the cellar, beat with a heavy stone against the large cross, and made an opening in the wall.

“In joyful haste I seized the piece of asphaltum, made my way back, and soon arrived with my precious treasure in the open country. I ran with such speed that the sweat ran down my forehead in streams. What strength and courage did that joy which filled my heart bestow ! Did I not hold my father’s life in my hands ? Soon should I reach the spot where I had left him, and be able to say, ‘Here is health for thee ; live long with us still ! The disease is conquered ! Embrace now my mother and sister also !’

“With these happy thoughts I pressed the packet to my lips, and kissed it with earnest fervor. Thus I approached the spot where my father was lying, and was on the point of calling aloud to him the happy tidings from a distance, when all at once I beheld upon the snow, in my very path, three wolves, apparently occupied in rending to pieces their prey. I was afraid to pass the wolves, and yet it was necessary, for I found myself in a narrow defile between two mountains ; and if I had turned back and taken another path, I should have delayed myself more than half an hour.

“Upon this, it occurred to me that wolves are terrified at the clashing of steel ; and drawing

forth my hatchet from under my garment, I struck it with my hunting-knife, and made as much noise as possible. The wolves looked up, and ran off scared through the bushes. Overjoyed at this speedy victory, I hastened onward, and was about to pass by the remains of their prey without stopping, when the shining of the blood upon the snow compelled me to cast a glance upon the ground. A body was lying there, and, O God! I recognised it,—it was that of my father!

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

“HENCEFORWARD I no longer relate what I myself heard or knew. That which follows was told me many years later by my sister.

“During my absence from Luttich my mother and sister saw plainly that my father was breathing forth his last sigh; they approached him, and found that, in fact, his soul had already gone to God. They then retired to some distance and prayed fervently for the departed. At length, overpowered by their feelings, and worn out by their painful journey, they sank into a state of dreamy stupor. After a while they suddenly heard near them a dreadful howling of wild beasts, and to their horror saw three wolves dragging the inanimate body up the mountain! My mother uttered a last cry of anguish: this terrible sight had broken the feeble thread of life; she sank down, and rose not again from that bed of death.

“My sister lost all consciousness, and remained lying on the ground until break of day. Her bewildered eyes first fell upon her mother; she lifted up her ice-cold hand, and let it drop again

in terror. A cry escaped her when she saw me sitting cowering at the foot of the mountain; she rushed toward me, and threw herself on my breast. I returned her kiss, and wished to keep her back; but she held me convulsively in her embrace, like a shipwrecked mariner clinging to the last plank. At last, unloosing her arms, she said:

“‘Walter, let us go quickly to the nearest habitation, that we may get our parents buried in consecrated ground. Come, I see a church-tower yonder in the distance.’

“I laughed, however, like a lunatic, and leaped round about in a phrensy of delirious joy.

“‘Ha, ha!’ I cried, ‘our father is cured; I have brought him the salve-box; he has anointed himself. See, there he lies! He is cured, is he not? Wolves—blood!—Look how beautiful the sun is!’

“And I played like a child with the lump of asphaltum. My poor sister threw her arms round my neck, forced me to sit down, placed herself near me, and said—

“‘Poor Walter, be calm! be still! Thy reason is bewildered! Pray to God, if thou canst! We also shall soon die here. Heaven will unite us all four in its bosom.’

“The series of our woes was at length accomplished.

“On the next day a body of knights on horseback halted beside us. They all looked at us with deep compassion; they had doubtless observed us

from the high-road sitting on the snow, and had been induced by curiosity to come near.

“ ‘Walter, my godson, is it thou?’ inquired one of the knights, leaping from his horse.

“His voice affected me powerfully; I ran toward him with the asphaltum, and called out with a laugh—

“ ‘Ha, ha! Father, here is the silver salve-box! There! anoint thy wounds—quick—before the wolves come.’

“Count Walter Van Craenhove—for he it was—clasped me in his arms. My raving, and, still more, the horrible spectacle which he saw before him, made him quiver with anguish.

“In my delirium I still continued to treat him as my father, and as he could gain no further information from my incoherent speech, my sister recounted to him the tale of misery. All the knights alighted from their horses, and began to show us many tokens of their sympathy; but Count Walter left them little time for this. He called to his attendants, who were behind, made each of us mount a horse which a servant was leading by the bridle, and then gave orders to repair to the nearest village.

“When he had conveyed us thither, he caused the bodies of our parents to be brought to the village, and buried with the solemn rites of the church. On the following day he bade his companions farewell, and did not proceed to Luttich, as he had before intended, but remained in the

village with us until nourishing food and kindly attention had somewhat restored my sister's strength. He then purchased a commodious vehicle, and conveyed us to his castle, the 'Lanteernenhof,' from which we never again departed.

"There we lived in peace and joy. My sister followed each one of my steps with anxious concern; I was the object of her constant care; she lived only for my sake, and to ward off from me every thing that might be injurious. My madness was not of a violent kind; I laughed incessantly, and although I did not know my sister, I loved her nevertheless, because I felt that she loved me. My chief occupation consisted in making wolves; whatever fell under my hand—clay, wax, paste, or any thing of the like—was straightway transformed into a four-footed animal resembling a wolf. Sometimes I would place perhaps a hundred of these objects before me, and laugh and dance with the utmost mirth. My sister had striven to turn me from this practice, but as soon as she remarked that she caused me grief in consequence, she left me to do as I liked.

"Count Walter was not less attached to me; he provided us with all that could make life agreeable. When I in my delirium called him father, I gave him truly the right appellation; he was indeed a father to us.

"After we had thus spent seven months at the 'Lanteernenhof,' the count appeared one day in the room in which I happened to be with my-

sister. I had crowned myself with flowers, and upon the ground before me stood a whole line of wolves modelled in clay. The count took a chair, seated himself by my sister, and said:

“Maria, thy generous and loving nature has filled me with the greatest wonder; it seems to me, in plain terms, that thy virtues have awakened in my heart another and more fervent sentiment toward thee. In the presence, however, of this being, for whom thou hast sacrificed thyself so entirely, I will not speak to thee in the name of an earthly passion. Thou canst not any longer live, Maria, without family and without parents, thus absolutely dependent on thy friend Walter. Often, when sleep flies my couch, do I reflect upon the lot which awaits thee when the Lord, according to the decree of his inscrutable will, shall call me to himself. Thy father, Maria, snatched me from the jaws of death; his friendship was of still greater worth to me than the life which he gave me back. I know that God hath chosen me for the consolation and protection of his children, and I would wish that the soul of thy father may rejoice in heaven at the manner in which I accomplish the sacred mission. Hitherto I have done but little; I feel that I possess the power to protect thee and thy brother from fresh sufferings. A voice from above, and a secret feeling in my heart, tell me that I ought to bind my lot with thine in the most sacred bond, and bestow upon thee a protection for life. Wilt thou, then, be my spouse?”

"My sister listened to the count with amazement; instead of answering, she pointed to me, and sighed—

"'Who then will remain with the poor lunatic?'

"'Thou, Maria,' said the count. 'My prayer is not a selfish one; thy love for thy brother has, indeed, kindled love in my heart for thee. The more thou continuest in such self-sacrifice, the more fervent will my attachment become.'

"However earnestly the count spoke to my sister, she did not seem inclined to adopt any other name than the one which bound her to me. This noble and unselfish refusal excited the love and admiration of the count to a still higher degree; and as his intentions were of the purest kind, he made many endeavors at a later period to obtain my sister's consent. Her determination, however, was unalterable.

"In the following winter the snow fell in abundance, and wolves from the Ardennes again infested the whole country. One evening, when my sister had left me alone for the purpose of seeking some plaything for me, I ran out of the castle into the fields. What happened to me I know not; but the men who had gone, at the entreaties of my afflicted sister, to seek for me with torches, found me stretched to all appearance lifeless upon the snow.

"I was seized with a mortal illness; for eight whole days I lay speechless, with fevered head, upon the couch, without the physician being able

to decide what was to be hoped or feared on my account.

"I now began gradually to waste away; but when this had reached its height a new life seemed to flow into my frame; my health daily improved, and with it soundness of mind and memory returned. Three months later, I was in the full possession of all my faculties.

"After this my sister became Countess Van Craenhove. She presented her husband with three children—two sons, Hugo and Arnold, and a wondrously fair daughter, who received the name of Aleidis.

"A few years later she died with a celestial smile upon her countenance, and in fervent prayer, like a very saint; the good Count Walter soon followed her.

"Both lie buried under the elms, and near them their sons Hugo and Arnold.

"I, Walter Abulfaragus, became the guardian of the children of my benefactor and my sister.

"When God, to whom be honor and praise forever, hath permitted me to accomplish this mission as I ought, then will I joyfully lay my head upon the bed of death, and resign my soul into the hands of my Creator."

Here ended the manuscript.

For the full understanding of the history of Abulfaragus, a few words are subjoined.

When the old man had attained the age of a hundred and two years, he breathed out his soul in the arms of Bernhart and Aleidis. Such a departure could not be called death; there was no pain, no feebleness of spirit. Before he closed his eyes, he looked round once more upon the numerous children of Bernhart and Aleidis, who surrounded his bed, and said to them, in thrilling accents—

“Children, honor your father and mother, that like your friend Abulfaragus your days may be long in the land!”

Then he added gently—

“Farewell! farewell!” and slowly closed his eyes.

His pure soul had winged its way to heaven!

Wooden Clara.

Wooden Clara.

BY

HENDRIK CONSCIENCE.

Translated from the Original Flemish.

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WOODEN CLARA.

CHAPTER I.

MY dear little niece Frederica—God be gracious to her soul, poor thing!—used sometimes to ask me, with tears in her eyes, what it was her school-fellows meant, when they twitted her, as they so often would, with—“There you stand, like Wooden Clara.” She knew as well as I that Wooden Clara was the name of a figure which stands at the foot of the staircase in the Orphan-house at Antwerp; but she wanted me to tell her who this Clara was, and what her name signified. At that time I could not satisfy her curiosity; and when she asked me, which was not seldom, I had to remain in her debt for the answer.

It was not till after my niece had long been at rest in the churchyard at Stuivenberg, and the cross on her grave had already mouldered away, that an impulse of poetical feeling set me upon investigating earnestly, diligently, and perseveringly,

the popular legends of my native city; in the course of which occupation I learned, among other things, who the Wooden Clara, or, as the Antwerp folks say, Cleer, had been. This story, the time of which is laid shortly after the taking of Antwerp by the Duke of Parma, is not at all like a tale of popular growth, so that it may reasonably be conjectured that a real event is at the bottom of it. Be that as it may, what here follows is nothing but a free version and arrangement of what I fragmentarily picked up from different old people, in whose mouths it lingered.

One spring morning of the year 1589, the girls of the Orphan-house were issuing from their asylum in the Spital street for a walk, under the charge of their Mother, or Superintendent. Many of them looked up at the window of the next house, and pointed out to one another, with gestures of curiosity, a richly-dressed lady, who was sitting at the window and looking down upon them.

"See," said one, "that's the rich señora; that's our new neighbor."

"I know her name, too," cried another; "she's the Countess de Almata, from Spain."

"And how do you know that?" asked a third.

"I heard the Mother telling Sister Monica; but the rich señora's no Spaniard, you may see; she has blue eyes and fair hair. No; she's from Antwerp, and married the rich Spaniard."

"Just hark to that story-teller Theresa making fools of us all with her tales again!" remarked one of the listeners, with a laugh.

"Well, if you don't believe me, ask Wooden Clara; she was by too. Here! Pst! Wooden Clara! Wooden Clara!"

At this the Mother-superintendent turned her head, and observed that some of her girls were looking up at the window of the next house, while she was busied in drawing up the others in rank and file. But a severe look was enough to check their peeping and chattering; and the Mother, taking one of the girls, whom she specially selected, by the hand, set forward at the head of her flock, who then followed in order.

"Always that Wooden Clara!" said Theresa. "I suppose she's afraid of her darling doll getting broken!"

"Just look now, Anna, how high, and mighty, and stiff, she steps along with the Mother, as if she had swallowed a broomstick! There she is again, trying all she can to make favor."

"Do just leave Wooden Clara alone," broke in Long Mie, [Marie.] "She knows another new song; such a pretty one. It begins so:

'Hail to thee, thou fairest flower,
Mary, handmaid of the Lord.'

This afternoon she'll teach it us, and on the spinet, too; I'd give two fingers of my left hand to play the spinet like Wooden Clara."

“That’s all very well; but why is she always to be made a pet of, as if she wasn’t an Orphan-house child, just like the rest of us? And why is she so high and mighty, too?”

“What do you mean by high and mighty? You know well enough that she’s as good-natured and obliging as a creature can be.”

Perhaps the girls would have gone on for yet a good while, exercising their tongues on Wooden Clara; but a handsome young man that galloped by on a spirited horse sufficiently occupied them, as they had first to make their observations on him closely, and then to impart them to one another copiously.

While thus the orphan girls slowly proceeded along the Spital street, the lady remained standing at her window, and dreamily looked down upon the street. Every thing in her appearance indicated a deep and settled melancholy, from the transparent paleness of her complexion to the dulness of her blue eyes and the heaviness of her movements. She could not well reckon less than thirty years, but for all that she had lost none of her beauty.

For near a quarter of an hour the lady stood motionless at the window. At last, the room-door was gently opened, and a man peeped in.

As the lady took no notice, he advanced into the room somewhat noiselessly, but not stealthily, at least not apparently so. He went up to the lady, and hastily cast a curious look over her

shoulder into the street. There was nothing there to excite any misgivings; and, satisfied of this, he took some steps on one side, sat down on a chair, and thence addressed the señora.

“Still always so gloomy, Catalina? You deceived me, then, when you ever assured me that the air of the Netherlands would restore you. We have now been a full fortnight here, and, instead of your growing more cheerful with the residence in your native town, you have quite lost the joyous smile that used to play over your countenance during our journey hitherward. I’m sorry that I so readily complied with your entreaties; for without doubt the climate of Spain is both more healthy and less gloomy than the perpetual veil of mist which here weighs like a heavy pall upon the earth. My love for you, Catalina, must in truth be great, to have induced me to this dangerous journey into a land in which I had seen my friends and kindred perish by fire and sword; but I hoped that at least this sacrifice would be repaid me in your pleasure and renewed health. Unhappily, your health seems still worse than before; except for the family visits which we paid together, you have hardly been out of this house, have you?”

These last words were whispered out to her in a peculiar tone. She cast down her eyes, and was silent, as though conscious of having something to reproach herself with.

With affected composure, her husband went on:

"No, señora; you have not yet been out of this house. Even yesterday, toward evening, when I was gone out to call on Don Fabricio, you did not go out with your duenna, whom, by-the-way, I do not see here now!"

"Calisto! Calisto!" sobbed the lady, "why do you thus spy out every step I take? You ask me why I do not recover health and spirits in my native air. What I sought here was liberty; but, alas! I have brought my bondage with me. It is not the air and sun alone of my native land that can restore me; I must have my native land's freedom, too; and so long as you cruelly rob me of that, and set hired spies upon your wife, as you did in Spain, so long will it be the stifling atmosphere of Spain that I shall breathe, and you need look for no improvement in me. Do not trouble yourself to seek the remedy in some other abode; everywhere I shall wither, where this yoke of slavery presses me down."

While the lady thus answered with ill-concealed bitterness, the Count de Almata looked searchingly into her eyes, and a smile, manifestly of suspicion, passed over his face.

"Would your ladyship condescend," he asked, "to inform your husband where it was that you were, with your duenna yesterday, in the twilight?"

"In the Great Square, Calisto."

"May I also ask, Catalina, why it was that you entered a house of poor appearance there?"

"Good God, Calisto! what sort of tone is that to question me in?"

"It would be shorter and simpler, Catalina, at once to tell me what I ask."

"Well, then, I went out for a little free enjoyment of the evening air—free, I said; do you understand, Calisto? In the Great Square, I remembered that an old servant of our family lived there, and I thought I should like to see her again; it was she that used to take me to school when I was a little girl. But it is now eight years that we have been away; the old woman is long since out of sight and mind, and no one knows what has become of her. Have you any fault to find with me for what was so natural?"

"Certainly none whatever, Catalina. If you'll allow me, I will help you in your search. What is the old woman's name?"

The countess blushed scarlet, and it was not till after a short hesitation that she stammered out—

"Her name is——Anna de Zwart."

"Ha! her name is Anna de Zwart!" repeated the count, in an incredulous tone. "Are you sure that is the right name, madam? you may have forgotten it, as it is so long since you have seen her."

"Calisto!" cried the lady, deeply hurt, "I will not be spoken to in this way. If your jealous

temper, Count de Almata, makes it impossible for you to trust your wife, at least you have no right to put this affront upon the daughter of your old brother-in-arms. Respect in me the noble name of Ghyseghem, and the blood of him who saved your life."

"Your father, John Van Ghyseghem, my brother-in-arms and preserver,—you see, madam, I have not forgotten it,—intrusted you to my keeping. I am fulfilling my duty; and, say what you will, Catalina, I will find out the truth of that mystery, whatever it is, which draws you to the Netherlands, and which I am not to know of. I freely confess that there is that in my proceedings which may well be annoying to you, if you are blameless; nay, more, I declare to you that I do not question your honor, but I must watch over you; our hearts not unoften lead us astray, and the mystery in which you wrap yourself may conceal an imminent danger. You see that I speak plainly—for I have right on my side. You, Catalina, can hardly say as much, for where there is concealment there must be some reason for it."

The lady repented deeply of her vehemence; the count's closing words had much diminished her irritation. She approached him with a gentle smile; a tear glistened in her eye; she took him tenderly by the hand, and said, in a deprecating tone—

"Forgive me, Calisto; I was wrong. But why

do you treat me with distrust? Why do you inquire into a totally insignificant circumstance, as though I were a criminal before her judge? You want me to be lively and in good spirits, a pleasant and cheerful companion? Well, then, leave off spying after me; do not grudge me the freedom which is here the custom of the land for all; and you shall see how gratefully I will love you, not only as a dear husband, but as the benefactor and guardian of my life."

"I know not, Catalina, how you come to torment yourself with the idea that you are living in bondage. I do not spy after your doings; but why, on the other hand, do you excite my suspicions by going out secretly, and not telling me of it? My servant, Domingo, saw you yesterday speaking with a woman at the entry of a house in the Great Square; what more natural than that he should mention it to me? Were it possible for me, I would gladly banish all suspicion from my breast; but my Spanish blood and your mysterious demeanor, Catalina, keep me at unrest, and I shall not be rid of it till I have from yourself the key to the mystery which, deny it as you will, I know exists. I am convinced that you have no evil designs; but I am a husband, and a Spaniard withal: be just and generous enough not to forget that."

"Calisto! Calisto! would that you could read my heart! A hundred times rather would I suffer martyrdom than wrong you of the love and grati-

tude I owe you. Your suspicions wring my heart; have pity on me."

"Come, my poor Catalina, away with your sadness; all is right between us again now. Let us drop this painful subject. God protect you, my love! And now, in half an hour we must be with the Señora de Beza de Santa Cruz, to pay the promised visit. By that time I trust that your duenna will be back and ready to accompany you."

And with these words, he tenderly kissed his wife's hand, and left the room.

The lady fell back exhausted into a chair, with both hands pressed to her forehead; she was evidently suffering severely, for every limb shook as in a fever fit. Soon tears flowed from her eyes, and her choking bosom relieved itself in deep sighs. Without doubt the unhappy countess was struggling against a lot which she could not change; and so, after a short delay, she rose again with an air of courage and resolution, and wiped the tears from her eyes. And now a smile of earnest longing passed upon her countenance; she crossed the room, and knocked three times on the wainscoting. A noise was heard, first of a chair pushed back, then of hastening steps, probably those of one who had long been waiting for the signal.

An elderly woman came in, with an air of caution. The lady rose, without speaking a word, gently opened and again shut all the doors, and

then, taking the duenna by the hand, led her silently up to the fireplace. Then, turning to the old woman, with a muffled and almost inaudible voice she spoke, while a beam of hope lighted up her features:

"Well, Ines, dear Ines, have you at last discovered any thing? Do you know what has become of Anna Canteels?"

"Yes, señora; I know now where she lives."

"My God! at last! that is a relief to me.—Oh! how glad I feel, dear Ines!"

"You'll be gladder by a great deal, when I tell you what more I've learnt."

"What, Ines? What? Oh! do speak!"

The old duenna smiled cheerfully, laid her finger on her lips, and whispered the lady in the ear—

"Thank God, I know where *she* is too."

The little word *she*, thus emphasized, certainly had a plain significance for the lady; for she started up, at once laughing happily and trembling nervously, and was evidently at a great effort to keep under her emotions.

"*She? She?*"

"Yes, señora; she is alive, and now but a few paces from you."

"Don't torture me so, Ines! Speak plainly! I cannot believe in so much happiness."

"Doubt no longer, then, señora; she whom we are seeking—not the old one, but the other—lives not far from here."

This sudden fulfilment of all that she had hardly ventured to hope for affected the countess intensely. She turned first red, then pale; a faintness came over her, and she had to lean for support upon the marble pier of the chimney-piece. Almost inaudibly she gasped out—

“Where does she live? Tell me, quick, where is she?”

“Wait a moment, señora, till you are yourself again—only a moment. Your joy at the good news is too much for you; I fear you might not be able all at once to bear what I have to tell you.”

“Cruel friend! Only look well at me; I am still all in a tremble, but I have my strength again. What is it then you have to tell me? Is it my death-warrant you bring me, instead of the glad tidings that you seemed to promise?”

“My poor señora, you are rambling. Only be calm, and collect yourself, and I will tell you where she is.”

With these words the duenna pointed to the wainscot, and seemed to listen to some distant sound; then, with an air of mystery, she went on:

“Señora, the girls of the Orphan-house hard by are just come in with their Mother from a walk; don’t you hear them singing in the distance, even through the wall?”

“Yes, Ines, I hear them every day; but what has that to do with the matter?”

“She is there, señora, among the orphan girls;

perhaps at this very moment her voice is among those that reach your ear."

"Oh, God! is it possible?" cried the lady, eagerly. "She there? so near me?"

And, as though carried away by an irresistible impulse, she ran to the wall and laid her ear to it, while inexpressible delight and painfully-strained attention struggled upon her countenance.

Long she listened with a happy smile, reposing on her joy till pulse and nerves had settled down into something more of calm. At last the song of the girls ceased; they had probably returned to the workroom.

The lady now turned cheerfully to the duenna, who stood by, waiting for her to speak, sat down by her, and in a low voice said—

"Dear Ines, tell me now how it came that you have been able thus all at once to overwhelm me with bliss; how God's hand led you in your search. You are sure, I trust, that there is no mistake?—it would be the death of me!"

"Well, then, only be patient, and hear me out at once, señora. We've no time to lose, for as I came in Domingo told me that the count will be with you immediately, to take you out with him."

"Quite true; so make haste."

"Well, then, this morning I was quite at my wit's end which way to turn, and where to inquire. No wonder, señora; for it's now more than a fortnight that I've been running backward and forward, all for nothing. Well, just as I was think-

ing I should have to come home once more as wise as I went, who should come across me in the street but an old woman, who before your marriage had sometimes been employed in the Count de Almata's house? She came up to me, and asked after you; she knows you quite well, señora, for she used often to work in your father's house, too."

"Is it Theresa Costerlings you mean?"

"The same. By degrees I brought the conversation upon Anna Canteels, and was told that she had taken to bad courses, and had at last married a soldier. Theresa told me, too, where Anna lives: she and her husband have a room in a poor house in the Convent street. I was well-nigh beside myself with joy, and to the Spanish Quarter you may be sure I set off without losing a moment; though I still had a good deal to do before I could find Anna's place. However, I did find it at last, and her too. Ah, señora! the poor woman is sadly to be pitied. Pale and worn she is; and like a skeleton; and every thing in such filth! But, poor thing, I believe she has a good heart left, too; for as soon as I began to speak of you the tears gushed from her eyes, and she sobbed out a prayer to be forgiven. Well, she told me that out of the money you left her she had put *her* out to nurse in the country, and kept her there for several years. Afterward Anna made bad acquaintances among the soldiers, and went altogether wrong. At last she married one of the soldiers; probably one of the worst of the lot, for with blows and ill-treat-

ment he got away from her all that remained of the money you had intrusted to her. But she would not give it up till she had made sure of *her* being cared for. There's no time now to tell you the piteous story she made out of a soldier killed and a village burnt, and how in that way she got *her* taken up by some people of influence, who put her into the Orphan-house. For to-day it's enough for you to know that there she is, close by here; and the girls call her Wooden Clara."

"Wooden Clara! That's a nickname. Ah! she's ill-treated and put upon by the rest!"

"Not at all, *señora*; they call her so because she always holds herself so bolt upright. Each girl, it seems, has some such nickname, and I dare say Wooden Clara's one of the best. But I'll go on, for I hear them down-stairs getting ready to go out. Come to the mirror, *señora*, and I can dress you while I'm telling you the rest. It's terribly tiring work, this whispering, though; I really can hardly go on. Well, I was still talking with Anna Canteels, and she was crying her eyes out, when the door opened, and in came a soldier, staggering and swaggering, an ill-favored fellow, with a long moustache and a look fit to frighten you. This was Anna's husband. The drunken rascal looked suspiciously at me, and when he saw his wife crying went into a great passion. He hustled her off her chair and into a corner, and with oaths and curses insisted on knowing what I was there for. Poor Anna refused to tell him at first, but he soon cuffed

it out of her. Then he began bullying me, and wanting money; so, to pacify him, I gave him what I had about me, and promised him something every week besides. This brought him quite round, and now—but hark, señora, the count's coming up-stairs. Luckily, you are quite ready to go out with him.”

And so it was. The door opened, the count entered, all cheerfulness and pleasantness, came up to the glass, and stood by for a moment, while his wife put the last hand to her toilet. With surprise and delight he saw her eyes beaming with new life and fire: sometimes even they met his lovingly. He saw in this an outbreak of grateful feeling for his late concessions, and was therefore doubly delighted at her pleasant aspect. He took her by the hand, and they left the room together to pay their visit to the Señora de Beza de Santa Cruz.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning the Countess de Almata was much earlier in waking than usual. Even her duenna was not yet up, when she left her bed and began to dress herself for going out. The constant smile upon her lips, the activity and lightness of her movements, sufficiently evidenced that it was the impatience of delight which impelled her.

When the duenna entered the room, her toilet was already nearly completed. The old attendant felt as though rebuked for her lateness, and set about her office with extra zeal; but in a joyous tone the countess exclaimed—

“You need not hurry so, Ines! It was nothing but my joy that would not let me stay in bed any longer; and after all the fatigue that you had for my sake yesterday I would not wake you.”

With these words she approached the duenna, whose conscience felt now relieved, took her by the hand, and led her into one corner of the room; then, in joyful excitement, but with suppressed voice, she began:

“Ines, I must see her! I must go to her! My

heart beats so fast; it is as though a new life's blood was gushing in my veins. Come, help me; I am in such a hurry of joy that I do not know what I'm doing."

The duenna obeyed, but with a somewhat frightened air. In a nervous voice, she observed:

"But the count, señora;—what will he say if you go out again without his knowledge, after he has forbidden you?"

"He knows it, Ines; I may come and go as I please now."

"What! are you sure of that?"

"Quite sure; you can't think how kind he was yesterday, what confidence and tenderness he showed me: I do not at all understand the sudden change."

"I can, very well, señora. The count truly loves you. For these eight years past you have done nothing but bemoan yourself; you have met all his marks of affection with invincible sadness. Yesterday, when I brought you the glad news, your eyes brightened up, color came into your cheeks, your voice rang like music. All this made you entrancingly lovely. Your husband, who loves you so dearly, could not resist the charm. And besides, señora, how cheerfully and pleasantly you chatted with him!"

"Ah, Ines! I see you can read the heart. Yes, so it is. After that fortnight of sorrow and suffering, I felt so full of joy that every word I spoke was pleasant and loving, and the count was al'

delighted. In the course of conversation, I threw out the idea of visiting the Orphan-house, under the pretext of seeing whether I could get any fine lace there; and he gave me a hearty kiss, and said, 'Go, dear Catalina; my mistrust is put away. Do as you will; you need have no mysteries with me. I am sure it is only a sort of antagonism that has led you into them, because you thought that I set spies upon you. Be always thus cheerful and happy, and you may go and come as you please for me. Your noble heart and honorable pride are a sufficient surety to me against the suggestions of my Spanish jealousy.'"

A sigh burst from the duenna's bosom; with lifted hands she cried—

"And such a man, all love and kindness, we must deceive! God forgive us, señora! what we are doing is in very truth not well."

The lady bowed her head upon her bosom, and seemed quite cast down by this remark of her duenna. After an instant's pause, she resumed, mournfully:

"What we are doing is not well, say you? Alas! I fear you are right; but how am I to escape my fate? I am innocent; you know it well. I should die of shame if I could for a moment give room in my breast to one dishonorable thought; and yet I must live under a constant weight of suspicious circumstances."

She was silent awhile; and then added—

"Shall I tell him all, Ives?"

"How can you think of such a thing, señora?"

"See, Ines, I love the count, not only from gratitude, but really from my heart. The consciousness that I am deceiving him is a very torment of hell to me; there are moments when I could tell him all."

"Take heed how you do that, señora; his Spanish blood would surely boil up at the news. His life would be poisoned by a knowledge that would be intolerable to him; and God knows how your lot would then shape itself. Better were it to go back to Spain, and try to forget why it was we came to the Netherlands."

The duenna's last words touched the lady most painfully. Proudly she reared her head, as though to repel an affront, and, with a dark look at her old servant, she said—

"How can you dare to speak of such a thing, Ines? Leave Antwerp without seeing *her*! You must be jesting; you know as well as I do it is not possible. Give me my mantilla, and let us go."

There stands in the Spital street an old-fashioned, Gothic-looking house, with its gable toward the street, the highest story of which is decorated with an allegorical representation of the Holy Trinity. Over the principal entrance is a relief in stone, representing a number of young girls receiving instruction from a mistress, with others standing at the door of the establishment. Under this work of art may be read the following

somewhat doggerel explanation of the objects and origin of the institution :—

“For decent bringing up of little maids
Who else in want and misery might have perish’d,
A godly man this house of God did raise;
Himself unknown, his soul compassion cherish’d.”

“This good man departed this life November the 19th, 1562. He lived seventy-three years. His name was Jan Van der Meere, merchant here.”

It was yet betimes in the morning when the Countess de Almata, with her duenna, stood at this door. The latter raised the iron knocker and let it fall again, so that the summons resounded through the house. At the same time she hastily said to her mistress—

“For God’s sake, señora, command yourself; remember there is that in your heart which no one must read upon your countenance.”

The lady made no answer.

A moment after, the door was opened by one of the girls of the house, with a bunch of keys at her apron string. She looked thoroughly cheerful, and was very tidily dressed. Her apron, collar, and sleeves were of linen, dazzlingly white, and exquisitely got up; she might pass for a living proof of the cleanliness, care, and industry which reigned in the establishment.

“What is your ladyship’s pleasure?” she asked, with a kindly smile.

“Oh, you dear child!” cried the lady, delighted, and patted the little damsel on the cheek. Then

putting her hand in her pocket, and feeling about a while, she brought out a silver thimble, which she immediately presented to the young portress.

"Here is a little present for you, dear child; you look so neat and friendly, it is a pleasure to see you. I came to see if I could get some good lace here."

"I thank your ladyship," answered the girl; and added—

"Yes; we have some very beautiful lace. Be pleased to step in."

And, showing the countess into a small parlor, she called out from the foot of the stairs—

"Mother! Mother! come down for a moment. There's a lady here wishes to speak to you."

A woman of some forty years of age speedily made her appearance in the parlor. Health of body and peace of mind shone forth upon her countenance; while her whole manner and appearance testified of thorough kindness of heart. She curtsied to the countess, and after civilly requesting her to be seated, thus welcomed her:

"Our house is much honored that the Countess de Almata condescends to visit the poor orphans her neighbors. In what can we serve your ladyship?"

"Mistress, I am desirous of purchasing some lace of superior quality, and would gladly take the opportunity of going over an establishment, the arrangements and management of which I have heard so much praised."

The Mother-superintendent speedily opened some large drawers, and exhibited to the countess a great variety of lace; she, however, was unable to contain her impatience, and broke in:

"Yes; the lace is beautiful, and I shall certainly take a quantity. But could you not, mistress, first have the kindness to let me see the children at their work?"

Instead of immediately complying with this request, the superintendent suddenly began to survey the countess with a look of astonishment, and with an intentness that almost amounted to rudeness.

"How, mistress?" said the señora; "you don't answer me!"

"I beg your ladyship's pardon," replied the Mother; "where can my wits be flown to? I had entirely lost myself——indeed, 'tis strange, though!"

"What is it startles you so?" asked the countess, not a little surprised.

"Oh, nothing, nothing! it's only a likeness. But what am I thinking about? Will your ladyship be pleased to follow me?"

With these words she conducted the countess and her attendant across a quadrangular court, to the back building in which the girls were. On the way, the duenna seized an opportunity of whispering her mistress in the ear—

"Cuidado, [take care,] señora!"

The great room into which the Mother now

conducted the countess was filled with girls of very different ages, all at work. They were uniformly dressed in a petticoat of black woollen, a blue woollen bodice, with broad white collar, snow-white apron, and a black velvet cap; this, together with a pair of white sleeves, which they wore while at work, to save the sleeves of the bodice, formed their whole equipment. The hair was combed off the forehead, and brought back under the cap, so as to leave the forehead clear, and give it its full height.

Most of them were working lace upon a cushion which they held in the lap; others were making or marking different articles of linen; some were knitting in colored wools, or embroidering with silk and gold, upon grounds of various material.

As the Mother entered with her visitors the girls broke off a hymn they had been singing, and worked on in silence, each with her head respectfully bent over her work. The countess had already heard them while crossing the court, and had remarked amid their choir one sweet, clear, high voice, which led the melody, like the notes of a silver flute. It was quite a disappointment to her when her entrance suddenly checked their song; but such was the rule of the house, and the Mother insisted on its strict observance.

In accordance with the countess's wish, the Mother showed her each girl's work severally, and added many circumstantial explanations, so it was but very slowly that they got through the rows.

The señora could not venture to inquire after what she was so earnestly longing to know and to see: it was a painful exercise of patience she was condemned to, and hardly could she give ear to her conductress, so occupied was she with the thought that one dearer to her than life itself was at this very moment breathing the air of the same room with her.

The Mother could not but be struck and surprised at her visitor's extreme preoccupation of thought, and was just about to break off her explanations, when suddenly the countess herself took up a new subject.

"Your girls all sing very nicely, Mother, but one high voice I heard, which sounded to me peculiarly sweet and pure."

"Yes, indeed," replied the superintendent; "that was Wooden Clara's voice. But what's the matter with you? I fear the room is over warm for you? Let us go out into the court, the fresh air there will do you good."

"It is nothing," interposed the duenna, hastily, but with perfect presence of mind; "my mistress turns pale suddenly sometimes; it is a mere nervous weakness, of no consequence whatever."

"I'm glad to hear it. Would your ladyship desire to hear the song again?"

"Ah, yes! I should be exceedingly obliged to you; but will you allow me to take a seat, for I feel quite tired."

The Mother ran off to the other end of the room,

and fetched her own arm-chair, which was covered with leather and ornamented with gilt nails. In this she begged the countess to seat herself, and then called to the girls:

"Children, her ladyship wishes to hear you sing. Clara Houtvelt, take your place at the music-desk."

The girls prepared to obey the order, and were now only waiting for the signal to begin, which was, however, delayed for a moment by the countess, who, with ill-concealed anxiety, threw in the question—

"Clara Houtvelt, say you, mistress? Were you not just speaking of a certain Wooden Clara, who you said was the leader?"

"The two are the same, Lady Countess. Wooden Clara is a name we have here for Clara Houtvelt; it is that sweet child that you see standing by the music-desk."

And without noticing either the effect her words had on the countess, or the nervous anxiety with which the duenna regarded her mistress, she turned to the girls:

"Now, the Christmas Carol! Clara, dear child, do you lead; your sisters will take the chorus."

In truth, Wooden Clara, as she stood at the desk, might have passed for an artistic ideal of childish beauty. She was delicately formed, perhaps a little too thin, but in a girl of twelve that hardly damaged the impression. All the pure deep blue of heaven seemed reflected in her large eyes, which sparkled like gems beneath her ala-

baster forehead; her little mouth was like a folded rose-leaf, and the prettiest dimple in the world lighted up (so to say) her chin. What particularly distinguished her among all her companions, and at the same time formed a singular contrast with her close cap, apron, and plain stuff dress, was her dignified bearing, and something indescribable in manner and expression, which seemed to mark her out as of nobler composition. Even among her playmates there was none who did not feel this; they were all fully convinced that Wooden Clara was a child of no common stock, though they had nothing to go upon but the impression made upon them by the inborn nobleness of her bearing and her feelings. No sooner had the Mother given the signal, than, with a voice of great compass and sweetness, she thus led off:*

'Twas Joseph and 'twas Mary
Together turned their feet
Unto the town of Bethle'm,
Their fathers' ancient seat.

Here the other girls all fell in with—

In excelsis gloria!
Et in terrâ pax hominibus.
Valasus! Valasus!
Hail to Thee, Lord Jesus!
Thou art our Dominus,
And in terrâ pax hominibus.

This chorus was to be repeated after each stanza. Wooden Clara then resumed the solo.

* See note at end.

And there, when it was evening,
So poor, so poor were they,
They sought a stable's shelter,
Wherein their heads to lay.
In excelsis gloria, &c.

And there, when it was midnight,
The Virgin she did bear
A blessed child to save us,
As angels did declare.
In excelsis gloria, &c.

'Twas thus the Lord, the Holy,
The Virgin's son became,
'Tis therefore men and angels
Cry, Hail to Mary's name!
In excelsis gloria, &c.

Joseph sings then, Hallelujah!
And the angels they sing all
In excelsis gloria!
Valasus! Valasus!
Say not no, sweet Jesus!
Thou art our Dominus,
And in terrâ pax hominibus.

All the while the song lasted the countess listened with half-open mouth, and all in rapture, as though it had been indeed the heavenly Hallelujah itself she was present at. She did not once take her eyes off Wooden Clara; she literally hung upon her lips. In fact there was something so divinely pure in the little singer's whole aspect, in her blue eyes there beamed so intense a yearning Godward, so totally did she seem absorbed in her song, and borne along by a mysterious sense of harmony, that it was hardly too much to say that she ex-

hibited the very ideal of a glorified soul standing before the eternal throne. Even the duenna was touched, and forgot for a moment the danger in which her mistress was involved; she also sat, with stretched-out neck, devouring Wooden Clara with her eyes.

The song was ended, and Clara was already back at her lace cushion; but the countess and the duenna still sat motionless there, to the great wonderment of the girls and excitement of their curiosity; till, at last, the Mother, approaching the señora, with evident pride observed:

“Yes, my lady, you may search the town through before you find a singer like this dear child. And she shall never be obliged to leave the house and go into service. The nuns of St. Elizabeth, close by here, the White Sisters in the new street, and the ladies of the Convent in the Cattle Market, have all been after our Clara, to get her for themselves as soon as she is old enough; they would all of them take her without any portion, and glad too, that she might be first singer in the choir. But that shall never be, my lady; Clara’s my own child, and, with God’s will, I will not part with her while I live. What does your ladyship think of her voice?”

Meanwhile the countess’s feelings were quite too much for her; it was with difficulty she kept back the tears which every moment threatened to burst from her eyes. The duenna saw well the inward struggle, and privately caught her mistress by the

hand, to remind her of the necessity of self-control. But regardless of this hint, and without making any reply to the Mother-superintendent's question, the señora left her chair, and went straight up to Wooden Clara, who on her part, out of respect for the stranger lady, also rose from her seat, and stood with her eyes bashfully cast down on the ground. The countess took her by the hand, her own trembling with emotion, and stammered out:

"My child, you have a voice like an angel. But look up at me, my little dear. You're not afraid of me, are you?"

Clara raised her beautiful blue eyes to the lady, and looked her in the face with the sweetest of smiles.

"Oh, no! my lady," she replied; "you speak too kindly to your humble servant for that."

"Humble servant!" sighed out the lady, sadly, while she pressed with still deeper feeling the child's hand. "Will you give me a kiss, Clara—you do sing so very, very sweetly!"

"Give you a kiss, my lady?" said Clara, with a blush. "I should like it indeed, if I might take such a liberty."

Hardly had the words passed her lips, when the countess seized her with both hands by the head, and kissed her again and again, with so much vehemence, that she was quite thrown into confusion, and as soon as she was let go returned to her work, from which she did not venture again to look up.

The superintendent and the duenna had meanwhile drawn near, and had looked on at this little passing scene. The former hardly knew what to make of it; all sorts of singular misgivings crossed her mind; however, as they had after all no substantial ground, she resolutely refused to entertain them, and would not doubt but that it was Clara's singing alone which had so affected her noble visitor. As for Clara's schoolfellows, their only feeling on the subject was one of idle curiosity, not perhaps in all unmixed with envy; but they were so accustomed to Wooden Clara's being at all times and to all comers an object of especial interest, and to her being made much of, that they saw nothing extraordinary in what had just passed.

The duenna trembled with nervous anxiety; and no sooner had she remarked the paleness that followed upon those fervid kisses, and the unsteady fire which lighted up in the swimming eyes, than she said aloud—

“Señora, the song has been too much for you; you are unwell. You had really better come out into the air a while; we can come again in the afternoon, or to-morrow.”

At the same time, making as though her mistress was in need of support, she took her by the arm, drew her away out of the great room, and into the court, and, after a few moments in the open air, thence into the parlor in which, on first coming in, they had seen the lace.

“Now, mistress,” said the duenna, “show us

quickly some of your very finest. We must make haste home now; my mistress is in need of rest and quiet. I know nobody in this world so easily affected by good music as the countess; it is sometimes quite too much for her nerves, so that I have known her even faint away with it."

"I am sure, if it can be any pleasure to the countess, she is welcome to come in here as often as she likes. Clara has quite a stock of the prettiest songs, and shall sing them to our noble neighbor in private. She is the sweetest and most obliging child; it is a real gratification to her to do any thing that can be a pleasure to anybody."

The countess had not yet sufficiently recovered her self-possession to be able to reply. In her imagination she was still reiterating the kisses; her whole soul still hung upon the idolized child's lips. The duenna perfectly understood what was passing in her, and therefore took all upon herself, without waiting for any further orders.

"Yes, the lace is really very beautiful. Your prices are rather high, though, mistress; however, we won't quarrel about that. My lady will take the whole piece of this; I will come back for it presently; and the piece of narrow, at five guilders, too. Farewell till to-morrow, mistress; many thanks for your kind reception. Home now, señora, shall we not?"

But the countess turned to the Mother, and said—

"I should like to make the little singer a present; can I see her again for a moment?"

"Immediately, my lady," said the Mother, and left the parlor to fetch her.

"For God's sake, señora! what is it you intend?" cried the duenna.

"I must kiss her once more before I leave the house, if it should cost me my life, Ines."

"May your guardian angel be with you, señora! You are in great danger. Here she is; be cautious!"

And, in fact, in came the Mother, and presented Clara to the countess, who took the little maiden by the hand, and feeling in her pocket, said to her—

"My dear child, your singing and nice behavior have quite enchanted me, and I wish to make you a little present, for the pleasure your song has given me. Take this from me, as the gift of a friend that feels heartily drawn toward you."

The girl took the gift, and gazed with wonder on the glittering objects she held in her hand: a pair of scissors, with the handle of fine silver, and a needle-case of the same metal.

"Give the señora a kiss," said the duenna.

Wooden Clara, beside herself for joy at the beautiful scissors and still more beautiful needle-case, did not wait for a second invitation, and, with a sweet smile, raised her arms toward the countess, who clasped the child in hers, pressed her to her bosom, and kissed her again and again,

till the duenna interposed with an observation calculated to bring her mistress to reason :

“Señora, you know the count is waiting for you, and may not be well pleased if you stay away too long.”

With these words, she advanced some paces toward the door.

“Good-by, then, till to-morrow, mistress,” said the countess ; “good-by, darling child ; I will bring you a thimble to-morrow, my little singer, to make up the set.”

And she followed her duenna to the door, which was soon closed behind them.

“Oh, señora, señora !” cried the duenna, when they were once fairly in the street, “it was indeed very thoughtless of you. These people must be stark blind if they do not see something of the secret which you ought to be so careful to hide, and——”

But the countess stopped the ill-boding mouth with her hand, and added, in an ecstasy of delight—

“Say no more about it, my good Ines ! If you were to tell me that the count had discovered all—that his hate and vengeance were ready to burst upon me—what would that signify ? You seem not to understand that I have heard her voice, seen her face, held her in my arms, kissed her !—that she smiled lovingly upon me, and lovingly returned my kisses ! Oh, merciful God ! it is too much of bliss ! I am ready now to bear any

thing; but do not, do not check the ineffable flow of bliss that is welling up in my heart. Do not interrupt me, Ines; leave me to revel in this unspeakable delight; do not cloud the heaven of my transported soul. Is not the little angel beautiful? Is she not, Ines? What an atmosphere of nobleness hovers round the little nightingale!"

The duenna opened the door of their dwelling-house with tears in her eyes, and closed it again behind her mistress.

Meanwhile, the Mother of the Orphan-house returned to the parlor, to shut up the drawers in which she kept the lace; but, full of speculation as she was on the event of the morning, she soon forgot what she was there for. Mechanically she seated herself on the chair the countess had just left, and, lost in thought, fixed her eyes on the ground, while she slowly murmured to herself:

"But that story of the village burnt, and the compassionate soldier? Is that, then, all a mere invention? Houtvelt? It is an out-of-the-way name. It may be her sister—hardly that, though: Clara's not old enough—barely turned twelve. Or a niece or cousin? Who knows? But would a cousin, or aunt, or even a sister, be so affected, even to tears, almost to fainting, at a single kiss from the little one? What can that impulsive, imperious feeling be, the mere exhibition of which moved my very soul—what else can it be than a mother's love? Ah! how I feel for her! Poor mother! what she must suffer! So lovely, so

engaging a child! Not to set eyes on her for years, and then to find her here, being brought up in an inferior condition, herself able to do nothing for her, and obliged to leave her with a bleeding heart, after a single kiss hastily snatched! To have to speak with her own child as with a stranger, and to withhold the caresses her heart is yearning to bestow! What a hard, what an unnatural struggle against an inexorable destiny! Once to go astray, and forever to have the sword of shame hanging over her by a single hair; to be torn hither and thither between nature and society, and ever and again to sink exhausted in the fearful strife! Poor mother!—yet who knows? Perhaps I am mistaken; and then my suspicion is an impeachment on the countess's honor. But, be that as it may, she is kind, and dearly loves the child that I love so dearly too. And whatever the secret of her heart may be, I will not betray her: from that, God preserve me! And if she finds pleasure, and—as, after all, I must believe—a mother's delight, in the sweet child's presence, why, let the poor mother come as often as she will, and I will do what I can to help her——”

“Mother! Mother!” cried the portress; “Sister Begga, of the Convent of the Annunciation, is here; she's come about the alb for the Canon Visschers.”

“Coming, coming!” answered the Mother, hurriedly, and hasted to meet Sister Begga.

CHAPTER III.

THE sun had completed but a small portion of his daily course, when the Countess de Almata, accompanied by her duenna, left her home to pay a second visit at the Orphan-house. In her eyes beamed joy unmixed; since she had shaken off the impassible melancholy that had for so many years weighed upon her. Every thing in the world looked fair and pleasant to her. Delighted with her new-found cheerfulness, her husband now saw in her all his heart could wish; his manner was so thoroughly kind and tender toward her, he showed her such unbounded confidence, that she was now fully convinced that all suspicion was henceforth banished from his breast. She felt free therefore to visit her heart's darling, without any fear of her steps being dogged by spies.

The duenna knocked at the door.

Doubtless the portress had received a special order from the Mother, for no sooner did she perceive who it was at the door, than she threw it wide open, and joyfully called out:

"Welcome, lady countess! Your most devoted servant. Be pleased to step in; I will call the Mother immediately."

With these words, the girl shut the door again, and was off like a roe toward the other side of the court, whence, a few moments afterward, the Mother and Wooden Clara made their appearance together.

The moment the child entered the parlor and saw the countess, she went straight up to her, took her hand, and kissed it.

The countess trembled in every limb; she succeeded, however, in controlling her emotion, and looked delightedly into the child's blue eyes without saying a word. She took her Clara by the hand, and fondlingly stroked her forehead and shoulders. The peculiar fixed gaze of the countess without doubt awakened in the child a feeling that had hitherto slumbered, for suddenly the smile disappeared from her lips, and she looked back inquiringly into the señora's eyes, as though expecting from her some explanation. She seemed to say—

“Everybody loves me and makes much of me, but not in the way she does. Why is this? And why is it that I do so yearn to be always with her?”

Perhaps the countess apprehended the orphan's dumb questioning, for mournfully she sighed out—

“Poor child!”

The superintendent watched attentively every movement of the lady's countenance, and easily recognised something of constraint in her man-

ner; neither the visitor nor Clara were able to find a word. To break the ice, therefore, she said—

“Countess, let us go into the room where the spinet is: you will hear then how nicely our Clara plays. The child is really quite a jewel. Sister Catherine, of the convent hard by, has given her lessons in music, and she plays so, that one could really sit and listen to her for days without eating and drinking.”

Between the countess and Wooden Clara a mutual bond of love and confidence had already grown up; and an inward sympathy led the child to see in the noble and wealthy lady something more than a patroness; for no sooner had the Mother spoken of going to another room, than Clara took the countess by the hand, just as though it had been her mother. This simple movement brought a flush of pride and joy into the lady's eyes; and she led the little one as a mother would have done her daughter.

In the room where the spinet was, they found an arm-chair set ready for the countess; the Mother and duenna seated themselves a little behind, and Wooden Clara took her place at the instrument.

“Now,” said the Mother, “give us, ‘With gladness we will sing:’ the accompaniment is so beautiful.”

Clara began. She seemed full of musical feeling; from the very beginning she was as one

inspired. As her little fingers ran over the keys, she ever and anon smiled in response to the notes expressive of joy and cheerfulness, or again a cloud passed over her countenance as she touched a deeper chord.

Full of admiration for her enchanting play, and wrapt as it were into the pure realm of harmony, the three listeners gazed with all their eyes upon the little maiden, who at last reared her slender neck, lifted her blue eyes to heaven, and sang the following hymn, accompanying herself upon the spinet:—

With gladness we will sing,
And praise the Three in One,
For that they will us bring
To their eternal throne,
Where heaven's eternal bliss
Forever doth belong;
Oh, may we that not miss!
Forever! Ah, how long!

All endless the delight
That we shall find up there,
Where heaven is ever bright,
And all's beyond compare.
There shall the Lord on high,
While we intone our song,
Pour full the cup of joy.
Forever! Ah, how long!

There make great feast always
The saints and martyrs' host,
Whiles they the Father praise,
The Son, and Holy Ghost.

The just departed souls
There sing the angels' song,
While endless time on rolls.
Forever! Ah, how long!
Mary, our mother mild,
In this our orphanhood,
Has joy o'er each lost child,
That turns himself to good.
Mary, on thee we call,
Thou patron kind and strong;
Pray for us, one and all.
Forever! Ah, how long!

As long as the silver tones of the song sounded in their ears, neither the Mother nor the duenna had once taken their eyes from off the singer; but, now that the song was over, they both with one accord turned them on the countess, as if to ask—

“Is not that exquisite?”

The countess meanwhile sat motionless, her head bent down upon her bosom, all unconscious of the flood of tears which silently dropped upon her lap.

Wooden Clara was the first to notice this effect of her song, and with a loud cry ran up to the señora, on whom she fixed her eyes with an astonished look, and then began to weep herself too; she laid her little head on the lady's knees, as though seeking thus to relieve her over-full heart. The señora lifted the child on to her lap, clasped her to her breast, kissed her cheek again and again, and wetted her forehead with her tears. But neither the one nor the other uttered a single sob, a single sigh.

The scene was solemn and moving. The duenna looked on with a mingled feeling of compassion and respect, and did not venture to speak; the Mother, on the other hand, now fully convinced that her former suspicion was well grounded, thoroughly appreciated what was passing in the señora's heart, and had much ado to restrain her tears. It required all her sense of delicacy and determination not to embarrass the señora, to prevent her from too plainly betraying that she had guessed the secret of what was passing.

After some moments, the countess awoke as out of a trance. Surprised at the dead silence which surrounded her, she looked about her; her eyes met those of the Mother, which were closely scrutinizing her. She could not but feel that she had laid herself open, and sought to recover at least an appearance of self-possession. She dried her tears, and went on caressing the child, to conceal her continued emotion. At last she came to herself, kissed Wooden Clara, and said—

“My little angel, your voice has quite upset me; your singing takes one quite out of oneself.”

But the child went on weeping, and only sobbed out in reply—

“I'll never sing again!—never again, in all my life!”

“Why so, dear child?”

“Because it makes you cry. Sure enough, I'll never sing again, neither to you nor to any one else. I'm quite angry with myself for having

troubled you so. Oh, dear! how I do wish I couldn't sing!"

These words were in truth not of a kind to restore the señora's composure. She was just on the point of bursting out into tears anew; but she felt that sharp eyes were upon her, and with a violent effort constrained herself to bear up. She set the child gently on her lap, and in a soothing voice said to her—

"You're mistaken, dear Clara. My tears are tears of joy. Have not you sometimes wept, dear child, at hearing a fine piece of music for the first time?"

"I always cry when Sister Catherine and Master Huyghens sing together to the spinet; but that's something quite different."

"It is the same thing, my dear child; it is the intense sense of harmony that melts the soul."

"Yes, the soul seems to swim in bliss; the heart quivers—but, for all that, I will not sing again. If I were to see you so troubled again, it would make me ill; it does hurt me so! oh, so much!"

"Poor child! Do you know what is the best thing you can do to comfort me? Cheer up, and give over crying. A smile on your lips would make me quite happy now."

At this Clara lifted up her head, and showed the señora a countenance, still indeed wet with tears, but at the same time lighted up with a sunny smile. This evidence of the child's loving disposition so touched the countess, that for a while she covered

her face with her hands, and then again overwhelmed Clara with caresses.

The Mother could not but feel that her absence would be an immense relief to the countess; she had the magnanimity to curb her curiosity, which would have urged her to see the scene out, and left the room, saying—

“I must go and see after my girls, who really are no sinecure to keep in order. Who knows what mischief they are after by this time? Stay quietly here with Clara, lady countess; no one will disturb you—I shall soon be back.”

She had no sooner left the room than the duenna said to the countess, in Spanish—

“Señora, do you think the superintendent has no suspicion? For myself, I believe that she sees through it all.”

“’Tis very possible, Ines,” answered the countess, without any sign of surprise or terror; “but I do not think I have any thing to fear from that. She loves the little angel almost as much as I do, and surely would not do what can only be an injury to the child’s prospects.”

“A woman’s tongue, señora, sometimes turns traitor to her will.”

“For God’s sake, dear Ines, do not excite my fears; you only trouble me in the enjoyment of my happiness.”

“I will say no more, señora. After all, what is done, is done. Be happy while you can, now.”

When the Mother returned, after half an hour’s

absence, Clara jumped down from the countess's lap, and ran to meet her with a book in her hand, which she held up to show her, and shouting with delight—

“Oh, Mother! do look at the beautiful Missal, with the gold clasps, and the pretty pictures! Master Jan Van den Rozier, who did your portrait, has painted it full of flowers of ultramarine and silver. Oh, how happy I am! And to-morrow I am to have a song-book! And I've a necklace too, in my pocket; just look at it! It is almost too fine for a king's daughter!”

The countess, meanwhile, had risen from her chair, and was now preparing to take her leave. She took the Mother-superintendent by the hand, and, with a friendly pressure of it, said to her—

“Mistress, I owe you many thanks. If ever I can be of use to you, be sure that my door stands open for you at all hours. If you will tell me of any thing in which I can serve you, you will be conferring an additional obligation upon me.”

“Your ladyship is too good. The honor of your good-will is an ample recompense to me. Consider me as at your orders, and come here as often as you see fit; I shall only be too happy to serve you.”

“Farewell, then, till to-morrow, dear mistress. But I may wish to speak a few words with you at my own house; might I venture to trouble you to come to me?”

“Certainly, my lady. It would only be too much honor for me.”

Wooden Clara the while was looking quite down-cast, and evidently was not far from bursting into tears.

"Farewell till to-morrow, darling nightingale!" said the señora.

"Won't you stay here, then?" sobbed the child.

"I shall come again to-morrow; and then I will bring you the pretty song-book. Now give me one more kiss, and don't forget your friend."

"That I shall not! I am sure I shall dream of you again to-night!"

"So, you dreamed of me, then?" said the countess, in astonishment; "and what was it you dreamed, dear child?"

"Oh, it was so sweet! I dreamed that I slept in the same bed with you, and lay in your arms, just as if you were my mother; and you kissed me, and——"

"To-morrow! to-morrow!" said the countess, in a stifled tone.

And she seized her duenna by the hand, and hurried her out into the street, as though fleeing from an urgent peril.

CHAPTER IV.

"YOUR ladyship was so good as to send word you wished to see me," said the Mother-superintendent of the Orphan-house, as she entered the Countess de Almata's chamber;—"here I am, at your service."

"Welcome, mistress," said the señora. "Sit down by me in this chair; I have something to say to you; I doubt not that you guess what it is about."

"Doubtless it has to do with Wooden Clara, my lady."

"Just so. Do you know the little girl's history?"

"Not much of it, my lady. Clara had been about a year in the house when I was appointed superintendent. I have understood from members of the board of management that she had lost both her parents in the sack of a village which was plundered and burnt; that a soldier had taken pity on her, brought her away with him, and taken care of her as best he could. Afterward she was taken in here through the interest of one of the family of our founder. For my part, I do not believe a word of this story, and have always con-

sidered it a mere invention to hide Clara's real origin."

"Does Clara remember any thing of her parents?"

"She has only an indistinct remembrance of a small farm-house, at which, as quite a little child, she lived. What convinces me that she was not brought up under her mother's care is the circumstance that the only living creature she recalls out of that period is a speckled lamb she used to play with. This to me is a sure proof that either she had lost her mother, or been deserted by her."

Toward the close of this narration the countess gradually sank into deep thought, as though revolving in her mind some fixed idea. The Mother noticed this absence, and had no difficulty in attributing it to its true cause. She was persuaded that the countess was desirous of intrusting her with a secret, and did her best to make it easy to her. Delicacy meanwhile prevented her from going to work too directly. It was probably an embarrassing confession that the countess had to make; one that it would not do to force from her too hastily. And then——suppose, after all, she had guessed wrong!

Observing that the countess remained silent, she added, to recall her attention—

"That, lady countess, is all that I know of Wooden Clara's history."

"Wooden Clara! Why don't you keep your girls from giving one another such ugly nicknames?"

“Ah, my dear lady! would is one word, and could is another! We have things of more consequence to think about. I can tell you, a regiment of soldiers is easier to manage than such a houseful of girls.”

“Well, Mother, I asked you to come to me that I might learn from you what it is in the power of any one that desires to advantage and provide for little Clara to do for her.”

“I take it for granted that your ladyship is speaking of yourself. In the first place, you might take her out of the Orphan-house, and bring her up with yourself, for all the orphan girls are destined to go out into service; or as workwomen; unless indeed, as sometimes happens, they leave the house by a creditable marriage.”

Here the Mother stopped, and seemed to be waiting for an answer from the countess; who, however, made no other than a sign of impatience, which seemed to say—

“Go on! go on!”

“Besides that; each girl has something for herself out of the price of her work. This daily trifle is credited to each separately. If they marry out, it serves for their outfit; if they go into service, then it is for them as a friend in need, to preserve them from want, and the temptations which it brings with it. A benefactor can thus provide for an orphan by putting a sum of money into her savings-box.”

“Is that all, Mother?”

"I know of no other way, my lady; for, as long as a girl remains in our house, she must wear the regular dress, and eat at the common table; beyond the merest trifle, she can have no money at her own disposal; nor can she, without special leave, go out, and that only to work in houses of known respectability."

The countess sufficiently showed, by her restless movements, how little comfort she found in the Mother's expositions.

"Gracious Heaven! And what will poor Clara's lot be?"

"That question, my lady, is easily answered. I shall keep her in the Orphan-house as my own servant. Then she will help in the work of the house, along with the orphan girls; wash, scour, cook——"

"She—that dear little Clara—be a servant maid to the other orphans?"

"Well, my lady, so she will, in a sense."

"That must not be, Mother! I cannot let that be!"

"See, dear lady countess, it is out of pure love and good-will to Clara that I have thought of this; for if she doesn't take service with me, that is, in our house, she will be much worse off. She would have to go into service among strangers, and be roughly ordered about, perhaps ill-treated. The only plan of life that remains for her is to go into a convent; but it would be cruel, downright inhuman, and sinful too, to lay out such a plan for a

child of her age, without the possibility of knowing whether she will have a true vocation for it or not, when the time comes."

The countess took the superintendent by the hand, and in a tone of much emotion said—

"Thanks for your generous love for the dear child; a mother could not be more thoughtful for her; you possess at once kindness and judgment. But tell me, would it not be possible to rescue the little Clara from this inferior condition?"

"I don't quite understand your ladyship."

"Could she not, for instance, have masters, to instruct her in Spanish and the other branches of a finished education?"

"No, my lady; the board of managers would never allow that. Such an education is not suitable for the condition of a servant girl, and could only lead to idleness and vice."

"A servant girl! a servant girl!" sighed the countess, and rose from her seat. "At least I will prevent that."

She opened a casket, and took out of it a heavy purse, which she put into the Mother's hands, saying, at the same time—

"See, dear friend; here is a purse of gold, containing a not inconsiderable sum. Let this go into our Clara's savings-box, and employ it so as to make her life as pleasant as may be. Refuse her nothing she can properly have, and let her learn every thing that your rules will allow of her being taught. I would gladly turn aside any the

least unpleasantness from the dear lamb's course; assist me in this, and be assured of my eternal gratitude."

"The savings-boxes of the orphans are under the especial control of the board of management, my lady, and every outlay must be authorized by them. It will not be in my power to dispose of the money as you wish."

"What fatality counteracts all my plans for her!"

"If your ladyship would allow me to retain a small portion of the money in my own hands, and at my own disposal, I should be able in some degree to give effect to your wishes."

"Right! right! I thank you, dear Mother, for entering so kindly into my views."

"Then I am to hand in the rest of the money to Clara's savings-box, as a present from—the Countess de Almata?"

At this question the countess was visibly terrified, and cast down her eyes in much confusion.

"Shall I say, then, that I have received this provision from an unknown benefactor?" asked the Mother, in a peculiar tone.

"Yes, yes, an unknown benefactor. One of whom nothing is known, and who has been totally lost sight of. That will be best."

The longer the conversation lasted, the more firmly did the Mother become convinced that her conjecture as to the true relation of Wooden Clara to the countess was well grounded; at the same

time, she could not but perceive that the lady had a load upon her breast which she would gladly be relieved of; the little care moreover she took to keep her secret warranted this supposition. The Mother therefore turned in her mind how she could open the way to the señora for an explanation, in case she wished to make one, but had not the courage to begin; an opportunity, however, soon offered itself.

"Now tell me, Mother," said the countess, "you will let Clara learn Spanish,* will you not; and have her instructed in all other accomplishments to fit her for good society?"

"No, my lady; not so. Such an education almost always turns out a misfortune for a woman of the lower classes."

"You are inexorable, dear Mother! But I tell you that Clara is of noble birth!"

"That I knew before I had the honor of being acquainted with your ladyship," said the Mother, quietly.

"Who told you, then?" cried the señora, in a tone of annoyance.

"Clara herself."

"How! What could Clara know about it?"

"Nothing, my lady; she knows it not herself; yet she has told me."

"Explain yourself; I can't understand you; what you say is a riddle."

* See note at end.

"It does in truth sound like one. Your ladyship has doubtless heard of sleep-walkers?"

"Well, what then?"

"Our little Clara is one.

"Oh! the poor thing!"

"There's nothing to be frightened at, dear countess; she doesn't seem to suffer at all, and it will pass away as she grows up. Besides, it is only for a small part of the year that she is so; it comes on her in the month of May, when the buds open, and in our veins also the blood flows more vehemently, and it lasts some three or four weeks."

"And what happens then? For God's sake tell me all; you torture me!"

"I do assure your ladyship there is nothing to be alarmed about. When I first came here, Clara slept in the general dormitory. Her spring fits of sleep-walking sometimes so frightened the other girls, though they knew well enough what it was, that the whole house was in a confusion. Besides that, I was afraid of her doing herself some mischief, and therefore shifted her bed into a little separate room in the front building, just over the staircase. At first I used to fasten her in at night, but this must have been a great annoyance to her, for in the morning I used to find her little hands bruised and bleeding with her efforts to open the door, and once she broke a pane of glass and cut herself with it. Master Tyfelynck, the physician of the house, desired me then not to shut her in. Your ladyship knows

that the entry, at the foot of the stairs, has no way out but what is shut in with doors; these are all locked every night, and so if Clara, in her fits of sleep-walking, should come down the stairs, she could but wander about in the entry, where there is nothing at all for her to hurt herself against——”

“For heaven’s sake, Mother, make haste! I shake like an aspen-leaf all the while you are telling me.”

The Mother cast a scrutinizing look on the countess, and went on:

“When the fit takes our poor Clara, she gets out of bed about midnight, goes carefully down the stairs, and sits down on the lowest step. There she remains about half an hour, and then goes back to bed and sleeps on quietly till morning. The most remarkable thing about it is, that she . . . has her eyes wide open all the while, and sees quite well without any light; she speaks, answers and questions again, quite plainly and rationally, and, indeed, with much more both of intelligence and feeling than in her ordinary waking conversation. Her memory, too, seems much clearer than at other times; for she speaks of circumstances from her earliest childhood, of which when awake she retains no recollection whatever. There must have been some woman about her at that time who used sometimes to tell her that her mother is rich and noble; this I have more than once picked up from Clara’s broken talk.

By day it is of no use speaking to her about it, for she hasn't the slightest recollection when awake of what she has said or done during her sleep. Indeed, I do not believe she would even be conscious of ever having left her bed, if she hadn't sometimes been woke up by some one calling her by her name; that brings her to herself at once."

"You do not tell me, Mother, of having done any thing to free the poor child of this dangerous liability. Really, that is a negligence that surprises me. How could you see the little angel suffer without moving heaven and earth in her behalf? Oh, if I had but been in your place!"

"No doubt your ladyship would have called in a hundred doctors, from far and near. But who tells you that I, poor as I am, have not out of love for the child, done for her what no money could have done?"

"Forgive me my hasty words!"

"I have still more to tell your ladyship; and, indeed, the most wonderful is what yet remains to be told. When Clara is sitting in this way at the foot of the stairs, if you speak to her, she answers as though her real mother were before her; and if you then properly humor this yearning of her heart, she glows out into a very fervor of childlike affection. She caresses and kisses you, laughs, sets herself on your lap, strokes your cheeks; and then looks so deep into your eyes with hers, and pours out such a flow of the sweet-

est expressions into your ears, that she seizes upon your very soul, in a way that has sometimes really quite terrified me."

Here the Mother paused in her narration, expecting some observation from the countess; who, however, sat on motionless, with outstretched neck and open mouth, listening for what was to come. The Mother, therefore, continued:

"I have no doubt, my lady, that Clara's mother used often, and sometimes for hours together, to fondle and kiss her baby, shedding many a tear the while; for frequently, in her state of somnambulism, Clara will burst out crying, because she figures to herself that her mother weeps. At such moments there is so much of tenderness, so much of charm, in the child's whole look, that a heart of stone could not help being affected at her words and gestures. Oh! if her mother could but see and hear her, she would surely forget all danger, in order to comfort this poor child with her love, to console it and bring it happiness; for it is only too plain that this innocent soul is suffering frightfully under a mysterious ill. But you weep, countess; my tale has been too much for you; forgive me."

The countess, meanwhile, was sitting as though thunderstruck, and her eyes were full of tears. She made no answer to the Mother's last words, and seemed almost to have forgotten her presence; she did not even stir, till her kind friend took her by the hand to comfort her.

On both sides a long silence followed. Suddenly the countess's bosom heaved violently, a deep flush rose upon her cheeks, she cast her eyes ashamedly on the ground, and at last sobbed out, with hardly audible voice—

“Have pity on me, my kind friend! Clara is my child! I am her mother! It is me she calls; me that she longs to caress!”

A flood of tears interrupted her words.

For a while the Mother respected in silence the señora's grief. Soon, however, she began to address her with words of comfort. She told her more, and again more, of Clara; pointed out to her the means of providing for the child's future welfare; and used every argument her own excellent heart could suggest to inspire the señora with hope and courage. By degrees she attained her end. The countess, whose heart was now relieved from the weight of a secret that had so long oppressed it, breathed more freely; and at last began to converse with even something like cheerfulness.

Yet a long while the two women talked on about the child, and especially about her liability to somnambulism; with respect to which the countess desired to be made acquainted with the minutest particulars.

Suddenly the countess turned pale, and trembled with a nervous terror.

While the Mother looked about with astonishment for the cause of this sudden change, the lady

opened a drawer, laid some lace upon the table, and said—

“Mother, Mother! the Count de Almata is coming: I heard the street-door open. Make haste to be gone, dear friend, lest if you be found here he should put questions to you which you would not find it easy to answer. Put the purse out of sight, and, if you meet him, say you were here with some lace for me to look at. Haste, haste! Farewell, till to-morrow; for now I shall come to you every day.”

The Mother rose, and made haste to depart, for the señora's tone and manner had made her feel quite nervous too. On the staircase she met the count, who did indeed look at her so keenly and curiously that she trembled; not a word, however, passed between them.

Domingo, too, opened the door without uttering a word.

CHAPTER V.

ALREADY had a fortnight passed since the Countess de Almata had intrusted her secret to the Mother-superintendent of the Orphan-house. Every morning, and sometimes in the afternoon also, she went to visit her child, with whom, by the Mother's arrangement, she was able to spend two or three hours at a time, which she employed in caresses, and instructions in manners and demeanor. She also began herself to give Clara some lessons in Spanish. At that time, the possession of this foreign language was absolutely necessary to every one that claimed to pass for a person of any condition; and as the señora had made it her aim to raise her daughter as much as possible above the station to which the girls of the Orphan-house were being brought up, it was quite natural that she should make a great point of this portion of the little damsel's education.

With a heart all made for love, Wooden Clara conceived for her patroness the tenderest affection. Her words of fondness and innocent caresses, which must have been powerfully attractive even to a stranger, worked so intensely on her mother's

heart, that the countess forgot the whole world beside, and had now no thought for any thing but her only darling.

The count, meanwhile, was not well pleased at seeing his wife absent herself from home every day and all day long, under the somewhat improbable pretext that she had recognised in the Mother-superintendent an old schoolfellow of hers, and found special pleasure in her society. His old suspicion awakened anew when he saw himself all but totally forgotten and neglected. But he was determined to remain true to his word; and, therefore, much as his wife's demeanor grieved and displeased him, he resolutely eschewed all espionage upon her, and even avoided showing any desire to know more than she herself told him of her proceedings. But anger and suspicion were all the while gathering in his breast, ready to burst into a storm, the more fearful the longer it was suppressed.

A piece of intelligence, however, which arrived from Spain, suddenly changed the whole position of things. The Count de Almata's uncle was dead, and had left the count the inheritance of all his property, consisting of a large landed estate in the neighborhood of Rota, in the fertile province of Andalusia, numerous houses in the town of Xeres de la Frontera, and several ships which traded between Cadiz and the New World.

The amount of wealth thus added to the count's possessions was immense; but he was obliged by

this event immediately to return to Spain to take formal possession of his inheritance, which, from the nature of a large portion of it, might else have suffered considerable loss. He saw in this conjuncture a suitable occasion of removing his wife from the Netherlands, without any appearance of ungraciousness on his part, or any reasonable pretext for objection on hers. It did not escape him now, when he announced to the countess the necessity of their speedy return to Spain, that a deathlike paleness overspread her countenance, nor how afterward her eyes were reddened with continued weeping; but he made as though he hardly observed this sadness, or, at all events, had no evil suspicions connected with it. It was sufficient for him to know that both his wife and he would soon be far removed from the unknown object which attached her so mysteriously to her native soil.

The evening which was to be the last of their stay at Antwerp arrived. The countess and the duenna were sitting together in the same room from which the former had one day watched the orphan girls setting out on their walk. Long they sat in silence; not a word passed, and they seemed to be waiting impatiently or fearfully for somebody or something. Over the señora's face ran from time to time an almost imperceptible smile of joy, which soon again was absorbed in an expression of dreamy unconsciousness; the duenna, on the

contrary, sat there like an image of gloomy despondency.

The church clocks were just striking eleven. At this sound both the lady and her attendant lifted their heads, and looked nervously at the room door, behind which might be heard a man's footsteps.

"Heavens! he is not gone to bed yet!" sighed the lady.

Presently the door opened, and the Count de Almata entered the room. He cast a sharp look on its two occupants, and said—

"Still up, Catalina? How is it that you are not yet gone to rest, when you know that to-morrow we set out on a long and fatiguing journey? I am aware that you are not in the best spirits about it, but you are reasonable enough to see that what can't be cured must be endured.

"We were just going to bed, Calisto," answered the countess, rising from her seat, and taking up a light.

"It is really strange," observed the count, "how to-day everybody in this house seems set against going to bed. There is Domingo, who generally is snoring any time after nine o'clock, sitting or lying; well, to-night he must needs stay up till going on for midnight; and what for I know not; every thing is ready for the journey since this morning."

To this observation the countess made no reply. She seemed desirous of avoiding any lengthened

conversation with her husband, and laid her hand on the handle of her bedroom door.

"Well, Calisto," she said, "I will follow your good advice, and endeavor to get some sleep—if I can, that is. One can hardly leave one's native land, perhaps never to see it again, without some sad emotions."

"You will see it again, Catalina; do not torment yourself with thoughts that only make you unhappy without a cause. Now, good-night! I trust I shall find you rested and in better spirits to-morrow morning."

"Good night, Calisto! I hope you will."

The count left the room, and betook himself to his bedchamber, which was on the other side of the house, toward the court. The señora, accompanied by her duenna, also entered her bedchamber.

There they sat down, each upon a chair, without giving any signs of an intention of preparing to go to bed.

For a few moments they listened whether any noise could still be heard in the house; at last the countess said, in a low voice—

"Ah, Ines! If Domingo should have betrayed us, and informed his master of our project?"

"That he will never do, señora."

"Are you sure of it, Ines?"

"Yes. I have promised him that when we get back to Spain, my pretty Antonia shall be his. With that in view, he will go through fire and

water for us. From him you have nothing to fear."

"Thanks to you, dearest Ines; that takes off something of my fear. I was in an agony of anxiety; the count looked so piercingly at us—it went to my very soul."

"I do not believe, my lady, that he has any fresh suspicion; it is an old habit of distrust, which this time, alas! is not without ground. But I do beg and pray your ladyship to listen to me yet this once, before you carry out your dangerous project, and forgive me trying once more to dissuade you from it."

"Speak, dear Ines; say what you will; but spare me as much as you can."

"Señora, this is a scheme which sets your own life and mine at stake, and your honor too. For who could exculpate us if the bloody, and to all appearance just, vengeance of your husband were to bury our secret with us in the grave?"

"Have some pity on me, Ines! it is all of no avail."

"It is not that I am afraid for my own share in the matter, señora. I have pretty strong nerves, and have seen the point of a poniard before now. But I owe it to my conscience that you should bear me witness that I, whom affection and gratitude have made your slave, have not with my own good will given in to this inconsiderate, this insane project. I have remonstrated against it, have I not?"

"Yes, yes, Ines!"

"With tears, with prayers, and with reproaches; have I not?"

"You have; you know that I lay none of the responsibility of it upon you."

"You hold then to your resolve? For the sake of at most a half-hour's enjoyment you will seriously risk your life and honor?"

"Ines, you speak as though you knew not what you are talking about. Do you know that you are seeking to deprive me perhaps of the last happy half-hour I shall pass on earth? To-morrow we set out for Spain. Who knows whether I shall ever see the Netherlands again? And you would have me leave my Clara without my ears having heard the word "mother" from her lips! without her knowing why it is that I so adore her! You would have me go coolly away like a stranger, that leaves her with indifference to the servile lot that is prepared for her! No, no, that must not be. I know well that I am acting foolishly, madly; but it would be in vain that I should strive against the impulse that forces me on. It must be!"

"Much of what you say, señora, it would be easy enough to answer; but I see that it would be of no avail. Well, then, so be it; fear no further objections from me; I will obey you, be the consequences what they may. In a few minutes it will be time. Domingo is waiting for us with the key; the father of the Orphan-house, too, our kind friend's husband, is there, ready to let us in; he

thinks that we are bound on a work of Christian charity, to make an attempt to cure Clara of her sleep-walking."

After a long quarter of an hour, passed in the deepest silence, the duenna rose from her seat, handed the countess her mantle, and said to her—

"Señora, it is time. Step upon the tips of your toes, that the floor may not creak. And now, not another word till we are out of the house. Follow me."

They left the room together, and cautiously descended the stairs amid the deepest darkness. Just as they were nearly at the bottom, they heard a noise upon the first floor. Trembling, they stood still, and listened in an agony of terror; but nothing more was heard."

"We are lost!" said the countess; "was not that in the count's room?"

"Be still, señora," answered the duenna. "No, I think not. All is quiet again now——"

And after listening once more, she added—

"It is nothing. Go on! do not fear!"

Then, with her face to the door, she called gently—

"Are you there, Domingo?"

"I've been waiting ever so long," answered the servant.

The countess and duenna came up to the door, which was then cautiously opened, and they left the house.

When they came to the door of the Orphan-

house, one leaf of it opened of itself; for the father stood waiting for them, with his face at the wicket.

The Mother-superintendent received them at the door, and conducted them to the parlor, where a light was burning. Then, turning to the countess, she said—

“Your ladyship is late. Clara may be coming down now any moment; for her time is not certain; she comes sometimes sooner, sometimes later; so be ready. Clara must not see us; we will wait here. Only take care not to call her by her name, for if you do she will wake immediately.

“It is very cold,” observed the countess, “will she not take harm?”

“Your ladyship need not be afraid of that; I have had a special night-dress made for Clara to sleep in at these times. Hark, up there! I hear her getting out of bed. Now, make haste; there’s a chair for you at the foot of the stairs; take the lamp, my lady!”

The countess took the light, and stood at the foot of the staircase. Her heart beat audibly, and she trembled, as under a mighty fear. But it was only the excess of joy that shook her nerves; for a whole heaven of bliss seemed opening itself before her. Poor woman! in her breast glowed the inextinguishable flame of a mother’s love. One only child had heaven accorded her; and for this one she had for eight long years pined and wept,—had been unhappy herself, and made all unhappy

around her. The thought of her ill-starred and forsaken offspring it was that had condemned her to this martyrdom. True, in this latest period she had received some compensation for her sufferings, while revelling in the kisses and caresses of her Clara. But, alas! for all this, to the child she was still a stranger; the sweet word, "mother," had not yet sounded in her ear. Now she was about to hear it—that holy word, which finds its instant echo in every woman's heart, and, as a voice from heaven, sheds bliss where'er it falls.

No wonder that neither the deathlike stillness which surrounded them, nor the darkness of the distant corners, which the feeble rays of the little lamp failed entirely to dispel, made any impression upon her nerves. She was totally absorbed in the joyful expectation of the solemn moment.

She stood at the foot of the staircase, and looked upward.

Soon Wooden Clara made her appearance on the stairs; sweetly she smiled upon the countess, as soon as she perceived her.

The child's night-dress was entirely of white linen; her fair hair, not too long to keep its natural curl, fell upon her shoulders; her cheeks bloomed like rose-leaves; and her large eyes, fully displayed under her smooth and open forehead, beamed with a yet intenser azure than by day. Hour of ghosts as it was, and her peculiar circumstances notwithstanding, there was nothing ghostlike about her apparition; she resembled rather the gentle angels.

which a mother's fancy calls up, playing about the cradle of her babe.

Presently she spoke; her voice resounded in the stillness, clear as a silver bell.

"Are you there, mother? I'm coming, I'm coming!"

With these words she opened her arms, and descended the stairs so rapidly, that the countess had barely time to set down the lamp before the child had clasped her round the neck and was devouring her with kisses, just as if welcoming her after a long absence. With the kisses were mingled broken words, which, unintelligible as they were, fell like drops of balm into the happy mother's heart. The warmth of the child's caresses almost transported the countess out of herself; in silence she clasped it to her bosom, and, lost to all consciousness of self, enjoyed at last the endless bliss of hearing the name of "mother" from her Clara's lips.

But after a while Clara suddenly loosed herself from her mother's arms, set herself down upon the last stair, close against the wooden baluster, and drew the countess to her by the hand, smiling happily, and saying—

"Sit down by me, dear mother; I feel so happy and at home by your side. I have been so sad, and have cried so! For a whole week I have been sitting here every night, and waiting for you——"

"You are mistaken, dear child," interrupted the countess, with jealous haste. "She of whom you

“speak is not your mother. I am your mother, and you are my child.”

Clara looked at the señora in astonishment, and said—

“What makes you speak so strangely to-day? of course, I know you’re my mother! But why don’t you come here every day? You promised me you would; and other children that have a mother are with her always.”

Mournfully the countess bowed her head upon her bosom; a sigh of pain was her only answer to Clara’s question. The child observed this, and said—

“There, dear mother, don’t be sad; I’ll not say so any more. I know it’s not your fault that you can’t come to me oftener.”

And clasping the countess in her little arms, she laid her head against her mother’s cheek and fondly went on—

“You’re not angry with me, darling mother? I do so love to have you with me! the angels in heaven can’t be happier than I am when I’m resting in your arms! But you mustn’t look so sad; else I shall begin to cry.”

But all Clara’s endearing words had no effect upon her mother, who seemed passively to submit to be caressed, while her mind was occupied with other things. She had hoped to be able to say, “I am your mother,” and that the child, at least during her state of trance, would appreciate the importance of the revelation. But this Clara made

impossible, by giving her, as of course, the very name she sought to claim, and evidently in no way distinguishing her from the superintendent of the Orphan-house. This long looked-for interview, therefore, failed to give her the happiness she had promised herself from it. Quite cast down at the sudden destruction of her illusion—

“Poor child!” she said; “the other is not your mother. It is I alone that know what pangs your birth cost me, what misery it has cost me since; I alone that have wept for years over your unhappy lot; I alone that shall perhaps pine lingeringly to death with love for you. Ah, me! at this moment I am exposing my life to the vengeance of an enraged husband; I am setting at stake my own good name, and the honor of my ancient house; all that I may for once hear the name of ‘mother’ from her lips, and, alas! alas! she understands me not.”

And as she spoke these words, her eyes filled with tears. Clara wept too, out of sympathy, but at the same time gazed in astonishment on the speaker, as though receiving into her ears the sounds of a strange, unintelligible language. At last she sobbed out—

“Dear, dear mother! Will some one harm you? Why, then?”

The countess pressed the child to her bosom in silence, and pacified it with a kiss. At last, after a considerable lapse of time thus spent in gloomy contemplation, she suddenly raised her head, dried

away her tears, and with feverish energy took Clara's two hands in hers. Then, as with a desperate resolution, her face distorted with a strange smile, she cried—

“Clara! Clara!”

And as she spoke the words, she looked steadfastly on the child, and awaited in trembling anxiety their effect.

The little girl rubbed her eyes, as one waking out of sleep, looked anxiously round, and cried—

“Where am I? It's quite dark!”

And she threw herself into the señora's arms.

“I am afraid,” she said; “it is so cold and lonely here.”

The countess gave her time to recognise the various objects about her, and to recover herself from her fright, and then said—

“Clara, my love! don't you know me?”

“Oh, yes, my lady! And now I see that you're with me, I'm not frightened any more. But why are we here, all alone, in the middle of the night?”

“Sit down, Clara, and listen to me, without speaking; I have something to tell you, which you must never forget all your life long.”

“Ah, me! how your ladyship trembles! That makes me afraid again!”

“Hush, Clara! there's nothing to be afraid of. No harm can come to us here. For Heaven's sake listen to me attentively. You pass for a poor orphan, Clara; for one that's to be brought up to

service, to work all your life long like a slave, and obey the orders of those that pay you your miserable wages. You, too, hold yourself for such, and are contented with your hard lot, because you are accustomed to regard it as of course. But it is not so, Clara! One day you shall take your place among the rich and noble of the land. It will be for you to command, and for others to obey you. The greatest will seek your favor; you will live in splendor, and look back with wonder when any thing reminds you of your humble life of old. For see, dear child, your mother, who would lay down her life to secure your lot, is noble and wealthy, and she will never desert her only darling!"

At these words she fervently embraced the child, and doubtless expected a return of her caresses; but the effect on Clara was quite different. Sunk in thought, she sighed out to herself:

"I shall be rich and great, and live in splendor! And I have a mother! Ah, if I could but see her! But why doesn't she come for me? I don't know her!——"

The countess was wellnigh beside herself. Her eyes lighted up with a phrensied fire, and a delirious smile passed across her countenance. She took the child's head between her hands, looked deep into the deep blue eyes, and cried—

"Look at me, dear angel! look at me! It is I that am your mother. Do you not feel that in the

burning kisses that I give you, only treasure of my soul! my darling, darling daughter!"

An intense expression of joy spread over Clara's countenance; but her smile still had something of hesitation mingled with it.

"You!—you are really my own mother?—my mother that lives with my father?"

"Your father is long since gone to rest, my darling Clara; he is dead, and is now praying for us in heaven," said the countess, in tears, and interrupted the questioning with a kiss. "I am your true and very mother, and I have no child but you."

"Oh, thanks and praises to the Blessed Virgin Mary for this!" cried Clara, with a burst of tears. "For this I will sing her my sweetest hymns all my life long, for this is her work. What joy and happiness that you are my mother! Before I knew it, I did so love you!"

Suddenly a mysterious voice sounded from out of the darkness:

"Señora, señora! it is time!"

In passionate haste the countess whispered yet a few words into Clara's ear. No doubt she feared being overheard by the duenna, a trusty friend, but an unwelcome visitor. For some time they conversed in this under-tone; tears and smiles, pain and joy, alternated upon both countenances; till at last Clara rose with a resolute air, and, after a burning kiss on her mother's lips, said—

"I will not tell any one that you woke me; and

nobody shall know that you are my mother. But you will come again, won't you, darling mother? I will wait for you patiently, and not be sad. A safe and pleasant journey to you! I will pray to the holy angel St. Michael to have you in his charge on your way."

The countess then took up the light, and accompanied Clara up the stairs; whence, soon returning, she rejoined the Mother and the duenna, who were now impatiently waiting for her.

"Come, Ines," said she, "let us make haste home. Clara is gone back to her bed, and is now peacefully asleep. Mistress, early to-morrow I shall send to ask you to come to me; we shall not set out till tolerably late in the day, so that I shall still have time to communicate to you my last instructions on matters of much importance."

The señora and her attendant now left the Orphan-house, and made the best of their way home. Arrived at the house, they gently knocked at the door, expecting that Domingo would be in waiting to open it to them; but though they repeated the signal more than once, it remained without response: the door did not open. Already was the countess trembling in every limb, when the duenna, pressing with her hand upon one of the leaves, discovered that it was only shut to, not fastened.

"Don't be alarmed, señora," she said; "that lazy dog, Domingo, has fallen asleep somewhere

near. The door is open ; come in quietly, and make no noise on the stairs."

The duenna shut the door cautiously, and they both went up, feeling their way in the dark. Not a footfall was audible to betray them. Arrived at the door of the countess's bedchamber, they began to breathe more freely ; each felt as though a heavy weight had been taken from off her breast. They had carried through their dangerous adventure, and were once more in safety, without mischance.

The duenna opened the room-door for her mistress, who entered first ; but before she could make three steps forward into the chamber, fell to the ground insensible, with an appalling shriek of terror. The duenna stood pale and trembling beside her mistress, without venturing to stoop to her assistance ; for, by the uncertain glimmer of a taper, she had descried in the background a terrible apparition, which chilled her very soul with dread. There sat the Count de Almata by his wife's bedside, a pistol in each hand, like a wounded lion, terrible with fury. His eyes blazed with concentrated wrath as he fixed them upon the countess. He rose from his seat with a burst of fiendish laughter, and with one of his pistols took aim at her as she lay ; but suddenly a new feeling seemed to gain ascendancy over him : his arm dropped as though struck with sudden lameness, and with a cry of despair he rushed out of the chamber, as one that shrinks from a thought

of murder, and makes haste to escape from the phrensy that is upon him. As he passed his wife, he thundered at her a fearful curse, and disappeared in the darkness of the staircase. The duenna fell upon her knees beside the countess, and bedewed her with her tears; she thought not of the danger in which she stood herself: her whole soul was occupied with the fate of her unhappy mistress.

CHAPTER VI.

THE countess sat alone in the room that looked out upon the street. Her head rested upon one of the arms of her chair; her hair had escaped from under her cap, and hung in disorder about her shoulders; her dress was tumbled and disarranged. About her weighed an ill-boding stillness; one might almost have taken her for a corpse, left lying in the attitude in which a sudden death had fixed the limbs. It was only the slow but vehement heaving of the bosom that testified of life. Ah, what unspeakable tortures must the victim have gone through that now lay there, annihilated by the immensity of her sufferings!

A noise below, as from the street door violently thrown to, roused her somewhat; she shuddered, and lifted her head a little to listen, but soon let it fall again into its former position, and lay on, as motionless as before.

Hastily, but stepping lightly, the duenna entered the room, seized her mistress by the arm, and in a tone of congratulation—

“Señora,” said she, “let us thank God; the count is just returned.”

This announcement seemed to give the countless new life; she raised herself upright upon her seat, lifted her hands to heaven, and, full of thankfulness, cried out—

“Blessed be thou, all-merciful God, that thou hast put away this last misery from me. Protect, I pray thee, my child, my innocent child! And if there must be a victim, let it be me—but he, the kind husband, whose life I have poisoned—thanks, oh, thanks, that thou hast kept him! that his guardian angel has stifled in him that horrible thought! Thou hast not willed that the guilt of murder should lie upon my soul! Blessed and praised be thy name for that.”

“But,” suddenly interrupted the duenna, under the impulse of an uncontrollable terror, “the count is now in the house! any moment he may come in upon us. Say, what shall we do? for I know not; my very soul is paralyzed with terror.”

“Go quickly, Ines, go, and speak to him.”

The duenna hardly seemed disposed to this step; she hung down her head, and stood without speaking.

“Oh, wo to me!” cried the countess; “you dare not! Ines, must I then go myself? You that can speak so well, that can touch so well all the heart’s cords, will you desert me in this hour of need?”

“Ah! my dear lady!” sighed out the duenna, “I dare not venture it! Had you seen how, with flaming eyes and face convulsed with passion, he

dashed to the doors, how furiously he flung out of the house—ah! you would fly from before his face; for death is in his train!”

“So, then,” said the countess, mournfully, her head sinking on her bosom, “you refuse me this last service; you have not the courage to carry out the good counsel which you yourself suggested to me as a last hope. Well, then, be it so! I commend my soul to God, and will myself go to meet the blow that shall destroy me.”

The duenna leaned her forehead against the back of the chair, and wept in silence. After a few moments of unbroken stillness, the countess lifted up her head, and exclaimed—

“What! shall I be so cowardly, and so ungrateful? My sense of duty, my bleeding heart, my conscience,—every thing calls to me to free him from this hell of desperation, in which he is suffering, in which he is perishing with agony: and shall I shrink from the confession that will relieve him? No, no.”

“Stay, stay, dear lady!” entreated the duenna, with folded hands; “he will surely kill you!”

But the señora paid no attention to her supplication, and continued, with ever-increasing passion—

“I have left my home secretly and by night—he believes me guilty of the most abominable treason—me, his idolized Catalina, for whom during ten years of his life he had sacrificed peace and comfort; I have sunk in his eyes to a despica-

ble creature; love, hatred, and revenge, strive in his heart and tear it. And shall I be kept back by a false shame, or the coward fear of death, from delivering him at once from the agonies of this frightful struggle? No, Ines! if a victim must fall, let it be me, that am guilty, though not as he thinks! I am resolved. Stay here. I go."

With these words, she advanced to the door; but before she could reach it, the old duenna threw herself upon her knees before her, exclaiming—

"Pardon! pardon, gracious lady!"

"I have nothing to pardon, dear Ines," answered the countess, raising her from the ground, and kissing her. "I quite understand your fear. Stay quietly here, and I will go."

"You shall not go!" interrupted the duenna, in a resolute tone. "The sight of you would drive him to madness, and you are not in a condition to meet his reproaches in a way to soften him. Your courage has called me back to a sense of my duty; and I will go with your explanation, should death be waiting for me on my errand. I will not have it that my mistress shall have to blush at her own words. My mind is made up. I will do what this morning I promised you. Go back now to your chair, and wait patiently for me."

She left her mistress no time for remonstrance, and in all haste left the room, locked the door on the outside, and put the key in her pocket.

Ines had taken heart by her mistress's example, and was now fully prepared to brave all danger. She no longer trembled; on the contrary, courageous by nature, she found new strength in the urgent importance of her errand; without a moment's hesitation she hastened through the passages, and soon found herself in the count's presence.

There sat the unhappy husband, his elbow on a table, his head supported on his hand, his eyes fixed immovably on the ground. By his side lay his two pistols.

At the sight of the duenna he trembled in every limb, and a bitter laugh of scorn convulsed his countenance.

"Miserable serpent! You still live!" cried he, without moving from his position. "Do you come to offer me your blood as an atonement? I thirst not for it. It is fire eternal that will one day punish as it deserves your abominable treason."

The duenna, however, did not allow herself to be discouraged by this unpromising reception. For a moment she was silent, then calmly answered—

"Count de Almata, you suspect your wife of a crime which she has not committed. Never has she violated the faith which she pledged to you at the altar."

"Ha! ha! She has lies to cover her treason, has she? No, no! it's all over now! Begone, I tell you, and tempt me not; I know not whether I

shall be able to command myself, and, I say it once more, I desire not to shed your blood."

"Count," continued Ines, still undaunted, "be so good as to look at me; I tremble not—it is not thus that a criminal stands before her judge. You must listen to me; I bring you relief and peace, perhaps even happiness. You are now suffering unspeakably; your heart is bursting within your bosom. Were your terrible suspicions well founded, you might indeed suffer; you would have the fullest right to quench your thirst for vengeance in the guilty blood. But, count, it is not so; your wife is pure of all guilt in this matter!"

The count struck his forehead, and slowly raised himself in his chair. He seemed struggling against a thought which was more than he could bear.

"Bethink you, señor," she proceeded; "if it is true, as true it is, that your wife has never ceased to love you, is pure in heart and guiltless of wrong, how ill a thing it is thus needlessly to torment yourself, thus causelessly to torture her. And yet, my lord, so in very truth it is; and if for a moment you think otherwise, you are doing my lady a grievous wrong."

"How can you have the impudence to speak thus?" cried the count, in wrath; "you cannot deny last night!"

"You are under a mistake, señor. I know well that we have done wrong; nothing can justify us; but wrong as what we did was, it was not that wrong which you suspect and dread. Forgive me

my freedom of speech; I honor you as my lord and master, but here I have to defend my lady's honor, which is called in question. I am come to free your bosom from the torment of doubt. Do with me as you will; I will bear witness to the truth, even if death is my reward for it."

"My head burns!" sighed the count; "every thing swims before my eyes! I suffer horribly—what, Catalina innocent, and still worthy of my love! Ines, Ines! if in one word you go aside from the very truth, a thousand deaths would be too little punishment for such a cruelty! For mere mercy's sake, deceive me not!"

With slow steps she advanced toward him, and threw herself on her knees at his feet. She seized his hand, kissed it respectfully, and then said—

"My dear lord, in pity to yourself, to the countess, and to me, I pray you to hear me out. I am come to open to you a secret which for these many years past has been hanging like a poisoned veil over your life. If in what I shall tell you there is much which may rightfully move your anger, yet your unbounded goodness gives me hope that what can be pardoned you will pardon. May I speak? Will you hear me out, without interruption?"

"Rise, Ines," answered the count, and pointed to a chair; "if you do but tell me all the truth, may God's blessing attend you for it."

The duenna, however, did not take the seat which he offered her, but remained standing by his side, and, with downcast eyes, thus began:

“Count de Almata, you must go back to the time when you, with your brother and his wife, found in the country residence of the Van Ghyseghems a hospitable refuge from the persecutions you were exposed to from the enemies of the Spanish name. There at the same time was residing a young nobleman, whom you loved as the very friend of your bosom, and who was not less heartily attached to you. Joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, you shared all with him; he was to you even as a brother.”

“Poor Lancelot!” sighed the count.

“Lancelot van Bisthoven loved our young Lady Catalina,” pursued the duenna; “you yourself took pleasure in favoring this inclination, and lost no opportunity of testifying to Lancelot’s valor, virtue, and other good qualities, in the presence of my mistress. And yet, señor, you too were not insensible to my lady’s manifold attractions; but you carried your magnanimity and goodness so far, that you stifled the growing feelings of your own heart, in order not to be a rival for happiness with your dearest friend. The praises which you so constantly bestowed on Lancelot, the opportunities which your inventive genius incessantly devised for forwarding his wishes, had at last their effect; my young lady returned your friend’s ardent love. It was a happy day—you, too, señor, felt it as such—when in God’s house my young lady was solemnly betrothed to Lancelot van Bisthoven. Thus mutually trothplight, in the presence of

family and friends on both sides, they seemed now once for all to belong to one another, and their mutual love secure from the waywardness of fortune. In a few days the marriage ceremony was formally to have united my mistress with your friend."

"Alas!" cried the count, in a voice of pain, "why do you recall to me those times of sadness? Do I not suffer enough now?"

The duenna went on, without paying any regard to the count's emotion:

"Inexorable death dissolved this union before the rite could be completed. The Baron van Ghyseghem was obliged to journey to Ghent, to be present at the negotiations for peace; he left the young Lady Catalina with me at Antwerp, in a house which he had there in the High street. Then came the day of the Spanish Fury,* which is recorded with blood and tears in the annals of Antwerp. The Spanish garrison broke out from the citadel, the sword in one hand, the torch in the other; murder and conflagration wandered with them through our streets. The citizens rose in arms, and a desperate struggle ensued. Every Spaniard that fell into their hands was straightway sacrificed to their vengeance. That day I shall never forget. I myself hurried from my bed, to which a dangerous illness had confined me. I yet hear the howling fury of the mob which stormed

* See note at end.

our house, seeking you, to tear you to pieces; I yet see before me Lancelot, as, sword in hand, and covered with blood, he defended your life against the raging crowd. At last, after blood had been poured out like water, after whole streets had perished in the flames, peace was restored. Then Lancelot's corpse was found, pierced with five deadly wounds; your brother, with his wife and child, had perished in the ruins of his burning house. Pardon me, Count de Almata, if I call up recollections which draw tears from your eyes; it is perforce that I do so. Well, then, I proceed. Long afterward, when the recollection of those that had perished remained but as a slumbering sorrow deep in the hearts of the survivors, there awoke in you anew a boundless love for the Lady Catalina. You desired, moreover, to take into your own keeping the happiness of her who had been your dearest friend's betrothed; and thus you became a suitor for her hand. Of no one on earth did my mistress think more highly than of you, count—no one did she hold for nobler of soul, for worthier of all love—and yet she refused to unite her lot with yours in marriage; yes, she even rejected your proposal with all the repugnance of terror, as what would involve her in a bondage of shame and misery. You must yet remember, count, how often you in vain pleaded for her consent, how often, even with tears and upon her knees, she besought you to think no more of her in the way of marriage. It would be superfluous to reiterate to you

all this. At last, driven on by the vehemence of your love, you called in her father's authority to your aid;—with what result you know! As a victim you dragged her to the altar, and it was under moral compulsion that there she spoke the word that bound her to you forever. Is it true, count, what I say, or not?"

"Ah, yes! I loved Catalina more than life!"

"That I know, and far be it from me to accuse my noble master's intentions. But do you, count, know why it was that my mistress so long refused herself to you? why it was she felt that you could never make her happy; that she could only embitter and poison your life? Know you the secret that for years long has weighed upon us all like a nightmare?"

She approached her lips to the count's ear, and went on, in a whisper—

"The bond that subsisted between Lancelot and Catalina was one that no power could loose; not even death itself could loose it;—for, count, there lived a child of Lancelot's, the innocent pledge of union, even beyond the grave, between its dead father and its hardly-tried surviving parent."

At these words the count turned pale; there was an expression in his eyes that made the duenna sink hers upon the ground. His heavy respiration, as of one struggling for very life-breath, showed how violently this revelation had affected him. Torturing thoughts of shame and dishonor darted through his brain. He succeeded, however,

in mastering his emotion, and sat on without speaking.

The duenna proceeded, in a saddened tone :

“God has not blessed you with children, count; it is therefore not possible for you to understand the all-powerful empire of maternal love in a woman’s bosom. And even were you a father, still it would not be possible to you. It is not in the heart of man to conceive the depth, the warmth, of a mother’s feeling for her child—that feeling which on the very bed of death speaks out in that last cry, ‘My child! my child!’ And if that feeling is one almost of idolatry while the mother sees her child in prosperity and happiness growing up beside her, think you not that it must be intensified even to madness, when she knows that the creature to which she has given existence is, like a stray lamb, exposed to all the evils of desertion; in poverty, at the mercy of strangers, and condemned to bear the brand of shame? Eight years, count, did my mistress live on without knowing what or where her poor child’s lot was, or whether it even still lived. For eight years she mourned and wept, for eight years did her mother’s heart bleed; with no one but with me, her faithful servant, could she speak of her bitter, bitter sorrow. She was compelled to deceive you; you whom she truly loved, whom she honored as the very model of kindness and generosity. She was compelled to give umbrage to you by the mystery of her demeanor; to wound you in the deepest and tenderest of your

heart's feelings, to rack you with all the tortures of suspicion and despair. Day by day I could see how under this martyrdom she was perishing away; how the color faded from her cheeks, as conscience gnawed on at her vitals; how she was rapidly sinking into a premature grave. Have you not more than once, count, yourself exclaimed to me, in accents of despair: 'My poor Catalina! she is perishing away! some secret, incomprehensible suffering is wearing her to death?'

The count stifled an outbreak of rage, and the duenna went on:

"At last you gave your consent to a journey to the Netherlands; and by that you saved her life. After a tedious and long fruitless search, at last we recovered our lost one's traces; we found it in the Orphan-house, here hard by. This last night the unfortunate mother had devoted to a last parting from her unfortunate daughter; she desired once more to satisfy the yearnings of her maternal love, to shed the last sad tears over her child, before she returned to Spain. In the darkness of the night the countess left this house—an unwarrantable step, doubtless, but taken with no other view than that of once again embracing her child. If you have any doubt, señor, of the strictest truth of my narrative, you can inquire of a poor woman named Anna Canteels, who is married to a soldier, and lives here in the Convent street. It was to her charge that the child was intrusted, and she knows all. The child (it is a girl) is in the Orphan-house, as

I told you ; she goes there by the name of Wooden Clara. Perhaps, count, you will desire to inquire more closely into the circumstances which show that your wife is innocent of having wronged you ; this you have fully the right to do ; but, whatever you may resolve on, spare, I implore you, the good fame of my mistress, and the memory of your friend Lancelot, and bring not shame upon your own house. I have nothing more to say ; you know now the whole truth."

After a while the count spoke, mastering his anger with an evident effort :

"'Tis well ; now begone. You promised me ease from my suffering and peace of mind, and after all you have only shifted the evil ; you have applied a salve to one wound, only to inflict another, almost as deep, in the very same region. I must consult my friends and family as to that which I now have to do ; for I will not sit down with this blot upon my escutcheon. For the present, leave me alone ; your mistress shall learn my resolve before this day is past."

Half discomfited, half well-pleased, the duenna left the chamber. She was drawn hither and thither, between hope and fear, and felt as yet quite unable to estimate the result of her venture. Still, when she reflected that her explanation had at all events allayed the immediate ebullition of her master's wrath, and substituted for it a feeling of much less violence, she could not but, upon the whole, be gratified with what she had so far effected.

One painful doubt from time to time brought a cloud over her brow:—would the count separate from Catalina? would he repudiate her as an unworthy wife? would he set out alone for Spain, and so brand with shame the last scion of the house of Ghyseghem?

Thus speculating, doubting, hoping, fearing, the duenna reached her mistress's apartment, which she entered, and cautiously closed the door behind her.

The count meanwhile remained motionless in his chair, his eyes fixedly bent upon the ground, as one deeply sunk in thought.

Only the convulsive twitchings of his countenance, with a bitter smile that from time to time played about his mouth, betrayed the storm that was raging in his heart. For a full half hour he sat on, laboring with this inward struggle. At last he rose, and passed his hand over eyes and forehead, as if to dash aside the tumultuous crowd of thoughts; then he arranged his dress, filled his purse with gold-pieces, and hurried out of the house.

CHAPTER VII.

PROBABLY the count's first impulse was to seek something of composure from the influence of the open air, for he passed on through the works of the fortifications, till he reached the fields beyond. And in truth the free breeze of heaven, mild at once and cool, did seem to alleviate his suffering and calm down his agitation. After a short walk he retraced his steps, apparently to return to his home, to the very spot where he had recently received so severe a blow. But instead of that he left his own house on one side, and went on, to knock at the door of the Orphan-house. His purpose it was not easy to guess; for he had by far too noble a heart to have any thought of wreaking his vengeance on the innocent Clara. Perhaps it was a blind impulse of his jealous feeling that drove him to see with his own eyes this stone of offence in his path of life; perhaps he was still swayed by a lingering suspicion, and wished to make sure for himself that the duenna's tale concealed no new subterfuge of fraud.

Be that as it may, the count knocked; the por-

tress opened, and he desired her, in an imperious tone, immediately to call the Mother-superintendent.

The portress showed him into the parlor, and hastened into the back building, where the Mother was at the moment occupied in giving out to the girls their respective tasks of work. She immediately left her employment, and proceeded to the parlor, without at all suspecting who it was that she should find waiting for her. At the sight of the count she turned pale with sudden terror.

"It seems, mistress," said the count, sarcastically, "that the sight of me alarms you, and makes you tremble. Fetch me the little girl who goes by the name of Wooden Clara; I wish to see her."

At this demand the Mother trembled in good earnest, in every limb, and could answer only an unintelligible murmur.

"What!" proceeded the count; "must I trouble the board of managers? Must there be an express order from them before I can see the child?"

"Oh, no, no! not that," sobbed the Mother, intimidated.

"Well, then, let me see her! and quickly!"

Quite at a loss what to say, she could only stammer out—

"Yes, yes, count! though I am afraid she has gone out; but I will see."

"You are trying to put me off, mistress!" cried

the count, angrily. "Take care, lest I make you repent it!"

Sighing, she left the parlor, and returned to the back building, whence she soon reappeared, leading the little Clara by the hand, whom on the way she had hastily prepared for the occasion with such instructions as the time allowed of.

"Clara," she said, "the Count de Almata is here, the husband of the lady that has been so kind to you. He seems to be in anger; but you must behave as pleasantly as you can; do you understand?"

"Yes, Mother, so the countess always bade me. But she said her husband was so kind and good."

The Mother had no time to reply to this observation, for they were already on the threshold of the parlor. She presented Clara to the count, but herself remained in the room, near the door, firmly resolved that neither prayers nor threats should induce her to leave the child alone with the count, lest, in his present mood, he should do her a mischief.

Wooden Clara stood in silence before the count, and looked up at him with her usual gentle smile. For a moment he looked on her loweringly, but the first glance at the angelic little head changed his feelings and his countenance together. Touched and amazed, he contemplated the heavenly blue of her eyes, at which so loving a heart shone out; the charming little mouth, round which played so enchanting a smile; even he, the injured and

indignant husband, yielded to the power of that heavenly countenance.

But it was not Clara's beauty and expression alone that worked this miracle; there was another circumstance in aid, which moved the count even to tears. The little girl bore a striking likeness not only to her mother, but still more, almost, to her father; under these pure and soft lineaments the deceased Lancelot reappeared, imploring pity for his child, forgiveness for his child's mother! The count saw his best and dearest friend once more stand before him; that friend's voice sounded beseechingly in his ears, and it was no longer possible for him to turn away his eyes from the features in which, as in an open book, he read the story of the happiest hours of his life.

Unable any longer to resist the feeling with which his heart swelled, he signed to the Mother-superintendent to leave the room. Her watchful eye had already noticed that all danger was over, her heart was already rejoicing that the count's anger had given way to the sweet child's charm. She only, therefore, bowed respectfully, and withdrew.

As soon as the count found himself alone with Clara, he gave free course to his feelings. He took her hand in one of his, with the other he covered his eyes, and thus silently poured out a flood of tears, which, as they fell, seemed to draw off with them from his breast all the accumulated sorrow which had so sorely loaded it.

The little girl meanwhile gently stroked his hand, seeking thus to comfort the suffering which she did not comprehend.

Before long the count's fit of agitation passed away. Once more he steadfastly regarded the child; but now his countenance was lighted up with a happy smile, which seemed to reflect that which instantly returned to Clara's countenance.

"So, my dear child," said he, in tolerable Flemish, "you know me, then, that you look at me so pleasantly?"

"You are the Count de Almata, are you not?" answered the little girl. "The lady that has been so good to me loves you very much, and has told me how kind you are; so of course I cannot help loving you too, my lord count."

The señor set the child upon his knee, and asked her, in a caressing tone—

"Do you know who your father was, my little one?"

"My father is in heaven," was the answer, "and prays to God for me; I have never seen him."

"I have," replied the count, with a sigh. "I have often seen him, and knew him well, dear child; he was to me a dear friend and brother. I did so love him! The tears that I have just shed were drawn from me by your wonderful likeness to him."

The count's caresses had soon made little Clara feel at home with him; as it was her nature to be with every one that was kind to her; and now,

when she heard that he had been a friend of her father's, the last trace of shyness vanished from her demeanor. She put her little arm about his neck, kissed him on the cheek, and in her sweetest tone said—

“May God reward you, that you so loved my father; I shall always dearly love you for it.”

“At all events, you know your mother?”

Clara hung down her head, and made no answer.

“Excellent child!” exclaimed the count, greatly touched. “You will not betray her secret; but to utter falsehood your pure heart will not allow you. No, no; tell it to no one upon earth. And shall this innocent creature be cast off uncared for? Shall I refuse to listen to her father's voice, which even now I hear pleading with me for her, and so embitter my whole life with remorse? Shall I thanklessly repay his faithful love with hatred of his child? Dear Clara, give thanks to God in your pure devotions. Your pleasant smile has taken away despair out of two lives, out of two hearts, one of which is already dear to you; the other shall become so by affection and kindness. Do you feel really as though you could love me, Clara?”

“How can you ask me such a question, my lord count? You are my kind benefactress's best friend, and for that alone I must love you. She is always telling me how kind and good you are to her. Of course, I shall love you always.”

The count looked in silence upon the little girl. A smile of indescribable felicity shone upon his countenance, and he caressed the child not only kindly, but even, as it were, gratefully. The comfort which he found in his change of feeling, the happiness which his noble and beneficent projects had called up in his soul—projects from which he might look up for a heaven of love and peace for his future life—all these new feelings bubbled up within him as a refreshing stream in the barren desert; and he gazed with a sort of admiration upon the simple little girl that had poured this healing balsam into his wounded heart.

Suddenly, as though an inward voice had spoken to him, he rose, and said to Clara—

“One could really let slip whole days with you, darling child! Come, let me give you a hearty kiss; perhaps you shall bring to me peace and happiness. But, mind, you must not repeat a word of what has passed between us; remember that. Come, kiss me again; I hope it will not be for the last time. Now, go back to the work-room; and, mind, say nothing. There’s fortune in store for you yet, Clara.”

The count left the parlor, and spoke privately a few words with the Mother-superintendent, who was anxiously waiting for him at the door. It must have been welcome tidings that the count brought to her, for she saluted him right cheerfully at parting, and returned in the best possible spirits to Clara, whom she caught up in her arms,

and kissed with all the fervor of an overflowing heart.

Meanwhile the portress had opened the door to the count, who now proceeded with hasty steps toward the central quarters of the town. Before long he was in the Convent street, and a little later was seen mounting the steps of the Town-hall. He must have had much to do this day, and at many places, for he had called a second time at the Orphan-house, and this time also without first returning home.

It was now about four in the afternoon. The countess still sat in the same chair, exhausted with weeping, and utterly cast down. Not far from her knelt the duenna, her rosary in her hand, fervently praying.

In the countess's heart there was now less of terror, but, perhaps, still more of grief. She had learned from Ines that her husband gave full credit to her confession of the truth, and was therefore free from the torturing thought of her having been unfaithful to him; at the same time, she was under the impression that he would part from her, and return to Spain without her. She did in very truth heartily love her husband; both gratitude and affection strongly bound her to him. This fear, therefore, was a severe affliction to her; it threatened her with a lot to which she had much difficulty in resigning herself.

While she was thus weeping in the stillness of her chamber—while she was mourning over the

loss of so much that was so dear to her—her good name, and her beloved husband—while she trembled lest he, in the first outbreak of his fury, had already taken steps that would publish irrevocably her own dishonor and her child's shame—while she was totally absorbed in these discouraging reflections, the door suddenly opened, and the Count de Almata appeared before her.

With a loud cry she sprang from her seat; she did not venture to look her husband in the face, but fell on her knees before him, with her hands joined:

"Pardon, pardon, Count de Almata! I have deeply sinned against you, and deserve your hatred and contempt. Deal with me, therefore, according to your will. But, by the bitter sufferings of our Lord, I adjure you, cast me not from you!—leave me not to die so wretchedly, of shame, remorse, and despair. I will be your servant, your slave; only where you are let me be too! Calisto, Calisto! hear my prayer! I will give up my child for your sake; if God will only give me strength, I will totally forget her, as an atonement for my guilt——"

The count did not leave her time to finish; he raised her from the ground, and kissed her on the forehead, without speaking.

This token of affection so took the señora by surprise, that she sank half-fainting on her husband's bosom. Then again looking on him, as still in doubt, she exclaimed—

"Be merciful—my head turns round. But no; it is you, Calisto, and your look is not of hate, but of kindness——"

Unable to say more, in the very distress of so unhopèd-for a joy, she hung on her husband's neck, who looked kindly upon her.

"Thanks! thanks!" at last she sobbed out. "You forgive me, then? You still hold me for not unworthy of your love? Ah, with what love will I return so much love! How will I adore you, as the very earthly impersonation of divine goodness! Blessings on your head, Calisto!"

The count took his wife's hand, which was resting on his shoulder, led her with a kind smile to the window, set a chair there for her, took a seat himself beside her, and spoke, still holding her by the hand—

"I have suffered much; the evil thought which had crept into my heart has tortured me unspeakably; for I love you, dearest Catalina, and I suspected, at last more than suspected. But I was in error, and so long as God leaves us together here upon earth, we will speak no more of that. To-day, meanwhile, I have made a discovery which, if I can obtain your co-operation, will contribute much to my happiness."

"To your happiness, Calisto!" interrupted the countess. "For that God be praised!"

"Hear me out," proceeded the count, with a mysterious air, but still in the tone of satisfaction. "You remember, Catalina, how on that fatal day

of the Spanish Fury, my poor brother, with his wife, perished in the flames. Their child, too, perished with them,—so at least said most of the neighbors; but others there were—as I doubt not you remember—who related that they had seen it rescued from the flames by a Spanish soldier.”

At this appeal to her memory, the countess shook her head.

“Ah, well, you have forgotten it,” proceeded the count. “You know, Catalina, how dearly I loved my brother, and will, therefore, not be surprised at the joy which I experienced when, to-day, an unexpected chance brought me upon the trace of this child of his.”

“Your brother’s child!” repeated the countess, as though doubtful whether her ears did not deceive her.

“The child of Don Alonzo!” exclaimed the duenna, in astonishment.

“Yes, yes!” answered the count, “the child of my late brother, Don Alonzo de Almata; of that I have no doubt. I have had the deposition of the soldier judicially taken, and am also in possession of other irrefragable proofs. And now, listen attentively to what I am about to say to you. Heaven has not blessed our marriage with children; my brother’s daughter, therefore—”

“It is a daughter, then?” cried the countess.

“A most darling child, and lovely and sweet-

looking like an angel," was the count's reply. "She is, therefore, by law now my only heir; and, as she has not hitherto been educated with all the care which beseems the blood of which she springs, I have resolved on giving her a home in my own house, and completing her education under my own eye. I have already executed a formal instrument of adoption in her favor, by which her right is secured, as my daughter and eventual heiress. Openly, and in the face of all the world, I now restore her to that place in my family which a strange fatality had deprived her of; she will now be respected by every one, as belongs to her high descent. I hope, dear Catalina, that I shall find you prepared to fill a mother's place to her, as it is my will that she shall henceforth call me father. Is it not so,—you will love the poor child for my sake?"

"Let her come," answered the countess, not, however, without a sort of dejection; "I will love her, because she is of your blood."

"Catalina," added the count, in a low voice, "I know what thought it is that is troubling you; but that matter, too, shall be provided for, and I will help you in it. We will unite in advancing the happiness of every one that is dear to either of us. So it shall be, shall it not?"

"Thanks, a thousand thanks!" cried the countess, with joy beaming from her eyes.

"Well, then," said the count, in a solemn tone,

at the same time rising from his seat, "be this the pledge of our reconciliation, and confirmation of our love. I give you for your own my brother's child; be its mother, as I will be its father: that will be a sacred bond between us, Catalina."

With these words he handed to the countess a parchment roll, from which great red seals hung down, adding, at the same time—

"It is fitting that a mother should know how her child is called."

With curiosity, but quite deliberately, the countess opened the parchment; but hardly had she cast her eyes upon it than she threw herself at the count's feet, with a loud cry—

"Clara, my Clara, your adopted daughter! gracious God! this is too much!"

More she could not say; senseless she sank into the arms of her husband, who had raised her from the ground.

The duenna stood by the count, and, weeping, kissed his hands.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was a happy and magnanimous thought of the Count de Almata's, that of giving out Wooden Clara for his brother's child. By this means, he set his adoption of Clara out of the reach of all questionable interpretation, and secured his wife's honor against the malice of evil tongues. He had thus given happiness to his wife and her beloved child; had made a well-merited offering of gratitude to the memory of his friend Lancelot, and purchased for himself a rich reward in the boundless affection of his Catalina. After ten years of anxiety and trouble, there was now in store for him a serene and peaceful future; no mystery now remained, with its fatal chasm of separation, in his married life; doubt and distrust would henceforth be at an end, love and gratitude strew their fairest flowers on his path. And besides all this, heaven had now gifted him with a child,—a child to which in truth there was more than one bond of feeling to attach him, and which he already loved with all a father's fondness.

It was not in the count's character to do any

thing by halves, especially in a matter of kindness and generosity. To Anna Canteels and her husband he had promised a good annuity, if they would shape themselves to his plans, to be doubled after ten years, in the event of the secret of Clara's birth still remaining truly kept. As was to be expected, they made no difficulty of compliance with the count's wishes, especially as all he asked of them was in the way of aid to an act of benevolence. Accordingly, their depositions had been recorded before the municipal authorities of Antwerp, who had officially exemplified the same to the count, in a document, wherein the orphan girl was entitled Donna Clara Brigita Juana de Almata.

But all this was not yet enough. To remove all doubt or possible misunderstanding on the subject of this miraculous recognition, the count had taken sufficient measures for its being made known throughout the town. He might, indeed, almost have spared himself this superfluity of caution, since from the Orphan-house itself a hundred voices had already carried the wonderful story into every corner of the city.

No wonder, then, that nothing was talked of in Antwerp but the extraordinary turn of Wooden Clara's fortune, and that hundreds, even out of the highest classes, visited the Orphan-house to see the subject of these strange vicissitudes. They were all, however, doomed to disappointment; for the board of management had already

transferred the child to the custody of the Count de Almata.

For the last three days it had been holiday in the Orphan-house. In consideration of the late extraordinary event, the board of management had a little relaxed their accustomed vigilance, and allowed the superintendent, for this week, a considerable exercise of leniency in exacting the stated task of work. The count's generosity had extended itself to the whole house. The Mother-superintendent and her husband were set at their ease for the rest of their days; to each girl's savings-box a handsome addition was made, besides some small article of gold or silver, either of ornament or of use, which each of Clara's old school-fellows received from herself, personally, as a keepsake. The present day's busy idleness in the house, however, had another cause than the satisfaction of its inmates at these welcome gifts.

The oldest and most skilful of the girls had been busied all the morning upon a parting memorial for Clara; and the interest or curiosity of the others had put an end to all order in the work-room, for every moment one or the other was running up to see how the work was getting on.

And in fact it was well worth looking at, this token of love and gratitude, on which so many busy fingers were working away with such eager

haste. A ground of rich stuff was covered with the most exquisite embroidery, in gold, silver, and silk of divers colors, having the following legend in the centre:—

Worked in honor
of
Donna Clara Brigita Juana de Almata,
by
Her former companions and now humble servants,
The girls of the Orphan-house at Antwerp,
1589.
God grant her happiness here on earth,
And hereafter eternal bliss.
Amen.

At about ten o'clock in the forenoon, Theresa suddenly cried out, in a voice that made the great room ring again—

“Hurrah, girls! it's done! There's nothing to do now but to cut off the ends of silk, and then we can take it out of the frame.”

This glad announcement was received with universal acclamation. Theresa, meanwhile, left her companions to put the last hand to the work, and hastened to the door.

“Here comes the gardener,” cried she, “just in the nick of time! He has those baskets full! Now, then, here with the flowers!”

The flowers were brought in, and the girls began to make them up into little posies, which was not accomplished without many a petty squabble; however, all passed off without any necessity for interference on the part of the Mother, who only stood by, and looked on with a smile of amusement.

Half an hour later, all the girls, each with a posy in her hand, stood drawn up two-and-two round the court and in the entry, dressed in their Sunday's clothes, and shining with cleanliness; their hearts beat double time, their cheeks glowed, and their eyes gleamed with eager expectation. These living roses put the gardener's flowers quite out of countenance, for, after all, what nosegay that he could make up could compare with this troop of blooming girls, radiant with health, and whose natural charm was neither disguised nor interfered with by any attempt at artificially heightening it?

At the head of the band, and immediately behind the closed entrance, stood the four seniors of the house, each holding a corner of a large red velvet cushion, which one of the managers had lent them, and on which the present for Clara lay.

While the orphans seemed waiting for the signal to set forward, from the street without was heard the rolling of carriages, and the stamping of restless horses. Presently both leaves of the street door were thrown open. Slowly and with measured tread the orphans left their house, and made their way through the surging crowd, who filled a great part of the Spital street, and hustled one another hither and thither in their zeal to get a good place for the sight. And now the door of the next house also opened, and out came Clara, dressed in the handsomest style as a young lady of rank, and holding the Count and Countess de Almata by the

hand. These were followed by a large attendance of friends and acquaintance, among whom might be noticed Sister Catherine, from the neighboring convent, and Master Huygens, the organist of the principal church. Clara was led up to the four girls who were deputed from the whole body to offer the present for her acceptance. While with beating heart she surveyed the dazzling embroidery, one of them made an attempt at an address on behalf of Clara's late companions; but at the second word her voice failed her, and her intended oration resolved itself into a burst of tears. And not only did the remaining three cushion-bearers follow their leader's example, but soon Clara too joined in. The countess thanked the girls for their friendly remembrance, and endeavored to comfort them with kind words. But to the female constitution tears are catching, as all the world knows; her eloquence was in vain. Clara threw herself sobbing into Theresa's arms; the other girls looked on with emotion; by degrees nothing was to be seen but aprons to the eyes; the whole band was silently weeping.

After some minutes thus spent, the count began to think it was time to make an end of the scene. He spoke a few words to Clara, and led her away to the carriage which was in waiting hard by; he handed the countess and her in, then got in himself. The footmen jumped up behind, the coachman cracked his whip, and the carriage disappeared round the corner of the street, on its way

to the Emperor's Gate, and the high-road to Brussels.

Poor girls! How joyously had they worked at their embroidery, and made up their posies! They had taken such pleasure themselves in the thought of the pleasure with which Clara would receive this token of their love and gratitude—and now, there they stand weeping and sobbing! Silent and depressed, they take their way back to the Orphan-house, there to hide their sorrow within their own walls, and to mourn undisturbed over the loss of their sweet companion.

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CHAPTER IX.

ANOTHER fortnight had now gone by; it was play hour in the Orphan-house, and the girls were all in the court; some matter of business was in agitation, for at a summons from Long Mie each girl threw a small piece of money into Theresa's apron.

Against one of the walls stood a ladder, and upon it an old man, at work on retouching a stone image of the Blessed Virgin, of which time and weather had somewhat impaired the folds of the drapery. The gray old fellow must have been an old acquaintance in the house, for the girls joked and chatted away with him at a great rate. Suddenly in one corner of the court there arose a discussion between the two girls, Anna and Long Mie, upon some subject which was doubtless of no little concernment to the common cause, for the other girls soon began to take part in it, with considerable confusion of tongues.

At last, when the debate had lasted some time without any symptom of coming to a conclusion, Theresa exclaimed—

"Come, this may go on till Easter day falls on a Friday! What do you know about it, Anna? We'll ask Master Steven about it; he can tell us as well as anybody whether it is possible."

Master Steven turned about upon his ladder, to take upon him the office of judge; but so many questions in so many voices resounded from every side in his ear, that not one single intelligible word could he make out.

"What are you all chattering at once for, you magpies?" he cried, with a motion of his hand, as though to disperse a swarm of flies. "Enough, enough! for God's sake hold your tongues—unless you want me to turn giddy, and fall off the ladder. Do you want the fun of seeing old Steven break every bone in his body? Be quiet, I say."

Theresa made the most noise of all, and so carried the day:

"Let me tell you what the matter is, and then you say what you think of it. And you there, do hold your bawling!"

"As if you weren't the greatest bawler of us all yourself!" muttered Long Mie; "that's how you always get the last word. Try whether you can't speak the truth, at any rate."

Theresa, however, made no reply to this sarcasm, but went on stating the case to the sculptor:

"Now, Master Steven, tell me if it's possible. We've got leave from the board of managers to put by a penny a week each for a portrait of Wooden Clara. But now, Clara's gone away to

Spain, and there's no painter here that has ever seen her. Well, now, here's Long Mie will have it that that makes no difference, and a good painter can paint a portrait without ever having seen the person. Is that possible, Master Steven?"

Master Steven laughed loud out, and answered—"Oh yes! It's possible—"

"There, see now!" cried Long Mie, triumphantly.

"Yes," proceeded the old sculptor, in a jeering tone; "it's possible, just as it's possible that I should sup to night off the capon that's now on the spit in the Grand Turk's kitchen. Long Mie, I'll be obliged to you to sew me a tassel on my cloak. To be sure, all my life long I've never had a cloak; but that's no matter, is it?"

Here all the bystanders broke into an obstreperous laugh, to the great annoyance of Long Mie, who walked off discomfited.

"You see, now," said Theresa, turning to her comrades, "it can't be. When we've got the money for the portrait, we shall never be able to find a painter that knows her."

"Eh, Theresa, what's that you are saying?" cried Master Steven; "you're at a loss for an artist? And what do you take me for, then, pray? Wasn't it I, and no one else, that carved the beautiful altar in your chapel?"

"But you don't paint portraits, Master Steven!"

"Portraits, indeed! a pretty affair, the wish-wash of red and blue that the gentlemen painters call a

portrait! If you once come to run your hand over it you soon find out what it is! Talk to me of a carved figure; there's some nature in that; you can not only see it, but touch it too—feel it. Look you here; you know I once took a model of Clara's head in clay, for one of the angels on the altar: well, now, let me do a figure from it in wood."

"In wood! in wood!" jeered the girls.

"Yes, in wood, to be sure," reiterated Master Steven. "What are you laughing at, girls? Wooden Clara in wood, isn't that the thing?"

The joke, such as it was, carried Master Steven his point by acclamation. He was commissioned to execute a wooden figure of Wooden Clara, in her Orphan-house dress and, at once struck a bargain with the girls for the price.

Four weeks more, and the artist brought his work home on his shoulder. And this figure of Master Steven's is the same which at this day stands at the foot of the staircase in the Orphan-house at Antwerp, in the place of the last baluster, by the very step on which Clara used to sit down in her fits of sleep-walking.

THE END.

NOTES.

Note, p. 29.

The song as here given is a translation of a genuine old Flemish carol or hymn. The translator wishes to remind the reader that there is a strange mixture of familiarity and doggerel with true religious and poetical feeling in most pieces of this class. If the translator has failed in his translation, it has certainly been rather in conventionalizing than in lowering the tone of it. His excuse must be in the extreme difficulty of preserving intact in a modern translation that naïveté of the old language which so narrow a line separates from vulgarity. The same observations will apply to the song subsequently introduced.

Note, p. 42.

The scene of this story (originally written in Flemish) is laid at a period before that in which the French language had acquired its subsequent ascendancy, as especially the language of high society; and, as the Netherlands were at this time under the dominion of Spain, Spanish then held in some sort the same place in a Belgian good education which French has since held all over Europe. As the author writes with a purpose—that of reviving the old Flemish language,—he is probably not sorry to remind his readers that, after all, this ascendancy of French, even regarding it as a foreign language, is but of modern growth.

Note, p. 89.

The Spanish Fury is the traditionary name by which the people of Antwerp long designated an outbreak of the Spanish soldiery on the 4th of November, 1576. The garrison had for a very considerable time received no pay, and demanded their arrears, under a threat of sacking the town; which at last, on that day, they put in execution. More than five hundred houses, among them the town-hall, were burnt, and above five thousand of the citizens lost their lives. They, on their part, killed about two hundred Spaniards.

The Village Innkeeper.

THE
Village Innkeeper.

BY
HENDRIK CONSCIENCE.

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PREFACE.

It is difficult to imagine why the honor of presenting "THE VILLAGE INNKEEPER" for the first time in English has been reserved for an American pen. There is so much brilliancy in its style, and so much interest in its combination of pathos and humor, that we are surprised the discriminating taste of the British press did not long ago make the public familiar with it in our language.

"The Innkeeper's Daughter" is a double illustration of the assumption of the nobility and of the upstart pretensions of the low-born, softened by the innocence of female virtue and the manly sense of an honest peasantry. If LISA's character is weakened by ill-health and ruined by tastes and associations unsuited to her class in the Old World, KAREL almost redeems her from insignificance by the love he lavishes on his idol, and the noble confidence he offers as a tribute to woman's honor. If MASTER GANSENDONCK is the village Quixote, who becomes crazed by self-sufficiency and conceit, KOBE, his squire, is the Sancho, who shows off his infirmities without modifying the fate of those in whom he is evidently most interested.

We trust our readers will share the delight with which we read this story in French and translated it into our own tongue. M. Conscience has shown in this work that genius can make the most varied and thrilling music with the very simplest of our heart-strings.

BALTIMORE, *July*, 1856.

THE

VILLAGE INNKEEPER.

IN a village on the plain of Antwerp, between Hoogstraten and Clamphout, dwelt Peter Gansendonck, the "*baes*" or master of the "Inn of Saint Sebastian." I knew him about 1830, when I was a soldier. I recollect very well that my impressions of him at that time were not very favorable, for he liked neither soldiers nor peasants; and sought the society of our officers alone. He was excessively angry with the *burgomaster*, because he took the captain of our company to his own house, placed the three sub-officers at the baron's, the notary's, and the doctor's, and billeted upon him—Peter Gansendonck—nobody but the simple sergeant-major, your very humble servant!

I remember, also, that I passed most of my leisure time in manufacturing playthings for his little daughter Lisa, who was hardly five years old. The child was ill, and seemed to have consumption; yet her angelic look was so winning,

her face so pale and pure, her silvery voice so full of soft and touching tones, that I found infinite delight in consoling and amusing her with toys, songs, and stories.

Alas ! what cries of despair burst from the lips of poor Lisa, what tears bedewed her cheeks, when the drums beat for our retreat, and her friend the serjeant-major stood before her, with his knapsack on his back, ready to depart.

It is only of late that I had occasion to revisit this village and to call once more at the "*Inn of St. Sebastian*;" but I found every thing changed. Where is Master Gansendonck ? Where is Lisa ? Where is the table, with its drawer, on which I and my comrades drank so many pints of jovial beer ? Every thing was gone ! Gentle Lisa ! who would have imagined that one day I should tell thy story to my countrymen, as, in former times, I used to please thy infant mind with my tales and adventures ?

CHAPTER I.

“When nothing becomes something, nothing no longer knows himself!”

MASTER GANSENDONCK was an odd fellow. Although his lineage was humble, he soon got it into his head that he was made of better stuff than other peasants,—that he knew more than a college of *savants*,—that if village matters went behindhand it was only because he was not *burgomaster*,—and many other things of equal significance and value in his community.

Nevertheless, the poor man did not know how to read or to write, and never had occasion to forget much. Still, he was so lucky as to have *a great deal of money!*

In this respect, at least, he resembled innumerable important folks in this world, whose minds are kept under key in a strong box, and whose wisdom, let out at five per cent., comes back to their brains every year with a considerable revenue of interest.

The inhabitants of the village, who had been constantly insulted by the self-sufficiency and airs of Gansendonck, by degrees conceived a profound

hatred for the innkeeper, and bestowed on him the contemptuous *sobriquet* of "*blaeskeck*."

The master of the St. Sebastian was a widower with one child,—a daughter of eighteen or nineteen years; and, although delicate and pale, her features were so refined and feminine, and her character so affable, that she attracted the notice of many clever young men in the village. But, according to the presumptuous notions of her father, she was far too good, too well educated, and too beautiful, to marry the son of a *peasant*! He had kept her for some years in a celebrated boarding-school, in order that she might learn French and cultivate manners suitable for the distinguished position he designed for her in society. Luckily, however, Lisa—or Lisette, as the country-folks called her,—had come back as simple and natural as she departed; for, if the germs of vanity had ever fallen on her heart, the inborn purity of her nature destroyed them instantly in the bud.

According to the fashion of the day, she had received only a sort of *half*-education. She understood French quite well, but spoke it imperfectly; yet she knew how to embroider exquisitely, how to make slippers and cushions of a thousand colors, to manufacture pearls, to cut paper flowers, to say "*bon jour*" in the most graceful way, to bow and curtsy, to dance according to the latest style; and, in fine, she was possessed of a multitude of other pleasing accomplishments, which,

according to the rustic proverb, were as suitable for her father's inn "as a lace collar is for a cow's neck."

From her infancy, Lisa had been destined to become the wife of Karel, the son of a brewer, one of the best youths imaginable, well-to-do in the world, and endowed with an excellent education, which he received at the College of Hoogstraten. Study had changed him very little; for he still loved the boundless liberty of a country life, was as joyous as a bird, drank and sang with everybody, and was the friend and comrade of all the good fellows who knew him.

The sudden death of his father forced Karel to quit college, in order to assist his mother in the management of the brewery; and the good woman thanked God every night on her knees that he had been so kind as to give her such a child for support and consolation in her troubles.

Nothing in the world abashed Karel but the presence of Lisa; for, before her, it was observed that the reckless youth would become grave and indulge in poetic reveries. At the side of his beloved girl, he relapsed, as it were, into childhood, and, taking delight in her simple occupations, would study to gratify her most trifling wishes with religious solicitude. She was so delicate, so weak,—this beloved one of his heart,—but withal so beautiful and winning! And thus the sturdy and courageous youngster surrounded the frail girl with respect, attention, and watch-

fulness, as if he were tending a languishing flower that had been intrusted to his special guardianship.

For five or six months, Master Gansendonck saw nothing wrong in the fact that, in time, his daughter would become the wife of Karel. It is true that this marriage never pleased his pride entirely; but as, in his opinion, the rich son of a brewer was not, in all respects, a *peasant*, he was unwilling to break the long-standing engagement, and had even consented that preparations should be made for a speedy union.

The happiness of the young people was thus on a very good footing, when a bachelor-brother of Gansendonck, happened to die after a very short illness, leaving a rich inheritance to be added to the wealth already existing at the "Inn of Saint Sebastian."

Pierre Gansendonck imagined, like many others, that intelligence, nobility, and a man's worth, ought to be measured, on all occasions, by the money he possessed; and, although he did not understand English, he was, nevertheless, very much disposed, in considering the character of an acquaintance, to ask the question, "How many pounds of silver does the individual weigh?" But the Flemings are no better in this respect than their neighbors over the water, for their own proverb declares that "dumb money covers all defects, and gives wit even to a fool!"

It is needless to say that, with such principles,

his pride, or rather his folly, increased even more rapidly than his fortune. He very soon considered himself quite equal to the baron of the village, for he conscientiously believed that his purse was as heavy.

From that moment Master Gansendonck began to hold up his head stiffly, and thought himself one of the first personages in the country. He dreamed all night that he was descended from a noble race, and, during the day even, the flattering fancy was forever petted and cherished in his mind. Sometimes, to strengthen the opinion he had conceived of his original and meritorious nature, he indulged in the inquiry as to the difference between himself and a *gentleman*; but, as he could discern no distinction, he resigned himself to the pleasing belief of his unappreciated excellence.

Master Pierre's conscience often told him that he was too old to learn French, to change the tenor of his life, and to enter a higher grade of society; but then he thought that, if it was impossible for *him* to do so, his daughter, at least, might rise in the world and marry the best among the barons. What a blessed certainty for Master Pierre! Before his death, he would assuredly have the satisfaction of hearing his Lisa saluted as "Madame the Baroness;" and there was no doubt that he might become grandfather of a whole flock of little barons!

It may easily be conceived that, thenceforth,

the course of Karel's love began to run roughly, and that, in his heart, Pierre regarded the young brewer as a stumbling-block in his daughter's path. He had already spoken of Karel, in Lisa's presence, with contempt, and said some things which wounded her so much that, for the first time in her life, she turned from her father with bitter tears. In order to avoid these afflictions in future, Master Pierre carefully abstained from direct attacks on the brewer and his love; yet he secretly resolved to retard the wedding till he could contrive to remove the blinds from Lisa's eyes, and convince her that Karel was nothing but a vulgar peasant like the rest.

CHAPTER II.

FROM the first glimpse of daylight the servants of the Saint Sebastian had been engaged in their usual tasks in the court-yard of the inn. Thérèse, the milkmaid, was washing beets at the well for her cattle; in the barn the sound of the flail was incessantly heard, and the stable-boy was singing a coarse song while grooming his horses.

One man alone was to be seen stalking about at leisure, smoking his pipe, and amusing himself by looking at the workpeople. He too was dressed

like a laborer, in jacket and wooden shoes; and, although his face bore the *nonchalant* expression of an idler, an occasional glance of malice or cunning might be observed in his watchful eyes. A certain redness of cheeks and purplishness of nose gave token that he was in the habit of sitting at a well-filled table, and that he was amazingly familiar with the road to the cellar.

The milkmaid went toward the barn, when the laborers seized the occasion to exchange a few words with her and the smoking idler.

"Kobe, Kobe!"* said the milkmaid, "you are in luck! We kill ourselves with work from morning to night, and receive nothing for pay but the trifles that are thrown us; but you, as I said, have the luck of it; you idle, smoke your pipe, are the friend of the master, and get all the good bits that are stirring! You may say, indeed, that your bread has fallen into the honey-pot!"

Kobe smiled wickedly, and replied,—

"To have is to have; but to get what one hasn't, that's the art, my girl! Happiness has wings, and he who catches her holds her very fast."

"To lick a hand is to deceive, and to flatter is to cringe!" growled one of the workmen, bitterly.

"Words are not reasons," returned Kobe, carelessly. "Every man is in this world to do good

* Abbreviation of Jacobus.

to the son of his father, and whoever gets it ought to keep it."

"I would be ashamed to act as you do!" cried the angry laborer. "A hog gets fat, though he don't work."

"Yes," replied Kobe, with a laugh, "one dog gets mad when he sees another dog go into the kitchen. When their portions are unequal, brothers quarrel. But it is better to be envied than complaining; and, as it is necessary for a person to sit down in this world, I confess that I prefer taking a seat on a cushion than on thorns."

"Hush, lick-spittle, and recollect that you are fattening on our sweat!"

"Ah! Baptiste, why so waspish? Can't you bear that the sun should shine on my little puddle? Don't you remember the proverb:—'He who envies another eats his own heart and loses his time'? If I got less would you get more? On the contrary, I give you timely notice when Master Pierre is coming, and many a time I pass you a foaming pot from the cellar. You're looking for what is not lost, friend Baptiste!"

"That's very well, Master Kobe. We understand your generosity; for you resemble the parish priest who blesses all mankind, but don't forget to give himself a blessing before anybody else!"

"He's right, and so am I," returned Kobe; "whoever serves the altar must live by the altar."

"That's true!" said another of the workmen. "Kobe is a good fellow, and I'd like extremely to be in his shoes. I should like to earn my bread, mightily, by whistling in the chimney-corner. 'When a man's stomach is full his heart is at ease!' Let them jest, Kobe; everybody can't have a lucky star in this world; and, for my part, I think you have a great deal of cleverness."

"Not a bit more than the fungus that is growing up there in the cherry-tree," replied Kobe, with affected humility.

Everybody looked up, with surprise, at the large mushroom which was growing among the branches of the cherry-tree; but their glances fell immediately back upon Kobe, as if demanding an explanation of his riddle.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the milkmaid. "No more wit than a *mushroom*! Then you ought to be a terrible dunce!"

"You know nothing about it, Marie. What says the proverb? 'Fools work!' I do nothing. Therefore ——?"

"But what has the mushroom to do with all that?"

"That's the riddle, my girl. The cherry-tree is our master——"

"Flatterer!" interrupted the servant-girl.

——"And I am the poor and humble mushroom."

"Hypocrite!" growled the threshers.

"And, if you are lucky enough to guess the riddle, you will learn how little dogs can eat out of the same dish with big ones and not get bitten."

Kobe had a mind to continue vexing his hearers with these *double-entendres*; but he heard the voice of Master Gansendonck within the house, and said quickly to the laborers, while he put his pipe in its pouch;—

"Take your flails again, my boys. Our worthy master is coming to see how his work gets on."

"We are going to have our breakfast now," said the milkmaid, running back to the well. "We'll have a pretty row, I guess!"

"If he calls me robber and stupid, as he did yesterday," said one of the threshers, "I'll fling my flail at his head."

"The pot fought with the stone, and fell to pieces at the first blow," said Kobe, ironically.

"For my part," remarked another laborer, "I laugh at his big words, and let his nonsense explode."

"You are right," returned Kobe. "'Open your two ears very wide, and whatever goes in at one will get out at the other.' Let him be always in the right, and do what he says."

"Do what he says!—and if I can't?"

"Ah! in that case, let him be in the right nevertheless, and *don't* do it! Say nothing, and believe that there is nothing better than silence."

"But a man is a man! I laugh at his impu-

dence! Let him begin once, and I'll make him see that I can show my teeth! He has no business to treat me like a beast, though I am nothing but a laborer."

"What you say is very true, Driesken, and still you will be striking foul blows," remarked Kobe. "Everybody ought to know his place in this world. What says the proverb? 'If you are an anvil, take the blows like an anvil; if you are a hammer, strike like a hammer!' And then 'a very little word destroys a very big passion.' If you desire that the world should go well with you, recollect that 'it is difficult to catch flies with vinegar.'"

"Kobe, Kobe!" cried a voice from within, impatiently.

"Look at him smoothing his hypocritical face!" said one of the threshers, in a tone of mockery.

"That's precisely an art that you will never learn," replied Kobe; and, turning toward the inn, he exclaimed, in a plaintive voice, as if frightened, "I am coming, I am coming, my dear master! Don't be angry, for I'm hurrying with all my might!"

"He earns his bread by fawning like a dog!" murmured one of the workmen. "I'd rather thresh grain all my life! That's the fate of all men who have driven a variety of trades!"

"Yes, he was ten years a soldier. It's in the army that a man learns to play the buffoon and

hypocrite so as to work as little as possible. After that he was a gentleman's servant, and that business don't make the hands horny. But what the mischief did he mean by his riddle? Do you understand what he would be at?"

"Oh, that's easy enough to guess," replied the other. "He meant to say that he's fast on our master's neck, and that he lives on it like a mushroom on the cherry-tree! But enough of this nonsense. Let us get to work again!"

CHAPTER III.

"The emperor's cat is his cousin.
A big lantern, and little light!"

"WELL, Kobe," asked Master Gansendoick of his servant, "how do you like me with my new cap?"

The servant stepped back a pace or two, and rubbed his eyes like a person suddenly astonished by something very wonderful.

"Oh! master," cried he, "you don't say so! Is that really you? I took you for the baron! Good heavens! is it possible? Raise your head a little, master. Turn yourself around a little,

master. Now walk a little, master! You resemble the baron just as one drop of water ——”

“Kobe,” interrupted Master Pierre, with a tone of feigned severity, “you want to flatter me. I don’t like it.”

“I know that,” replied the servant.

“There are few men who have less pride than I, though people do say, out of spite, that I am haughty because I can’t bear *peasants*.”

“You are right, master. But really I am very much in doubt whether you are not the baron!”

Joy sparkled in the eyes of Gansendonck, as, with his head erect, and in lofty attitude, he looked at his servant complacently, while Kobe continued walking round and round him, making all sorts of gestures of admiration and surprise.

Kobe had not altogether deceived his master by absolute flattery. Judging from his exterior alone, and without taking notice of his stupid physiognomy, Master Gansendonck really resembled the worthy baron. Nor was there any thing astonishing in this; for during the last three months he had been busily engaged in copying the garments which that personage commonly wore, and, as he lived in the country unpretentiously, his usual dress was of the most simple and ordinary character.

But, some weeks before this period, the baron had been seized by a sudden fancy;—and who, in the course of his life, has not? A beautiful pet dog that belonged to him died, and he caused a

cap to be made for himself out of the animal's skin. This cap had especially attracted the attention of Master Pierre, and he at once ordered a *fac-simile* from the neighboring town. The new article was at that moment displaying its glossy curls for the first time on the head of the master of the *Saint Sebastian*, who was unable to admire himself sufficiently in the parlor looking-glass.

After another glance or two, he got ready to go out.

"Kobe," said he, "get your pitchfork, and let us take a walk."

"Yes, master," answered the servant, composing his countenance, and following at Gansendonck's heels.

Upon the highway, which was bordered by houses, they met many villagers, who took off their hats or caps very politely to Master Pierre, but burst out laughing the moment he passed them. Many folks, too, came forth to their doors or ran to their windows to admire his new and shining cap; but Gansendonck made it a point never to be the first in saluting, and stalked along with a stiff neck and slow, majestic step, as if he had been the baron himself. Kobe, whose face by this time had assumed an expression of vacant stupidity, marched in silence behind his master, and followed him as patiently and faithfully in all his motions as if he had been a dog.

Every thing went well till they came opposite the forge; but there they found some young

people who were engaged in conversation. As soon as they saw Master Gansendonck approaching, they began to laugh so loudly that the peals could be heard throughout the street.

Sus,* the son of the smith, renowned as the wildest joker in the village, dropped his hammer and began to march up and down in front of the forge, with his head erect, imitating poor Gansendonck so precisely that it was a wonder Master Pierre did not burst with rage! In passing in front of the scoffer, he flung a glance of rage at him from eyes that seemed starting from their sockets; but, as Sus returned the look with nothing but a provoking laugh, Gansendonck passed on, mad with passion, and struck off into a by-path.

"*Blaeskaek! Blaeskaek!*"† shouted the crowd after him.

"Well, Kobe, what do you think of that peasant *canaille*?" exclaimed he, when his ire had somewhat abated. "They dare to mock me,—to treat me like a fool!—a man of my standing!"

"Yes, master, 'flies will sting a horse, though he is a big animal.'"

"But I'll be even with them yet, the insolent wretches! Let them beware; they shall pay dearly for it. 'Mountains don't meet, but men do!'"

* Abbreviation of Franciscus or François.

† A word of derision in Flanders.

"Certainly, master; 'what is only put off is by no means given up.'"

"I'd be a terrible fool to have my horses shod or any other work done by that shameless scamp!"

"Yes, master, 'whoever is too good is always half a fool.'"

"None of my household shall ever put foot in the smithy."

"No, master."

"And then the mocking scoundrel will find himself beautifully caught, and may bite his nails in vain. Isn't it so, Kobe?"

"Undoubtedly, master."

"But, Kobe, I believe that this worthless smith is paid by somebody to jeer and vex me. The country police think it was he who wrote something on our sign one night."

"'THE SILVER LION,' master?"

"It is unnecessary, Kobe, to repeat such impertinences."

"Yes, master."

"You ought to maul him well some time when nobody sees you, and then give him my compliments."

"Yes, master."

"Will you do it?"

"I'll give him your compliments, master."

"No,—the mauling!"

"That's just as much as to say that you wish to see me brought back to the inn without arms or

legs. I am not very strong, master, and the smith is not a cat to be fought without gloves."

"Are you afraid of such a cowardly ass? You should be ashamed of yourself."

"It is not good to fight against a man who is tired of life. 'John the coward is worth more than John the dead man,' says the proverb, master."

"Kobe, Kobe! I am afraid you won't die of courage!"

"I hope so, master."

In the course of this chat, the anger of Master Gansendonck evaporated. Amid a multitude of defects, he had one good quality; for, though he was easily aroused, he very soon forgot an offence. He had crossed some woods and reached his own land, where he very soon again found occasion to let loose his excitability, and abuse everybody. Here, a cow had trespassed; there, a goat had nibbled the foliage; farther on, he thought he could discover the footsteps of huntsmen or the trail of dogs. This last circumstance made him actually leap with rage; for he had caused huge placards, with "HUNTING FORBIDDEN," to be placed all over his grounds; and, nevertheless, it appeared from these signs that some one had been bold enough to violate his rights! He was on the point of exploding anew, and, in his excitement, struck a beech-tree with his foot. Kobe, meanwhile, kept in his master's rear, and thought of dinner, at which there was to be hare. He fancied that there would be no one at home to

prepare the gravy as it ought to be, and the idea worried him. From time to time, however, he managed to say, "Yes, master," and "No, master," without paying any attention to the remarks of that personage.

All of a sudden, Pierre Gansendonck heard a mocking voice cry, "*Blaeskaek! Blaeskaek!*"

Furious again, he stared around him, and saw nobody but his servant, who, with his eyes bent on the ground, mumbled with his lips as if engaged in eating.

"Is it *you*, scoundrel?" shouted Master Pierre, in a rage.

"I, again!" replied Kobe. "Good Lord! what's the matter with you, master?"

"I asked you, worthless wretch, if you did not speak just now."

"Do you hear well, master?"

Gansendonck, who, by this time, was almost out of his wits, seized the pitchfork from his hands and was about to strike him, when Kobe perceived that matters were coming to a serious pass, and, leaping aside with his hands raised, cried out,—

"Oh, Lord! our master is becoming stark mad in reality!"

"*Blaeskaek! Blaeskaek!*" again exclaimed the voice behind Pierre Gansendonck.

It was then, for the first time, that he beheld a *magpie* in the branches of the beech, and heard the bird repeat the insulting epithet!

"Kobe! Kobe!" shouted he, "run, get my gun! It's the smith's magpie. The rascally brute shall die on the spot!"

But the magpie darted from the tree and flew toward its home; whereupon Kobe was seized with such a violent convulsion of laughter, that he fell on the ground, where he rolled about for some moments.

"Stop!" roared Master Pierre. "Stop, or I'll drive you off! Stop laughing, instantly!"

"I can't, master!"

"Get up!"

"Yes, master."

"I will forget your insolence on one condition, and that is—that you will poison the magpie."

"With what, master?"

"Why, with poison, to-be-sure!"

"Yes, master, provided he'll eat it."

"Then kill him with a gun."

"Yes, master."

"Well; let us be off. But what is that I see yonder in my young plantation? It's enough only to be a proprietor in order to become the prey of everybody!"

With these words, he ran toward the plantation, followed by Kobe.

From a distance, he had seen a poor woman and two children breaking the dead branches of trees and tying them in a large fagot; and, although it was an established custom of the district to permit the poor to gather dry wood in a

forest, Master Gansendonck had no stomach for such trespassers. The dead sticks were *his* property quite as much as the green wood; and it was his whim that no one should touch what was *his*! Add to this that the offender was a *woman*, from whom he could fear neither mockery nor resistance. These facts were quite sufficient to give him courage and to rouse his passion. Accordingly, he at once seized the poor creature by the shoulders, exclaiming,—

“Impudent robbers! Come, march along with me to the village. I’ll soon have you in the hands of the police and fast in prison!”

The trembling woman let fall the wood she had gathered, and was so terrified by these threats that she began to cry without saying a word, while the two children clutched their mother’s dress and filled the grove with screams and sobs.

Kobé raised his head with scorn. His habitual expression of indifference disappeared, and it seemed that a sentiment of generous compassion had got possession of him.

“Here, you scamp,” cried Gansendonck, “lend me a hand to secure these thieves and conduct them to the *gendarmes*!”

“Oh! my dear man, I will never do so again!” sobbed the unfortunate woman, in plaintive tones. “Look at my poor children! See the dear lambs dying with fear!”

“Silence, vagabond!” roared Gansendonck;

"I'll break up your habits of marauding and robbery!"

Here Kobe suddenly took the woman by her arms, with a *show* of anger, and, as he turned her round rapidly, whispered in her ear, "Down on your knees and call him '*gentleman*'!"

The peasant-woman instantly fell at Master Pierre's feet, stretched her arms toward him, and, in a beseeching voice, exclaimed,—

"Oh! gentleman, gentleman! Pardon; pardon, if you please! Oh! for the sake of these poor little ones, my dear sir, let me beg your mercy!"

Gansendonck seemed suddenly touched, as if by some secret impulse; and, while he looked at the woman intently, his countenance gradually became milder and more benevolent.

To see a person *kneeling* before him,—her hands stretching toward heaven, and imploring *his mercy*! It was something like royalty itself!

After enjoying this supreme luxury for a few moments, raising the peasant, and drying a tear that started in his eyes,—“Poor mother!” he said, “it's possible that I have been a *little* quick; but it's all over. Take up your bundle; for, after all, I believe you're a good wench. Hereafter, you may gather the dead wood throughout my property; and, if you take a little of the green, even, I shall not be hard on you. Be quiet now; I pardon you.”

The woman looked with astonishment at the pair of oddities, while Gansendonck assumed a

lofty air of protection, and Kobe bit his lips to prevent an explosion of laughter.

"Yes, my little woman," repeated Master Peter, "you may gather the dead branches throughout my property." And, as he said so, he pointed all round the horizon, as if the whole country belonged to him.

The poor woman took up her fagots, and thanked him in a softened tone:—"God will bless you for your benevolence, MONSIEUR LE BARON!"

At these words a thrill ran through Master Gansendonck, and his face beamed with joy.

"Woman, woman," said he, rapidly, "come closer to me; repeat what you said just now; I did not exactly understand you, I think!"

"'Twas nothing, MONSIEUR LE BARON, but a thousand thanks for your goodness."

In a twinkling master Gansendonck put his hand in his pocket, and, drawing forth a piece of silver, presented it to the wood-picker.

"Here, good mother, take this and refresh yourself a little; and when winter comes, call every Saturday at the '*Saint Sebastian*,' where you shall receive not only wood, but a stomachful of bread. And now get you gone to your home."

With these words he left the surprised woman, and followed the path rapidly from the woods. Indeed, it is reported that he wept to such a degree that tears poured down his cheeks. Kobe remarked this peculiarity, and, as in duty bound, rubbed his eyes with his coat-sleeve.

"It's surprising," said Master Peter, at length, with a sigh, "that I never can see people suffer without my heart giving way."

"Neither can I, master," ejaculated Kobe.

"Did you hear her, Kobe? she took me for the baron!"

"I'm not surprised, master."

"Now hush, Kobe, for we're getting near home."

Kobe followed submissively, as usual. Both of them tramped along for some time in silence,—Gansendonck thinking of the title the peasant had bestowed on him, and his servant dreaming of the hare and wine-sauce that were simmering at home.

Before they had gone very far, three sportsmen started up from behind a hedge. They were gay young men, jauntily dressed in hunting-costume, with their guns on their shoulders. One of them seemed to be particularly well acquainted with the keeper of the *Saint Sebastian*; and, while he pronounced a decided eulogium on the gentle Lisa, described to his companions the singular demon of pride and self-sufficiency that possessed poor Gansendonck.

"Come," said he, "we are tired; let us amuse ourselves a little. Follow me, and we'll accompany the landlord to his inn, where we will be sure to find a good bottle. Be careful, however, to show him uncommon respect and to pay him an abundance of compliments; the more extravagant you make them the better he'll relish them."

So saying, he leaped the ditch, ran toward Gansendonck, and, bowing profoundly, overwhelmed him with a profusion of the most formal salutations.

Pierre Gansendonck took off his fur cap with both hands, and, bowing and scraping, repeated to the stranger all that the stranger said to him. Meanwhile the other two huntsmen, instead of taking part in these ceremonies, lagged behind the servant and strove to suppress their laughter.

"Well, Master Adolph, my friend," said Gansendonck, "how is your father? Always big and fat, as usual? He never comes to see us any more, now that he lives in town. 'Far from sight, far from mind,' says the proverb."

Adolph seized the hand of one of his lagging companions, and forced him into the presence of Master Pierre.

"Monsieur Gansendonck," said he, solemnly, "I have the honor to present you the young **BARON VICTOR VAN BRUINKASTEEL**; you must pardon his weakness, which is unfortunately the result of the convulsions he was afflicted with in his infancy, for he can hardly ever look at anybody without laughing."

Victor became nearly black and blue with the effort to contain himself. "You are spoiling the joke," said he, in Adolph's ear; "have done, or the ass will suspect something!"

"Make yourself perfectly easy, Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel," said Master Pierre; "it is not by laughing that a man gets corns on his toes."

Adolph took his friend's hand and repeated the introduction anew.

"Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel has not the honor to know me," said Master Pierre, bowing.

"Exactly," replied Victor; "I have the honor to be altogether *unknown* to you."

"The honor is by no means great," said Gansendonck, bowing again. "Monsieur has doubtless come to the country to pass the hunting-season at the *château* with our friend Adolph."

"At your service, Master Gansendonck!"

"His father has purchased our hunting-lodge," said Adolph; "Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel will be our neighbor every winter, and it is likely, Master Pierre, that he will very often pay you a visit."

"But Adolph, my friend, why does that other young gentleman lurk yonder behind Kobe? Is he afraid of me?"

"He's timid, Monsieur Gansendonck, and he can't help it, for he's extremely young. But, Monsieur Gansendonck, if I am not mistaken, you are a sportsman as well as ourselves?"

"Oh, yes; I'm a great *amateur* of the chase; am I not, Kobe?"

"Certainly, master, and especially of hares. I myself love the article, provided it isn't burnt," added he, aside.

"What are you growling about now?" said Master Pierre, in an angry tone, to show the gentlemen that he carried things with a high hand among his dependants.

"I was asking whether you didn't think it was time to return home, master; and I was just saying to myself that fishing and hunting make hungry stomachs."

"When a pig dreams it is always about the swill-tub. Be silent!"

"Yes, master; 'to say nothing and to think never do harm to any one'!"

"Not another word from you, I say!"

"No, master."

"Will these gentlemen do me the honor to take a morning glass with me?" continued Gansendonck.

"Now, that's exactly what we had a mind to propose," said Adolph.

"Well, come then; you shall give me your opinion of my wine. Isn't it true, Kobe?—you have tasted it at least once in your life;—if the gentlemen don't smack their lips when they are done drinking, call me a peasant."

"That's a fact, master."

Adolph and Master Pierre strolled on in advance; the two others followed, and Kobe brought up the rear. The hare that was cooking for dinner still ran in the head of the latter; but they all soon reached the old-fashioned parlor of the St. Sebastian.

CHAPTER IV.

“Never bring a wolf in the sheepfold.”

It was a beautiful morning. The sun rose above the horizon like a golden disc whose arrowy rays shot in every direction athwart the sky. The gleaming light penetrated joyously through the windows of the *Saint Sebastian* and dyed with a rosy tint the ivory brow of a young maiden.

LISA GANSENDONCK was seated near the window before a table. She was buried in thought; for her long eyelashes were downcast, and a calm smile played around her delicate mouth, while at intervals a slight blush came and went on her pale cheeks, denoting the emotion which agitated her. From time to time she resettled herself on the chair, a more brilliant light gleamed in her eyes, and her smile became more distinct, as if she were suddenly inspired by happiness and joy.

She began to read an Antwerp paper which lay open before her, but, after perusing a few lines, became motionless again, as at first. Vague and indistinct sounds, like those of a distant harp,

fell from her lips; and at length, with a sigh, she murmured,—

“How happy one ought to be in a city! Such a ball! All those rich dresses, those diamonds, those flowers in the hair, those rich robes whose price would purchase half a village,—every thing glittering with light and gold! And then withal, what fine manners!—what charming talk! Oh! could I but see all these things,—were it only through the window-panes!”

After a long and dreamy reverie, the seductive fancy of “a city ball” seemed to abandon her. She rose from the table and placed herself in front of a mirror, in which she carefully examined her face, arranged the folds of her dress, and passed her hands repeatedly over her head to smooth and brighten the lustre of her raven hair.

In truth, she was very simply dressed, and no one would have considered her *toilette* of much account, had it not been that the smoky walls of the inn, the odor of the stable, and the pewter pots on the dresser, said very distinctly that “*Miss Lisa*” was out of her proper place. Her black silk dress was adorned with a single flounce, and her only ornament was a pale rose, which harmonized extremely well with the whiteness of her complexion. Her locks were plainly arranged, and the flat *bandeaux* clung in a knot at the back of the head.

After stopping awhile before the glass, she returned to the table and began to embroider a

collar, but without paying much attention to her task. Her wandering glances testified that her thoughts were straying away from the work; and at last, in a very indistinct tone, she soliloquized:—

“The hunting-season is beginning, and the gentlefolks from the city will soon be coming to the country. Father says I must be polite to them. He intends taking me with him to town to buy a satin hat. He says I ought not to keep sitting here forever with downcast eyes; I ought to smile and look the men in the face when they speak to me! What does father want? He says I don’t know how good *a change* might be for me;—But, then, KAREL!—he seems displeased when I change my dress too often, and is grieved when strangers are too long talking to me! What am I to do? Father *will* have it so! And, besides, I ought not to be impolite toward people. Still, I never will make Karel angry,—never!”

Her father’s voice was just then heard at the door, where she beheld him bowing and scraping to three young men dressed in hunting-costume. Was it desire or modesty that made that sudden redness flush her brow? Once more she passed her fair hand over the black rolls of her hair, and then sat motionless as if she had seen or heard nothing.

Gansendonck entered the apartment with the strangers, and, approaching Lisa, exclaimed, abruptly,—

"This, gentlemen, is my daughter! What say you to such a flower? She is educated, too; for she knows French, gentlemen. There is as much difference between my Lisa and a peasant as there is between a cow and a wheelbarrow!"

Kobe burst out in a fit of laughter.

"Boor!" cried Gansendonck, in a rage, "what makes you laugh like a fool? Begone!"

"Yes, master."

Kobe slipped away and took his seat in the chimney-corner, where he enjoyed himself, after his heart, in snuffing the fumes of the hare. With his eyes fixed on the fire, and his countenance apparently indifferent, he nevertheless listened to every thing that was going on.

While Lisa rose and exchanged a few words in French with the strangers, Gansendonck descended to the cellar, whence he soon returned with a bottle and glasses, which he placed on the table before his daughter.

"Be seated, be seated, gentlemen," said he. "We will touch glasses with Lisa, who, I'll be bound for it, won't back out! Ah! they're talking French! It's surprising how much I love to hear French spoken. I could spend a whole day listening to it. It has always the effect of a song on me!"

He then took Victor by the arm and forced him into a chair at the side of Lisa, saying, "No compliments, Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel;—do precisely as if you were at home."

The beautiful and gentle face of Lisa had inspired two of the young sportsmen with a sentiment of respect the moment they beheld her. They were seated on the other side of the table, and looked silently at the innocent girl, who evidently forced herself to appear polite, while wounded modesty tinged her brow and cheeks with a burning red. But Victor Van Bruinkasteel was neither so considerate nor dignified, and began immediately to lavish his commonplaces on her beauty, her embroidery, and the excellence of her French:—in fact, he had the art to flatter so gracefully without exceeding the bounds of propriety, that Lisa hearkened to him with pleasure, as if listening to delicious music.

Master Gansendonck, into whose heart hope was entering with every word, and who cherished a decided predilection for Monsieur Victor, smiled, rubbed his hands, and said to himself,—

“Who knows when the copper is pitched on which side it will fall? and, in truth, every thing is possible except that the coin will stay in the air! They’d make a pretty couple! Come, gentlemen,” continued he, aloud, “another glass! Your health, Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel! Go on with your French, I beg you. Don’t mind me. I read in your eyes all you are saying.”

The young sportsmen seemed excessively amused. In fact, Lisa did not speak French very well; but every word that fell from her lips was so artless, her modest blushes were so

charming, every thing about her was so fresh and attractive, that the sound of her voice alone was sufficient to kindle the most tender emotions in the listener's heart.

Victor, who was a clever man of the world, very soon detected the weak side of Lisa's character. He spoke of new fashions, beautiful dresses, and city life; he described balls and *fêtes* in glowing colors; and, in fact, managed to engage the attention of the poor girl so completely that she hardly knew where she was. In time the young man's boldness increased to such a degree that, in the midst of their conversation, he ventured, as if by accident, *to take her hand!*

But in an instant Lisa was restored to consciousness, as, all trembling, she withdrew it, moved her chair, and looked at her father with a pained and questioning glance. But Gansendonck, who was absolutely stupid with joy, returned a reproachful look, and made signs to his daughter to remain seated where she was. Lisa's repulsive movement surprised Victor, who turned away his head to conceal his embarrassment, and, in doing so, caught the eye of Kobe in the chimney-corner, looking at him with a threatening air.

Turning angrily toward Gansendonck, he asked, "What has that scoundrel to say here, that he dares eye at me with such insolence?"

"He! something to say!" vociferated Master Pierre. "You shall see!—Kobe!"

“What is the matter, master?”

“Did you look impudently at Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel? Did you dare to make eyes at him, you earthworm?”

“I laughed as a dog laughs when his mouth is rubbed with mustard, master. *I just now burnt my hand, sir!*”

“You are too much of a fool even to dance before the devil! Get out of the room!”

“Yes, master,” returned Kobe, humbly, as he left the apartment, dragging his legs slowly after each other and taking off his cap like an awkward booby.

In a moment Victor’s boldness was forgotten, and the young folks were again engaged in conversation. Gansendonck pressed the sportsmen to repeat their visit, and assured them that a good bottle would always be at their service. Lisa, herself, took pleasure once more in Victor’s prattle, and thought that so charming a chat was worth a thousand times more than the vulgar conversation of her every-day life.

Suddenly, a youth opened the back-door, and entered the apartment, followed by Kobe.

“A glass of beer, Kobe; and draw another for yourself!” said he.

The lusty stranger was dressed in a *blouse* of fine blue linen, a silk cravat, and seal-skin cap. His handsome regular features were sun-burnt, and his rough hands showed that he was ac-

customed to daily labor; while large and sparkling eyes, which were full of life and fire, convinced the most careless observer that nature had not been less prodigal to him in gifts of mind than of person.

On his entrance Lisa rose and saluted him with so familiar and friendly a smile that the two young sportsmen looked at her with surprise. Adolph, the third of the hunters, had already been long acquainted with him. Gansendonck growled inaudibly between his lips, in a manner that betokened his dissatisfaction at Karel's appearance on the scene, and, stamping his foot, scarcely concealed his anger. But the young brewer appeared to take no notice of these things, while he kept his eyes bent on Lisa with an eager and questioning gaze. The maiden returned his glance by another which was even kinder and more affectionate than the first; and immediately the disquieted expression seemed to pass like a cloud from the face of Karel.

"Father!" said Lisa.

"Why that *peasant*-name again?" cried Gansendonck, sneeringly.

"PAPA," said Lisa, correcting herself,—“papa, shall not Karel take a glass with us?”

"Be it so," replied Master Pierre, rudely; "let him get a glass in the cupboard."

"I thank you, Master Gansendonck," returned Karel, with a cutting sneer, "but wine don't agree with me in the morning."

"No: better drink *beer*, young man; it will strengthen your head!" said Gansendonck, with the mocking air of a man who thought he had uttered a good thing.

Karel was accustomed to Master Pierre's roughness; and, letting this sally pass like the previous ones, he was about seating himself opposite Kobe in another part of the room, when Lisa beckoned him to her side. "Here, Karel," said she, "is a chair; be seated, and chat with us a little."

Master Gansendonck looked angrily at his daughter, and bit his lips; but Karel did not hesitate for a moment to obey Lisa's invitation.

"You'll have good sport this year, gentlemen," said he in Flemish, as he seated himself near Adolph; "the hares and partridges are literally swarming."

"So I hear," replied Adolph; "though this morning we have not had a crack at one of them: our dogs haven't got their scent yet."

"I thought," said Gansendonck gruffly to himself, "that it would end by his putting spokes in their wheels with his eternal Flemish! We shall hear nothing now but dogs, cows, sheep, and potatoes. Let him prate as he pleases, Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel, but do *you* continue to speak French with our Lisa;—I hear that language spoken with so much delight that I am really unable to express my pleasure."

Karel laughed, shrugged his shoulders, and looked Victor boldly in the face. But the young

baron seemed suddenly to have lost all his eloquence, and did not show himself at all willing to continue his gallantries with Lisa in presence of Karel.

There was a moment of silence and constraint; and Master Pierre remarked that Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel appeared to be growing wearied; at the same time casting a reproachful look at Karel.

"Monsieur Victor," said he, "don't mind him; he's our brewer and a friend of the family; but he has nothing to say here, though he imagines he has drawn number *one*! Go on, Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel; I see my daughter is pleased with you and delights in your conversation; and if the brewer wants to make ugly faces, let him do so out of doors."

Encouraged (as he ought not to have been) by these rude remarks, and willing perhaps to tease Karel, Victor leaned over toward Lisa with one of those lascivious leers which are only allowed in the company of women of equivocal virtue.

Karel grew instantly pale, trembled, and gnashed his teeth convulsively; yet he managed to repress the rage that was boiling in his heart. Still, the young brewer's anger had been remarked by the visitors; and, although Victor was perhaps not absolutely alarmed, he had seen enough to make him cautious and to repress all inclination for laughter or *badinage*. This incident increased the irritation of Gansendonck, who growled like

a bear and beat the ground impatiently with his foot; while poor Lisa, who thought that the ill-bred language of her father had alone wounded Karel, threw down her head and was near bursting in tears. Meanwhile, the brewer, who was still a little pale with excitement, remained motionless in his chair, with his face much more composed than it had been a minute before.

Suddenly Victor started up, and, seizing his gun, "Come," said he to his companions, "let us begone for another beat in the woods! Mademoiselle Lisa will surely have the goodness to pardon me if, without desiring it, I have been so unlucky as to say something that offended her!"

"What's that? what's that?" broke in Gansendonck; "every word you uttered, baron, was proper and genteel; and I really hope this is not to be the last time that my girl is to enjoy your company!"

"Mademoiselle Lisa, perhaps, is of another opinion; though, I assure you, it was my wish to express respect and friendship for her."

As Lisa did not answer, her father became worried.

"What means this boorish conduct, Lisa?" said he. "Why do you stand there silent, like a fool? Answer the baron directly!"

Lisa raised her swollen eyes, and, in a cold but polite tone, replied, in Flemish,—

"Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel, don't think it hard that something else than what *you* said gave

me pain and made me silent. All that you uttered this morning was very pleasant; and if it please you to visit us again you will always be welcome."

"That's right! that's right!" cried Master Pierre, clapping his hands. "Ah, Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel, she's a jewel of a girl! You don't know her yet; she sings like a nightingale! Take a seat for a little while, till I get another bottle."

"No; we must be off, or the day will be lost; yet let me thank you most cordially for your reception."

"I'll finish my walk with the gentlemen, if they will allow it," said Gansendonck. "There's a little bit of wood that I want to see; and 'the master's foot is good for the soil,' as the saying is."

The young men declared unanimously that the company of Master Pierre would be delightful; and accordingly the party started at once from the inn, followed by Kobe.

As soon as they were gone, Lisa said, very softly,—

"Karel, don't be worried by what father has said to you so rudely: you ought to know very well that he don't mean what he says."

The youth shook his head as he answered,—

"It's not that, Lisa, that worries me."

"What is it, then?" asked the maiden, anxiously.

"It is difficult to explain it to you, Lisa: your

pure and innocent heart would scarcely understand me. Let us say no more about it."

"No, Karel, I *must* hear it."

"Well, if you force me to speak, I am not pleased to see those crack-brained city fops coming here and pouring forth their stale compliments and nonsense to my Lisa. Conversation like theirs is often full of improprieties; while those French gallantries and leerings prove to me that they don't approach you with the respect that a *lady* deserves and should always receive."

A twinge of impatience, mingled with grief, flitted across Lisa's face as he finished this sentence.

"Oh! you are unjust, Karel," returned she, quickly, with a reproachful voice; "I assure you these gentlemen did not utter an improper word in my presence; and, besides, I feel that their conversation rubs off my country manners so that in time there will not be a bit of the *peasant-girl* left in me!"

Karel bowed down his head in silence, and a sigh of pain escaped from his breast.

"Ah, yes! I know very well," continued Lisa, "that you detest town-folks and town-fashions; but, no matter what may be your opinion in that respect, you should not desire me to be impolite. You are wrong, Karel, to wish that I should hate people who are worthier of respect than some others."

The girl uttered these words with a little

bitterness, while Karel, who was still seated opposite, looked at her with a fixed and wild expression. His eager gaze troubled Lisa; for she was unable to comprehend how it was that those simple words had evidently given him so much pain. Taking his hand, and pressing it kindly,—

“Karel,” said she, “I don’t understand you. What do you want me to do? Were you in my place, how would you behave when strangers visited you?”

“That’s a matter of taste, my girl,” replied Karel, raising his head. “I don’t know myself what to advise; yet, were they fine talkers, like those fops, I would answer them civilly; but I would not let them sit in a circle around me and stuff my ears with nonsense.”

“And my father—who compels me to listen?” inquired she, sadly.

“A hundred reasons may be found for going away when one don’t want to sit still.”

“So I must suppose that you think I have done wrong?” said the girl, sobbing, with her eyes full of tears; “I have not behaved like a lady?”

Karel drew his chair close to Lisa’s, and replied, tenderly,—

“Oh, pardon me, Lisa, pardon me! You should be more indulgent, for it is not my fault that I love you so much; my heart is my master, and I cannot control it. You are as pure and lovely as a lily; and I tremble at the very thought that a doubtful word, an impure breath, should ever

assail you! I love you with a respect and solicitude that make me always anxious; and can it be surprising that the languishing glances of those triflers make me shudder? Oh, Lisa! you think that this sentiment is blamable. Perhaps it is; yet, my love, could you but feel the pain that tears my heart,—the grief that their conduct caused me,—you would have compassion on my excessive love, forgive my dark fancies, and console me.”

These words, which were calmly and tenderly uttered, seemed to reach the depths of Lisa's heart; and, with a voice almost stifled by tears,—

“Karel,” said she, “I know not what thoughts possess you; but, be they what they may, since what has come to pass to-day displeases you, I promise that it shall never occur again. If strangers come to visit me hereafter, I will leave the apartment instantly.”

“No! no!” interrupted Karel, half ashamed of the result; “that is not what I want. It is proper, Lisa, that you should always be polite and affable to every one,—even to the gentlemen who were just now here. You don't seem to understand me, my love. Behave as you did before; recollect that some things annoy me; recollect that your father occasionally makes mistakes, and let your own sense of dignity be your best guide. I know, Lisa, how pure your heart is, and it is no matter to me who visits the *Saint Sebastian*; yet I would have you treated with respect, for the least forgetfulness in

that way, the slightest shadow of disregard toward you, wounds my heart more deeply than you can imagine."

"But, Karel, you have heard that Monsieur Adolph and his friends are likely to be here very often. It will perhaps be necessary for me to speak or reply to them if I remain in their presence: will that worry you constantly?"

Karel blushed, and reproached himself inwardly for his remarks, while he could not help admiring the innocent simplicity of his beloved. He took her hand, and said, with a gentle smile,—

"Lisa, I am a thoughtless fellow: will you do me a favor?"

"Certainly, dear Karel."

"Yes, but seriously, and with all the frankness of your nature. Forget my caprice. I should be pained if I saw you alter your conduct. And, in truth, why should I ask you to do so, since your father is master here and would force you to comply with his wishes?"

"Now, Karel, you are becoming reasonable," said Lisa. "I ought never to be otherwise than *polite*, ought I? And father is master in his own house."

"Well, then," replied the young brewer, "we will forget the past, my love, and I will tell you some news. Mother has at last consented to have our house enlarged, and on Monday next the masons are to begin laying the foundation. There is to be a nice apartment expressly for you, with

a marble mantel-piece and a handsome carpet. There is to be a new and private entrance for the dwelling, and a stable is to be built for your *cabriolet*. And so, dear Lisa, you will neither be forced to pass through the brewery nor to sit in the common stove-room."

"Oh! you are too kind, Karel; how shall I ever thank you for such affectionate consideration! But I believe father is going to speak to you about something that may be even better. Perhaps his plan may please you; for I know that he would be very glad if we rented the little lodge in the rear of the *château*. The notion seems to be a good one. By such an arrangement we could, by degrees, get out of the crowd of peasants and make the acquaintance of a better class of people."

"Yet, Lisa," said the brewer, interrupting her rather impatiently, "how is it possible for you to think of such a thing? I would be forced to quit my mother! She is a widow, and has no one in the world but me to depend on. Nay, even were she out of the question, my love, I could not do what you wish. I have been a workman from my childhood, and I ought to continue to work, for my own good, for my health, to assure the comfort of my mother,—for you, too, Lisa, to embellish your life with every joy I can confer on you, and to have the conviction that the fruit of my toil contributes to your happiness."

"Oh! surely," said Lisa, with a sigh, "that

cannot be necessary, for our parents possess sufficient for all of us."

"That may be, Lisa; but reflect," continued Karel, "that we are now among the first of *our class*. Your father is one of the principal landholders in our district; our brewery is behind no other. Can I consent to become an upstart?—to beg the protective friendship of the proud, and to make myself detested by my old companions as a man who wishes to play the *gentleman*? No, Lisa; I should feel humiliated by such conduct, and would loathe myself. It is better, my love, to be esteemed and loved by peasants than to be looked down on and treated with condescension by lords!"

Lisa was about replying to the excited sally of Karel, when Kobe opened the door, and, approaching the young brewer, said to him, hurriedly,—

"Karel, do you want to have an hour's quarrel with master? 'No!' do I hear you say? Then be off in a jiffy, for he is furious with you. You must have trodden on his corns with all your weight. If you don't clear out, the house will be topsy-turvy."

"Yes, Karel," said Lisa, sighing and pressing his hand, "begone till father's fit is over: after dinner he'll think no more of it."

The brewer bowed his head, saluted his betrothed, and hastened from the inn by the back-door.

Kobe followed, and, as they walked away, be-

gan to console the distressed lover in his patronizing way.

"Fear nothing, Karel," said he; "I'll be on the watch, and you'll see when the coach goes out by the track of its wheels. Master is a little cracked just now; but be quiet, and he will get rid of the maggot in his brain. The cock on the steeple turns round and round very often, as if it were mad; but it always becomes still after a while and points to fair weather!"

CHAPTER V.

"Modesty! glory of women;—
Beautiful but delicate flower!"

Two months glided by.

One morning, very early, three or four young men were in the forge chatting together. Sus with one hand held a piece of iron in the fire, while with the other he was blowing the bellows.

"Who has heard the news?" said one of the men: "Lisa Gansendonck's going to marry the baron."

"Ha! ha!" said Sus, laughing; "next year, perhaps, 'when Easter comes on Friday!' Get out, and sell your news in another market!"

"But I say *yes*: she's going to marry that

young man who for six or seven weeks has hardly stirred from the *Saint Sebastian*."

"When that comes to pass bulls will calve," said Sus.

"You don't believe it; but the *blaeskaek* told it himself to the notary."

"And I believe it still less on that account."

"Do you know what I think? Master Gansendonck is brewing some very bitter beer. There are all sorts of queer stories about *Madoiselle* Lisa. People talk about her as the Jews do of bacon."

"The *blaeskaek* will get what he deserves, and that coquettish doll also. 'He who plays with a cat is sure to be scratched,' says the proverb."

"And the luckless Karel is fool enough to grieve about it! I'd let him go to the dogs with his *BARON*!"

"See! there's Karel coming now!" said one of the young men, who was near the door. His dejected air and expression were perceptible even at a distance; for he walked along with his chin on his breast, as if looking for pins.

Sus struck his hammer violently on the anvil.

"What's the matter with you?" ejaculated the rest.

"When I see Karel my blood boils!" cried Sus. "I would be willing to pass a year without drinking a pint of beer if I could only forge a horse-shoe with all my might on the back of Gansendonck. The proud hog! he's playing with the

honor of his daughter to gratify his crotchets; yet he is her master, and she don't deserve any better. But that he should ruin my friend Karel,—that he should drive a man like him into the ditch;—rich, educated, good-hearted, and strong as an oak,—a man who is worth a hundred *blaeskaeks* and a hundred coquettes like his daughter,—that's what I can't digest! Look you, boys; I wish harm to no man, but if Gansendock were to break his neck I would consider it a blessing of Providence."

"Be quiet, Sus! punishment always comes at the proper time: 'when the insect gets wings it is always near its death.'"

"Don't threaten so much, Sus. The *blaeskaek* has said that he'll have you put in prison."

"Bah! I fear the jackass as little as if he were a figure painted on the wall."

"But can't you make Karel understand that he ought to let her run with those for whom she is fit?"

"There's no balm to heal him. They make him believe, yonder at the *Saint Sebastian*, that cats lay eggs: he has lost his wits entirely. His courage, too, is gone; and if you speak to him about this matter, tears start in his eyes, he turns on his heel, and—good-bye to friendship."

"But can't Kobe make his master understand that 'when a crow wants to fly with swans it very soon falls into the water and is drowned'?"

"Gansendonck and his servant eat out of the

same platter: 'two wet bags won't dry each other.' "

"Hush, Sus! See! Karel is coming into the forge."

In fact, at that moment Karel entered the smithy and saluted his comrades with a forced smile. He approached the counter silently, and took up the tools one after the other, and then laid them down moodily, while the young men stood gazing at him with mingled looks of curiosity and compassion.

Karel was much changed. His face was extremely pale; his expressionless eyes wandered about listlessly from object to object; his cheeks were wrinkled and hard. Every thing about him indicated neglect and debility; nor was his dress as careful as formerly, while his hair fell in wild disorder on his neck.

"Well, Karel," said Sus, at length, "you come in here like the sun,—without speaking. Rouse yourself, man; throw sadness over the hedge, and recollect that you are worth a hundred of those that worry you! Sign yourself with the cross and drink a pint of good beer. All your sadness won't inspire the *blaeskaek*; and as for his charming daughter, you will never make any thing but——"

A shudder and a piercing glance from Karel arrested the conclusion of the sentence on the blacksmith's lips.

"Yes, I thought I couldn't touch on that sub-

ject: you resemble those very sick people who either won't have a doctor or throw their medicines out of the window. But never mind: these crotchets have lasted too long already. Do you know what Gansendonck says? He says that *Mademoiselle* Lisa is to be married to *Monsieur* Van Bruinkasteel;—that they are to be legally married in church."

"I'd rather he should marry her than I," said another workman;—"a peasant-girl from the road, and low in virtue."

Karel struck the bench convulsively with his clenched fist, glanced angrily at the speaker, and, with a stifled voice,—

"LISA," ejaculated he; "LISA is innocent and pure! You talk wickedly, boy!"

With these words he turned to the door, walked slowly away, and took no further notice of his old comrades, though Sus called after him. He crossed the road and struck into a by-path leading into the fields. As he moved along he spoke to himself, stopping occasionally, stamping on the ground, then walking more rapidly, till at last, at the corner of a wood, he heard his name suddenly pronounced. It fell from the lips of Kobe, who, with his gun beside him on the ground, was discussing a hearty lunch of meat and wine.

"Ah, Kobe," inquired Karel, pleasantly, "what are *you* doing here?"

"It's another maggot of my master," replied the serving-man. "He places me here as a sort

of forester, and I keep guard to see that the trees don't fly away."

"Will you walk with me a little?" said Karel, in a suppliant tone.

"I've just finished my meal," replied Kobe, "and I've no objection. How do you like my gun? Isn't it a splendid one? There's no gunsmith in the country that can mend the lock, and the charge has been in the barrel twenty years and three months! Like master, like gun."

"Come, Kobe," said the brewer, walking beside him, "have you any consolation to give me? How are things getting on down yonder?"

"Like a rotten apple that one don't know on which side to touch, Karel. The house is topsy-turvy; master is crazy with joy and don't know what he is about: he dreams aloud of *barons* and *châteaux*, and runs to the notary's thrice every day."

"Why, what is he after?" inquired Karel, with evident emotion.

"He says that Lisa is very soon to be married to Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel."

The brewer became white as a sheet, and looked at Kobe with amazement.

Yes," continued Kobe; "but the young baron knows nothing of the affair, and don't even dream of it."

"And Lisa?"

"Nor Lisa either."

"Ah!" exclaimed Karel, breathing again freely,

as if a rock had been taken from his breast, "you made me ill."

"If I were in your place," replied Kobe, "I'd look sharply into that thing. 'When we let the weeds grow they end the matter by stifling the grain.' You never come nowadays to the inn, except when Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel has gone. You sit silently for half a day at a time alongside of Lisa, and look heart-broken enough to move stones. If Lisa asks the cause of your sorrow, you say you are *sick*, and she believes you."

"But, Kobe, what am I to do? Whenever I begin to talk about our affairs she bursts into tears. She don't understand me."

"Women's tears are cheap, Karel; I don't mind them much; and 'it is too late to fill up the well when the calf is drowned in it.' 'A dog don't let himself be fastened up very long by a string of sausages.'"

"What do you mean by these riddles?" stammered Karel. "Do you suspect Lisa? Do you fear that she——"

"If I thought that a single hair of my head had a bad thought of Lisa, I'd tear it out. No, no; Lisa is altogether innocent in the business. She fancies, too,—poor thing!—that all these chats and that charming French talk are nothing but 'fine manners.' And when, for love of you, she receives the baron coldly, master forces her to play the amiable. Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel ought to be a very worthy man, for my master literally

throws Lisa into his arms at least six times a week."

"How! throws her into his arms, Kobe?" exclaimed Karel.

"Oh! that's only a way of talking," continued Kobe; "if you don't understand me, so much the better."

"Alas! what's to be done? what's to be done?" exclaimed Karel, despairingly, and stamping the ground.

"That's not hidden under the sand you are striking, Karel. If I were you, I'd go straight to the point: 'a broken window is better than a ruined house.'"

"What do you mean, Kobe? for the love of God, speak out more clearly!"

"Well, pick a quarrel with Monsieur Victor: if you have a fight, that at least will make a change; and when things that are good for nothing experience a change, it is commonly for the better."

"Would that he might give me a pretext for a quarrel!" cried Karel; "but all that he says and does is so skilfully calculated that one might burst with spite before he found cause for revenge."

"The man who *wants* to find something don't have long to look for it. Tread on his foot,—that little foot of his in velvet slippers! In that way the train might soon be fired."

"Ah, Kobe, but what would Lisa say? Would

it be proper to compromise her reputation by an attack which might be considered as a proof that I too had bad thoughts of her?"

"Poor simpleton! don't you think that people talk of her already? There's not a bad thing that can be said of her that is not uttered daily. The scandal has got wind, and every one who repeats it adds his own inventions to the story."

"Oh, God! Oh, God! she is innocent! and yet they accuse her like a criminal!"

"Karel, you have no blood in your heart. You see the evil growing every day, and yet you bow your head like a baby! Look you! every thing conspires to hurry your innocent girl to perdition,—the seductive speeches of Monsieur Victor, the foolish pride of her father, and her own vain fancy for every thing that comes from cities! Nobody can do any thing to save her,—nobody but you, her guardian angel, who are sleeping while the devil is busy betraying her soul. Your credulity and patience leave Lisa a prey on the brink of ruin. If she fall, whose fault will it be? Rouse yourself, Karel! 'Help yourself, and God will help you.' Be bold; cut the knot; show yourself a man! Don't the proverb say that 'when the shepherd who knows the pathway wanders off into the woods, the wolves are always sure to eat his sheep'?"

Karel was silent for a few minutes after this appeal. At length, with a sigh,—

"Alas! alas!" said he, "I am afraid of every

thing. What can I devise? I know that at the very first look of Lisa every spark of courage quits me. I am sick,—sick at heart, Kobe, and I must submit to my unhappy lot.”

“You will defend her at least from the bloody outrages of the baron himself?” said Kobe, cunningly.

“Outrage? Has *he* wronged her?”

“Do you know what Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel said the day before yesterday, when joked by his comrades in the presence of Adolph’s *chasseur*?” inquired Kobe, as he approached Karel’s ear with a mysterious air, and *whispered* in it.

“You lie! you lie!” cried Karel, throwing off the servant violently; “he dared not say that!”

“As you please, Karel,” growled Kobe. “Be it so! I lie; the *chasseur* lies; it’s not true; it can’t be: Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel loves Lisa entirely too much to say such a thing!”

Karel leaned against the trunk of a tree: his breast rose and fell violently; his breath was heavy and panting; his eyes sparkled with fire beneath his downcast lids. What the servant had whispered in his ear must have gashed his heart frightfully, for he trembled like a reed and groaned like a lion.

Suddenly he stretched his clenched fist toward Kobe, and muttered, between his firm-set teeth,—

“Then you want me to murder him—devil!”

Kobe, almost frightened to death by the gaze

and manner of Karel, retreated a few steps, and stammered,—

“How, Karel! is it in jest or not that you are making such faces at me? I never did you any harm. If you’d rather see my heels, you have only to say the word;—a ‘good-bye,’ all is over, and each one can take his own path.”

“Halt where you are!” cried the brewer, fiercely.

“Open your hands first,” said Kobe; “I don’t like clenched fists.”

Again Karel relaxed his passionate bearing, cast down his eyes, and remained for some time motionless, without even looking at the serving-man. At length he suddenly raised his head, and asked, in a composed tone,—

“Kobe, is Victor Van Bruinkasteel now at the *Saint Sebastian*?”

“Yes, but—but—but—” stammered Kobe, “but you will not go there, Karel? If I have to fight with you as long as there is a breath of wind in my body, I will prevent your going to the inn. I don’t understand you: sometimes you’re all prudence, and then all rashness. You’d make a pretty sight just now at the *Saint Sebastian*! You look like a mad bull.”

Without paying attention to his words, Karel turned on his heel and walked rapidly toward the inn. Kobe let fall his gun, and threw himself before the brewer, holding him back by force.

“Let me go!” said Karel, as Kobe looked in his eyes with a dubious smile;—“let me go, I say;

for you know very well that you can't prevent me. Will you force me to do you an injury?"

These words, uttered in a most determined manner, surprised Kobe somewhat; yet he did not release his hold, as he inquired,—

"Will you promise me to use words and not hands?"

"I will harm nobody," answered Karel.

"What are you going to do, then?"

"Follow your advice, Kobe;—demand an explanation of every one, and speak out boldly what's on my mind. Yet fear nothing, Kobe:—*I have a mother!*"

"Ah! has your good sense come back to you again? You are not shamming, are you? Well, then, I'll go along with you. Be calm and strong, Karel: he who takes high ground is half a conqueror at the beginning. Make a little noise; show your teeth, and let master see what he is at once: courage won't give *him* a fever. God knows, if you attack him properly, whether he won't ask the baron to walk out of the door at once; and then—'pleasure comes after pain!' I think I see the fiddler on the road already."

Not far from the inn, Kobe left his companion, alleging that it was too soon for him to return to the house, as there was a full hour yet for him to play guardian of the forest.

As soon as the young brewer found himself quiet and alone, the veil seemed to drop from his eyes, and he saw clearly what he ought to do.

He resolved to call Gansendonck to account, and, whether it pleased him or not, to let the old man feel how greatly his folly was compromising not only Lisa's good name, but his own honor. When Karel reached the inn, his face was composed and wore no other expression than that of calm and resolute earnestness. But in a flash this amiable tone of mind was changed, as his hand touched the latch of the back-door of the *Saint Sebastian*. Within the house he heard the seductive voice of the baron, singing a French air which was full of love and coquetry. Karel stopped and listened with feverish attention.

“Pourquoi, tendre Elise, toujours vous défendre ?
A mes désirs daignez vous rendre !”

The brewer's fingers clenched convulsively.

“Ayez moins de rigueur ;
Si mon amour vous touche,
Qu'un mot de votre bouche
Couronne mon ardeur !”

Lisa's voice mingled tenderly with the baron's : she, too, sang these voluptuous words !

The blood ran wildly through Karel's veins ; his eyes became bloodshot, his teeth gnashed, and, when the last verse fell like sparks of fire on his heart from the singer's lips, his hair stood on end.

“Pitié ! mon trouble est extrême !
Ah ! dites, ‘Je vous aime !’
Je vous aime !” *

* In the original work of M. Conscience, this song is given in French and not in Flemish.

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Master Gansendonck, clapping his hands; "how beautiful that is!"

A stifled hiss escaped from the choking throat of Karel, and he entered the apartment as the last cadence died on his ear.

At his appearance everybody started with surprise or fright. Lisa screamed, and stretched her arms in supplication toward Karel, the baron looked in his face with a fierce, questioning air, while Master Pierre stamped and muttered curses to himself.

For a moment Karel leaned his hands on the back of a chair like one demented. He trembled to such a degree that his legs were scarcely able to support him; his face was white as linen. In fact, his expression must have been terrible; for the baron, who was not a coward, grew pale, and stepped backward so as to be out of the brewer's reach. Gansendonck alone appeared unaffected by the scene, and looked on with a smile of contempt.

Suddenly the brewer darted at the baron a glance of hatred and vengeance, which seemed instantly to rouse the young nobleman.

"What means this child's-play?" cried he. "Do you know whom you are insulting? Stop looking at me, this moment, with that insolent gaze!"

Karel groaned deeply, and, grasping the back of the chair, would doubtless have hurled it at the baron's head, had not Lisa rushed toward her

lover and thrown her arms round his neck, weeping bitterly. Then, raising her eyes to his, full of love and supplication, she besought him with so many words of tenderness that he very soon released his grasp and let the chair fall to the ground.

"Thanks! thanks, Lisa!" exclaimed he; "you have saved me. Had it not been for you, I would have done it."

Lisa pressed his hands fondly and continued to address him with her wonted affection; for she saw, from the violent emotion which still agitated Karel, that his rage was not yet over.

While this scene was passing, the baron moved toward the door, and was preparing to depart, when Gansendonck stopped him.

"Are you afraid of a crazy peasant, baron?"

"No," replied he, "I am not afraid of a crazy loon; but it is not agreeable to have a fight with one."

Hardly were the insulting words out of his mouth, when Karel sprang from Lisa's grasp and ran after the baron, in hopes of coming up with him outside the house; but Gansendonck seized the brewer with a violent grasp, and, in a rage, rapidly exclaimed,—

"Stop, you villain! the fight is *ours* now. This has lasted too long. What, sir! do you undertake to drive people out of my house, and to play the master here? Do you dare, in my doors, to strike the Baron Van Bruinkasteel with a chair?

I don't know what keeps me from sending for the *gendarmes* on the spot! But stop a while, young man; I've something to say to you that is not necessary for my daughter to hear; and with that we will settle matters, and I'll show you who is master here!"

A bitter smile lighted Karel's face as he followed Gansendonck into another chamber, where, closing the door, the innkeeper placed himself in front of Karel, and, silently eyeing him for a while with a threatening look, endeavored to suppress his rage till he recovered his voice.

"Make grimaces as much as you please," said Gansendonck; "I laugh at your whims! You will please tell me, and that very quickly, who has given you leave to be impudent to visitors in my house? You think, perhaps, that you have bought my daughter?"

"For the love of God," said Karel, in a suppliant tone, "don't make me mad! Give me time to come to myself again, and I'll reason with you. If you are then unwilling to understand me, I shall leave the house and never cross its sill again."

"Well, I am rather curious to hear you," said Gansendonck, sarcastically. "I know the song you are going to sing, but it won't do; you're knocking at a deaf man's door."

This irony rekindled Karel's passion, as he replied, rapidly,—

"My father assisted you and saved you from

ruin! You promised him on his death-bed that Lisa should be my wife; you encouraged our passion——”

“But times change, and men with them,” interrupted Gansendonck.

“And, now that you have inherited a little more dirt,” continued Karel,—“a little more of that dirt that men call money,—now, like an ungrateful man, you not only want to break your word solemnly given, but you are doing all you can to soil the honor of my betrothed wife! You are selling her good name, Master Gansendonck, with the vain hope of an impossible elevation in society; and you allow her virtue to be dragged in the dust!”

“What’s that you say?” broke in Gansendonck; “whom are you speaking to?”

“And me,” continued Karel, paying no attention to the interruption,—“and me you condemn to grief, despair, and death! Not that you can tear Lisa from me,—no! that you never can do, for she loves me dearly, dearly. But is there a greater martyrdom than to see the beloved of one’s heart—his betrothed—blown on by the scandalous breath of the town, and then to lead her to the altar when the purity of her soul has been profaned?”

“Did you learn this mass of incomprehensible rant by heart, Master Karel? I don’t think there can be any doubt of it. I’d have you know, once for all, that I am master here; that whatever I do

is right! Perhaps you flatter yourself that you have more wit and cleverness than Pierre Gansendonck?"

"Blind! blind!" exclaimed Karel; "willingly blind! Do you not see, Master Pierre, that you are forcing your daughter to listen to the poisoned words of this baron, and that every word he utters is a stain on that candid soul? You drive her to ruin; and if she fall, alas! her father will have dug the pit wherein the honor of his child lies buried. What do you really expect to come of this? Do you think she will marry Van Bruinkasteel? That's impossible! If his father and friends were not at the altar to forbid the union, he himself would refuse a wife dishonored in his eyes by the means you have used to attract him, and by the liberties he has indulged in with her."

"Go on, go on," said Gansendonck, with an ironical laugh; "I didn't know there were so many notes in your song. She's not to marry the baron—eh? We shall see. You shall come to the wedding if you behave yourself. Get this love-maggot out of your head, Karel:—that's the best thing you can do at present; else harm may come of it. Be friends with us, just as you used to be, but don't come here any more; for you must know that the baron is hereafter going 'to pass the whole day at our house,' as we may say; and, if he finds you in his way, he's not the man to put up with peasants."

Karel was silent for a moment, and then began to speak sorrowfully:—

“So the sight of my mortal grief, the knowledge of my sufferings, have no effect on you! He is to cajole and flatter her; still to sing his lustful songs in her ears; still to whisper words of passionate desire; still to fill my Lisa’s heart with that poison which must wither every leaf of her honor and chastity!”

“Poison! What do you mean?” exclaimed Gansendonck. “Poison! do you call his words poison because you are unable to converse as well? That’s the common boorish talk about city-folks, for they burst with envy when they see any one who is better bred than themselves. Now, my good boy, let me give you a little advice. Master your heart, for you are playing a game in which you will certainly be loser. The baron shall come here exactly as before, and Lisa will become a distinguished woman in society. If you were to break your head in order to prevent this from coming to pass, it would have no more effect, I assure you, than if you drowned a fly in one of the beer-vats at your brewery. I have the right to do with my daughter and to act in my house precisely as I please, and no one shall dare say a word;—you, Karel, less than any other person!”

“Yes; the right,” interrupted Karel,—“the right to compromise your daughter’s honor; to give her up, pure and spotless as she is, to the world’s calumny; to make her universally de-

spised as the discarded plaything of an effeminate fop! No, no, Master Pierre; you have no such right: Lisa belongs to *me*! If her father wants to plunge her into a gulf of infamy, I—I will rescue her triumphantly! For a moment I forgot my duty; but it is over now. Your baron shall keep off; Lisa will be saved in spite of you. No! no! I care no longer for your fatal ambition!"

"Is that all you have to say?" asked Gansendonck, with an air of the utmost indifference; "for then I shall take the liberty of telling you, without further parley, that I forbid you this house; and if you dare to enter its doors again I shall have you put out by my servants and the police."

"An inn is free to everybody," returned Karel, coolly.

"That may be the law; but there are chambers in it where the baron will not be interrupted in his intercourse with Lisa."

Karel sank on a chair, folded his arms, and, casting his eyes on the ground, sat there for a few moments, motionless and silent.

"Come! be off!" at length said Gansendonck, abruptly breaking the stillness of the room; "be off, and get cured of your love-fit. Go home, boy, and keep at a distance from the *Saint Sebastian*, without troubling yourself any more about Lisa. On that condition we will be friends. I will pass over your arrogance and whims. Good sense,

even if it is late in coming, is wisdom. Will you be off?"

Karel rose, and his face seemed to have undergone an entire transformation. The spasmodic tension of his muscles was over; the feverish excitement of the hour had worn him out in body and soul. He clasped his hands convulsively, and with a suppliant manner advanced to Master Pierre.

"Oh, Gansendonck!" said he, "have compassion on me,—on Lisa! For God's sake, for the memory of my father,—your valued, faithful friend,—I conjure you, Gansendonck,—I pray you, by the memory of the past,—open your eyes, give me your daughter, before her name is entirely dishonored! I will make her happy! indeed I will! I will love her; I will watch and work for her like a slave; and for you, you,—her father,—I will have the veneration, the obedience, the love, of a son!"

Gansendonck was somewhat moved by this humiliating appeal of Karel, and replied, softly,—

"Karel, I don't mean to say that you are not a good young man, and that my Lisa would not have a good husband in you."

"Oh, Master Pierre! for the love of God," supplicated Karel, with a look full of hope, "have mercy on me; give me Lisa! I will do whatever you want with the submissiveness of a child. I will sell the brewery; I will buy a *château*; I will

abandon peasant-life; I will change my existence completely!"

"That cannot be now, my dear Karel," replied Gansendonck; "it is too late."

"And if you knew that my death was to be the result of your unfavorable decision?"

"I should grieve, I confess; but I can't force you to live, Karel."

"Oh, Gansendonck!" shrieked the youth, raising his clasped hands and falling on his knees, "let me hope! don't kill me!"

Gansendonck raised him, as he answered,—

"You are absolutely losing your senses, Karel. I have no more power to do any thing in the matter, and you may therefore judge how far things have gone. To-morrow we are to dine with the baron at the lodge, where he gives a *fête* in honor of Lisa."

"She! she!—my Lisa,—at the baron's *château*? Oh, Gansendonck! you are on the brink of ruining her forever! There's not a woman at the *château*!"

"She's going to inspect the hunting-lodge of her future husband."

"And so it is all over?—there's no longer a hope left! Dishonor for her—the grave for me!" sobbed Karel, as he buried his face in his hands, while a flood of tears burst from his eyes.

"I really pity you, Karel," said Master Pierre, rather indifferently, "but it can't be helped. Lisa

is to be a *great lady*; it is written there on high, and 'what is to be will be.' "

With this he laid his hand on Karel's shoulder, and, gently pushing him toward the door, "Go now," said he; "this has lasted too long already, and no good can come of more discussion. Return to your home, Karel; and, remember! not one word again about Lisa."

Silent and docile as a child, Karel allowed himself to be led through the door into the apartment where Lisa still lingered. Poor girl! for a long time she had been endeavoring to catch the words that came confused and broken from the other room; and, now that she heard approaching footsteps, she rose from her chair and stood in front of the door, pale and trembling.

And there, too, came her lover, pale and trembling like herself, bathed in tears, and walking slowly, like one on his way to the scaffold. With a shriek she sprang toward Karel, and, flinging her arms around his neck and burying her head in his bosom, they clung to each other in silence. There seemed no need of words to express their mutual consciousness of *doom*.

It is likely that this silent parting would have been protracted for a long time; but Gansendonck separated her arms from Karel's neck, and, pushing the young man roughly from the door of the inn, slammed it after him.

CHAPTER VI.

“He who mixes pride with folly resigns himself willingly to the scorn of mankind.”

MASTER GANSENDONCK was running up and down in his chamber like one possessed. He had put the looking-glass on the floor, and moved backward and forward in front of it with all sorts of exclamations of pleasure. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and had just put on a pair of new tight pantaloons. On a chair near the wall, a pair of yellow gloves, a white waistcoat, and a lace shirt-frill, were ostentatiously displayed.

His servant stood in the centre of the room, with a white cravat folded on his arm. He looked at his master patiently, while from time to time a smile of mingled pity and dissatisfaction might have been seen playing over his features.

“Well, Kobe,” said Master Pierre, with an explosion of delight; “what do you say of it? Don’t it fit magnificently?”

“I don’t know,” replied Kobe, in a surly way.

“You can surely see, at least, whether it fits or not?”

"I don't like the set of your trousers; they make your legs look as stiff as broom-handles."

Gansendonck, surprised by the impudence of the remark, darted a fierce glance at his servant, as he answered,—

"What do you mean, Kobe? Are you, like the rest of them, beginning to cock up your ears? Do you think I feed and pay you to make unpleasant remarks about me? Come, speak! say yes or no! Do the trousers fit me?"

"Yes, master."

"How! 'yes, master'?" mimicked Master Pierre, stamping his foot. "Do they fit well or not?—I ask again."

"They couldn't fit better, master."

"Ah! you are obstinate, are you? You want to be paid off, and get service elsewhere, eh? Isn't your life easy enough here, you idler? You want better food, I suppose, than wheat-bread? It's always thus that we run from grass to bear-skins; and it's a true saying that 'if you give hay to an ass he will run after thistles.'"

Kobe, who either feigned or felt a degree of pain at this outburst, replied, in a tone of supplication, as he clapped his hand on his body,—

"Oh, master dear! I have such a pain in my stomach just now that I really don't know what I say, so you must forgive me. Your pantaloons fit you as nicely as if they were painted on your legs."

"Ah! Kobe," asked Master Pierre, with an air

of solicitude, "have you really got a pain in your stomach? Open the little closet yonder, and drink a glass of *absinthe*. 'What is bitter for the mouth is good for the bowels.'"

"Yes, master. You are too good to poor Kobe," said he, walking to the closet.

"Give me my cravat now, and be careful you don't rumple it;" and, as he continued the process of dressing, he indulged in the following sage reflections:—

"Eh, Kobe! but the country-folks will stare when they see me going by with my white waistcoat, lace ruffles, and yellow gloves! God knows whether they have ever seen any thing like it in all their lives. I asked Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel, one day, without letting him know what I was after, how fashionable people were in the habit of dressing when they went abroad; and, in four little days, behold me finished up in this elegant style from the city! With money, one not only works wonders, but miracles! Then Lisa, too;—she will make the very eyes leap out of their stupid heads when they see the *six flounces* on her new silk dress."

"Six flounces, master! The lady at the *château* only wears *five*, and it must be Sunday, too, for her to do that even."

"If Lisa would do as I want her, she would have *ten*; for when a man is well to do in the world he ought to show it, and 'who can pay can buy.' You shall see her, Kobe, to-day, dressed

precisely like a fashionable lady, with her satin hat adorned with such flowers as are seen only at the *château* in winter."

"Camelias, master?"

"Yes, camelias. Only think of it, Kobe; in town they had put sprigs of wheat and common things of that sort in her hat; but, as soon as I saw it, I very quickly stripped off those countrified trappings. Give me my waistcoat now, and be careful not to touch it with your hands."

"Well, that's an art, master, that I've not learned yet."

"Fool! I meant that you should finger it with a napkin!"

"Yes, master."

"Now, Kobe, imagine me seated at table in the *château*,—Lisa between me and the baron. Do you hear us complimenting each other and saying a hundred pretty things? Do you see us drinking all sorts of extraordinary wines, and eating the most exquisite game, prepared with sauces whose names the devil himself wouldn't remember, and every thing served on gilded plates with silver spoons?"

"Oh, hush, master, if you please; the water is running out of my mouth."

"I don't wonder, Kobe; but I can't be happy alone. The half of yesterday's hare is yet on the dish down-stairs: you may eat it if you please, and wash it down with a couple of pints of barley-beer."

"You are too good, master."

"And after you are done, come to the lodge in the afternoon, to see if I haven't some commands for you."

"Yes, master."

"But stay now, Kobe; I wonder whether Lisa's dressed?"

"I don't know, master: when I went down a while ago for fresh rain-water, she was still sitting at her work-table."

"And what dress had she on?"

"Her common Sunday dress, I think, master."

"Didn't she tell you that I turned the brewer out of doors yesterday?"

"I saw that she was very downcast, master; but I never inquire into things that don't concern me: 'he's a fool who burns himself with another man's kettle.'"

"You're right Kobe; but I'm *master* here, and I've a right to talk to you about it if I please. Would you believe it that she's still so much attached to that fellow Karel that she refused to dine at the lodge because she saw him weeping as he went off? Wasn't I obliged to quarrel all the evening with my own child to get the obstinate fit out of her head?"

"And did she at last consent to go with you, master?"

"How—consent!—She has nothing to say about it! I am master."

"That's true."

"Hadn't she the boldness to tell me that she would *not* marry the baron?"

"Indeed?"

"Yes; and to say that she would remain single all her days unless she could get that scamp Karel for a husband. She'd cut a pretty figure—wouldn't she?—in that dirty brewery, sitting on a stool near the milk-kettle. And when she wanted to go to town, she might get astride of the beer-wagon!—eh, Kobe?"

"Yes, master."

"Give me my gloves now: I am ready. Let's see what Lisa is about, for I dare say she will tease us with some new caprice. Yesterday evening she wouldn't listen to the *six flounces* on her silk dress. But I am resolved that she shall be dressed as I think proper."

Lisa sat near the window in the front-room below. Her face was heavy with profound sadness. In one hand she held her pattern and in the other her work-needle; but her thoughts were far away, for she was as motionless as a statue.

"What does all this mean, Lisa?" said her father, angrily, as he entered the room., "Here am I, dressed from top to toe, and there you are sitting, as unconcerned as if there was nothing to be done!"

"I am ready, father," answered Lisa, patiently.

"'Father'—'father'—again! Do you want me to leap out of my skin at once, girl?"

"I am ready, *papa*," repeated Lisa, with the same calmness in which she had first answered.

"Get up," said Gansendonck, a little crestfallen. "What dress is that you have on?"

"My Sunday dress, *papa*."

"Quick! begone; and put on your new dress and your hat and flowers."

Lisa cast down her head, but said nothing.

"Better and better!" vociferated her father. "Will you speak? yes or no!"

"Ah, *papa*!" said Lisa, suppliantly, "don't compel me. That dress and hat do not suit our station, and I dare not pass through the village in them. You wish me to follow you to the *château*, though I have begged you to let me stay at home. Well, I will do as you desire me; but, for the love of God, *papa*, let me go there in my common Sunday dress!"

"In a cap, with one flounce to your dress!" said her father, with a sneer. "You would cut a fine figure in that costume when you were seated at a table with golden plates and silver spoons! Come, come! no more words; put on your new dress and hat: I must have it so, without further talk."

"You can do as you please, *papa*," said Lisa, with a sigh, as she dropped her head on her breast with an air of desolation; "you may scold me, punish me: I will *not* put on the new dress, and I will *not* wear the new hat."

Kobe nodded his head in the chimuey-corner to encourage Lisa in her resistance.

Gansendonck turned toward the servant, and asked, in a furious voice,—

“And what say you, Kobe, of a girl who dares to speak in such a manner to her father?”

“She may be right, master.”

“What, and *you* too? Is there a conspiracy between you to make me burst? But I’ll teach you, ungrateful vagabond! to-morrow you shall be off from this!”

“But, my dear master,” interrupted Kobe, “you don’t understand, for you don’t let me finish my sentences. I meant to say that Lisa may be right —*if she is not wrong.*”

“Well, please to speak a little more distinctly another time.”

“Yes, master.”

“And you, Lisa, be quick, I say again. Whether it pleases you or not, you shall obey me, even if I have to dress you by force.”

The poor girl was by this time drowned in tears,—a circumstance which of course increased her father’s passion, as her appearance was not likely to be improved by red eyes. Accordingly, he began to grumble and talk to himself, and finished by stamping about the room and dashing the chairs against each other.

“Better still!” said he, after a while; “better still! Cry an hour or two, and you’ll be beautiful afterward, with eyes as red as a white rabbit’s.

Stop sniffing this instant; for it's only a trick you are playing to force us to remain at home."

But the poor girl could not restrain her tears, though she was perfectly silent.

"Come, then," said Gansendonck, impatiently, when he saw all his threats and persuasions unavailing; "as it can't be helped now, dress as you please, but stop bawling. For God's sake, Lisa, make haste!"

Without uttering a word, Lisa rose, and went up-stairs to prepare for her visit to the *château*; but hardly was she out of the room when Van Bruinkasteel entered the inn.

"What has kept you so long?" said he, as he approached Gansendonck; "I was really afraid that something had happened, for we have waited for you an hour already."

"It's all Lisa's fault, baron," answered Master Pierre: "I had a beautiful new dress and hat made for her to wear on the occasion, but she is so obstinate that I can't make her put them on."

"And she is right, Master Gansendonck; for she is always handsome enough as she is."

"Nevertheless, fine clothes don't hurt, *Monsieur Victor*."

With this, Lisa came down, and saluted the baron with cold politeness. Her face bore evidence of the recent scene with her father, and it was easy to see that she had been weeping. She was dressed in her single-flounced gown, and wore a lace cap on her head, made after the fashion of

those worn by her class in towns, and known as *cornettes*.

She passed her arm instantly through her father's and led him toward the door; but Gansendonck disengaged himself, and drew aside, as if inviting the baron to escort his daughter. Victor, however, either feigned not to notice or did not observe this by-play; for perhaps it struck him as being in very bad taste for a baron to go through the village arm-in-arm with an innkeeper's daughter. In this dilemma, Gansendonck was forced to take the lead with Lisa; and, as they walked on a little ahead, his ill-temper and querulousness again broke out:—

“Don't you see, you stubborn jade, if you had put on your handsome dress and your hat and flowers, the baron would have given you his arm? Now he won't do it: your dress is too common,—that's what it is!”

As they passed through the village their path led in front of the brewery. There, behind the stable-wall, the poor girl saw Karel, who, with crossed arms and downcast head, fixed his eyes upon her with a listless look. As they came in front of him, Lisa uttered a sudden, sharp cry, and, bounding away from her father, seized her lover's hands and uttered a confused verbiage of tenderness and consolation. But in a moment Gansendonck was at her side again, and, dragging her off rudely, they passed on their way to the hunting-lodge of Victor Van Bruinkasteel.

CHAPTER VII.

“Pride is the source of all our ills.”

TOWARD the close of the afternoon, Karel stood in a thick copse, leaning against the trunk of a birch-tree. In front of him, on the other side of a ditch, rose the hunting-lodge of Victor Van Bruinkasteel. The young man had been there for a long time, and it would have been difficult for him to say when or wherefore he had come there. With his head full of painful memories and fancies, he had strayed from field to field, and at length reached that spot, perhaps to encounter still more pain and sorrow. He was motionless as a statue, displaying no sign of life, save as from time to time he heaved a sigh or felt a convulsive shudder run through his frame. His heart was a prey to torture: his excited imagination pierced the walls that concealed Lisa; he fancied that he heard the declarations of love, the seductive gallantries of the baron; he surprised him in the midst of lascivious glances, and saw Gansendonck restraining the modest indignation of his daughter; and then poor Lisa, knowing no longer what to do, allowed the baron to grasp her hand and profane her with the gaze of passionate desire!

Poor Karel! he inflicted a thousand wounds on his susceptible heart, and forced his inflamed imagination to the verge of frenzy, till he drained the cup of sorrow to the very dregs.

After losing himself for a long time in these sad and painful reveries, he fell into a sort of spirit-sleep. His muscles were paralyzed; his features expressed nothing but weariness and indifference; his head hung on his breast, and his half-closed eyes were bent on the ground. Suddenly his ears were saluted by the distant notes of an instrument accompanying a male voice. Indistinct as were the sounds, they stirred the soul of the listener powerfully. Trembling throughout all his frame, he started as if a snake had bitten him. A burning fire shone in his eyes, his open lips disclosed his teeth, and he clenched his fists till the joints cracked. He recollected that hateful song,—that song which, like a voice from hell, had once in his hearing poured the voluptuous language of passion into Lisa's ear. Those disgusting words, which had been echoed from the lips of Lisa, still burned like molten lava in his heart.

In his despair, Karel crushed the branches of the young oaks, while inarticulate sounds broke from his lips. The notes increased in loudness; the words became more distinct; "*Je vous aime!*" was heard even in the copse; and the baron threw so much fire and feeling into their utterance that it was impossible he could be addressing them to anybody but Lisa.

Losing all control over himself, Karel leaped into the ditch, crossed it, and disappeared in a thick grove of fig-trees which was planted at the side of a long walk. Concealing his person as well as he could among the trees, he glided along stealthily till he found himself near a dark vault of foliage. The branches of two hedges, planted close to each other, had been carefully bent till their union formed an arch of beautiful verdure; and, although the declining sunlight still dropped its rays in patches on the tips of the upper leaves, evening was so far advanced that the scene was already almost darkened by the shadows of coming night.

Karel passed along the walk and approached the house on the side of the saloon in which the baron and his guests were assembled. Three or four steps from the window of the room there was a thicket of wild jasmine, which, in the spring-time, when its flowers were in bloom, must have filled the apartment with delicious perfume. Karel disappeared in this copse, whence he could distinctly see into the saloon.

Ah! how his heart beat! how the blood bounded in his veins! He could see every thing, hear every thing, for the wine of the festive hour had strengthened their voices. It seemed to him that they were trying to force Lisa to do something that she did not wish to do. The baron drew her by the hand, with a gentle force, toward the piano, while her father pushed her

along with less consideration, and said, in a half-angry tone,—

“Lisa! Lisa! you are again going to make me jump out of my skin with your abominable obstinacy! Are we to have the scene of this morning over again? These gentlemen entreat you, with all the politeness imaginable, to sing that little song once more, and you are so ill-mannered as to refuse! You must not hide your voice, girl, but let it be heard, I say!”

The baron renewed his importunity; Gansendonck ordered her angrily. Lisa obeyed, and began to sing with the baron, accompanied on the piano:—

“Ah! pitié, mon trouble est extrême,
Dites, ‘Je vous aime!’
Je vous aime!”

The leaves of the jasmine trembled as if stirred by a sudden breeze!

In truth, pride and folly had crazed poor Gansendonck. His face glistened and was purple with pleasure; he rubbed his hands together constantly, and spoke so freely, so boldly, and so often, that he might have been readily mistaken for the master of the lodge. Stiff as a poker, he stood near the piano, nodded his head in false measure, as if beating time, patted the waxed floor with his heavy foot, and every now and then interrupted his daughter with “Louder!” “Faster!” “That’s well!” “Bravo!” He did not comprehend that Adolph, his friend, and even Victor

himself, were making him the butt of their jokes; but, on the contrary, he fancied the mocking laughter of the youngsters was a mark of appreciation and friendship.

Scarcely had the last note of the song died away, when Adolph ran his hand over the keys and struck up so bewitching a waltz that Gansendonck felt stirred up for a dance, and actually began to balance himself on his toes as if about to spin round the saloon.

"A dance! a dance!" cried he. "Our Lisa dances so splendidly that we can have no greater delight than in watching the motion of her feet! Come, Lisa; let's see a specimen of what you learned at boarding-school."

The poor girl, who had already been so unwillingly obliged to sing, seemed anxious to escape from the piano and her father's commands; but he dragged her to the centre of the room and beckoned to the baron as if encouraging him to lead her out. Victor, half good-humoredly, half trifling, sprang forward at once, and, seizing her by the waist, forced her to make five or six turns before she could stop him.

A low sound, like the growl of a dying lion, issued from the jasmine-copse; but they were too busy in the saloon to hear the murmur.

As Lisa absolutely refused to dance, Van Bruin-kasteel was considerate enough not to press her. He excused himself politely to the confused and worried sufferer; yet he seemed to be concerned

neither by her pain nor her refusal. The trifler was evidently amusing himself carelessly with a young girl in whom he saw nothing but a charming and uncontaminated country-lass, who helped him to pass his time pleasantly. If any other feeling had ever beset him, Lisa's coldness would soon have disenchanted it. Accordingly, he bowed civilly when she declined dancing, and offered his arm, which, this time, she did not refuse.

"And now, gentlemen, let us go out into the garden for a stroll till the lamps are lighted," said he; "and pray don't be offended if I monopolize Mademoiselle Lisa for the promenade."

So saying, the company left the room, and, descending the stone steps, struck off toward the most secluded portions of the garden. There were many paths and walks. The baron led Lisa toward a bed of dahlias; Adolph and his companion took another direction. Lisa soon saw with surprise and anxiety that her father did not keep near her, but strayed off to a distance. She summoned him back with her eyes and head; but Gansendonck called to her to 'follow her leader,' while he himself ran off, laughing, toward Adolph, as if he had said a good thing. Lisa trembled. Her virgin innocence whispered that it was wrong to be thus wandering alone arm-in-arm with the baron through those dark and solitary walks; but her *cavalier* as yet said nothing improper, and at the end of the alley she thought her father must infallibly reappear. Besides, would it not be very

impolite to leave the baron and run away like a country-girl?

With her mind running on in these fancies, she walked along by the side of her companion, to whose remarks her replies were not only brief but wandering. A moment afterward everybody disappeared amid the windings of the garden and in the dense thickets of foliage.

Meanwhile, our unhappy friend Karel was suffering the pains of martyrdom. Often already had the desire for vengeance on the imagined seducer almost driven him from his concealment; but every time the impulse was arrested by the image of his mother which flitted across his feverish mind.

Suddenly he heard the voice of the baron, in most caressing tones, a few paces from him. He beheld Lisa, sad and silent, leaning on his arm, as they followed the path which passed along the jasmine-copse and led into the deeper gloom of the thicket.

At the distance of a few steps from where Karel was endeavoring to restrain his very breath, Lisa seemed to observe for the first time that they were about to plunge into almost absolute darkness. She stopped, and begged the young nobleman to rejoin her father, and began to tremble like an aspen when the baron pressed her arm, and, laughing at her fears, endeavored to persuade and lead her into the sombre walk. Victor seemed to disregard her emotion, or took the liberty to

consider it feigned. Be that as it may, however, half in jest, half in earnest, he tried to force her toward the dark alley of verdure, and was about succeeding, when she shrieked—

“Father! father!”

Another and louder cry was about escaping her; but, ere her lips could form the words, two powerful hands fell heavily on the baron’s shoulders and prostrated him on the sand.

Victor rose instantly, and, seizing a stout stick from a flower-bed, struck the young brewer so severely over the head that the blood ran down his cheeks. Upon this, Karel seized his opponent by the waist, raised him aloft in his herculean grasp, and dashed him fiercely to the earth like a stone. But the baron was almost directly again on his feet, and for a while fought the young brewer, till the latter stretched him by a blow on the earth, and, with his knee on his breast, beat him about the head and face till he was covered with blood.

Meanwhile, Lisa, who stood motionless and silent till she saw the first blood, ran off a short distance, and with a scream fell in a swoon on the grass. But the cries of distress and the noise of conflict had been already heard by the promenaders and the servants in the house, so that in a short time there was a crowd around the combatants dragging the enraged Karel from the body of his victim. Adolph ordered the brewer to be seized and kept in safety by his serving-men,

who arrested him; while Gansendonck ran about tearing his hair like a madman, thinking his daughter was killed.

Adolph and his friends assisted the baron to rise. His face and body were cruelly lacerated and beaten; yet all his passion was rekindled as his eyes fell on the stalwart form of the brewer.

"Wretch!" exclaimed he, "I ought to have you lashed to death by my servants; but the scaffold shall be my revenge,—you lurking assassin! Lock him up in the cellar, and go at once for the *gendarmes*."

The servants were about complying with their master's orders, when Karel, by a powerful effort, cast off the two servants who held him, kicked a third into the jasmine-bushes, dashed into the thickets, leaped the ditch, and, before they could think of pursuit, was far beyond their sight or reach in the darkness.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Still water is bad water."

NEXT morning, Lisa sat in the back-room of the Saint Sebastian, behind the muslin window-curtain. The redness of her swollen eyes and the extreme paleness of her cheeks gave token that she was worn out with weeping. But she showed

symptoms of something more than past sorrow. It was evident that she was suffering not only from fear or terror, but was undergoing the pangs of anxious expectation. From time to time she stole an unquiet glance beneath the lifted corner of the curtain, but withdrew her eyes immediately whenever she saw some passer-by fix his regards upon the house. Her whole expression and action indicated the restlessness of a person who was waiting for some thing or some one with intense solicitude.

But what was she waiting for? Indeed, she could hardly say; but conscience was eating her heart like a worm. The image of her dear Karel flitted before her imagination and upbraided her as the cause of all his wo. She fancied she could hear the villagers talking of her, and for the first time fully understood that her fair fame was gone and that even Karel had a right to discard her. That was the reason why she blushed, trembled, and cringed as the villagers passed her window and gazed at the house. She thought she could see in their very looks that they were talking of last night's adventure, and that their commentaries on it were interlarded with anger, scoffing, and contempt. She saw some of the villagers shake their clenched fists at the inn, as if they were swearing vengeance for the dishonor that Gansendonck had inflicted on their class.

While Lisa was thus draining the bitter cup of

shame and remorse, Kobe was seated alone and motionless before the fireplace of the common parlor. His pipe was in his hand, but he did not smoke; his face wore an expression entirely different from its ordinary one, for it was a sort of mingling of bitterness, reproach, and offended pride. At times his lips moved as if talking to himself, while a flash of anger glanced from his eye.

Suddenly he thought he heard the voice of Gansendonck, and for an instant his mouth relaxed into a smile; but very soon the cloud came over him again, and his features indicated only excitement and displeasure.

As Master Gansendonck approached the back-door of the inn, Kobe heard him growling forth his invectives against some imagined enemy; but the serving-man could not yet make out distinctly who it was that excited his master's wrath. Nor did it in truth seem to concern him very deeply, for he never stirred from his seat by the fireplace.

Gansendonck came in stamping violently, and began, as usual when in a passion, to knock the chairs about.

"It's going too far!—too far entirely!" cried he, at last. "A man like me—a man of my mark—to be pointed at in the street! to be shouted after! to be hooted at! to be treated like a cursed ass! Think of it, Kobe; are they not possessed by the devil? Those beggarly peasants at the blacksmith's shop rushed out as I went by, and ran

after me, crying, 'For shame! for shame!' Had I not been afraid of dirtying my hands by touching such *canaille*, I really believe I would have mashed the heads of half a dozen with my pitchfork. But Sus shall pay for it, and for all the other vagabonds! I'll teach him to fling dirt after Master Pierre Gansendonck! We shall see how the game will end! If it costs me half my fortune, I'll have my revenge. I'll have the police out; and, if any one dares crook his finger at me, I'll have half the village before court! I've got money enough for that; and Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel, who is intimate with the attorney-general, will have them comfortably put in the shade for a while! Then they'll see to whom they dare offer their brutal insults,—the impudent scoundrels! It has gone too far! I'll let them feel what Pierre Gansendonck can do; and no one need look for pardon or intercession!"

Gansendonck would probably have ranted on in this style much longer had his wind lasted; but fortunately it gave out, and, panting as if after a race, he fell back in a chair, while his eyes lighted angrily on poor Kobe, who was seated in his old place, looking at the fire with as much unconcern as if he had not heard a word the innkeeper was saying.

"What are you looking at there, like a booby who can't count three? Your idleness has spoiled you, Kobe; you are becoming as indolent and

dumb as a hog. It makes me mad to see you. I want my servant to be brisk and stirring, and not as cold as a stick when I am in a passion."

Kobe looked at his master with an expression of pain, but said nothing.

"I suppose you have got the stomach-ache again!" cried Gansendonck; "but I'm tired of that dodge. Do you take the Saint Sebastian for a hospital? I don't hire you to have a stomach-ache. You have nothing to do but to eat less, you ravenous glutton! Come! will you speak? yes or no!"

"I'd speak, master, with the greatest pleasure, if I did not know that the very moment I opened my mouth you'd bounce off in one of your rages, and begin to sing your eternal litany."

"What do you mean, Kobe, by using such language to me? Do you intend to intimate that I am a consummate gabbler? Go on, Kobe; don't mind me in the least! Everybody falls pellmell on Pierre Gansendonck, and why shouldn't you fling a stone at the man who supplies your daily bread?"

"Now, look you, master," said Kobe, smiling sadly, "I have not uttered two words, and there you are, falling on my head like a hot poker! I shall take care hereafter never to say any thing offensive to you; but I am sure, master, you will agree with me that it would be a smart spider that could spin his web over your mouth!"

"I am *master* here," ejaculated Gansendonck;

"I can talk to myself just as long and as often as I please!"

"Then allow me, master, if you please, to be silent even if I burst."

"*You* silent? No; I don't want you to be silent: you *must* talk. I want to know what good can come out of so stupid a head as yours."

"*'Still water is deepest,'* master."

"Come; talk now, I say! But don't talk too long; and remember that I don't pay my servant to give me lessons."

"There is a maxim, master, which says that '*wise men consult fools and learn truth from them.*'"

"Well, tell me, then, what advice the fool has to give to the sage. If you are disposed to talk sensibly I will listen to you."

Kobe leisurely turned himself and his chair around toward Gansendonck, and, after a moment, said, in a clear and resolute tone,—

"Master, things have been going on here in such a way for the last two months that even a simpleton like me can't help getting his blood in a stew."

"I believe you, Kobe. But it won't last long: the police isn't paid to catch flies!"

"As for myself, master, I know I am idle; yet my heart is right. Were it in my power, I would do much to keep harm from our kind Lisa; and I don't forget that, in spite of your excitability, at bottom you are good to me."

"That's true, Kobe," said Gansendonck, touched; "it pleases me to know that you, at least, are grateful. But what do you mean by this seriousness?"

"Don't make me put the carriage before the horse, master; I'll touch your quick soon enough."

"Be brief, or I'm off: you kill me with twaddling."

"Listen, if it's only for a moment. For a long time Lisa has been promised to Karel, who, in truth, is a good fellow, though he may have committed some imprudences——"

"A good fellow!" interrupted Gansendonck; "a good fellow! he who, like an assassin, attacked Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel in his own house and ground him to powder!"

"The best horse in the world shies sometimes."

"Ah! you call that shying? and he's 'a good fellow'? You shall pay for that expression. You have eaten all your white bread, Kobe; and you shall leave my house this very day!"

"My trunk's packed already, master," answered Kobe, coldly; "but before I go you shall hear what's on my mind. You shall hear it if I have to follow you into the fields, the streets, or your chamber. It's my duty, and the only mark of gratitude I can leave you. It don't surprise me that I am discharged: 'no man who speaks the truth frankly is ever harbored long.'"

Gansendonck quivered with impatience, but did not say a word, for he was mastered by the grave and decided manner of his servant.

"Our Lisa," continued Kobe, "would have been very happy with Karel; but you, master, would insist on bringing the fox into our chicken-coop. Nothing would do but you must have a young fop to fill your daughter's ears with stale compliments, to feign affection for her, to sing immodest songs, to——"

"That's a lie!" growled Gansendonck.

"You would have him speak French to her," continued Kobe. "Could you understand a word he said?"

"And do *you* understand it, you vagabond, that you lecture me so boldly about it?"

"I understand enough of it, master, to know that trifling or something worse was the game he played at. And what is the end of your imprudence? Must I tell you? Your child's honor is stained,—not fatally, I hope; but still so much that she can scarcely regain her girlish purity. Karel, the only person who ever loved her truly, is wearing away with despair; his mother is in her bed, sick from the grief and anguish of her only son; and you, master, are hated and despised by everybody. It is the common talk that you are the cause of Karel's misery, your daughter's dishonor, your own misfortunes."

"Yes," replied Gansendonck, "'when they want to kill a dog they say he is mad.' But they

have nothing to do with my affairs; they don't concern them: I shall do exactly what I please. And you too, you impertinent scamp! I'll teach you how to put your nose in other people's business."

"It's not of the least importance whether my words please you or not, master," said Kobe, firmly; "for they are the last I shall ever utter in the *Saint Sebastian*."

It is likely that Gansendonck, in spite of his abuse and threats, was very much attached to his servant, and feared to see him depart; for every time that he announced his determination to quit his service Master Pierre's anger fell and he looked forgivingly at Kobe.

Observing this turn in Gansendonck's manner, Kobe sat down again, and took up the thread of conversation where he had dropped it.

"Now, what is to come of all this? Isn't there a proverb that says 'the pitcher goes so often to the well that at last it is smashed'? But no; the modest reserve of your daughter will preserve you from a greater dishonor. Still, the baron will become tired of Lisa's company, and will seek for other amusement; Lisa will be left between two stools; all right-thinking folks will avoid her, and the world will laugh at you and rejoice in your mortifying deception."

"Who can please everybody, Kobe? 'He who builds on the street never lacks critics.' I don't understand your nonsense. Don't you know what

is at stake? The baron is to *marry* Lisa! There's no doubt of it: it's surely plain enough. And then all the scandal-mongers of the village, and you too, will open your staring eyes like a flock of owls in the sunlight. If I were not sure of it, there might perhaps be something to take back; but, even then, nobody would have a right to interfere: I'm master in my house!"

"Indeed! The baron is going to marry Lisa, is he?" replied Kobe, incredulously. "Then every thing is, of course, for the best, and you may stick a new feather in your cap, master. Yet it isn't at all unusual for people in this world to consider what they hope for as already done. May I ask a question, sir?"

"What is it?"

"Has the baron ever spoken to you about this marriage?"

"That's not at all necessary."

"Then, of course, *you* have spoken to him about his intentions?"

"That, too, isn't necessary."

"Well, has the baron spoken to Lisa, then?"

"How childishly you talk, Kobe! It would be a pretty thing for him to talk to Lisa on such a subject without knowing whether I, who happen to be master in the matter, am ready to give my consent. That isn't the way things are done in this country, booby!"

"No; but the baron *laughed* at you the other day, in the churchyard, after service, when the

doctor asked him, in the presence of at least ten people, if it was really true that he was going to marry Lisa."

"What's that you say? Van Bruinkasteel laughed at me?"

"He asked the doctor if he imagined that a *baron* would marry the daughter of a village innkeeper; and when they told him that you had been talking to the notary about the terms of the marriage-contract, he remarked that Lisa was a fine girl, but that her father was an old fool, who ought long ago to have been put in the mad-house at Gheel."

As the last words came from Kobe's lips, Gansendonck bounced up in a passion, as if some one had trodden on his corns.

"What's that you dare to say?" exclaimed he, in a loud and menacing voice. "I ought to be at Gheel! Are you crazy, Kobe, yourself? Alas! it's true that 'a mad dog will bite even his own master.'"

"I repeat nothing but what ten people, at the very least, aver they heard with their own ears. You are perfectly at liberty to believe it or not, as you please. What use——"

"Yes! yes!" interrupted Gansendonck; "finish it! What use are spectacles for an owl that can't see? I ought to give you a sound flogging, varlet, and kick you out of the door."

"Rather say, What's the use of light when a man shuts his eyes?" continued Kobe. "The

baron has laughed at your foolish expectations at other times besides——”

“No! no!” broke in Gansendonck; “it is false! it can’t be true! You believe the envious calumnies of people who are mad because I am richer than they and because they see that Lisa will be a great lady in spite of their jealousies and rivalry.”

“‘When a blind man dreams that he sees, he sees what he pleases,’” said Kobe, with a sigh. “I can say or do no more. Every man makes his soup to his taste: take your own way, and have the wedding to-morrow.”

“They are all wicked and envious inventions, and nothing else!” exclaimed Gansendonck.

“But the *doctor* is not envious of you, master,” replied Kobe; “the doctor is a quiet, prudent man, and is probably the only one in the village who continues friendly to you. It was he himself who begged me, even at the risk of your displeasure, to set the danger before your eyes.”

“But the doctor is deceived, Kobe; they have made him believe their lies: it can’t be otherwise, I tell you. It would be a pretty thing, indeed, if the baron didn’t marry Lisa!”

“We ‘must not count on a chicken before the egg is laid,’ master,” said Kobe.

“I’m just as sure of it as I am of my father’s name.”

“‘You’re not yet in the saddle, and still you begin to gallop.’ I tell you, master, that the

baron laughs at you, turns you to ridicule, and calls you a fool! I tell you you are blind; that I pity both you and Lisa; and, moreover, I tell you that to-morrow morning I shall leave this house, so as not to witness the end of this unfortunate business. If you would listen to me, master, I would give you a piece of parting counsel which will be worth gold to you."

"Ah! let us hear it! What may this precious counsel amount to?"

"Look you, master; a credulous man is easily deceived. Were I in your place, I would find out this very day what is to be the upshot of the matter. I would go boldly to the lodge and ask Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel what are his intentions in regard to Lisa. Fine words and windy compliments would not withdraw me from my purpose; for my interview should end with the flat question, 'Do you want to marry her or not?' I'd force him to play his cards, and to give me once for all a clear, decided answer. If he refused, as it is probable he will do, I would forbid him from ever speaking another word to Lisa. I'd put the bars up in my old meadow; I'd make friends with Karel, and hasten his wedding. This is all that remains for you to do in order to keep misery and dishonor from your household."

"Well, if Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel don't come very soon himself and talk to me about this marriage, I think I *will* speak to him on the subject. But there's no hurry."

"No hurry, master!" exclaimed Kobe; "'there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.' You must make the baron show his hand this very day."

"Well, well," said Gansendonck, "I'll go to the lodge after dinner: I will have a frank explanation with the baron. But I know already what he'll say."

"I hope you may be right, master; but I fear your reception won't be the most agreeable in the world."

"The world gets topsy-turvy!" ejaculated Gansendonck. "Servants lecture their masters, and their masters must swallow it! 'Play with a jack-ass and he'll switch your face with his tail.' But wait a while; I'll be revenged on all of you. This very afternoon I'll be off to the lodge; and what will you say, you scamp, when I come back with the declaration of the baron that he means to marry Lisa?"

"That you are the only person in this village who has any sense, master, and that all the rest, not even excepting myself, are enormous fools. But what will *you* say, master, if Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel should happen to laugh at you?"

"That's impossible, I tell you."

"Yes; but if, by accident, it should turn out so?"

"If—if—if! 'If the skies fall, we shall catch larks!'"

"I repeat my question, master," persevered Kobe:—"if the baron denies and laughs at you?"

“Ah! baron or not, I will show him what I am, and——”

A frightful cry of distress—a piercing shriek of agony—arrested the word on his lips.

Both master and servant leaped from their seats and ran toward Lisa's room, where they found her standing at the window gazing wildly into the street. The sight that startled her must have been terrible; for her lips were compressed over the clenched teeth, her eyes seemed starting from their sockets, and she trembled in every limb like a leaf. Hardly had her father reached the middle of the apartment, when another shriek, even louder and more agonizing than the first, rang through the room, and the poor girl fell backward, flat and heavily, on the floor.

While Gansendonck knelt beside his child, trying to restore animation, Kobe ran to the window, where he beheld Karel passing along, with pinioned arms, followed by a couple of *gendarmes*. Behind them came an old woman, sprinkling the footsteps of her son with tears. Sus, the smith, was tearing his hair and going on like a madman. A crowd of peasants, of both sexes, followed the group as it advanced, and many an apron was busy with the women's eyes. A stranger might well have imagined that he beheld a funeral train, escorting the remains of a village favorite to their resting-place in the graveyard.

CHAPTER IX.

When an ass is on solid ground there is nothing that delights him more than the idea of getting on ice,—where he invariably breaks his neck!

GANSENDONCK hurried through dinner, and, taking Kobe's advice, set forth to question the baron as to his designs. As he did not want to pass in front of the blacksmith's shop, he left the inn by a back-door, whence he soon struck a retired path across the woods and fields which led to the hunting-lodge.

The innkeeper's face was by no means sad, though his only child had been all day, since her attack, confined to bed with a nervous fever. Indeed, a sort of satisfied elation beamed from Master Pierre's countenance; and from time to time he smiled and almost laughed, as if already enjoying an achieved victory. It was easy to be seen that Gansendonck was castle-building, and that his airy architecture was pleasant in his sight. He had been almost constantly talking to himself or making grimaces and gestures; but, as he advanced, his utterance became louder and clearer, till at length he spoke out distinctly:—

“Yes, I see it as plain as day; they are all

leagued against me, and imagine that I must retreat before their stupid clamor. But Pierre Gansendonck will show them what he is made of and what he can do. Another person might say, 'It's better to have friends than foes;' but I say it is better to be envied than to be complaining, and 'he who has too many friends is the plaything of everybody.' The baron won't marry Lisa! Humph! when twice a day he has sent his servant to inquire for *my* health! When I think over every thing, there can't be a doubt of it. Didn't he say to me, with his own lips, that Lisa was altogether too good and too clever to become the wife of a burly brewer? Then, didn't he add, 'She will form a *better* marriage, and make any man who understands her perfectly happy'? That's clear enough, it seems to me. These impudent boors think that a baron acts just as they do, and says out flat, 'Come; let's get married!' No; high folks don't get along that way. Ha! ha! Van Bruinkasteel refuse to marry my Lisa! I'll bet five acres of land that he'll fling his arms round my neck the moment I open my mouth. Van Bruinkasteel won't marry Lisa?—won't marry her?—just as if I hadn't always noticed how he squeezed my hand! It was Monsieur Gansendonck here, Monsieur Gansendonck there; hares sent by his servant, partridges brought by himself; and, as Lisa don't eat game, the gifts were of course for my gratification. But why? Certainly it wasn't on account of *my* pretty face,—

ha! ha! He was 'clearing the road before he ran the great race.' I'll help him a little! he'll be delighted—delighted!" And hereupon Master Pierre silently rubbed his hands and smacked his lips, as if actually tasting the seductive fancies that rioted in his brain.

A little farther on, he burst out laughing:—"Ha, ha, ha! I think I see the whole village with faces as long as my pitchfork! There! see the baron, giving his arm to Lisa; they are so beautifully dressed that the boors are forced to shut their dazzled eyes; four servants follow them in livery, with gold lace and silver on their hats; four horses are in their coach; I, Pierre Gansendonck, walk alongside of Bruinkasteel with my head erect, and look down on those viper-tongues—those envious wretches—with such an air as the father-in-law of a baron ought to put on before peasant *canaille*. We reach the church-door: there are carpets and cushions spread for us; the path is strewn with flowers; the organ plays till the windows rattle; the fatal 'yes' is pronounced at the altar, and Lisa is off with post-horses for Paris, dashing through the village till the very stones sparkle with fire! Next day twenty peasants at least are in bed, ill of spite, envy, and vexation. While my son-in-law is abroad, I sell or rent the '*Saint Sebastian*;' and, when he returns with my blushing daughter, we depart together for some large, pleasant *château*. Master Gansendonck—I should say 'MISTER Gansendonck'—has

gathered his crop: he has nothing to do nowadays but give orders, eat, hunt, ride, drive! Eh! but, in thinking of all the fine things that are to come, I am on the eve of bumping my nose against the door of the lodge!"

So saying, Master Pierre touched the bell-string.

After a minute's delay, a servant opened the door.

"Ah! good-day, sir," said the waiter; "you have doubtless called to see the baron?"

"Precisely, young man," replied Gansendonck, haughtily.

"He's not at home."

"How! not at home?"

"That's to say, he can't be seen."

"Not be seen by *me*? That would be pretty! He's in bed, perhaps?"

"No, but he receives nobody; and you well know why. A black eye and a face full of scratches——"

"Oh! that's nothing. He needn't hide his face from me. I'm on such terms with the baron that I could speak with him were he even in bed. I shall come in, therefore, without minding his denial."

"Come in, then," said the valet, with a wicked grin. "Follow me; I'll announce your visit."

"It's not by any means necessary," growled Master Pierre; "such formality would be nonsense in our case."

Still, the servant led the way into a small antechamber, where he forced the unwelcome visitor, in spite of resistance and remonstrance, to wait till he brought a reply from the baron.

Half an hour slipped away, and the valet had not yet returned, when Gansendonck began, as usual, to grumble.

"This rascally servant imagines, I suppose, that he can trifle with me; but I'll mark him. His head won't grow gray in our service. He shall be dismissed: that will teach him! But I listen till it makes me deaf, and all's so still in the lodge that I could hear a pin drop. Can that fellow have forgotten that I am waiting? Surely he would not carry his insolence so far! I can't sit here till to-morrow! Come, let me see what ails him. Ah! I hear the scamp at last. He laughs; what can he be laughing about?"

"Master Gansendonck," said the valet, entering the antechamber, "please follow me. Monsieur le Baron condescends to receive you; but it was not without difficulty that I brought it about. Had it not been for my intervention you would have gone back as empty as you came."

"What the mischief are you chattering about, you impertinent scoundrel?" cried Gansendonck, in a rage. "Do you know whom you are talking to? I am MONSIEUR Gansendonck!"

"And I am Jacques Miermans, at your service," responded the valet, with the *sang-froid* of a clown.

"I'll hunt you up hereafter, you villain!" said Gansendonck, as he mounted the stairs; "you shall find out what it costs to make me wait half an hour in an antechamber. Make up your bundle at once; you'll not be allowed in this house to make game of people like me!"

The valet, without noticing his threat, suddenly opened the door of a saloon, and, in a loud voice, announced,—

"THE MASTER OF THE SAINT SEBASTIAN!" after which he shot off, leaving Gansendonck planted and in a passion at the head of the staircase.

Victor Van Bruinkasteel was seated at one end of the saloon, with his elbows leaning on a table. His left eye was covered with a bandage, while his forehead and cheeks bore evidences of his fight with the brewer. But the object that chiefly attracted Gansendonck's attention, on his entrance, was the baron's dressing-gown, which was a magnificent Turkish *robe-de-chambre*. The bright and mingled colors of the garment dazzled Master Pierre to such a degree that, even before he bowed or saluted the baron, he exclaimed,—

"Good heavens, baron! what a splendid dressing-gown you have on!"

"Good-day, Master Gansendonck," said Victor, without noticing his exclamation; "you have called, I suppose, to hear how I get on? I thank you for your friendly attention."

"Don't take it ill, baron, but, before I inquire

about your health, *do* tell me where you had that dressing-gown made. It takes my eye."

"Don't make me laugh, Master Gansendonck; it pains my cheeks."

"I'm not talking to make you laugh, baron, I assure you; I'm as serious as ever I was in my life."

"Well, it's an odd question. I bought my dressing-gown in Paris."

"In Paris! That's a pity, baron."

"Why?"

"Because I should like to get one like it."

"It cost about two hundred *francs*."

"Well, I don't mind that."

"But it wouldn't suit *you*, Master Gansendonck."

"Wouldn't suit me? If I can pay for it, it would suit me. But let us have done with the dressing-gown, and pray let me know how your health is?"

"You can see for yourself:—a black eye and my body covered with bruises."

"The scoundrel has just been caught by the *gendarmes* and taken to town. I hope you will make him suffer for his impudent brutality."

"Certainly; he must be punished. He laid in wait for me, and made the assault on my own property. The law treats such deeds with severity; still, I should be sorry if he were judged according to the strict letter of the law, for then he would be imprisoned for five years at least. His

old mother has been here to intercede with me, and I pity the poor woman."

"Pity!" cried Gansendonck, with scorn and indignation; "*pity* such wretches as these?"

"If the son is a vagabond, why is his mother to suffer?"

"She ought to have brought him up better. That class of brutish *canaille* only get what they deserve; and what would become of the peasants if they were suffered to treat people like us as if we were their equals? No, baron; we must enforce respect and submission by fear, for they already carry their heads too high. If I were in your place, I wouldn't mind spending some money to give this brewer and his fellows a rough but wholesome lesson."

"That's my concern, sir," said Victor, rebukingly.

"Unquestionably, baron; I am well aware of it: every man is master of his own affairs."

The tone the conversation had taken was evidently displeasing to the baron, for he turned away his head and remained for some moments without saying a word. Master Gansendonck, who was quite as much disconcerted, let his eyes run all round the chamber, and endeavored to think how he should broach the subject of the marriage. He moved his feet about, coughed, cleared his throat; but the fit of inspiration did not come.

"And our poor Lisa?" inquired the baron, at

last, breaking the silence: "the brewer's arrest must have annoyed her dreadfully. I can easily understand her feelings, as she seems to have been in love with him from infancy."

Gansendonck awoke the moment he heard Lisa's name pronounced by the baron. "*There!*" thought he; "there's the road most luckily opened!"

"She *loves* him, think you, baron?" said he. "No, no; they had a sort of love-scape, as the saying is, long ago, but it was over some time since: I kicked the brewer out of doors. The heavy beer-cask would gladly have married my Lisa."

"There are others, no doubt, Master Gansendonck, who might have the same fancy."

A ray of happiness shone in Master Pierre's eyes as he sprang from the sofa, and said, with an air which he meant should be roguish,—

"Yes, yes; I knew *that* long ago. A man of talent can very soon tell where his cow is when he gets a glimpse of her tail."

"That's a pretty comparison!" laughed Victor.

"Isn't it? I saw through it very clearly long ago, baron. But let us take the bull by the horns at once: I can't suppose that there is much necessity for roundabout talk between us."

The baron looked at Gansendonck with a repressed smile.

"And so," continued Gansendonck, "you are thinking seriously of marriage?"

"How did *you* find it out, when I have concealed it carefully even from my friends?"

"I know every thing, baron. I have more resources in my skull than you imagine."

"In truth, you must either be a wizard, or you are uncommonly lucky in your guesses; yet, be that as it may, you have hit the nail on the head."

"Then let us come to the point at once," said Gansendonck, rubbing his hands. "I will make a sacrifice: I give my Lisa thirty thousand francs, in money and property, for her dower; and after my death she will have thirty thousand more. We will sell the inn, so as to get rid of these boors, and I'll come to live with you at your *château*; and, if such an arrangement is made, you might have the sixty thousand *francs* on the wedding-day."

As he said this, he rose, and, stretching his hand to the baron, said,—

"You see I don't make difficulties: let's drink to the success of this union. But why do you draw your hand away?"

"*The success of this union!* What union?" echoed the baron, in a tone of surprised inquiry.

"Come, come; grasp your father-in-law's hand, and in a fortnight the first banns shall be published. Don't be frightened, baron: we're no longer children. Your hand, your hand!"

The baron burst out into a loud and long fit of laughter, while surprise and anxiety were depicted in the face of poor Gansendonck.

"Why do you laugh, Monsieur Van Bruinkas-

teel?" asked the latter, subduedly: "it's for joy, perhaps?"

"Well, Gansendonck," said the baron, as soon as he had mastered his laughter, "have you taken leave of your common sense, or what's the matter with you?"

"Didn't you observe just now that you were about marrying?"

"Certainly, and with a young Parisian. She's not as pretty as Lisa, but she's a countess, and bears an ancient and distinguished name."

A shudder ran through the innkeeper's frame, as he said, in a tone and with a look of supplication:—

"Monsieur le Baron, let us put this trifling aside, if you please. It's my Lisa, isn't it, in reality, that you desire to marry? I know that you are fond of quizzing people, and I have nothing to say against it, if it gives you pleasure. But think a moment, baron; girls like our Lisa don't come in dozens;—beautiful as a meadow-flower, educated, well-bred, of a respectable family, thirty thousand *francs* in hand, and as many more in expectation! That's not a laughing-matter, I guess, and I can't say whether a countess, even, presents as many attractions. 'Good chances fly away, like swans at sea, and we can't tell when they will come back again.'"

"Poor Gansendonck!" said the baron, compassionately, "I pity you, for you are surely not in

possession of your wits. There's something the matter with your brain!"

"How?" cried Master Pierre, becoming irritated, and talking aside. "But I will restrain myself; he's joking, perhaps: yet our misunderstanding must come to an end. Let me present the naked question, Monsieur Van Bruinkasteel:—Will you marry my daughter?—yes or no! I request you to give me a frank and distinct reply."

"It is as impossible for me marry Lisa, Master Innkeeper, as it is for you to marry the star in the evening sky!"

"But why so?" cried Gansendonck, angrily. "Are you too proud, then, to mate with us? The Gansendoncks are honorable people, sir, and they have many a piece of fine land under the blue heavens. In short, *will* you marry my child, or not?"

"Your demand is simply ridiculous; but I will nevertheless answer it. No! I will not marry Lisa, neither to-day, to-morrow, nor ever. And now have the goodness to stop annoying me with your folly."

Trembling with rage, and as red as a turkey-cock, the innkeeper patted the floor violently with his foot, as he replied:—

"My demand is ridiculous, is it? I am a fool, am I? You won't marry Lisa? We shall see! The law is free and open for everybody,—for me as well as for a baron. If I have to spend half my fortune, I'll make you feel it. What! by a

series of hypocritical pretences you manage to sneak into my house; you make my daughter believe a thousand lies; you compromise her good name; you laugh at me, and then you dare to say, 'I don't care for her; I'm going to marry a countess!' Things are not done that way here, baron. Master Gansendonck is not to be trifled with in that fashion! After yesterday's occurrences you can no longer refuse: you must restore my child's honor, or I'll bring you before the court, and follow you even to Brussels. You will marry, eh? and, if you don't instantly consent, I forbid you to put your foot inside of my doors again. Do you understand?"

During this outburst of rant, the baron regarded the innkeeper with a frigid look of pity, till at the end of the threatening tirade there was a momentary flush on his countenance, denoting a struggle between anger and self-possession.

"Monsieur Gansendonck, if I listened to the dictates of my self-respect, I ought to pull the bell and order my servants to turn you out of doors; but I really pity your craziness. As you seem to desire it, I will reply clearly and distinctly, once for all, to whatever you may have said and all you shall say hereafter. There is a lesson in this thing for you and another for me; and both of us will do well to profit by the instruction."

"I want to know," cried the innkeeper, "whether you are going to marry Lisa?—yes or no!"

"Haven't you ears, that you ask the same thing

over and over again? Listen, Monsieur Gansendonck, to what I shall say, and don't interrupt me, or my lackeys shall put an end to our nonsensical interview."

I listen! I listen!" growled Master Pierre, between his clenched teeth; "if I have to die for it, I will be silent, provided I am to have my turn afterwards."

The baron began:—"You reproach me with having introduced myself at your house; but you must remember perfectly that it was you yourself who requested me to come and excited my curiosity to see and know your daughter. What, then, have I done without your consent? Nothing. On the contrary, you were always complaining that I was not *familiar* enough with your daughter; and now you come here with the pretence that I am bound to marry her! So it was a trap that you set for me, and drew me on with concealed views! I sought Lisa's company because it was pleasant, and because I really felt a loyal friendship for her. If this intercourse, which I designed as a *favor* to you, shall have a sad issue for all of us, it is only another proof of the wisdom of the old proverb, 'Keep with your equals.' We have both acted indiscreetly, and both are punished for it. To *my* shame and mortification, I have been nearly killed by a peasant, while *you* have become the laughing-stock of the village, and now behold all your 'castles in the air' vanishing in mist. Late repentance is better than none.

I confess that I was wrong in visiting a village tavern on familiar terms, and in behaving toward your daughter as if I were her equal; ay, and I confess too that, had not Lisa been by nature the soul of purity and virtue, her character might have been corrupted by my loose manner and careless conversation."

"What do you say?" cried Gansendonck, with a bound. "Seducer that you are, have you dared to speak dishonorable words to my child?"

"I scorn your rage," continued the baron, coolly, "and I desire to forget for a while who it is that dares speak to me in such tones. I never made speeches to your daughter that would not be considered, in the world, as every-day remarks,—remarks which, in French, do no harm in the society where they are constantly heard, but which, if spoken among inferior classes, may defile the heart, because they are taken for truths and excite emotions, though they are nothing but the badinage and compliments of idle society. I was wrong in that; but it was the only crime, or rather the only error, with which any one may charge me,—except *you*, perhaps, who always made me say more than I desired. You threatened just now to forbid me your house: that is altogether useless; I had already resolved to profit by the lesson I have received, and not only to avoid your inn as a friend, but never to make free with *peasants* again."

"*Peasants!*" cried Gansendonck, impatiently;

"I am no *peasant*! my name is Gansendonck. What resemblance do you find between a peasant and me?—say!"

"Unluckily for you, there is very little," answered the baron, sarcastically. "Your vanity has transported you out of your true position, and now you are neither fish nor flesh,—neither gentleman nor peasant. For the rest of your life you will be a jest for the better class and an object of contempt for the lower. A *true peasant* is the most useful man on the face of God's earth; and when he is honest, has a kind heart, and fulfils his duties, he merits the world's esteem more than anybody else. But do you know *who* it is that most provokes a contemptuous feeling for the peasantry of a country? It is a man like you, who fancies he raises himself when he looks down on others; who imagines he ceases to be a peasant the moment he can talk disparagingly of his class, and who considers himself an eagle when he sticks one of its feathers in his cap!"

"Are you done, Monsieur le Baron?" cried Gansendonck, starting up. "Do you think I have come here to be dragged in the dirt without uttering a word?"

"One word more," added the baron; "let me give you a bit of good advice, Monsieur Gansendonck. Write on your bedroom-door, 'Shoemaker, stick to your last.' Dress like other peasants; speak and act like people in your condition of life; seek a stout, worthy workman as your

daughter's husband; smoke your pipe and drink your pint of beer sociably with the villagers; and don't try any longer to be what you are not. Recollect that when an ass wears a lion's skin his ears are almost always peeping out; and the world won't fail to discover from your habits and voice that your father wasn't a nightingale. Now, Gansendonck, go in peace with this lesson, for which you will thank me hereafter!"

Gansendonck sprang once more from his chair, folded his arms firmly over his panting breast, and exclaimed,—

"You think to deceive me, sir, by your pretended moderation and monkey-tricks; but you deceive yourself, and we shall see whether there is no law to keep you in bounds, Monsieur le Baron! I shall go to town to see your father and let him know how you have stained the honor of my house. And if it is necessary for me to write to Paris, to the countess whose name you conceal from me through fear, I shall not hesitate to do it. I'll put a stop to your marriage; and, what's more, I'll let everybody know what a trifling deceiver you are!"

"Is that all you have to say?" asked the baron, with contemptuous anger.

"Will you marry Lisa?—yes or no!" vociferated Master Pierre, shaking his fist at him.

Victor stretched his arm and gave a couple of violent pulls at the bell-rope, and footsteps were instantly heard on the staircase. Gansendonck

quivered with shame and spite; but the door opened, and three serving-men appeared in the saloon.

"Did Monsieur ring?" asked they, all together.

"Conduct Monsieur Gansendonck to the door of the lodge," said the baron, with as much calmness as he could command.

"What! you turn me out of doors!" shrieked Gansendonck, with concentrated passion. "You shall pay for it, tyrant! impostor! seducer!——"

Victor made a sign with his hand to the valets, and, rising, left the room by a side-door.

Gansendonck stood as if thunderstruck, and did not know whether to weep or curse. Meanwhile the servants began to push him politely but irresistibly to the door, without paying any attention to his remarks. In fact, before he recovered the use of his faculties, Master Gansendonck was out in the fields, with the door of the hunting-lodge closed on him forever.

For a while he walked straight forward, like a blind man who does not know where he is, till he struck his head against a tree, which seemed to rouse him from his stupor. He then began to follow the highroad toward his inn, all the way giving vent in curses to his wrath against the baron. At length he halted in a thick copse, where he stood perfectly still for at least ten minutes, and then began to strike his face and forehead with his clenched fist.

"Stupid ass! fool, fool, fool that you are! do

you dare go back to your home? You deserve to be cowhided, crazy loon! That will teach you what barons and gentlefolks are! Put on a white waistcoat and yellow gloves again? a fool's cap had been better! You are ignorant and stupid enough to drown yourself in a windmill! Hide yourself! burrow in the ground, you boor—you boor!"

At length, after having exhausted the vocabulary of self-abuse, tears came to his relief; and, weeping and sighing, the humiliated innkeeper dragged his footsteps homeward.

All at once he perceived his servant Kobe running toward him, uttering sounds and making signs which at a distance he could not comprehend, except as pressing appeals for haste.

"Master! master! master! oh! come quickly, quickly!" shouted Kobe, as soon as he was within reach: "*poor Lisa is in her death-struggle!*"

CHAPTER X.

The daughter of Pride is called Shame.

THE winter was over. The trees and grass were beginning to display their tender green under the sun's gentle influence; the birds built their nests and sang their songs of spring; every thing beamed with the vigor of youth; every

thing gave token of a glorious future, as if a cloud were never to shadow the beautiful blue of the arching sky.

In the back-chamber of the *Saint Sebastian* a sick girl reposes with her head on a pillow. Poor Lisa! the unrelenting worm is gnawing at her heart. There she sits, motionless, yet panting with debility, for the slightest motion exhausts her. Her pale face is as transparent as alabaster, but on each thin cheek a burning spot denotes the fatal ravages of disease. She is amusing herself by looking at and playing with a few daisies they have just brought her; but, after a while, she drops the withering flowers on the ground; her head falls back on the pillow; her glassy eyes turn to the ceiling with an earnest gaze, as if looking into futurity, and her soul seems measuring the path to eternal life!

A little behind his daughter, beside the window, Pierre Gansendonck is seated, in silence, with his arms crossed on his breast. His head is bent downward, and his half-closed eyes are fixed on the ground, while his features and attitude betray the evidences of remorse, despair, shame, and contrition.

What were the thoughts of the wretched father as he beheld the life of his only child going out like a lamp before him? Did he acknowledge that his vanity was the executioner who bound the victim to the fatal block?

Be that as it may, in his heart the devouring

serpent wound its endless coils, for his face was ploughed with wrinkles, and his shrunken cheeks and weary movements bore witness that the last sparks of confidence, courage, and hope were expiring within him.

The least sigh of the sick girl made him start and shudder; her painful cough racked his own breast; and, when she turned her suffering looks on him, he trembled as if he read in her vacant stare the frightful word *infanticide*! Now that his parental love was freed and purified from the bonds of pride, he would have met the most cruel death with joy to have prolonged his daughter's life even for a single year.

Poor Gansendonck! but a little while ago every thing in the world looked so smiling around him! such celestial dreams of happiness and grandeur adorned his life with their bewitching and deceptive *mirages*! And now, there he sat, in solitude and abandonment, dumb as a shadow, by the side of his dying child, like a criminal in the condemned cell.

If the eternal pangs of conscience, the constant thought of death, had withered his body, they had also dispelled the clouds of vanity from his soul and strangely softened his character. His dress was modest and unpretending, his tone affable, his demeanor humble. He had now but two objects in life,—to assuage the sufferings of his child and to obtain the release of Karel.

Gansendonck had been sitting for at least half

an hour in the posture we have described. He neither stirred nor seemed to breathe, so fearful was he of disturbing poor Lisa. At length she raised her head with a sigh of pain, as if the pillow had not been placed comfortably, and in a moment her father sprang to her side.

"Dear Lisa, you are tired, are you not, of confinement to this room? See how brightly the sun shines out of doors; the air is so fresh and soft! I have fixed a chair and a couple of pillows for you in the garden. Shall I carry you out into the sunshine? The doctor says it will do you good."

"Oh no, father! leave me here," said she, with a sigh; "this pillow is so hard!"

"The eternal silence of this chamber is so oppressive, Lisa; thy heart needs some change and recreation."

"Eternal silence!" echoed the sick girl. "How calm and quiet it must be in the grave!"

"Oh! banish such gloomy thoughts, Lisa! Come; shall I help you? No one will see you; I will shut the garden-gate, and you may sit behind the pretty hedge. You will see how the fresh young flowers are springing; you will hear how sweetly your birds are beginning to sing. Come, Lisa; do it for my sake."

"Well, father," replied she, "for your sake I will try to go that distance once more;" and, placing both hands on the table, she raised herself slowly.

Ah! how the tears started afresh in that father's

eye when he saw every limb of her body trembling under the effort. Without saying a word, Gansendonck lifted her gently like an infant in his arms, and bore her forth till he laid her on a sofa in the garden. Then, arranging the pillows behind her back and under her head, he took his seat beside her and waited silently till she had regained her strength a little. Then, in a consoling manner, though still weeping, he said,—

“Take heart, dear Lisa! the beautiful summer will soon be here, and the warm breeze will strengthen you. You will get well, my child.”

“Ah, father! why do you try to deceive me?” sighed Lisa. “Everybody who sees me—you, father, like the rest—weep and grieve at my condition. It’s all over with me! When the Fair comes I shall be asleep in the graveyard!”

“My child! my child! don’t cast yourself down still lower with such desolating thoughts!”

“Desolating thoughts, father?” echoed Lisa. “Oh! isn’t it beautiful in this world of ours? but were I in heaven I should be blessed with joy—with health—eternal love!”

“Karel will soon be back, Lisa. Didn’t you say that you’d soon get well if he were near you? He will understand how to pet and console you; his affectionate voice will rouse you from your sufferings and give you renewed power.”

“Six months more!” uttered the poor girl, despairingly, with her eyes raised to heaven as if in prayer; “six months more!”

"Not so long, Lisa. Kobe went to Brussels yesterday with a letter from our *burgomaster* to the gentleman who is interceding for us with the minister of justice. We have every reason to believe that Karel's sentence will be mitigated. It is likely he will be set free at once. God knows whether Kobe won't bring us the joyous news this very afternoon! Lisa, my child, don't you feel revived by the thought?"

"Poor Karel! poor Karel!" said Lisa, in a reverie; "four everlasting months already! Oh, father! I committed a fault, I did; but he,—he who is so innocent,—he who ought not to be wearing out his fresh life in a gloomy prison!"

"But no, Lisa, it isn't so: the day before yesterday I went myself to see him in prison. He bears his lot patiently, and, were he not distressed by your illness, he would consider himself comparatively happy."

"How much he has suffered, father! You love him, don't you? you won't repulse him any more? He's so good!"

"Repulse him!" cried Master Pierre, in a trembling voice: "I have begged his pardon on my knees; I have bathed his feet with my tears!"

"Oh, heaven, father! and he,—what did he say?"

"He folded me in his arms, kissed me, consoled me. I confessed all to him; told him that my pride had been the cause of his misfortunes, and told him that my life should be one long

expiation. But he shut my lips with a kiss,—a kiss which, like a balm from heaven, poured hope and strength into my heart. Blessed is the generous heart that gives good for evil!”

“And he pardoned all *my* faults too, father, did he not?”

“Pardon you, Lisa? What harm have you ever done? Ah! dearest child, if you suffer,—if a punishment from above seems to have smitten you,—it is for me alone, poor girl, that you are forced to undergo that bitter sacrifice!”

“And I?—am I innocent, father? Was it not my levity that crushed Karel’s heart and made him despair? But he has pardoned all,—my excellent love!”

“No! no!” cried her father; “Karel had nothing to pardon in you. In his eyes, you were always a lily. Even when my folly forced you to behave imprudently, and when every thing conspired to weaken his confidence, he banished every suspicion, and, with a glance of confidence in his eyes, declared that his Lisa was pure and loved none on earth but him!”

A gentle smile flitted over the face of the poor sufferer, as she replied,—

“Yes, *that* conviction will assuage my dying agony. When I am gone there above, I will pray to God for him; I will smile on him from heaven wherever he goes, even until he shall come unto me!”

The firm, joyous tone of Lisa’s voice encouraged

her father in an effort to withdraw her mind from the sad presentiments that possessed it.

“You don’t know, Lisa,” said he, pleasantly,—“you don’t know all he said to me the other day about the fine garden he intends having made for you as soon as he gets out. He means to have a profusion of the finest flowers, paths and winding alleys, parterres, groves, hedges, ponds! And, while the workmen are engaged laying out the garden, he intends making a journey with you to Paris, where you’ll see the handsomest things that are to be found anywhere on this earth. His love will rekindle your life, Lisa! Think of it a moment, my child! In fact, you are his wife already, for nothing in the world can part you any more, and your life will be a heaven of happiness. Karel wants me to come and live with you and his mother at the brewery. He will be my son, and in her you will find a tender mother. By humility I will strive to regain the friendship of the villagers. Everybody will love us. But, Lisa! Lisa! my child! what ails you? You tremble! Are you ill?”

She made an effort to smile again, but it was evident that her strength was gone. She felt for her father’s hand, and, holding it in her feeble grasp, said, in tones that became feebler and feebler,—

“Dear father, if the good God above had not recalled me, your consoling words would indeed cure me. But, alas! what can save me—from

the death that I see yonder—like something I can't describe,—a cloud,—something that seems beckoning me? And now again an icy chill runs through me; the air is too cold. Water! water on my forehead! Oh, father! dear father! I think I am—dying!" While uttering the last word, she closed her eyes and fell back as motionless as a corpse.

Gansendonck fell on his knees before his daughter and raised his hands in prayer to heaven, while tears streamed from his eyes. He soon recovered himself, however, and began to rub the palms of the dying girl, to raise her head, to call her name, to bathe her brow with tears of repentance and love.

In a short time consciousness returned to the sick girl; and, while her father was half crazy with joy at her restoration, she slowly opened her eyes, rolling them round with a surprised look.

"Not yet? Still on earth?" sighed she. "Oh, father, carry me back to the house! My head swims; my breast burns; the air scalds my lungs; the sunlight makes me ill!"

Gansendonck, as if he would willingly have snatched her from the grasp of death, raised the girl in his arms, and carried her into the chamber, where he placed her again in her chair near the table, with a cushion beneath her head. He seemed anxious to say something after all these preparations for her comfort were completed; but,

"Don't speak now, father dear," said she; "I am so weary, so tired. Let me rest!"

Gansendonck was instantly still, resumed his chair, and began again to weep in silence.

Another half-hour glided by without a sound or movement in that chamber that gave token of the presence of human beings, when suddenly the sounds of wheels were heard before the door.

"There's Kobe, Lisa! there's Kobe!" cried Gansendonck, joyously. "I hear the tramp of our horse."

A spark of hope glimmered in the dying eyes of the maiden.

Kobe came in as Lisa seemed to rally her expiring strength to listen to the good news. She raised her head, stretched her thin neck, and looked earnestly at the servant.

"Well, well, Kobe?" cried Master Pierre, impatiently.

Kobe's eyes were wet. "Nothing! master; I have nothing to tell you! The gentleman who was to plead for Karel with the minister of justice has gone to Germany."

A stifled groan escaped from Lisa's mouth. Her head fell like lead on the pillow, and silent tears started in her eyes.

"Alas! alas!" said she, in a whisper so feeble that it could just be distinguished, "he will see me no more on earth!"

CHAPTER XI.

He who sows thistles reaps thorns.

It was a fine morning when a young peasant was seen briskly walking along the highway from Antwerp to Breda. He was out of breath, and the sweat stood in big beads on his brow. Nevertheless, indescribable joy shone in his eyes, and in their expression might be read the language of gratitude to God and good-will to men. He walked quickly. From time to time a word of delight broke from his lips: an observer might have supposed that he was hastening with anxious impatience to reach a spot where he expected to enjoy some extraordinary happiness. In fact, it was Karel the brewer, whose punishment had been mitigated by a reduction of the term for which he had been sentenced to imprisonment; and he was on his way back to the village, full of happy fancies. He was about to see his Lisa,—to console and cure her; for, was it not his imprisonment which had caused her grief and anxiety? His deliverance, his return, must be infallible remedies for all her ills! Oh, yes! he was about to surprise her by his unexpected presence,—to

say to her, "Cease, Lisa, cease resigning yourself to sorrow. Behold me, my beloved! faithful and true as of old! Repose on my affectionate breast; lift your head with hope; all our troubles are over: look at the future with courage, faith, and joy; smile at life, which promises so many happy years!"

And his good old mother, too,—how he would repay her tender, sympathetic sufferings! He saw her, in fancy, running to welcome him with a cry of pleasure; he felt her arms round his neck, her kisses on his cheek, her tears on his brow; and he smiled lovingly at the delicious vision, as the words "Mother! mother!" fell from his lips.

Oh, that youth was happy! Restored freedom expanded his manly chest; the perfumed breeze, as it stole sweetness from the flowery hedges, entered his lungs like balm; the spring sunshine threw golden sparks on the fresh young verdure of the trees, and throughout nature every thing seemed to the emancipated man to be clad in festal dress.

With such feelings and thoughts, Karel walked rapidly onward till he arrived within half a league of his native village. But there he suddenly halted as if he had seen an apparition of horror. Three gentlemen came out rapidly from a by-road into the highway; and one of them was—Victor Van Bruinkasteel!

It would have been hard to say whether those young men recognised Karel; but, if they did so,

they took no notice of him, and went on their way to the village.

Karel was annoyed. He was of course unwilling to meet the baron at that moment, for his blood boiled, and he felt how difficult it would be to restrain his passion; and yet it was impossible, with his present anxiety, to stop or even slacken his gait. Accordingly, after a little reflection, he struck into a well-known by-path, which, though it was somewhat longer than the highway, led to the village across the woods and fields.

* * * * *

The sounds of the death-bell were booming slowly and heavily from the tower of the village church. In the cemetery a fresh grave was opened, and every toll of the bell re-echoed from the hollow tomb, as if a deep voice were calling from the earth for its mortal prey. Even the beasts of the field seemed appalled by the funeral tones, and stood motionless in their tracks: the dogs howled, the cattle lowed, but, with the exception of these melancholy sounds, not a note broke the mournful silence of the little community. Here and there might be seen groups of villagers, with their prayer-books and rosaries, slowly and sadly directing their steps, like shadows, to the church-door. Farther on in the distance there was a funeral-train. Four young girls dressed in white bore the body of their companion who had perished in the morning of life; while other maidens, clad like the first, walked beside them, to relieve

the bearers of their precious burden. All the girls of the village, even down to the little ones whose innocent hearts were still ignorant of the meaning of the word *death*, followed the body, carrying branches of box-wood in their hands. Many wept bitterly: all moved onward with downcast eyes and faces, grieving for poor Lisa,—so young, so innocent, and, alas! so punished!

The coffin is covered with flowers,—roses and lilies, emblems of virgin purity! How fresh and sweet is their smell! how bright and shining they rest on the white linen! And there, beneath them, lies another flower, pale and withered,—unhappy victim of vanity and pride!

Three men only followed directly behind the corpse:—Kobe the servant, and Sus the smith; while between them they support a man who staggers along the path as if about to fall at every step. He hides his face in his hands; but tears strain through his fingers, and his bosom heaves with convulsive sobs. Poor Gansendonck! culprit father! thou darest not gaze on that grave and coffin. Thou tremblest with agony! Let us not look too narrowly into thy bosom, for martyrdom exacts respect. We forget thy deadly pride, and shed a tear of compassion for thee at this double burial of thy heart and of thy child!

The graveyard is reached at last, and the priest is beginning to say the last prayers over these spoils of death; when, lo! what sudden apparition in their midst startles the mourning crowd?

It is Karel! He stops a moment, as if struck by lightning, and fixes a wild, staring look on the group. He rushes to the bier, pushes back the bearers, tears off the snowy pall and scatters the flowers on the ground, lacerates his hands with the nails and lid that hide the loved one: he calls his Lisa, shrieks, weeps, laughs, and falls to the earth in a swoon!

* * * * *

The burial is over, and Karel, borne to his home, is gradually restored to animation. Kobe speaks to him of his mother; but the youth no longer recognises either friend or foe. A strange fire sparkles in his eyes; he laughs; seems happy;—*but his mind is gone forever!*

* * * * *

If you ever happen, dear reader, to visit the village where these tragic scenes occurred, you will see two men seated on a bench in front of the brewery, playing together like children. The face of one of them is wan and idiotic; the other is an old servant who watches the sufferer affectionately and strives to amuse him.

Ask that servant the cause of his master's illness, and poor Kobe will tell you this story. He will show you the grave where Gansendonck sleeps his last sleep beside his daughter; and he will be sure to end his narrative by the proverb:—

“PRIDE IS THE SOURCE OF ALL OUR ILLS.”

THE END.

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