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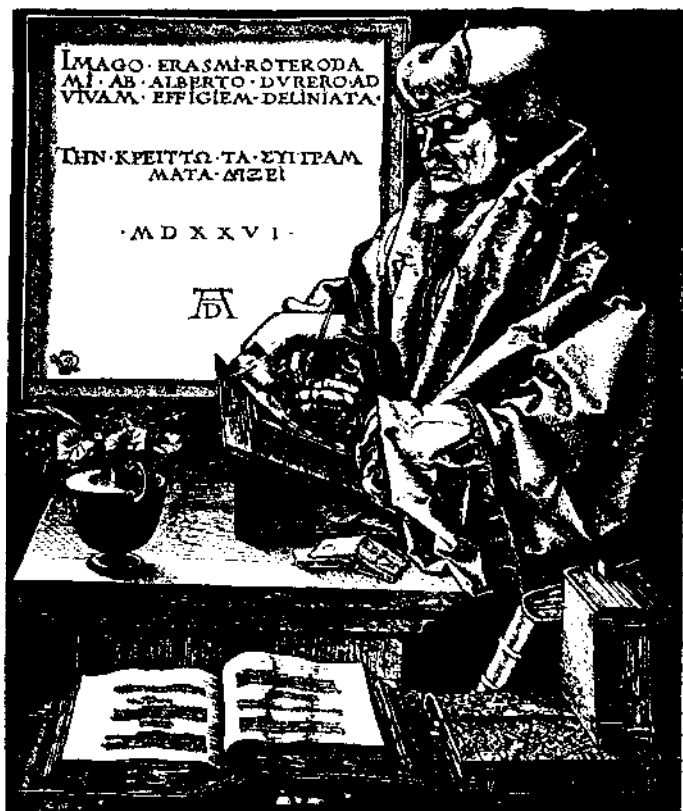
THE CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH



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DESIDERIUS ERASMUS
A Portrait from Life by Albrecht Durer

The Cloister & the Hearth

A Tale of the Middle Ages

By

Charles Reade

Abridged, with Introduction and Notes, by

Y. W. Cann, M.A.

ENGLEM

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1929

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION.	xi
THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK	xiii
THE CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH:	
	1
CHAPTER I.	1
	7
CHAPTER II.	7
	16
CHAPTER III.	16
	20
CHAPTER IV.	20
	22
CHAPTER V.	22
	27
CHAPTER VI.	27
	31
CHAPTER VII.	31
	36
CHAPTER VIII.	36
	39
CHAPTER IX.	39
	44
CHAPTER X.	44
	51
CHAPTER XI.	51
	61
CHAPTER XII.	61
	66
CHAPTER XIII.	66
	72
CHAPTER XIV.	72
	79
CHAPTER XV.	79
	83
CHAPTER XVI.	83
	90
CHAPTER XVII.	90
	91
CHAPTER XVIII.	91
	93
CHAPTER XIX.	93
	100
CHAPTER XX.	100
	104
CHAPTER XXI.	104
	110
CHAPTER XXII.	110

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	xi
THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK	xiii
THE CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH :	
CHAPTER I.	1
CHAPTER II.	7
CHAPTER III.	16
CHAPTER IV.	20
CHAPTER V.	22
CHAPTER VI.	27
CHAPTER VII.	31
CHAPTER VIII.	36
CHAPTER IX.	30
CHAPTER X.	44
CHAPTER XI.	51
CHAPTER XII.	61
CHAPTER XIII.	66
CHAPTER XIV.	72
CHAPTER XV.	79
CHAPTER XVI.	83
CHAPTER XVII.	90
CHAPTER XVIII.	91
CHAPTER XIX.	93
CHAPTER XX.	100
CHAPTER XXI.	104
CHAPTER XXII.	110

viii THE CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH

	PAGE
CHAPTER XXIII.	115
CHAPTER XXIV.	120
CHAPTER XXV.	121
CHAPTER XXVI.	127
CHAPTER XXVII.	130
CHAPTER XXVIII.	130
CHAPTER XXIX.	140
CHAPTER XXX.	143
CHAPTER XXXI.	147
CHAPTER XXXII.	152
CHAPTER XXXIII.	100
CHAPTER XXXIV.	105
CHAPTER XXXV.	171
CHAPTER XXXVI.	174
NOTES	177
SUBJECTS FOR SHORT ESSAYS	183
HELPS TO FURTHER STUDY	184

ILLUSTRATIONS

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS, by A. DURER *Frontispiece*

" The light at the nape of his neck made a glow- worm of him "	PAGE 41
" Martin drew the bolt very slowly, and in rushed Dierich and four more "	49

The text of this edition has been reduced by omissions, but is otherwise faithful to the original. The illustrations are reproductions of drawings made by Charles Keene for the first version of the story when it appeared in *Once a Week*.

INTRODUCTION

The Cloister and the Hearth is one of the most famous stories produced in an age of great story-tellers. Charles Reade was a contemporary of Thackeray and Dickens, Kingsley and George Eliot, novelists whose works are more justly renowned than any of his own, with one exception. Of this one Swinburne, a poet and critic of the next generation, said, "A story better conceived or better composed, better constructed or better related, than *The Cloister and the Hearth* it would be difficult to find anywhere." And on the merit of this story he ranks him high among the novelists.

Reade had the gifts and the experience we should expect to find in the writer of such a novel. He was a scholar, a wide and untiring reader; he was a lawyer by profession and therefore a keen observer of human nature; a musician, with an artist's sympathy and imagination; and a dramatist, with training and skill in the construction of a plot.

The novelists of his time had nearly always a motive behind their tales; they were trying to rouse the sympathy of their readers to attack some social evil. When Kingsley wrote *The Water-Babies*, he was revealing the horrors of the life of a child chimney-sweep. Dickens condemned the schools of the day in *Nicholas Nickleby*, and the evils of work-houses in *Oliver Twist*. Reade himself wrote *It is Never Too Late to Mend* to stir up indignation against the prisons of the time. We can sometimes feel his caustic criticism behind the incidents in *The Cloister and the Hearth*, his scorn of hypocrisy, fraud and superstition, his rage against the tyranny of great rulers. But he did not write this novel with the

motive of reform. He wrote it because he was keenly interested in the life of the Renaissance and because he had found a story he loved. The story was intensely real to him, and therefore it grips us too.

The great name which gave Reade the germ of his story is revealed only in the last paragraph of *The Cloister and the Hearth*. Erasmus was a scholar of the fifteenth century who believed that "the education of youth was the most honourable of all callings." It was due to his influence upon his English friends that some of the finest English schools were founded. He was a man revered throughout Europe and honoured by all generations, but his birth has always been obscure. He is believed to have been the son of a priest, and therefore illegitimate, and round this tradition of his parents Reade has woven a story with all the sympathetic imagination he possessed.

He wrote it first as *A Good Fight*, a short story in a magazine. It ended happily; the villains were frustrated, and Gerard and Margaret married. There was no account of Gerard's adventures in Germany and Italy and no mention of Denys, his friend. And then a year later Reade took up his tale again. "I felt uneasy," he wrote, "at having deviated unnecessarily from the historical outline of a true story." He determined to make a full and sincere novel out of a slight tale. So he set to work for a year to collect material about the fifteenth century. He preserved cuttings and extracts and notes from newspapers, books of travel, and from personal observation, and classified and indexed them in huge ledgers. Finally he was ready to begin his novel, and in 1861 it was published.

You might expect from such a systematic reading and careful arrangement that his book would be a mere dry collection of historical facts. It is anything but that. Reade studied his subject so that he could live in the atmosphere his characters lived in. He invents incidents and creates people to show us the life of the fifteenth century. He

was a dramatist, and knew that a story must move quickly and that conversation must be alive. And so he holds our attention.

He had a wealth of material to explore. The age of the Renaissance was one which has left countless revelations of itself behind in art and history and literature. Reade says that some of the best scenes in the book are those from the pen of Erasmus himself. Erasmus wrote vivid letters telling of the many lands he visited and the many types of men he understood. Reade would look, too, at the paintings of the Renaissance artists of the Netherlands and of Italy, the portraits of Flemish citizens, the great altar-pieces of Memling and the Van Eycks, the frescoes of Perugino, and the exquisite illuminated missals of the convents, and show them to us by creating for us the men and women who lived in their midst and were shaped and influenced by them. He delves into the complicated history of the time and from it produces a vivid portrait of a tyrannical Burgundian prince, a scheming burgomaster, an ambitious cardinal. He reads the letters and treatises of divines and the records of monastic houses, and re-creates for us the Church, its stern conservatives like* Jerome, its cultured fanatic scholars like Fra Colonna. From the tales of travel he gives us some faint conception of the perils of waters, of robbers, of the city, in those days of rough journeying.

But we see ail this through Gerard's eyes. The great master-novelists never cram our minds with details so that we forget their characters : the characters themselves win our sympathy to understand the times in which they lived. First and last in this story are the fortunes of Gerard and Margaret. We never forget them through all the plots and struggles and adventures, or lose sight of them among all the lesser characters, robust and natural as these are. The characters from real life—Margaret Van Eyck, Baldwyn of Burgundy, Hans Memling—lose nothing of their reality. The imaginary figures gain reality from the truth of the

surroundings in which they are placed. We read *The Cloister and the Hearth* for the story, and find at the end that we have been living in the past and have experienced and absorbed it without effort, through the supreme art of the writer.

THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK

CHARLES READE was the son of an Oxfordshire squire, and was born at Ipsden in 1814. His early school-days were spent under a master as brutal as Dickens's Mr. Squeers, at Rose Hill School, Iffley, but he was later sent to a private tutor at Windsor. He went to Magdalen College, Oxford, and became a Fellow, Vinerian Scholar, and Dean of the Faculty of Arts. All this had been a preparation for the legal profession, and he was called to the Bar in 1843.

His great ambition was to excel as a dramatist, but his plays were never really successful. Instead he became popular as a novelist with *Peg Woffington*, a story of the stage; *Christie Johnstone*, a study of Scottish fisherfolk; and *It is Never Too Late to Mend*. These were written between 1852 and 1856. *The Cloister and the Hearth* appeared in 1861. *Hard Cash* and *Griffith Gaunt* are two of his more successful later novels, and there are a number of others.

To the end of his life he was writing continuously both as novelist and journalist, and when he died in 1884 he left behind him a novel he had just completed. Reade was much interested in music, and played the violin himself. He was also an authority on Cremona violins. He had a real enthusiasm for social reform, and his novels show him to have been as keenly alive to the abuses of the day as were his fellow-novelists.

THE CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH

CHAPTER I

IT was past the middle of the fifteenth century ; Louis X I . was sovereign of France ; Edward IV . was wrongful king of England ; and Philip " the Good," having by force and cunning dispossessed his cousin Jacqueline, and broken her heart, reigned undisturbed this many years in Holland, where our tale begins.

Elias, and Catherine his wife, lived in the little town of Tergou. He traded, wholesale and retail, in cloth, silk, brown Holland, and, above all, in curried leather, a material highly valued by the middling people, because it would stand twenty years' wear, and turn an ordinary knife, no small virtue in a jerkin of that century, in which folk were so liberal of their steel.

The couple were well to do, and would have been free from all earthly care, but for nine children.

As the parents grew older, and saw with their own eyes the fate of large families, misgivings and care mingled with their love. They belonged to a singularly wise and provident people : in Holland reckless parents were as rare as disobedient children.

One day the eldest boy but one, aged nineteen, came to his mother, and begged her to intercede with his father

to send him to Amsterdam, and place him with a merchant.

Catherine threw up her hands with dismay and incredulity. " What! leave Tergou ! "

" What is one street to me more than another ? If I can leave the folk of Tergou, I can surely leave the stones."

Richart was launched, and never cost them another penny ; but to place him in the house of Vander Stegen, the merchant, took all the little hoard but one gold crown. They began again. Two years passed ; Richart found a niche in commerce for his brother Jacob.

The little coffer was empty again, and to fill it they gathered like ants. And so in three years more they had gleaned enough to set up their fourth son as a master-tailor, and their eldest daughter as a robemaker, in Tergou.

Alas ! there remained on hand two that were unable to get their bread, and two that were unwilling. The unable ones were, 1, Giles, a dwarf, of the wrong sort, half stupidity, half malice, all head and claws and voice, and sided with through thick and thin by his mother ; 2, Little Catherine, a poor little girl that could only move on crutches. She lived in pain, but smiled through it, with her marble face and violet eyes and long silky lashes; and fretful or repining word never came from her lips. The unwilling ones were Sybrandt, the youngest, a ne'er-do-weel, and Cornelis, the eldest, who stuck to the hearth, waiting for dead men's shoes. Almost worn out by their repeated efforts, the couple would often say, " What will become of all these ? But thanks to St. Bavon and all the saints, there's Gerard."

Young Gerard was for many years of his life a son apart and distinct, object of no fears and no great hopes. No fears, for he was going into the Church, and the Church could always maintain her children: no great hopes, because his family had no interest with the great to get him a benefice. The day was never long enough for him; and he begged ends of candles of the neighbours, which he lighted at unreasonable hours—ay, even at eight of the clock at night in winter, when the very burgomaster was abed. The monks of a neighbouring convent had taught him penmanship, and continued to teach him until they discovered that he was teaching them. "But, my son," said an elderly monk, "how is it that you, to whom God has given an eye so true, a hand so subtle yet firm, and a heart to love these beautiful crafts, how is it you do not colour as well as write? A scroll looks but barren unless a border of fruit, and leaves, and rich arabesques surround the good words."

At this Gerard was confused, and muttered that he had made several trials at illuminating, but had not succeeded well; and thus the matter rested.

Margaret, sister and survivor of the brothers Van Eyck, left Flanders, and came to end her days in her native country. She bought a small house near Tergou. In course of time she heard of Gerard, and saw some of his handiwork: it pleased her so well that she sent her female servant, Reicht Heynes, to ask him to come to her. This led to an acquaintance. At first the old lady damped Gerard's courage terribly. At each visit she fished out of holes and corners drawings and paintings, some of them by her own hand, that seemed to him unapproachable. She drew from him the reason why

he did not illuminate, viz., that he could not afford tho gold, the blue, and the red, but only the cheap earths. Then Margaret Van Eyck gave him a little brush-gold, and some vermilion and ultramarine, and a piece of good vellum to lay them on. He almost adored her.

Gerard advanced in learning and skill. As a return for all he owed his friends the monks, he made them exquisite copies from two of their choicest MSS., viz., the life of their founder, and their Comedies of Terence, the monastery finding the vellum.

The high and puissant Prince, Philip "the Good," was versatile. He could fight as well as any king going ; and he could lie as well as any, except the King of France. He was a mighty hunter, and could read and write. His tastes were wide and ardent. He had lions in cages, and fleet leopards trained by Orientals to run down hares and deer. In short, he relished all rarities. The best of him was, he was open-handed to the poor ; and the next best was, he fostered the arts in earnest. He offered prizes for the best specimens of *orfèvrerie* in two kinds, religious and secular : item, for the best paintings in white of egg, oils, and tempera ; these to be on panel, silk, or metal, as the artists chose : item, for the best illuminating and border-painting on vellum : item, for the fairest writing on vellum. When this was cried by the bellman through the streets of Tergou, a thousand mouths opened, and one heart beat—Gerard's. He told his family timidly he should try for two of those prizes. They stared in silence, for their breath was gone at his audacity.

" Yes, Gerard, try with the rest. Many say you are skilful; and mother and I will pray the Virgin to guide your hand."

" Thank you, little Kate. I will ask the good monks to let me send my copy of their ' Terence': it is on snowy vellum, and I can write no better."

' When the time came, Gerard longed to go to Rotterdam and see the Duke, and above all to see the work of his competitors, and so get a lesson from defeat. The night before he went, Margaret Van Eyck asked him to take a letter for her, and when he came to look at it, to his surprise he found it was addressed to the Princess Marie, at the Stadthouse in Rotterdam.

The day before the prizes were to be distributed, Gerard started for Rotterdam in his holiday suit, to wit, a doublet of silver-grey cloth, with sleeves, and a jerkin of the same over it, but without sleeves. When he got within a league of Rotterdam he found an old man sitting by the roadside quite worn out, and a comely young woman holding his hand, with a face brimful of concern. The old man wore a gown, and a fur tippet, and a velvet cap, sure signs of dignity; but the triangular purse at his girdle was lean, the gown rusty, the fur worn. The young woman was dressed in plain russet cloth: yet snow-white lawn covered that part of her neck the gown left visible, and ended half way up her white throat in a little band of gold embroidery; and her head-dress was new to Gerard: instead of hiding her hair in a pile of linen or lawn, she wore an open network of silver cord with silver spangles at the interstices: in this her glossy auburn hair was rolled in front into two solid waves, and supported behind in a luxurious and shapely mass.

His quick eye took in all this, and the old man's pallor, and the tears in the young woman's eyes. So he came towards them bashfully.

" Father, I fear you are tired."

" Indeed, my son, I am," replied the old man, " and faint for lack of food."

The girl seemed ashamed, and, with much reserve in her manner, said she had underrated the distance, and imprudently allowed her father to start too late in the day.

Gerard, quite as a matter of course, fell to gathering sticks. This done, he took down his wallet, out with the manchet of bread and the iron flask, and his tinder-box ; lighted a match, then a candle-end, then the sticks ; and put his iron flask on it. " Mind the pot," said he, " and don't let it spill, for Heaven's sake : there's a cleft stick to hold it safe with " ; and with this he set off running towards a corn-field.

Whilst he was gone, there came by, on a mule, an old man redolent of wealth. The purse at his girdle was plethoric, the fur on his tippet was ermine, broad and new.

It was Ghysbrecht Van Swieten, the burgomaster of Tergou. He was old, and his face furrowed. He was a notorious miser. Yet at the sight of the faded old man and his bright daughter sitting by a fire of sticks, he wore a strange look of pain and uneasiness. " Why, Peter,—Margaret," said he, almost fiercely, " what mummary is this ? " Peter was going to answer, but Margaret interposed hastily, and said : " My father was exhausted, so I am warming something to give him strength before we go on." " What! reduced to feed by **the** roadside like the Bohemians," said Ghysbrecht.

At this moment who should come bounding up but Gerard. He had two straws in his hand, and he threw himself down by the fire and relieved Margaret of the cooking part: then suddenly recognizing the burgo-master, he coloured all over. Ghysbrecht Van Swieten started and glared at him. " Oh ! " said he bitterly, " I am not wanted/' and went slowly on, casting a long look of suspicion on Margaret, and hostility on Gerard. Gerard stared with surprise. ^{ci} By St. Bavon, I think the old miser grudges us three our quart of soup," said he.

Ghysbrecht plodded on, more wretched in his wealth than these in their poverty. And the curious thing is, that the mule and one-half the coin in that plethoric purse belonged not to Ghysbrecht Van Swieten, but to that faded old man and that comely girl.

CHAPTER II

GERARD untied in a moment the knot on his breast, took his hat off, put a stone into each corner of it, then, wrapping his hand in the tail of his jerkin, whipped the flask off the fire, wedged it in between the stones, and put the hat under the old man's nose with a merry smile. The other tremulously inserted the pipe of rye-straw and sucked. Lo and behold, his wan, drawn face was seen to light up more and more, till it quite glowed.

And now, the bread and soup being disposed of, the old scholar prepared to continue his journey. Then came a little difficulty : Gerard could not tie his ribbon again as Catherine had tied it. Margaret, after slily eyeing

his efforts for some time, offered to help him, then, looking up, received full in her eyes a longing gaze of such ardent adoration, as made her lower them quickly and colour all over. She retreated with downcast lashes and tell-tale cheeks, and took her father's arm on the opposite side. Gerard, blushing at having scared her away with his eyes, took the other arm ; and so the two young things went downcast and conscious, and propped the eagle along in silence.

They entered Rotterdam by the Schiedamze Poort; and, as Gerard was unacquainted with the town, Peter directed him the way to the Hooch Straet, in which the Stadthouse was. He himself was going with Margaret to his cousin, in the Ooster-Waagen Straet, so, almost on entering the gate, their roads lay apart. They bade each other a friendly adieu, and Gerard dived into the great town.

Presently meeting a crowd of persons all moving in one direction, he mingled with it, and it speedily led him to the Stadthouse. But when he got there he was refused, first at one door, then at another, till he came to the great gate of the courtyard. It was kept by soldiers, and superintended by a pompous major-domo. It cost Gerard a struggle to get near him, and when he was within four heads of the gate, he saw something that made his heart beat; there was Peter, with Margaret on his arm, soliciting humbly for entrance.

" My cousin the alderman is not at home; they say he is here."

" No strangers enter here, but the competitors and their companies."

Margaret turned half round imploringly:

" Good people, we are come from far, and my father is old ; and my cousin has a new servant that knows us not, and would not let us sit in our cousin's house."

At this the crowd laughed hoarsely. Margaret shrank as if they had struck her. At that moment a hand grasped hers. She turned quickly round at it, and it was Gerard. Such a little cry of joy and appeal came from her bosom, and she began to whimper prettily.

" All is well now," remarked a coarse humourist; " she hath gotten her sweetheart."

" Haw ! haw ! haw ! " went the crowd.

She dropped Gerard's hand directly, and turned round, with eyes flashing through her tears :

" I have no sweetheart, you rude men. But I am friendless in your boorish town, and this is a friend ; and one who knows, what you know not, how to treat the aged and the weak."

The crowd was dead silent. They had only been thoughtless, and now felt the rebuke, though severe, was just. The silence enabled Gerard to treat with the porter.

" I am a competitor, sir."

" What is your name ? " and the man eyed him suspiciously.

" Gerard, the son of Elias."

The janitor inspected a slip of parchment he held in his hand :

" Gerard Eliassoen can enter."

A few steps brought the trio upon a scene of Oriental luxury. The courtyard was laid out in tables loaded with rich meats and piled with gorgeous plate. Guests in rich and various costumes sat beneath a leafy canopy of fresh-cut branches fastened tastefully to golden, silver, and blue

silken cords that traversed the area. The Duke's minstrels swept their lutes at intervals, and a fountain played red Burgundy in six jets that met and battled in the air. The evening sun shed crimson glories here and there on fair faces, snowy beards, velvet, satin, jewelled hilts, and sparkling glass. Gerard and his friends stood dazzled, spellbound. Presently a whisper buzzed round them, " Salute the Duke ! Salute the Duke ! " They looked up, and there on high, under the daïs, was their sovereign, bidding them welcome with a kindly wave of the hand. The men bowed low, and Margaret curtsied with a deep and graceful obeisance. Instantly seven of his people seated them at a table, and put fifteen many-coloured soups before them, in little silver bowls, and as many wines in crystal vases.

The soup was tasted, and vanished in a twirl of fourteen hands, and fish came on the table in a dozen forms.

On these grand occasions an ox was roasted whole, and reserved for the poor. But this wise prince had discovered, that whatever venison, hares, lamb, poultry, etc., you skewered into that beef cavern, got cooked to perfection, retaining their own juices and receiving those of the reeking ox. These he called his beef-stuffing, and took delight therein, as did now our trio. After this, twenty different tarts of fruits and herbs, and last of all, confectionery on a Titanic scale.

But long before our party arrived at this final stage appetite had succumbed, and Gerard had suddenly remembered he was the bearer of a letter to the Princess Marie, and had asked one of the servants if he would undertake to deliver it.

It may be remembered that Peter and Margaret came

here not to dine, but to find their cousin. Well, the old gentleman ate heartily, and being much fatigued, dropped asleep, and forgot all about his cousin.

Meantime, that cousin was seated within a few feet of them, at their backs, and discovered them when Margaret turned round. But he forbore to speak to them, for municipal reasons. Margaret was very plainly dressed, and Peter inclined to threadbare. So the alderman said to himself :

" 'Twill be time to make up to them when the sun sets and the company disperses: then I will take my poor relations to my house, and none will be the wiser."

Margaret leaned back and half closed her eyes, and murmured to Gerard : " What a lovely scene ! the warm sun, the green shade, the rich dresses, the bright music of the lutes and the cool music of the fountain, and all faces so happy and gay ! and then, it is to you we owe it. What do you admire most of all these beautiful things, Gerard ? "

" What do I admire most ? If you will sit a little more that way, I'll tell you."

" This way ? "

" Yes ; so that the light may fall on you. There ! I see many fair things here, but the fairest of all, to my eye, is your lovely hair in its silver frame, and the setting sun kissing it. It reminds me of what the Vulgate praises for beauty,' *an apple of gold in a network of silver*.'⁹ There, now the sun is full on it, it is like an aureole. So our Lady looked, and none since her until to-day."

" Oh, fie ! it is wicked to talk so. Compare a poor, coarse-favoured girl like me with the Queen of Heaven ? "

" How can I help having eyes, and a heart—Margaret!"

" Gerard ! "

" Be not angry now ! "

" Now, is it likely ? "

" I love you."

" Oh, for shame ! you must not say that to me," and Margaret coloured furiously at this sudden assault.

" I can't help it. I love you. I love you." ,

" Hush, hush ! for pity's sake ! I must not listen to such words from a stranger. Oh, how one may be mistaken ! If I had known you were so bold——"

Then Gerard was frightened at the alarm he caused. " Forgive me," said he imploringly. " How could any one help loving you ? "

" Well, sir, I will *try* and forgive you—you are so good in other respects ; but then you must promise me never to say you—to say *that* again."

" Give me your hand then, or you don't forgive me."

She hesitated ; but eventually put out her hand a very little way, very slowly, and with seeming reluctance. He took it, and held it prisoner ; it submitted quite patiently to force.

A grave white-haired seneschal came to their table, and inquired courteously whether Gerard Eliassoen was of their company. Upon Gerard's answer, he said :

" The Princess Marie would confer with you, young sir ; I am to conduct you to her presence."

Gerard rose to obey.

" I wager we shall not see you again," said Margaret calmly, but colouring a little.

" That will you," was the reply : then he whispered in her ear : " This is my good princess ; but you are my

queen." He added aloud: " Wait for me, I pray you ; I will presently return."

" Ay, ay! " said Peter, awaking and speaking at one and the same moment.

Gerard gone, the pair whose dress was so homely, yet they were with the man whom the Princess sent for, became " the cynosure of neighbouring eyes " ; observing which, William Johnson came forward, acted surprise, and claimed his relations. Margaret thanked him graciously, but demurred to go just now. " It were ill manners to our friend ; and he will lose us. He knows not where we lodge in Rotterdam, and the city is large."

" Oh ! " said Johnson, " we will provide for that. My young man, ahem ! I mean my secretary, shall sit here and wait, and bring him on to my house : he shall lodge with me and with no other. Ho ! stand forth, Hans Cloterman."

Hans was then instructed to sit at the table and wait for Gerard, and conduct him to Ooster-Waagen Straet; and Margaret, Peter, and William Johnson went away together.

" And, indeed, it is time you were abed, father, after all your travel," said Margaret.

As Gerard was long in coming, the patient Hans improved the time by quaffing solemnly, silently, goblets of Corsican wine. The wine was strong, so was Cloterman's head ; and Gerard had been gone a good hour ere the model secretary filled bumper nine, and rose gingerly but solemnly and slowly. Having reached his full height, he instantly rolled upon the grass, goblet in hand, not disturbing a muscle in his long face.

The seneschal led Gerard through several passages to a room where three ladies sat working, and a pretty little girl tuning a lute. The ladies were richly but not showily dressed, and the duenna went up to the one who was hemming a kerchief, and said a few words in a low tone. This lady then turned towards Gerard with a smile, and beckoned him to come near her. She began a conversation at once.

" Margaret Van Eyck is an old friend of mine, sir, and I am right glad to have a letter from her hand. Marie, my love, this is the young gentleman who brought you that pretty miniature. You are in holy orders, sir ? "

Gerard bowed.

" I fear you are not a priest; you look too young."

" Oh no, madam ; I am not even a sub-deacon. I am only a lector; but next month I shall be an exorcist, and before long an acolyth."

" Well, Monsieur Gerard, with your accomplishments you can soon pass through the inferior orders. And let me beg you to do so. For the day after you have said your first mass I shall have the pleasure of appointing you to a benefice."

" Oh, madam ! "

" And, Marie, remember I make this promise in your name as well as my own. I must take care it is not too far from—what call you the place ? "

" Tergou, madam."

" A priest gives up much," continued the Countess ; " often, I fear, he learns too late how much " ; and her woman's eye rested a moment on Gerard with mild pity and half surprise at his resigning her sex and all the heaven they can bestow, and the great parental joys:

" at least you shall be near your friends. And now, sir, we must not detain you too long. Duchess, oblige me by bidding one of the pages conduct him to the hall of banquet; the way is hard to find."

Gerard bowed low to the Countess and the Princess, and backed towards the door. He followed his new conductor, his heart warm with gratitude ; and, being now at the entrance of the banqueting-hall, he ran hastily with joyful eyes to Margaret. He came in sight of the table—she was gone. Peter was gone too. Nobody was at the table at all; only a citizen in sober garments had just tumbled under it dead drunk, and several persons were raising him to carry him away. Gerard never guessed how important this solemn drunkard was to him.

He walked through many streets, but could not find her he sought. At last, fairly worn out, he went to a hostelry and slept till daybreak. All that day, heavy and heartsick, he sought her, but could never fall in with her or her father, nor ever obtain the slightest clue. Then he felt she was false or had changed her mind. He was irritated now, as well as sad. More good fortune fell on him ; he almost hated it. At last, on the third day, he said, " She is not in the town, and I shall never see her again. I will go home." He started for Tergou with royal favour promised, with fifteen golden angels in his purse, a golden medal on his bosom, and a heart like a lump of lead.

CHAPTER III

IT was near four o'clock in the afternoon. Catherine and her little crippled daughter were in the sitting-room, which I will sketch. It was floored with Dutch tiles, so highly glazed and constantly washed, that you could eat off them. There was one large window ; the cross stone-work in the centre of it was very massive, and stood in relief, looking like an actual cross to the inmates, and was eyed as such in their devotions. The panes were very small and lozenge-shaped, and soldered to one another with strips of lead. The chairs were rude and primitive, all but the arm-chair, whose back, at right angles with its seat, was so high that the sitter's head stopped two feet short of the top. This chair was of oak, and carved at the summit. There was a copper pail, that went in at the waist, holding holy water, and a little hand-besom to sprinkle it far and wide ; and a long, narrow, but massive oak table.

In tottered Gerard, pale, dusty, and worn out ; and amidst uplifted hands and cries of delight, curiosity, and anxiety mingled, dropped exhausted into the nearest chair.

Beating Rotterdam, like a covert, for Margaret, and the long journey afterwards, had fairly knocked Gerard up. But elastic youth soon revived, and behold him the centre of an eager circle. First of all they must hear about the prizes. Then Gerard told them he had been admitted to see the competitors' works, all laid out in an enormous hall before the judges pronounced. " Oh,

mother! oh, Kate! when I saw the goldsmiths' work, I had like to have fallen on the floor. I thought not all the goldsmiths on earth had so much gold, silver, jewels, and craft of design and facture. But, Kate, when I came to the illuminated work from Ghent and Bruges, my heart sank. Mine was dirt by the side of it. The coloured work was so beautiful I forgot all about the black and white. But next day, when all the other prizes had been given, they came to the writing, and whose name think you was called first? "

" Yours," said Kate.

The others laughed her to scorn.

" You may well laugh," said Gerard, " but for all that, Gerard Eliassoen of Tergou was the name the herald shouted. I stood stupid; they thrust me forward. Everything swam before my eyes. I found myself kneeling on a cushion at the feet of the Duke. He said something to me, but I was so fluttered I could not answer him. So then he put his hand to his side, and gave me a gold medal, and there it is." There was a yell and almost a scramble. " And then he gave me fifteen great bright golden angels. I had seen one before, but I never handled one. Here they are."

" Oh, Gerard! oh, Gerard! "

" There is one for you, our eldest; and one for you, Sybrandt, and for you, Little Mischief; and two for thee, Little Lily, because God hath afflicted thee; and one for myself, to buy colours and vellum; and nine for her that nursed us all."

Then Gerard threw himself on his knees beside her, and she flung her arms round him and wept for joy and pride upon his neck.

" Good lad ! good lad ! " cried the hosier, with some emotion. " I must go and tell the neighbours. Lend me the medal, Gerard ; I'll show it my good friend Peter Buyskens ; he is ever regaling me with how his son Jorian won the tin mug a-shooting at the butts."

Then Gerard told his interview with the Countess, and the house rang with joy.

From that hour Gerard was looked upon as the stay of the family. He was a son apart. Cornelis and Sybrandt became more and more jealous of him, and longed for the day he should go to his benefice. The first time the bishop came that way, he applied to be admitted " exorcist/" the third step in holy orders. The bishop questioned him, and ordained him at once. He had to kneel, and, after a short prayer, the bishop delivered to him a little MS. full of exorcisms, and said : " Take this, Gerard, and have power to lay hands on the possessed, whether baptized or catechumens ! "

Returning home from the church, he was met by little Kate on her crutches.

" Oh, Gerard ! who, think you, hath sent to our house seeking you ?—the burgomaster himself."

" Ghysbrecht Van Swieten ! What would he with me ? "'

" Nay, Gerard, I know not. But he seems urgent to see you. You are to go to his house on the instant."

Ghysbrecht Van Swieten was an artful man. He opened on the novice with something quite wide of the mark he was really aiming at. " The town records," said he, " are crabbedly written, and the ink rusty with

age." He offered Gerard the honour of transcribing them fair, and a sum that would have just purchased the pens, ink, and parchment.

" But, burgomaster, my labour ? Here is a year's work. Besides, there's my time."

" Your time ? Why, what is time to you, at two-and-twenty ? " Then fixing his eyes keenly on Gerard, to mark the effect of his words, he said : " Say, rather, you are idle grown. You are in love. Your body is with these chanting monks, but your heart is with Peter Brandt and his red-haired girl."

" I know no Peter Brandt."

This denial confirmed Ghysbrecht's suspicion that the caster-out of demons was playing a deep game.

" Ye lie ! " he shouted. " Did I not find you at her elbow on the road to Rotterdam ? "

" Ah ! "

" Ah ! And you were seen at Sevenbergen but t'other day."

" Was I ? "

" Ay ; and at Peter's house."

" At Sevenbergen ? "

" Ay, at Sevenbergen."

Now this was put boldly forth as fact, to elicit by the young man's answer whether he had been there lately or not.

Gerard started up in a strange state of nervous excitement.

" Burgomaster," said he, with trembling voice, " I have not been at Sevenbergen these three years, and I know not the name of those you saw me with, nor where they dwelt ; but, as my time is precious, though

you value it not, give you good day." And he darted out, with his eyes sparkling.

From that day Gerard spent most of his evenings with Margaret, and the attachment deepened and deepened on both sides, till the hours they spent together were the hours they lived. And at the outset of this deep attachment all went smoothly. Obstacles there were, but they seemed distant and small to the eyes of hop[^], youth, and love.

CHAPTER IV

CATHERINE and her daughter were chatting together about their favourite theme, Gerard, his goodness, his benefice, and the brightened prospects of the whole family.

A strange voice was heard at the door. And the next moment in came, casting his eyes furtively around, a man that had not entered the house this ten years—Ghysbrecht Van Swieten.

The two women were so taken by surprise, that they merely stared at him and at one another, and said, " The burgomaster! "

" It is about your son Gerard."

" Ay ! ay ! you want him to work for the town all for nothing. He told us."

" I come on no such errand. It is to let you know he has fallen into bad hands."

" Now Heaven and the saints forbid ! Man, torture not a mother ! Speak out, and quickly : speak ere you have time to coin falsehood: we know thee."

Ghysbrecht turned pale at this affront, and spite mingled with the other motives that brought him here. " Thus it is, then," said he, grinding his teeth and speaking very fast. " Your son Gerard is more like to be father of a family than a priest: he is for ever with Margaret, Peter Brandt's red-haired girl, and loves her like a cow her calf."

Mother and daughter both burst out laughing.

" Carry this tale to those who know not my son Gerard. Women are nought to him."

" Other women, mayhap. But this one is the apple of his eye to him, or will be, if you part them not, and soon. Come, dame, make me not waste time and friendly counsel: my servant has seen them together a score times."

The next moment Elias came in from the shop, and turned pale. The presence of the burgomaster in his house, coupled with his wife's and daughter's distress, made him fear some heavy misfortune.

" Richart! Jacob ! " he gasped.

" No, no ! " said the burgomaster ; " nobody is dead or dying, old friend."

" God bless you, burgomaster! Now, what is the matter ? "

Ghysbrecht then told him all that he told the women.

" Is that all ? " said Eli, profoundly relieved. " What are ye roaring and bellowing for ? It is vexing—it is angering, but it is not like death, not even sickness. Boys will be boys. He will outgrow that disease ; 'tis but skin-deep."

But when Ghysbrecht told him that Margaret was a girl of good character; that it was not to be supposed

22 THE CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH

she would be so intimate if marriage had not been spoken of between them, his brow darkened.

" Marriage! that shall never be," said he sternly. " I'll stay that; ay, by force, if need be. He never disobeyed me in his life : he never shall. Where is he ? It is past supper-time. Where is he, Kate ? "

" Alas ! I know not, father."

" I know," said Ghysbrecht; " he is at Sevenbergen. My servant met him on the road."

CHAPTER V

WHILE the burgomaster was exposing Gerard at Tergou, Margaret had a trouble of her own at Sevenbergen. She came to Martin Wittenhaagen, the old soldier [who lived with them] with tears in her eyes.

" Martin, there's nothing in the house, and Gerard is coming, and he is so thoughtless. He forgets to sup at home. When he gives over work, then he runs to me straight, poor soul; and often he comes quite faint."

Martin scratched his head. " What can I do ? "

" It is Thursday ; it is your day to shoot; sooth to say, I counted on you to-day."

" Nay," said the soldier, " I may not shoot when the Duke or his friends are at the chase ; read else. I am no scholar." And he took out of his pouch a parchment with a grand seal. It purported to be a stipend and a licence given by Philip, Duke of Burgundy, to Martin Wittenhaagen, one of his archers, in return for services in the wars, and for a wound received at the Duke's side. The stipend was four merks yearly, to be

paid by the Duke's almoner, and the licence was to shoot three arrows once a week, viz., on Thursday, and no other day, in any of the Duke's forests in Holland; proviso, that the Duke should not be hunting on that day, or any of his friends. In this case Martin was not to go and disturb the woods on peril of his salary and his head, and a fine of a penny.

Margaret sighed and was silent.

"Come, cheer up, mistress," said he; "for your sake I'll peril my carcase; I'll but step into the skirts of the forest here. It is odds but they drive a hare or a fawn within reach of my arrow."

He stole cautiously into the wood. The horns were heard faintly in the distance, and all the game was afoot. He took his stand behind a thick oak, and strung his bow. It was of English yew, six feet two inches high, and thick in proportion; and Martin, broad-chested, with arms all iron and cord, could draw a three-foot arrow to the head, and, when it flew, the eye could scarce follow it. A hare came cantering, then sat sprightly, and her ears made a capital V. Martin levelled his tremendous weapon at her. The arrow flew, the string twanged; but Martin had been in a hurry to pot her, and lost her by an inch: the arrow seemed to hit her, but it struck the ground close to her, and passed under her belly like a flash, and hissed along the short grass and disappeared. She jumped three feet perpendicular and away at the top of her speed.

"Luck is against me," said he despondingly. But he fitted another arrow, and eyed the glade keenly. Presently he heard a bustle behind him, and turned round

just in time to see a noble buck cross the open, but too late to shoot at him. At that moment a long spotted animal glided swiftly across after the deer ; its belly seemed to touch the ground as it went. He recognized the Duke's leopard. " The hunters will not be far from her," said he, " and I must not be seen. Gerard must go supperless this night."

He plunged into the wood, following the buck and leopard, for that was his way home. He had not gone far when he heard leaves rustling violently and the ground trampled. He hurried in the direction. He found the leopard on the buck's back, tearing him with teeth and claw, and the buck running in a circle and bounding convulsively, with the blood pouring down his hide. He drew his arrow to the head, and buried it in the deer, who, spite of the creature on his back, bounded high into the air, and fell dead. The leopard went on tearing him as if nothing had happened.

Martin hoped that the creature would gorge itself with blood, and then let him take the meat. He waited some minutes, then walked resolutely up, and laid his hand on the buck's leg. The leopard gave a frightful growl, and left off sucking blood. Martin had heard that wild creatures cannot stand the human eye. Accordingly, he stood erect, and fixed his on the leopard : the leopard returned a savage glance, and never took her eye off Martin. Then Martin continuing to look the beast down, the leopard, brutally ignorant of natural history, flew at his head with a frightful yell, flaming eyes, and jaws **and** claws distended. He had but just time to catch her by the throat, before her teeth could crush his face; one of her claws seized his shoulder and rent it, the other,

aimed at his cheek, would have been more deadly still, but Martin was old-fashioned, and wore no hat, but a scapulary of the same stuff as his jerkin, brought over his head like a hood ; the brute's claw caught in the loose leather. Martin kept her teeth off his face with great difficulty, and griped her throat fiercely, and she kept rending his shoulder. The pain was fearful; but, instead of cowing the old soldier, it put his blood up, and he gnashed his teeth with rage almost as fierce as hers, and squeezed her neck with iron force. The two pair of eyes flared at one another—and now the man's were almost as furious as the brute's. She found he was throttling her, and made a wild attempt to free herself, in which she dragged his cowl all over his face and blinded him, and tore her claw out of his shoulder, flesh and all; but still he throttled her with hand and arm of iron. Presently her long tail, that was high in the air, went down. "Aha!" cried Martin, joyfully, and griped her like death; next, her body lost its elasticity, and he held a choked and powerless thing: he griped it still, till all motion ceased, then dashed it to the earth; then, panting, removed his cowl; the leopard lay mute at his feet with tongue protruding and bloody paw; and for the first time terror fell on Martin. "I am a dead man: I have slain the Duke's leopard." He hastily seized a few handfuls of leaves and threw them over her; then shouldered the buck, and staggered away, leaving a trail of blood all the way—his own and the buck's. He burst into Peter's house a horrible figure, bleeding and bloodstained, and flung the deer's carcase down.

"There—no questions," said he, "but broil me a steak on't, for I am faint."

Margaret did not see he was wounded; she thought the blood was all from the deer.

She busied herself at the fire, and the stout soldier stanch'd and bound his own wound apart; and soon he and Gerard and Margaret were supping royally on broiled venison.

Martin revived, and told them how the venison was got; and they all made merry over the exploit.

Their mirth was strangely interrupted. Margaret's eye became fixed, and her cheek pale with fear. She gasped, and could not speak, but pointed to the window with trembling finger. Their eyes followed hers, and there in the twilight crouched a dark form with eyes like glow-worms.

It was the leopard.

While they stood petrified, there sounded in the wood a single deep bay. Martin trembled at it.

" They have lost her and laid muzzled bloodhounds on her scent; they will find her here, and the venison. Good-bye, friends, Martin Wittenhaagen ends here."

More voices of hounds broke out, and nearer.

" Curse her ! " cried Martin ; " I spared her once ; now she must die, or I, or both more likely ; " and he reared his bow, and drew his arrow to the head.

" Nay ! nay ! " cried Margaret, and seized the arrow. It broke in half : the pieces fell on each side the bow. The air at the same time filled with the tongues of the hounds ; they were hot upon the scent.

" What have you done, wench ? You have put the halter round my throat."

" No ! " cried Margaret. " I have saved you : stand back from the window, both ! Your knife, quick ! "

She seized his long-pointed' knife, and darted from the room. The house was now surrounded with baying dogs and shouting men.

The glow-worm eyes moved not.

Margaret cut off a huge piece of venison, and ran to the window and threw it out to the green eyes of fire. They darted on to it with a savage snarl; and there was a sound of rending and crunching : at this moment, a hound uttered a bay so near and loud it rang through the house ; and the three at the window shrank together. Then the leopard feared for her supper, and glided swiftly and stealthily away with it towards the woods, and the very next moment horses and men and dogs came helter-skelter past the window, and followed her full cry. Martin and his companions breathed again : the leopard was swift, and would not be caught within a league of their house.

CHAPTER VI

THE little house at Tergou was no longer the abode of peace. Gerard was taken to task next day before the whole family ; and every voice was loud against him, except little Kate's and the dwarf's, who was apt to take his cue from her. As for Cornelis and Sybrandt, they were bitterer than their father.

At last, after more than six months of irritation, came the climax. The father told the son before the whole family he had ordered the burgomaster to imprison him in the Stadthouse rather than let him marry Margaret. Gerard turned pale with anger at this, but by a

great effort held his peace. His father went on to say, " And a priest you shall be before the year is out, nilly-willy."

" Is it so ? " cried Gerard. " Then, hear me, all. By God and St. Bavon I swear I will never be a priest while Margaret lives. Since force is to decide it, the day I see the burgomaster come for me, I leave Tergou for ever, and Holland too, and my father's house, Wiere it seems I have been valued all these years, not for myself, but for what is to be got out of me."

And he flung out of the room white with anger and desperation.

As he came out of the house, his cheeks pale and his heart panting, he met Reicht Heynes : Margaret Van Eyck desired to see him. The old lady inquired coldly why he had not visited her of late : " I thought we had been friends, young sir."

" It is because you never told her you were in love," said Reicht Heynes, pitying his confusion. " You need not have been afraid to tell my mistress ; she is always kind to true lovers."

" Madam—Reicht—I was afraid because I was told——"

" Well, you were told——? "

" That in your youth you scorned love, preferring art."

" I did, boy ; and what is the end of it ? Behold me here a barren stock, while the women of my youth have a troop of children at their side, and grandchildren at their knee. I gave up the sweet joys of wifehood and motherhood for what ? For my dear brothers. They have gone and left me long ago. For my art. It has all but left me too. I have the knowledge still, but what avails that when

the hand trembles. No, Gerard; I look on you as my son. I will not let you throw your youth away. There is a country, Gerard, where certain fortune awaits you at this moment. Here the arts freeze, but there they flourish as they never yet flourished in any age or land."

"It is Italy!" cried Gerard. "It is Italy!"

"Ay, Italy! where painters are honoured like princes, and scribes are paid three hundred crowns for copying a single manuscript. Know you not that his Holiness the Pope has written to every land for skilful scribes to copy the hundreds of precious manuscripts that are pouring into that favoured land from Constantinople, whence learning and learned men are driven by the barbarian Turks? Find you the heart to go, I'll find the means. I know where to lay my hand on ten golden angels: they will take you to Rome: and the girl with you, if she loves you as she ought."

Besides the money she procured him for the journey, Margaret Van Eyck gave him money's worth. Said she, "I will tell you secrets that I learned from masters that are gone from me, and have left no fellow behind. Even the Italians know them not; and what I tell you now in Tergou you shall sell dear in Florence. Note my brother Jan's pictures: time, which fades all other paintings, leaves his colours bright as the day they left the easel. The reason is, he did nothing blindly, nothing in a hurry. He trusted to no hireling to grind his colours; he did it himself, or saw it done. His panel was prepared, and prepared again—I will show you how—a year before he laid his colour on. Most of them are quite content to have their work sucked up and lost, sooner than not be in a hurry. Bad painters are always in a hurry.

Above all, Gerard, I warn you use but little oil, and never boil it: boiling it melts that vegetable dross into its very heart which it is our business to clear away; for impure oil is death to colour. No; take your oil and pour it into a bottle with water. In a day or two the water will turn muddy: that is muck from the oil. Pour the dirty water carefully away, and add fresh. When that is poured away, you will fancy the oil is clear. You are mistaken. Reicht, fetch me *that*! " Reicht brought a glass trough with a glass lid fitting tight. " When your oil has been washed in bottle, put it into this trough with water, and put the trough in the sun all day. You will soon see the water turbid again. But mark, you must not carry this game too far, or the sun will turn your oil to varnish. When it is as clear as crystal, and not too luscious, drain carefully, and cork it up tight. Grind your own prime colours, and lay them on with this oil, and they shall live. Hubert would put sand or salt in the water to clear the oil quicker. But Jan used to say, ' Water will do it best; give water time.' Jan Van Eyck was never in a hurry, and that is why the world will not forget *him* in a hurry/'

Thus provided with money and knowledge, Gerard decided to marry and fly with his wife to Italy. Nothing remained now but to inform Margaret Brandt of his resolution, and to publish the banns as quietly as possible. He went to Sevenbergen earlier than usual on both these errands. He began with Margaret; told her of the Dame Van Eyck's goodness, and the resolution he had come to at last, kissed her hands with rapture, and then her lips; and in a tumult of joy ran for Peter and Martin. They came and witnessed the betrothal; a solemn

ceremony in those days, and indeed for more than a century later, though now abolished.

CHAPTER VII

THE banns of marriage had to be read three times, as in our days ; with this difference, that they were commonly read on week-days, and the young couple easily persuaded the curé to do the three readings in twenty-four hours. They were cried on Monday at matins and at vespers ; and, to their great delight, nobody from Tergou was in the church. The next morning they were both there, palpitating with anxiety, when, to their horror, a stranger stood up and forbade the banns, on the score that the parties were not of age, and their parents not consenting.

Outside the church door Margaret and Gerard held a trembling, and almost despairing, consultation; but, before they could settle anything, the man approached, and gave them to understand that he was very sorry to interfere : that his inclination was to further the happiness of the young ; but that in point of fact his only means of getting a living was by forbidding banns. " The young people give me a crown, and I undo my work handsomely ; tell the curé I was misinformed, and all goes smoothly."

" A crown ! I will give you a golden angel to do this," said Gerard eagerly ; the man consented as eagerly, and went with Gerard to the curé, and told him he had made a ridiculous mistake, which a sight of the parties had rectified. On this the curé agreed to marry the young

couple next day at ten : and the professional obstructor of bliss went to drink his angel at a certain hostelry in Tergou. There, being drunk, he bragged of his day's exploit; and who should be there but the ne'er-do-weel Sybrandt. Sybrandt ran home to tell his father ; his father was not at home ; he was gone to Rotterdam to buy cloth of the merchants. Catching his elder brother's eye, he made him a signal to come out, and told him what he had heard.

They put their heads together, and agreed not to tell their mother, whose sentiments were so uncertain, but to go first to the burgomaster. They were cunning enough to see that he was averse to the match, though they could not divine why.

Ghysbrecht Van Swieten saw through them at once ; putting on magisterial dignity and coldness, he said :

" Since the father of the family is not here, his duty falleth on me, who am the father of the town. I know your father's mind ; leave all to me."

So he dismissed them, a little superciliously : he was ashamed of his confederates.

The next morning, at ten o'clock, Gerard and Margaret were in the church at Sevenbergen. Peter was also there, and Martin Wittenhaagen, but no other friend. Margaret had declined Italy. She could not leave her father ; he was too learned and too helpless. But it was settled they should retire into Flanders for a few weeks until the storm should be blown over at Tergou. The curé did not keep them waiting long, though it seemed an age. Presently he stood at the altar, and called them to him. They went hand in

hand, the happiest in Holland. The curé opened his book.

But ere he uttered a single word of the sacred rite, a harsh voice cried " Forbear ! " And the constables of Tergou came up the aisle and seized Gerard in the name of the law. Martin's long knife flashed out directly.

" Forbear, man ! " cried the priest. " What! draw your weapon in a church ? And ye who interrupt this holy sacrament, what means this impiety ? "

" There is no impiety, father," said the burgomaster's servant respectfully. " This young man would marry against his father's will, and his father has prayed our burgomaster to deal with him according to the law. Let him deny it if he can."

" Is this so, young man ? "

Gerard hung his head.

They took him away on horseback, and about five in the evening he was secretly conveyed into the prison of the Stadthouse. He was taken up several flights of stairs and thrust into a small room lighted only by a narrow window, with a vertical iron bar. The whole furniture was a huge oak chest.

Imprisonment in that age was one of the high-roads to death. Gerard felt he was in the hands of an enemy.

" Oh, the look that man gave me on the road to Rotterdam. There is more here than my father's wrath. I doubt I shall see no more the light of day." And he kneeled down and commended his soul to God.

Presently he rose and sprang at the iron bar of the window, and clutched it. This enabled him to look out by pressing his knees against the wall. It was but for

a minute ; but in that minute he saw a sight such as none but a captive can appreciate.

Martin Wittenhaagen's back.

Martin was sitting, quietly fishing in the brook near the Stadthouse.

Gerard sprang again at the window, and whistled. Martin turned hastily round and saw Gerard, made him a signal, and taking up his line and bow went quickly off.

Gerard saw by this that his friends were not idle. He held on, looking at the soldier's retiring form as long as he could, then falling back somewhat heavily, wrenched the rusty iron bar, held only by rusty nails, away from the stone-work just as Ghysbrecht Van Swieten opened the door stealthily behind him. The burgomaster's eye fell instantly on the iron, and then glanced at the window; but he said nothing. The window was a hundred feet from the ground ; and if Gerard had a fancy for jumping out, why should he balk it ? He brought a brown loaf and a pitcher of water, and set them on the chest in solemn silence. Gerard's first impulse was to brain him with the iron bar and fly down the stairs ; but the burgomaster gave a little cough, and three stout fellows, armed, showed themselves directly at the door.

" My orders are to keep you thus until you shall bind yourself by an oath to leave Margaret Brandt, and return to the Church, to which you have belonged from your cradle."

" Death sooner."

" With all my heart." And the burgomaster retired.

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It was nine o'clock on a clear moonlight night; Gerard, senior, was still away ; the rest of his little family had been some time abed.

A figure stood by the dwarf's bed. It was white, and the moonlight shone on it.

With an unearthly noise, between a yell and a snarl, the gymnast rolled off his bed and under it by a single unbroker movement. A soft voice followed him in his retreat.

" Why, Giles, are you afear'd of me ? "

At this, Giles's head peeped cautiously up, and he saw it was only his sister Kate.

She put her finger to her lips. " Hush ! lest the wicked Cornelis or the wicked Sybrandt hear us." Giles's claws seized the side of the bed, and he returned to his place by one undivided gymnastic.

Kate then revealed to Giles that she had heard Cornelis and Sybrandt mention Gerard's name ; and being herself in great anxiety at his not coming home all day, had listened at their door, and had made a fearful discovery. Gerard was in prison, in the haunted tower of the Stadt-house. He was there, it seemed, by their father's authority. But here must be some treachery ; for how could their father have ordered this cruel act ? He was at Rotterdam. She ended by entreating Giles to bear her company to the foot of the haunted tower, to say a word of comfort to poor Gerard, and let him know their father was absent, and would be sure to release him on his return.

In less than half an hour Giles and Kate opened the house-door cautiously and issued forth. She made him carry a lantern, though the night was bright. " The

lantern gives me more courage against the evil spirits," said she.

CHAPTER VIII

As the sun declined, Gerard's heart too sank and sank. He was faint with hunger; for he was afraid to eat the food Ghysbrecht had brought him. He sat upon the chest, his arms and his head drooping before him, a picture of despondency. Suddenly something struck the wall beyond him very sharply, and then rattled on the floor at his feet. It was an arrow; he saw the white feather. A chill ran through him—they meant then to assassinate him from the outside. He crouched. No more missiles came. He crawled on all fours, and took up the arrow; there was no head to it. He took it up, and felt it all over; he found a soft substance attached to it. Attached to the arrow was a skein of silk, and on the arrow itself were words written.

Well beloved, make fast the silk to thy knife and lower to us : but hold thine end fast: then count an hundred and draw up.

Gerard seized the oak chest, and dragged it to the window. Standing on the chest and looking down, he saw figures at the tower foot. They were so indistinct, they looked like one huge form. He waved his bonnet to them with trembling hand; then he undid the silk rapidly but carefully, and made one end fast to his knife and lowered it till it ceased to draw. Then he counted a hundred. Then pulled the silk carefully up: it came up a little heavier. At last he came to a large knot, **and** by that knot a stout whipcord was attached to the

silk. Margaret's voice came up to him, low but clear. "Draw up, Gerard, till you see liberty." At the word Gerard drew the whipcord line up, and drew and drew till he came to another knot, and found a cord of some thickness take the place of the whipcord. The weight got heavier and heavier, and at last he was well-nigh exhausted: looking down, he saw in the moonlight a sight that revived him: a stout new rope touched his hand: he hauled and hauled, and dragged the end into his prison, and instantly passed it through both handles of the chest in succession, and knotted it firmly; then sat for a moment to recover his breath and collect his courage. The first thing was to make sure that the chest was sound, and capable of resisting his weight poised in mid-air. He jumped with all his force upon it. At the third jump the whole side burst open, and out scuttled the contents, a host of parchments.

After the first start this gave him, Gerard comprehended that the chest had not burst, but opened: he had doubtless jumped upon some secret spring. He now mounted the chest, and put his foot through the window, and sat half in and half out, with one hand on that part of the rope which was inside. In the silent night he heard his own heart beat.

Finally, he put himself in the attitude of a swimmer, his body to the waist being in the prison, his legs outside. Then holding the inside rope with both hands, he felt anxiously with his feet for the outside rope, and when he had got it, he worked it in between the palms of his feet, and kept it there tight, and put his left hand on the sill and gradually wriggled out. A cry came up from below. Gerard hung in mid-air. He clenched his teeth,

and nipped the rope tight with his feet and gripped it with his hands, and went down slowly hand below hand. He passed by one huge rough stone after another. He saw there was green moss on one. The fluttering figures below seemed an awful distance. It made him dizzy to look down : so he fixed his eyes steadily on the wall close to him, and went slowly down, down, down.

And there, not more than thirty feet below him, were Margaret and Martin, their faithful hands upstretched to catch him should he fall.

" Take care, Gerard ! oh, take care ! Look not down."

" Fear me not," cried Gerard joyfully, and eyed the wall, but came down faster.

In another minute his feet were at their hands. They seized him ere he touched the ground, and all three clung together in one embrace.

" Hush ! away in silence, dear one."

They stole along the shadow of the wall.

Now, ere they had gone many yards, suddenly a stream of light shot from an angle of the building, and lay across their path like a barrier of fire, and they heard whispers and footsteps close at hand.

" Back! " hissed Martin. " Keep in the shade."

They hurried back, passed the dangling rope, and made for a little square projecting tower.

No sooner was the haunted tower visible, than a sight struck their eyes that benumbed them as they stood. More than half way up the tower, a creature with a fiery head, like an enormous glow-worm, was steadily mounting the wall: the body was dark, but its outline visible through the glare from the head, and the whole creature not much less than four feet long.

At the foot of the tower stood a thing in white, that looked exactly like the figure of a female. Gerard and Margaret palpitated with awe.

"The rope! the rope! It is going up the rope," gasped Gerard.

As they gazed, the glow-worm disappeared in Gerard's late prison, but its light illuminated the cell inside and reddened the window. The white figure stood motionless below.

A strange impulse now seized Margaret. She put down Gerard's hand quietly, and stood bewildered; then, all in a moment, with a wild cry, darted towards the spectre.

CHAPTER IX

KATE and Giles soon reached the haunted tower. Judge their surprise when they found a new rope dangling from the prisoner's window to the ground.

"I see how it is," said the inferior intelligence. "Our Gerard has come down this rope. It may be years ere I fall in with such a long rope. As well be knocked on the head at once as never know happiness."

And he sprung on to the rope with a cry of delight, and the only concession Kate could gain from him was permission to fasten the lantern on his neck first.

The light at the nape of his neck made a glow-worm of him. His sister watched his progress, with trembling anxiety. Suddenly a female figure started out of the solid masonry, and came flying at her. Kate uttered a feeble cry. It was all she could, for her tongue clove to

her palate with terror. Then she dropped her crutches, and sank upon her knees, hiding her face and moaning :

" Take my body, but spare my soul! "

Margaret (panting), " Why, it is a woman ! How you scared me! "

Kate, "I am scared enough myself. Oh ! oh ! oh ! "

" This is strange! But the fiery-headed thing ? Yet it was with you, and you are harmless ! But why are you here at this time of night ? Ah ! you are his *good* sister, *Kate*! "

" And you are *Margaret Brandt*."

" Yea."

" Then *Giles* was right. He has won free."

Gerard came forward. But all further explanation was cut short by a horrible unearthly noise, like a sepulchre ventriloquizing:

" PARCHMENT !----PARCHMENT !—PARCHMENT ! "

They looked up, and there was the dwarf, with his hands full of parchments, and his face lighted with fiendish joy. With the word, the awful imp hurled parchment at the astonished heads below. Finally, the fire-headed imp, with his light body and horny hands, slid down the rope like a falling star, and proposed to his rescued brother an immediate settlement for the merchandise he had just delivered.

" Hush ! " said *Gerard*. " Gather them up, and follow us to a safer place than this."

" Will you not come home with me, *Gerard* ? " said little *Kate*.

" I have no home. My father it is that gave the burgo-master authority, or he durst not have laid a finger on me, that am a free burgher of this town. So be it, then.



Tho light at the nape of his neck made a glow-worm of him.

I was his son. I am his prisoner. Farewell the burgh where I was born, and lived honestly, and was put in prison. While there is another town left in creation, I'll never trouble you again, Tergou ! "

" Oh ! Gerard ! Gerard ! "

Margaret whispered her : " Do not gainsay him now. Give his choler time to cool ! "

Then, looking up, Kate said, " I little thought to like you so well. My heart is willing, but my infirmity will not let me embrace you. You, too, Gerard, kiss me ere you go ; for my heart lies heavy at parting with you this night."

Gerard kissed her, and she went on her crutches home. The last thing they heard of her was a little patient sigh.

As they turned to go to Sevenbergen, the dwarf nudged Gerard with his bundle of parchments, and held out a concave claw.

Margaret dissuaded Gerard. " Why take what is not ours ? "

" Oh, spoil an enemy how you can."

He gave Giles a few small coins, with which the urchin was gladdened, and shuffled after his sister. Margaret and Gerard were speedily joined by Martin, and away to Sevenbergen.

Ghysbrecht Van Swieten kept the key of Gerard's prison in his pouch. He waited till ten of the clock ere he visited him ; for he said to himself, " A little hunger sometimes does well ; it breaks 'em." At ten he crept up the stairs with a loaf and pitcher, followed by his trusty servant well armed. He opened the door.

No Gerard.

Ghysbrecht stood stupefied. After a little he fell a-trembling so, that the servant behind him saw there was something amiss, and peeped over his shoulder. At sight of the empty cell, and the rope, and iron bar, he uttered a loud exclamation of wonder ; but his surprise doubled when his master suddenly flung himself on his knees before the empty chest, and felt wildly all over it with quivering hands.

" GONE ! GONE ! GONE ! " shrieked Ghysbrecht, and suddenly turned on his servant and collared him, and shook him with rage. " D'ye stand there, knave, and see your master robbed ? Run ! fly ! A hundred crowns to him that finds it me again. No, no ! 'tis in vain. Oh, fool ! fool ! to leave that in the same room with him. But none ever found the secret spring before. None ever would but he ! " and his years and infirmity now gained the better of his short-lived frenzy, and he sank on the chest muttering ; "' Lost ! lost ! I have lost the town records. What will the burghers say to me ? What will the burgh do ? " Then he suddenly burst out again, " A hundred crowns to him who shall recover them ; all, mind, all that were in this box. If one be missing, I give nothing."

" Master, I will take the constables to Gerard's house, and seize him for the theft."

" The theft ? ay ! good ; very good. It is theft. I forgot that. So, as he is a thief now, we will put him in the dungeons below, where the toads are and the rats. Dierich, that man must never see daylight again. 'Tis his own fault ; he must be prying. Quick, quick ! ere he has time to talk, you know, time to talk."

In less than half an hour Dierich Brower and four constables entered the hosier's house, and demanded young Gerard of the panic-stricken Catherine.

Kate made him a signal she would speak with him privately. He bade his men go on, and waited outside the door. She joined him.

"Hush!" said she; "my mother knows not. Gerard has left Tergou. As for these skins of parchment you keep such a coil about, look in the nearest brook or sty, and 'tis odds but you find them."

"Give you good day, then," said Dierich sharply. "The sheepskin you scorn, I value it more than the skin of any he in Tergou."

And he went off hastily on a false scent.

CHAPTER X

GERARD and Margaret went gaily to Sevenbergen in the first flush of recovered liberty and successful adventure. But Gerard was an escaped prisoner, and liable to be retaken and perhaps punished. Moreover, he had conceived a hatred to his native place. Margaret wished him to leave the country for a while, but at the thought of his going to Italy her heart fainted.

They sat hand in hand till midnight. The morning found them resigned to part, but neither had the courage to say when.

About three in the afternoon, Giles, who had made a circuit of many miles to avoid suspicion, rode up to the door. They both ran out to him, eager with curiosity.

"Brother Gerard," cried he, in his tremendous tones,

" Kate bids you run for your life. They charge you with theft; you have given them a handle. The parchments you took, they are but a blind. A price is on your head. Fly ! For Margaret's sake and all who love you, loiter not life away, but fly ! "

It was a thunder-clap, and left two white faces looking at one another, and at the terrible messenger.

Then Giles, who had hitherto but uttered by rote what Catherine bade him, put in a word of his own.

" All the constables were at our house after you, and so was Dirk Brower. Kate is wise, Gerard."

" Oh, yes, Gerard," cried Margaret wildly. " Fly on the instant. Ah ! those parchments ! "

" Margaret, they are but a blind : the old caitiff shall never see them again ; I will not go till I have hidden his treasure where he shall never find it." Gerard then, after thanking Giles warmly, told him to go back and tell Kate he was gone. He then shouted for Martin, told him what had happened, and begged him to go a little way towards Tergou, and watch the road.

" Ay ! " said Martin, " and if I see Dirk Brower or any of his men, I will shoot an arrow into the oak-tree that is in our garden ; and on that you must run into the forest hard by, and meet me at the weird hunter's spring."

Surprise thus provided against, Gerard breathed again. He went with Margaret, and while she watched the oak-tree, dug a deep hole to bury the parchments in.

They were nearly all charters and records of the burgh ; but one appeared to be a private deed between Floris Brandt, father of Peter, and Ghysbrecht.

" Why, this is as much yours as his," said Gerard. " I will read this."

" Oh, not now, Gerard, not now," cried Margaret. " Every moment you lose fills me with fear ; and see, large drops of rain are beginning to fall, and the clouds lower."

Gerard yielded to this remonstrance ; but he put the deed into his bosom, and threw the earth in over the others, and stamped it down. While thus employed, there came a flash of lightning followed by a peal of distant thunder, and the rain came down heavily. Margaret and Gerard ran into the house, whither they were speedily followed by Martin.

" The road is clear," said he, " and a heavy storm coming on."

The thunder came nearer and nearer till it crashed overhead ; the flashes followed one another close, like the strokes of a whip, and the rain fell in torrents. The sun set unperceived, and still the thunder pealed. Supper was set; but Gerard and Margaret could not eat: the thought that this was the last time they should sup together choked them. The storm lulled a little. Peter retired to rest. But Gerard was to go at peep of day, and neither he nor Margaret could afford to lose an hour in sleep. Martin sat a while, too ; for he was fitting a new string to his bow, a matter in which he was very nice. Suddenly the old mail held up his hand.

They were quiet and listened, and heard nothing. But the next moment a footstep crackled faintly upon the autumn leaves that lay strewn in the garden at the back door of the house.

Martin fitted an arrow to his string, and hastily blew out the candle. At this moment, to their horror, they heard more than one footstep approach the other

door of the cottage, very stealthily—and then a dead pause.

Their blood froze in their veins.

A heavy knock fell on the door.

And on the hearts within.

As if this had been a concerted signal, the back door was struck as rudely the next instant. They were hemmed in. But at these alarming sounds Margaret seemed to recover some share of self-possession. She whispered, " Say he was here, but is gone." And with this she seized Gerard and almost dragged him up the rude steps that led to her father's sleeping-room. Her own lay next beyond it.

The blows on the door were repeated.

" Who knocks at this hour ? "

" Open, and you will see! "

" I open not to thieves—honest men are all abed now."

" Open to the law, Martin Wittenhaagen, or you shall rue it."

" Why, that is Dirk Brower's voice, I trow. What make you so far from Tergou ? "

" Open, and you will know."

Martin drew the bolt very slowly, and in rushed Dierich and four more. They let in their companion who was at the back door.

" Now, Martin, where is Gerard Eliassoen ? "

" Gerard Eliassoen ? Why, he was here but now ! "

" Was here ? " Dierich's countenance fell. " And where is he now ? "

" They say he has gone to Italy. Why, what is to do ?"

" No matter. When did he go ? Tell me not that he went in such a storm as this! "

" Here is a coil about Gerard Eliassoen," said Martin contemptuously. Then he lighted the candle, and seating himself coolly by the fire, proceeded to whip some fine silk round his bow-string at the place where the nick of the arrow frets it. " I'll tell you," said he carelessly. " Know you his brother Giles ? Well, he came tearing over here on a mule, and bawled out something. Anyway, he started Gerard. For as soon as he was gone, there was such crying and kissing, and then Gerard went away. They do tell me he has gone to Italy—mayhap you know where that is, for I don't."

Dierich's countenance fell lower and lower at this account. A cunninger man than Martin would perhaps have told a lie too many, and raised suspicion.

" Mates," said Dierich, " I doubt he speaks sooth. Confound that chalk-faced girl! she has outwitted us bearded men. A wet jerkin apiece, that is all we shall get, mates, by this job."

Martin grinned coolly in Dierich's face.

" However," added the latter, " to content the burgo-master, we will search the house. Watch outside two of you, one on each side of the house, that no one jump from the upper windows. The rest come with me."

And he took the candle and mounted the stairs, followed by three of his comrades.

Martin was left alone.

Dierich Brower and his men found Peter in his first sleep. They opened his cupboards, they ran their knives into an alligator he had nailed to his wall; they looked under his bed ; it was a large room, and apparently full of hiding-places, but they found no Gerard.

Then they went on to Margaret's room, and the very



Martin drew the bolt very slowly, and in rushed Dierich and four more.

sight of it was discouraging—it was small and bare, and not a cupboard in it; there was, however, a large fireplace and chimney. Dierich's eye fell on these directly. Here they found the beauty of Sevenbergen sleeping on an old chest not a foot high, and no attempt made to cover it; but the sheets were snowy white, and so was Margaret's own linen.

Presently she awoke, and sat up in the bed, like one amazed; then, seeing the men, began to scream faintly, and pray for mercy.

She made Dierich Brower ashamed of his errand.

"Here is a to-do," said he, a little confused. "We are not going to hurt you, my pretty maid. Lie you still, and shut your eyes, and think of your wedding-night, while I look up this chimney to see if Master Gerard is there."

"Gerard! in my room?"

"Why not?"

"Cruel! you know they have driven him away from me—driven him from his native place. This is a blind. Four great hulking men to come, armed to the teeth, to insult one poor honest girl!"

"There! come away, before we hear worse," said Dierich hastily. "He is not in the chimney. Plaster will mend what a cudgel breaks; but a woman's tongue is a double-edged dagger." And he beat a hasty retreat.

The men had no sooner retired than Margaret stepped out of bed, and opened the long chest on which she had been lying down in her skirt and petticoat and stockings, and night-dress over all; and put the lid, bed-clothes and all, against the wall: then glided to the door and listened. The footsteps died away through her father's room and down the stairs.

Now in that chest there was a peculiarity that it was almost impossible for a stranger to detect. A part of the boarding of the room had been broken, and Gerard being applied to to make it look neater, and being short of materials, had ingeniously sawed away a space sufficient just to admit Margaret's *soi-disant* bed, and with the materials thus acquired he had repaired the whole room. The bed or chest rested on the rafters a foot below the boards. Consequently it was full two feet deep, though it looked scarce one.

All was quiet. Margaret kneeled and gave thanks to Heaven. Then she glided from the door and leaned over the chest, and whispered tenderly : " Gerard, all is safe, thank Heaven ! You may rise ; but oh ! be cautious ! "

CHAPTER XI

GHYSBRECHT VAN SWIETEN could not sleep all night for anxiety. As soon as the storm ceased altogether, he crept downstairs, saddled his mule, and rode to the " Three Kings " at Sevenbergen. There he found his men sleeping, some on the chairs, some on the tables, some on the floor. He roused them furiously, and heard the story of their unsuccessful search.

" Fool! to let you go without me," cried the burgo-master. " My life on't he was there all the time. Looked ye under the girl's bed ? "

" No ; there was no room for a man there."

" How know ye that, if ye looked not ? " snarled Ghysbrecht. " Come, now, get up, and I shall show ye how to search."

In a few minutes Peter's house was again surrounded. The house was empty.

They went upstairs, and then suddenly one of the men gave a shout, and pointed through Peter's window, which was open. The others looked, and there, at some little distance, walking quietly across the fields with Margaret and Martin, was the man they sought. Ghysbrecht, with an exulting yell, descended the stairs and flung himself on his mule ; and he and his men set off in hot pursuit.

Margaret, who kept nervously looking back every now and then, uttered a cry, and began to run towards the wood, screaming with terror all the way.

Resistance would have been madness. Martin and Gerard followed Margaret's example. The pursuers gained slightly on them ; but Martin kept shouting, " Only win the wood ! only win the wood ! "

They had too good a start for the men on foot, and their hearts bounded with hope at Martin's words.

But an unforeseen danger attacked them. The fiery old burgomaster flung himself on his mule, and, spurring him to a gallop, he headed not his own men only, but the fugitives. His object was to cut them off. The old man came galloping in a semicircle, and got on the edge of the wood, right in front of Gerard ; the others might escape for aught he cared.

Instead of attempting to dodge him, as the burgomaster made sure he would, Gerard flew right at him, with a savage, exulting cry, and struck at him with all his heart, and soul and strength. The oak staff came down on Ghysbrecht's face with a frightful crash, and

laid him under his mule's tail beating the devil's tattoo with his heels, his face streaming, and his collar spattered with blood.

The next moment the three were in the wood. The yell of dismay and vengeance that burst from Ghysbrecht's men at that terrible blow which felled their leader, told the fugitives that it was now a race for life or death.

" Why run ? " cried Gerard, panting. " You have your bow, and I have this," and he shook his bloody staff.

" Boy ! " .roared Martin, " the GALLOWS ! Follow me," and he fled into the wood. Soon they heard a cry like a pack of hounds opening on sight of the game. The men were in the wood, and saw them flitting amongst the trees. Margaret moaned and panted as she ran ; and Gerard clenched his teeth and grasped his staff. The next minute they came to a stiff hazel coppice. Martin dashed into it, and shouldered the young wood aside as if it were standing corn.

Ere they had gone fifty yards in it they came to four blind paths.

Martin took one. " Bend low," said he. And, half-creeping, they glided along. Presently their path was again intersected with other little tortuous paths. They took one of them. It seemed to lead back ; but it soon took a turn, and, after a while, brought them to a thick pine grove, where the walking was good and hard. There were no paths here ; and the young fir-trees were so thick, you could not see three yards before your nose. The farther they went, the more absolutely secure from pursuit they felt. Indeed, the townspeople

never ventured so far as this into the trackless part of the forest.

" Hush ! " said Martin peevishly. " Do you hear nothing, Margaret ? My ears are getting old."

Margaret listened, and presently she heard a tuneful sound, like a single stroke upon a deep ringing bell. She described it so to Martin.

" Nay, I heard it," said he.

" And so did I , " said Gerard ; " it was beautiful. How sweetly it blends with the air ! "

" No, no! the echoes of this wood confound the ear of a stranger. It comes from the pine grove."

" Why, Martin, is this *anything*; ? You look pale."

" Wonderful! " said Martin, with a sickly sneer. " He asks me is it *anything* ? Come, on, on ! at any rate, let us reach a better place than this."

" A better place—for what ? "

" To stand at bay, Gerard," said Martin gravely ; " and die like soldiers, killing three for one."

" What's that sound ? "

" IT IS THE AVENGER OF BLOOD."

" Oh, Martin, save him! Oh, Heaven be merciful! What new mysterious peril is this ? "

" GIRL, IT'S A BLOODHOUND."

" Alas! good Martin," cried Gerard, " despair not so quickly ; there must be some way to escape."

" Oh, Martin! " cried Margaret, " what if we were to part company ? Gerard's life alone is forfeit. Is there no way to draw tñce pursuit on us twain and let him go safe ? "

" Girl, you know not the bloodhound's nature. He is not on this man's track or that; he is on the track of

blood. My life on't they have taken him to where Ghysbrecht fell, and from the dead man's blood to the man that shed it that cursed hound will lead them, though Gerard should run through an army or swim the Meuse." And he leaned upon his bow, and his head sank.

Whilst the men were thus benumbed, the woman's brain was all activity.

"Lend me your knife," said she to Martin. He gave it her.

"But 'twill be little use in your hands," said he.

Then Margaret did a sly thing. She stepped behind Gerard, and furtively drew the knife across her arm, and made it bleed freely; then stooping, smeared her hose and shoes; and still as the blood trickled she smeared them, but so adroitly that neither Gerard nor Martin saw. Then she seized the soldier's arm.

"Come, be a man!" she said, "and let this end. Take us to some thick place, where numbers will not avail our foes."

"I am going," said Martin sulkily; then turning to the left, he led the way, as men go to execution. He soon brought them to a thick hazel coppice.

"Do as you see me do," said Gerard; and drawing his huge knife, he cut at every step a hazel shoot or two close by the ground, and turning round twisted them breast high behind him among the standing shoots. When they had thus painfully travelled through the greater part of the coppice, the bloodhound's deep bay came nearer and nearer, less and less musical, louder and sterner.

Margaret trembled.

Martin went down o\

" I hear a horse's feet."

" No," said Gerard ; " I doubt it is a mule's. That cursed Ghysbrecht is still alive : none other would follow me up so bitterly."

At last they worked through the coppice, and there was an open wood. The trees were large, but far apart, and no escape possible that way.

And now with the hound's bay mingled a score of voices, hooping and hallooing.

" The whole village is out after us," said Martin.

" I care not," said Gerard. " Listen, Martin. I have made the track smooth to the dog, but rough to the men, that we may deal with them apart. Thus the hound will gain on the men, and as soon as he comes out of the coppice we must kill him."

" The hound ? There are more than one."

" Then we must kill two instead of one. The moment they are dead, into the coppice again, and go right back. Stand you with your bow by the side of the coppice—there, in the ditch. I will go but a few yards to yon oak-tree, and hide behind it ; the dogs will follow me, and, as they come out, shoot as many as you can ; the rest will I brain as they come round the tree."

Martin's eye flashed. They took up their places.

The hooping and hallooing came closer and closer, and soon even the rustling of the young wood was heard, and every now and then the unerring bloodhound gave a single bay.

A trembling hand was laid on Gerard's shoulder. It made him start violently, strung up as he was.

" Martin says if we are forced to part company, make for that high ash-tree we came in by."

" Yes! yes ! yes! but go back for Heaven's sake ! don't come here, all out in the open ! "

She ran back towards Martin ; but, ere she could get to him, suddenly a huge dog burst out of the coppice, and stood erect a moment. Margaret cowered with fear, but he never noticed her. Scent was to him what sight is to us. He lowered his nose an instant, and the next moment, with an awful yell, sprang straight at Gerard's tree, and rolled head-over-heels dead as a stone, literally spitted with an arrow from the bow that twanged beside the coppice in Martin's hand. That same moment out came another hound and smelt his dead comrade. Gerard rushed out at him ; but ere he could use his cudgel, a streak of white lightning seemed to strike the hound, and he grovelled in the dust, wounded desperately, but not killed, and howling piteously.

Pointing wildly to Martin to go back, Gerard ran a few yards to the right, then crept cautiously into the thick coppice just as three men burst out. The rest were following at various distances. Gerard crawled back almost on all-fours. Instinct taught Martin and Margaret to do the same upon their line of retreat. Thus, within the distance of a few yards, the pursuers and pursued were passing one another upon opposite tracks.

A loud cry announced the discovery of the dead and the wounded hound. Then followed a babble of voices, still swelling as fresh pursuers reached the spot.

" I hear no more hounds," whispered Martin to Margaret, and he was himself again.

They were now nearly at the edge of the coppice, when suddenly they heard hooping and hallooing behind

them. The men had satisfied themselves the fugitives were in the coppice, and were beating back.

" No matter," whispered Martin to his trembling companion. " We shall have time to win clear and slip out of sight by hard running. Ah ! "

He stooped suddenly; for just as he was going to burst out of the brushwood, his eye caught a figure keeping sentinel. It was Ghysbrecht Van Swieten seated on his mule.

At that moment an active figure leaped on Ghysbrecht from behind so swiftly, it was like a hawk swooping on a pigeon. A kerchief went over the burgomaster, in a turn of the hand his head was muffled in it, and he was whirled from his seat and fell heavily upon the ground, where he lay groaning with terror ; and Gerard jumped down after him.

" Hist, Martin ! Martin ! "

At this crisis, when safety seemed at hand, as fate would have it, Margaret, who had borne up so bravely till now, began to succumb, partly from loss of blood.

In a moment Martin was on Ghysbrecht's mule, and Gerard raised the fainting girl in his arms and placed her on the saddle, and relieved Martin of his bow.

" Now, have you got her firm ? Then fly ! for our lives ! for our lives ! "

But even as the mule, urged suddenly by Martin's heel, scattered the flints with his hind hoofs ere he got into a canter, and even as Gerard withdrew his foot from Ghysbrecht's throat to run, Dierich Brower and his five men burst roaring out of the coppice on them.

Confused for a moment, like lions that miss their spring, Dierich and his men let Gerard and the mule put

ten yards between them. Then they flew after with uplifted weapons. A hundred yards were covered in no time. Yet still there remained these ten yards between the pursuers and the pursued.

This increase of speed since the morning puzzled Dierich Brower. The reason was this. When three run in company, the pace is that of the slowest of the three. From Peter's house to the edge of the forest Gerard ran Margaret's pace ; but now he ran his own ; for the mule was fleet, and could have left them all far behind. The pursuers began to curse.

Martin heard, and his face lighted up. " Courage, Gerard! courage, brave lad! they are straggling."

It was so. Dierich was now headed by one of his men, and another dropped into the rear altogether.

They came to a rising ground, not sharp, but long ; and here youth, and grit, and sober living told more than ever.

Ere he reached the top, Dierich's forty years weighed him down like forty bullets. " Our cake is dough," he gasped. " Take him dead, if you can't alive ; " and he left running, and followed at a foot's pace. Jorian Ketel tailed off next ; and then another, and so, one by one, Gerard ran them all to a standstill.

Presently Gerard found stains of blood on Margaret's ankles.

" Martin ! Martin ! help ! they have wounded her : the crossbow ! "

" No, no ! " said Margaret, smiling to reassure him ; " I am not wounded, nor hurt at all."

" But what is it, then, in Heaven's name ? " cried Gerard, in great agitation.

" Well, Martin said it was blood those cruel dogs followed ; so I thought if I could but have a little blood on my shoon, the dogs would follow me instead, and let my Gerard wend free. So I scratched my arm with Martin's knife—forgive me ! "

" Let me see this scratch first," said Gerard, choking with emotion. " There, I thought so. A scratch ? I call it a cut—a deep, terrible, cruel cut. "

Margaret smiled with love ineffable. " Foolish Gerard," murmured she, " to make so much of nothing." And she flung the guilty arm round his neck. " As if I would not give all the blood in my heart for you, let alone a few drops from my arm." And with this, under the sense of his recent danger, she wept on his neck for pity and love ; and he wept with her.

" Come a step with me, Martin," whispered Gerard. When he had drawn him aside, he said to him in a broken voice, " Good Martin, watch over her for me ! She is my wife ; yet I leave her. See, Martin ! here is gold. You will not let her want for anything, dear Martin ? "

" Thou art a good lad, Gerard. Neither want nor harm shall come to her. Go with a stout heart, and God be with thee going and coming." And the rough soldier wrung Gerard's hand, and turned his head away, with unwonted feeling.

After a moment's silence he was for going back to Margaret, but Gerard stopped him. " No, good Martin ; prithee, stay here behind this thicket, and turn your head away from us, while I—oh, Martin ! Martin ! "

Martin did not see the poor young things kneel and renew before Heaven those holy vows cruel men had interrupted. But he heard Gerard sob, and Margaret moan.

At last there was a hoarse cry, and feet pattered on the hard road.

He started up, and there was Gerard running wildly, with both hands clasped above his head, in prayer, and Margaret tottering back towards him with palms extended piteously, as if for help, and ashy cheek and eyes fixed on vacancy.

Gerard, severed from her he loved, went like one in a dream. He hired a horse and a guide at a little hostelry, and rode swiftly towards the German frontier.

After many hours' riding they came to the brow of a steep hill ; a small brook ran at the bottom.

" Halt ! " cried the guide, and pointed across the valley. " Here is Germany."

" Where ? "

" On t'other side of the bourn. No need to ride down the hill, I trow."

Gerard dismounted without a word. He paid the lad in silence, and descended the hill alone. The brook was silvery; it ran murmuring over little pebbles, that glittered, varnished by the clear water. Then he drank, and laved his hot feet and hands in it ; it was very cold : it waked him. He rose, and taking a run, leaped across it into Germany.

CHAPTER XII

THE sun was nearly setting, and Gerard, who had now for some time been hoping in vain to find an inn by the way, was very ill at ease. To make matters worse, black clouds gathered over the sky.

Gerard quickened his pace almost to a run.

It was in vain ; down came the rain in torrents, drenched the bewildered traveller, and seemed to extinguish the very sun.

Presently the darkness thickened. He was entering a great wood. Huge branches shot across the narrow road, and the benighted stranger groped his way in what seemed an interminable and inky cave with a rugged floor, on which he stumbled and stumbled as he went.

On, and on, and on, with shivering limbs and empty stomach, and fainting heart, till the wolvps rose from their lairs and bayed all round the wood.

Presently in the sea of ink there was a great fiery star close to the ground. He hailed it as he would his patron saint. " CANDLE ! a CANDLE ! " he shouted, and tried to run. The light was more distant than he had thought. But at last, in the very heart of the forest, he found a house, with lighted candles and loud voices inside it. He looked up to see if there was a signboard. There was none. " Not an inn after all," said he sadly. " No matter ; what Christian would turn a dog out into this wood to-night ? " and with this he made for the door that led to the voices. He opened it slowly, and put his head in timidly. He drew it out abruptly, as if slapped in the face, and recoiled into the rain and darkness.

He had peeped into a large but low room, the middle of which was filled by a huge round stove, or clay oven, that reached to the ceiling ; round this, wet clothes were drying—some on lines, and some more compendiously, on rustics. Garlic filled up the interstices of the air. And all this with closed window, and intense heat

of the central furnace, and the breath of at least forty persons.

They had just supped.

Now Gerard, like most artists, had sensitive organs, and the potent effluvia struck dismay into him. But the rain lashed him outside, and the light and the fire tempted him in. So he crept into a corner close to the door. He plucked up a little heart; and being faint with hunger, asked one of the men whether this was not an inn after all ?

" Whence come you, who know not ' The Star of the Forest ? ' " was the reply.

" I am a stranger ; and in my country inns have aye a sign."

" Droll country yours ! What need of a sign to a public-house—a place that every soul knows ? "

The landlady sat on a chair an inch or two higher than the rest, between two bundles. From the first, a huge heap of feathers and wings, she was taking the downy plumes, and pulling the others from the quills, and so filling bundle two—littering the floor ankle-deep. Gerard asked her if he could have something to eat.

She opened her eyes with astonishment. " Supper is over this hour and more."

" But I had none of it, good dame."

" What have I to do with that ? All the world knows ' The Star of the Forest ' sups from six till eight. Come before six, ye sup well ; come before eight, ye sup as pleases Heaven ; come after eight, ye get a clean bed, and a stirrup cup, or a horn of kine's milk, at the dawning."

Gerard looked blank. " May I go to bed, then,

dame?" said he sulkily; "for it is ill sitting up wet and fasting."

"The beds are not come yet," replied the landlady. "You will sleep when the rest do. Inns are not built for one."

It was Gerard's turn to be astonished. "The beds were not come! what, in Heaven's name, did she mean?"

A woman in the corner was beckoning him. When he had got up to her, "Hold the child," said she, in a fine hearty voice; and in a moment she plumped the bairn into Gerard's arms. She was rummaging among her clothes with two penetrating hands. Presently she fished out a small tin plate and a dried pudding; and held them forth to Gerard, keeping a thumb on the pudding to prevent it from slipping off.

⁴⁴ Put it in the stove," said she; ⁴⁴ you are too young to lie down fasting."

Gerard thanked her warmly, and baked his pudding; and getting to the stove, burst into steam.

The door opened, and in flew a bundle of straw.

It was hurled by a hind with a pitchfork. Another and another came flying after it, till the room was like a clean farmyard. These were then dispersed round the stove in layers, and in a moment the company was all on its back.

The beds had come.

The guests lay round the sacred stove by seniority, i.e. priority of arrival. This punishment was a boon to Gerard; for thus he lay on the shore of odour and stifling heat, instead of in mid-ocean.

And now he turned his face to the wall and pulled up "two handfuls of the nice clean straw, and bored in them with his finger, and so made a scabbard, and sheathed his nose in it. And soon they were all asleep ; men, maids, wives, and children all lying higgledy-piggledy, and snoring in a dozen keys like an orchestra slowly tuning ; and Gerard's body lay on straw in Germany, and his spirit was away to Sevenbergen.

When he woke in the morning he found nearly all his fellow-passengers gone. He paid the landlady her demand, two pfenning, or about an English halfpenny.

The sun had just risen : the rain-drops on the leaves glittered like diamonds. The air was fresh and bracing, and Gerard steered south.

Eight leagues he walked that day, and in the afternoon came upon a huge building with an enormous arched gateway and a postern by its side.

" A monastery ! " cried he joyfully ; " I go no further lest I fare worse." He applied at the postern, and was instantly admitted and directed to the guest-chamber, a large and lofty room, where travellers were fed and lodged gratis by the charity of the monastic orders. Soon the bell tinkled for vespers, and Gerard entered the church of the convent, and from his place heard a service sung so exquisitely, it seemed the choir of heaven. But one tiling was wanting, Margaret was not there to hear it with him. At supper, plain but wholesome and abundant food, and good beer, brewed in the convent, were set before him and his fellows, and at an early hour they were ushered into a large dormitory, and had each a truckle bed, and for covering, sheepskins dressed

with the fleece on ; but previously to this a monk, struck by his youth and beauty, questioned him, and soon drew out his projects and his heart. When he was found to be convent bred, and going alone to Rome, he became a personage, and in the morning they showed him over the convent and made him stay and dine in the refectory. They also pricked him a route on a slip of parchment, and the prior gave him a silver guilder to help him on the road, and advised him to join the first honest company he should fall in with, " and not face alone the manifold perils of the way."

CHAPTER XIII

THAT evening he came to a small straggling town where was one inn. He soon found his way to the stove (as the public room was called from the principal article in it), and sat down near the oven, in which were only a few live embers that diffused a mild and grateful heat.

After waiting patiently a long time, he asked a grim old fellow with a long white beard, who stalked solemnly in, and turned the hour-glass, and then was stalking out, when supper would be. The grisly Ganymede counted the guests on his fingers—" When I see thrice as many here as now." Gerard groaned.

After a while company trickled steadily in, till full eighty persons of various conditions were congregated, and to our novice the place became a chamber of horrors ; for here the mothers got together and compared ring-worms, and the men scraped the mud off their shoes with their knives, and left it on the floor, and combed

their long hair out, inmates included, and made their toilet, consisting generally of a dry rub. Water, however, was brought in ewers. Gerard pounced on one of these, but at sight of the liquid contents lost his temper and said to the waiter, " Wash you first your water, and then a man may wash his hands withal."

" An' it likes you not, seek another inn! "

Gerard said nothing, but went quietly and courteously besought an old traveller to tell him how far it was to the next inn.

" About four leagues."

Then Gerard appreciated the grim pleasantry of th' unbending sire.

When perspiration and suffocation were far advanced, they brought in the table-cloths; they seemed like sacks that had been worn out in agriculture, or like shreds from the mainsail of some worn-out ship. The Hollander, who had never seen such linen even in nightmare, uttered a faint cry.

A Burgundian soldier with his arbalest at his back came peeping over Gerard's shoulder, and laughed so loud that the room rang again, then slapped him on the back and cried, " Courage ! le diable est mort."

Gerard stared ; but the tones were so hearty and the arbalestrier's face, notwithstanding a formidable beard, was so gay and genial, that he smiled, and after a pause said drily, " Il a bien fait: avec l'eau et le linge du pays on allait le noircir à ne se reconnaître plus."

" Tiens, tiens ! " cried the soldier, " vià qui parle le francais," and he seated himself by Gerard, and in a moment was talking volubly of war, women, and pillage, interlarding his discourse with curious oaths.

Presently in came the grisly servant, and counted them all on his fingers superciliously ; then went out again, and returned with a deal trencher and deal spoon to each.

Then there was an interval. Then he brought them a long mug apiece made of glass, and frowned. By-and-by he stalked gloomily in with a hunch of bread apiece, and exit with an injured air. Expectation thus raised, the guests sat **for** nearly an hour balancing the wooden spoons, and with their own knives whittling the bread. Eventually a huge vessel was brought in with pomp, the lid was removed, a cloud of steam rolled forth, and behold some thin broth with square pieces of bread floating. Slices of Strasbourg ham followed, and pieces of salt fish, both so highly salted that Gerard could hardly swallow a mouthful. Then came a kind of gruel, and when the repast had lasted an hour and more, some hashed meat highly peppered ; and the French and Dutch being now full to the brim with the above dainties, and the draughts of beer the salt and spiced meats had provoked, in came roasted kids, most excellent, and carp and trout fresh from the stream. Gerard made an effort and looked angrily at them, but " could no more," as the poets say. The canny natives had kept an internal corner for contingencies, and polished the kids' very bones.

The bedrooms were upstairs, dungeons with not a scrap of furniture except the bed, and a male servant settled inexorably who should sleep with whom. Neither money nor prayers would get a man a bed to himself here ; custom forbade it sternly. They assigned to Gerard a man with a great black beard. He was an honest

fellow enough, but not perfect; he would *not* go to bed, and *would* sit on the edge of it telling the wretched Gerard by force, and at length, the events of the day. At last Gerard put his fingers in his ears, and lying down in his clothes, for the sheets were too dirty for him to undress, contrived to sleep. But in an hour or two he awoke cold, and found that his drunken companion had got all the feather bed; so mighty is instinct. They lay between two beds; the lower one hard and made of straw, the upper soft and filled with feathers light as down. Gerard pulled at it, but the experienced drunkard held it fast mechanically. Gerard tried to twitch it away by surprise, but instinct was too many for him. On this he got out of bed, and kneeling down on his bedfellow's unguarded side, easily whipped the prize away and rolled with it under the bed, and there lay on one edge of it, and curled the rest round his shoulders. Before he slept he often heard something grumbling and growling above him, which was some little satisfaction. At peep of day Gerard rose, flung the feather bed upon his snoring companion, and went in search of milk and air.

A cheerful voice hailed him in French: "What ho! you are up with the sun, comrade!"

The soldier then told him his name was Denys, and he was passing from Flushing in Zealand to the Duke's French dominions; he should revisit his native place, and a host of pretty girls who had wept at his departure, and should hear French spoken again. "And who are you, and whither bound?"

"My name is Gerard, and I am going to Rome," said the more reserved Hollander.

" All the better; we will go together as far as Burgundy."

" That is not my road."

" Well, then, it is I who must go out of my way a step for the sake of good company, for thy face likes me, and thou speakest French, or nearly."

" There go two words to that bargain," said Gerard coldly.

" Come, young man, too much suspicion becomes not your years. Is it yon fat purse at your girdle you fear for ? " (Gerard turned pale.) " Look hither ! " and he undid his belt, and poured out of it a double handful of gold pieces, then returned them to their hiding-place. " There is a hostage for you," said he; " carry you that, and let us be comrades," and handed him his belt, gold and all.

Gerard stared. " If I am over prudent, you have not enow." But he flushed and looked pleased at the other's trust in him.

" Bah ! I can read faces ; and so must you, or you'll never take your four bones safe to Rome."

" Soldier, you would find me a dull companion, for my heart is very heavy," said Gerard, yielding.

" Oh ! no soul is sad alongside me. I lift up their poor little hearts with my ' Courage, tout le monde, le diable est mort.' Ha ! ha ! "

" So be it, then," said Gerard. " But take back your belt, for I could never trust by halves. We will go together as far as Rhine, and God go with us both ! "

" Amen ! " said Denys, and lifted his cap. " En avant ! "

The pair trudged manfully on, and Denys enlivened the weary way. He chattered about battles and sieges, and things which were new to Gerard. He passed nobody without addressing him. " They don't understand it, but it wakes them up," said he. He doffed his cap to every woman, high or low, he caught sight of, and with eagle eye discerned her best feature, and complimented her on it in his native tongue, well adapted to such matters ; and at each carrion crow or magpie, down came his crossbow, and he would go a furlong off the road to circumvent it.

Our travellers towards nightfall reached a village; it was a very small one, but contained a place of entertainment. They searched for it, and found a small house with barn and stables. In the former was the everlasting stove, and the clothes drying round it on lines, and a traveller or two sitting morose. Gerard asked for supper.

" Supper ? We have no time to cook for travellers ; we only provide lodging, good lodging for man and beast. You can have some beer."

" Madman, who, born in Holland, sought other lands ! " snorted Gerard in Dutch. The landlady started.

" What gibberish is that ? " asked she, and crossed herself with looks of superstitious alarm. " You can buy what you like in the village, and cook it in our oven ; but, prithee, mutter no charms nor sorceries here, good man ; don't ye now, it do make my flesh creep so."

They scoured the village for food, and ended by supping on roasted eggs and brown bread.

At a very early hour their chambermaid came for them. It was a rosy-cheeked old fellow with a lanthorn.

They followed him. He led them across a dirty farm-yard, where they had much ado to pick their steps, and brought them into a cow-house. There, on each side of every cow, was laid a little clean straw, and a tied bundle of ditto for a pillow. The old man looked down on this his work with paternal pride. Not so Gerard. "What, do you set Christian men to lie among cattle?"

"Well, it is hard upon the poor beasts. They have scarce room to turn."

"Oh! what, it is not hard on us, then?"

"Where is the hardship? I have lain among them all my life. Look at me! I am fourscore, and never had a headache in all my born days—all along of lying among the kye. Bless your silly head, kine's breath is ten times sweeter to drink nor Christians'. You try it!" and he slammed the bedroom door.

CHAPTER XIV

As they drew near the Rhine, they passed through forest after forest, and now for the first time ugly words sounded in travellers' mouths, seated around stoves. "Thieves!" "black gangs!" "cut-throats!" etc.

Certain it was, that every clown they met carried a most formidable weapon; a light axe with a short pike at the head, and a long slender handle of ash or yew, well seasoned. Gerard bought one and practised with it. Denys quietly filed and ground his bolt sharp, whistling the whilst; and when they entered a gloomy wood, he would unsling his crossbow and carry it ready for action.

One day, being in a forest a few leagues from Diisseldorf, as Gerard was walking like one in a dream, thinking of Margaret, and scarce seeing the road he trode, his companion laid a hand on his shoulder, and strung his crossbow with glittering eye. "Hush!" said he, in a low whisper that startled Gerard more than thunder. Denys sprang into the wood, and his crossbow went to his shoulder, even as he jumped. Twang! went the metal string; and after an instant's suspense he roared, "Run forward, guard the road, he is hit! he is hit!"

Gerard darted forward, and as he ran a young bear burst out of the wood right upon him; finding itself intercepted, it went upon its hind legs with a snarl, and though not half grown, opened formidable jaws and long claws. Gerard, in a fury of excitement and agitation, flung himself on it, and delivered a tremendous blow on its nose with his axe, and the creature staggered; another, and it lay grovelling.

"We will carry it by turns," said Gerard, "for 'tis a heavy load: poor thing, how its blood drips. Why did we slay it?"

"For supper and the reward the baillie of the next town shall give us."

Gerard did not answer, for his ear was attracted by a sound behind them. It was a peculiar sound, too, like something heavy, but not hard, rushing softly over the dead leaves. He turned round with some little curiosity. A colossal creature was coming down the road at about sixty paces' distance.

"Denys!" he cried. "Oh, God! Denys!"

Denys whirled round.

It was a bear as big as a cart-horse.

It was tearing along with its huge head down, running on a hot scent.

The very moment he saw it Denys said in a sickening whisper—

" THE CUB ! "

For in that syllable it all flashed upon them both like a sudden stroke of lightning in the dark—the bloody trail, the murdered cub, the mother upon them, *and it*. DEATH.

She saw them. Huge as she was, she seemed to double herself (it was her long hair bristling with rage) : she raised her head big as a bull's, her swine-shaped jaws opened wide at them, her eyes turned to blood and flame, and she rushed upon them, scattering the leaves about her like a whirlwind as she came.

" Shoot! " screamed Denys, but Gerard stood shaking from head to foot, useless.

" Shoot, man! ten thousand devils, shoot! too late ! Tree! tree! " and he dropped the cub, pushed Gerard across the road, and flew to the first tree and climbed it, Gerard the same on his side ; and as they fled, both men uttered inhuman howls like savage creatures grazed by death.

With all their speed one or other would have been torn to fragments at the foot of his tree ; but the bear stopped a moment at the cub.

Without taking her bloodshot eyes off those she was hunting, she smelt it all round, and found that it was dead. She gave a yell such as neither of the hunted ones had ever heard. She reared and struck at Denys as he climbed. He was just out of reach.

Instantly she seized the tree, and with her huge

teeth tore a great piece out of it with a crash. Then she reared again, dug her claws deep into the bark, and began to mount it slowly, but as surely as a monkey.

Denys's evil star had led him to a dead tree, a mere shaft, and of no very great height. He climbed faster than his pursuer, and was soon at the top. He looked this way and that for some bough of another tree to spring to. There was none; and if he jumped down, he knew the bear would be upon him ere he could recover the fall, and make short work of him. Moreover, Denys was little used to turning his back on danger, and his blood was rising at being hunted. He turned to bay.

" My hour is come," thought he. " Let me meet death like a man." He kneeled down and grasped a small shoot to steady himself, drew his long knife, and clenching his teeth, prepared to job the huge brute as soon as it should mount within reach. The monster's head and neck were scarce vulnerable for bone and masses of hair.

Gerard's heart was better than his nerves. He saw his friend's mortal danger, and passed at once from fear to blindish rage. He slipped down his tree in a moment, caught up the crossbow, which he had dropped in the road, and running furiously up, sent a bolt into the bear's body with a loud shout. The bear gave a snarl of rage and pain, and turned its head irresolutely.

" Keep aloof! " cried Denys, " or you are a dead man."

" I care not; " and in a moment he had another bolt ready and shot it fiercely into the bear, screaming, " Take that! take that! "

The bear finding so formidable and noisy a foe behind him, slipped growling down the tree, rending deep

furrows in it as she slipped. Gerard ran back to his tree and climbed it swiftly. But while his legs were dangling some eight feet from the ground, the bear came rearing and struck with her fore paw, and out flew a piece of bloody cloth from Gerard's hose. He climbed, and climbed ; and presently he heard as it were in the air a voice say, " Go out on the bough ! " He looked, and there was a long massive branch before him shooting upwards at a slight angle : he threw his body across it, and by a series of convulsive efforts worked up it to the end.

Then he looked round panting.

The bear was mounting the tree on the other side. He heard her claws scrape, and saw her bulge on both sides of the massive tree. Her eye not being very quick, she reached the fork and passed it, mounting the main stem. Gerard drew breath more freely. The bear either heard him, or found by scent she was wrong : she paused ; presently she caught sight of him. She eyed him steadily, then quietly descended to the fork.

Slowly and cautiously she stretched out a paw and tried the bough. It was a stiff oak branch, sound as iron. Instinct taught the creature this: it crawled carefully out on the bough, growling savagely as it came.

Gerard looked wildly down. He was forty feet from the ground. Death below. Death moving slow but sure on him in a still more horrible form. His hair bristled. The sweat poured from him. He sat helpless, fascinated, tongue-tied.

The bear crawled on. And now the stupor of death fell on the doomed man ; he saw the open jaws and blood-shot eyes coming, but in a mist.

As in a mist he heard a twang ; he glanced down ; Denys, white and silent as death, was shooting up at the bear. The bear snarled at the twang, but crawled on. Again the crossbow twanged, and the bear snarled, and came nearer. Again the crossbow twanged ; and the next moment the bear was close upon Gerard, where he sat, with hair standing stiff on end and eyes starting from their sockets, palsied. The bear opened her jaws like a grave, and hot blood spouted from them upon Gerard as from a pump. The bough rocked. The wounded monster was reeling ; it clung, it stuck its sickles of claws deep into the wood ; it toppled, its claws held firm, but its body rolled off, and the sudden shock to the branch shook Gerard forward on his stomach with his face upon one of the bear's straining paws. The ponderous carcass rent the claws out of the bough, then pounded the earth with a tremendous thump. There was a shout of triumph below, and the very next instant a cry of dismay, for Gerard had swooned, and without an attempt to save himself, rolled headlong from the perilous height.

Denys caught at Gerard, and somewhat checked his fall ; but his best friend now was the dying bear, on whose hairy carcass his head and shoulders descended. Denys tore him off her. It was needless. She panted still, and her limbs quivered, but a hare was not so harmless ; and soon she breathed her last ; and the judicious Denys propped Gerard up against her, being soft, and fanned him. He came to by degrees, but confused, and feeling the bear around him, rolled away, yelling.

Denys laughed at him.

" What is the matter now ? " said he, " also, why

tumble off your perch just when we had won the day ? "

" I swooned, I trow."

" But why?"

" You need not to brag, Maitre Denys; I saw you under the tree, the colour of your shirt."

" Let us distinguish," said Denys, colouring ; " it is permitted to tremble *for a friend*."

Gerard, for answer, flung his arms round Denys's neck in silence.

" Look here," whined the stout soldier, affected by this little gush of nature and youth, " was ever aught so like a woman ? I love thee, little milksop—go to. Good ! behold him on his knees now. What new caprice is this ? "

" Oh, Denys, ought we not to return thanks to Him who has saved both our lives against such fearful odds ?" And Gerard kneeled, and prayed aloud. And presently he found Denys kneeling quiet beside him, with his hands across his bosom after the custom of his nation, and a face as long as his arm. When they rose, Gerard's countenance was beaming.

" Good Denys," said he, " Heaven will reward thy piety."

" Ah, bah ! I did it out of politeness," said the Frenchman. " So now our evensong being sung, and the saints enlisted with us—marchons."

Ere they had taken two steps, he stopped. " By-the-by, the cub ! "

" Oh, no, no ! " cried Gerard.

" You are right. It is late. And now I think on't, we shall have papa after it next; these bears make such a

coil about an odd cub. What is this ? you are wounded ! you are wounded ! "

" Not I. "

" He is wounded : miserable that I am ! "

" Be calm, Denys. I am not touched ; I feel no pain anywhere. "

" You ? you only feel when another is hurt, " cried Denys, with great emotion ; and throwing himself on his knees, he examined Gerard's leg with glistening eyes.

" Quick ! quick ! before it stiffens, " he cried ; then made a small bundle of bears' ears, rolling them up in a strip of the skin, cut for the purpose ; and they took the road.

Gerard leaned on his axe, and propped by Denys on the other side, hobbled along, not without sighs.

It was a clear starlight night ; and soon the moon rising revealed the end of the wood at no great distance : a pleasant sight, since Düsseldorf, they knew, was but a short league further.

CHAPTER XV

ALTHOUGH there were no more vivid adventures for a long while, one day's march succeeded another ; one monastery after another fed and lodged them gratis with a welcome always charitable, sometimes genial ; and they met no enemy but winter and rough weather. And so the pair, Gerard bronzed in the face and travel-stained from head to foot, and Denys with his shoes in tatters, stiff and footsore both of them, drew near the Burgundian frontier.

At the next town they came to, suddenly an arbalestrier ran out of a tavern after them, and in a moment his beard and Denys's were like two brushes struck together. It was a comrade. He insisted on their coming into the tavern with him, and breaking a bottle of wine. In course of conversation, he told Denys there was an insurrection in the Duke's Flemish provinces, and soldiers were ordered thither from all parts of Burgundy. Denys gave a start. "Dost hear, Gerard? this comrade is bound for Holland."

In an instant out came inkhorn and paper from Gerard's wallet; and he wrote a long letter to Margaret; dwelt most on the bear, and the character of Denys, whom he painted to the life. And with many endearing expressions bade her be of good cheer; some trouble and peril there had been, but all that was over now, and his only grief left was, that he could not hope to have a word from her hand till he should reach Rome. And so absorbed was he in his love and his work, that he did not see all the people in the room were standing peeping, to watch the nimble fingers execute such rare penmanship.

When this was disposed of, Gerard earnestly requested his friend to let the matter drop, since speaking of her made him pine so for Margaret, and almost unmanned him with the thought that each step was taking him farther from her. "I am no general lover, Denys. There is room in my heart for one sweetheart, and for one friend. I am far from my dear mistress; and my friend, a few leagues more, and I must lose him too."

"As to my leaving thee at Remiremont," said Denys kindly, "reckon thou not on that! For" (three consecutive oaths) "if I do. Nay, I shall propose to thee

to stay forty-eight hours there, while I kiss my mother and sisters, and the females generally, and on go you and I together to the sea."

"Think what you say! 'Tis impossible. 'Tis too selfish of me."

"I tell thee, 'tis settled. No power can change me. At Remiremont I borrow ten pieces of my uncle, and on we go; 'tis fixed; irrevocable as fate."

They shook hands over it. Then Gerard said nothing, for his heart was too full; and so on they went, till a company of mounted soldiers, about fifty in number, rose to sight on the brow of a hill.

"See the banner of Burgundy," said Denys joyfully; "I shall look out for a comrade among these."

"Halt!" cried a stentorian voice. The troop halted. The Bastard of Burgundy bent his brow gloomily on Denys: "How now, arbalestrier, how comes it thy face is turned southward, when every good hand and heart is hurrying northward?"

Denys replied respectfully that he was going on leave, after some years of service, to see his kindred at Remiremont.

"Good. But this is not the time for't; the duchy is disturbed. Ho! bring that dead soldier's mule to the front; and thou mount her and forward with us to Flanders."

"So please your highness," said Denys firmly, "my home is close at hand. I have not seen it these three years; and above all, I have this poor youth in charge, whom I may not, cannot leave, till I see him shipped for Rome."

"Dost bandy words with me?" said the chief, with
CH. F

amazement, turning fast to wrath. " Art weary o' thy life ? Let go the youth's hand, and into the saddle without more idle words."

Denys made no reply ; but he looked defiance.

At this the bastard roared, " Jarnac, dismount six of thy archers, and shoot me this white-livered cur dead where he stands—for an example."

The young Count de Jarnac, second in command, gave the order, and the men dismounted to execute it.

" Oh, nay ! nay ! nay ! " cried Gerard. " He shall go with you on the instant. I'd liever part with him for ever than see a hair of his dear head harmed. Oh, sir, oh, my lord, give a poor boy but a minute to bid his only friend farewell! I swear he shall go with you."

The stern leader nodded a cold contemptuous assent. " Thou, Jarnac, stay with them, and bring him on alive or dead. Forward ! " And he resumed his march.

Denys and Gerard gazed at one another haggardly. And they spoke hurriedly, for the moments were flying **by.**

" Thou goest to Holland : thou knowest where she bides. Tell her all. She will be kind to thee for my sake."

" Make for the Rhine, Gerard ! Strasbourg. And down the current to Rotterdam. Margaret is there : I go thither. I'll tell her thou art coming."

" My lads, haste ye, or you will get us into trouble," said the count firmly, but not harshly now.

" Oh, sir, one moment! one little moment! " panted Gerard. They kissed one another again and again, speechless. And the Count Jarnac looked on amazed, but the rougher soldiers, to whom comrade was a sacred

name, looked on with some pity in their hard faces. Then at a signal from Jarnac, with kind force and words of rude consolation, they almost lifted Denys on to the mule, and spurred after their leader. And Gerard ran wildly after to see the very last of him; and the last glimpse he caught, Denys was rocking to and fro on his mule, and tearing his hair out. But at this sight something rose in Gerard's throat so high, so high, he could run no more nor breathe, but gasped, and leaned against the snow-clad hedge, seizing it, and choking piteously.

All nature seemed to stare now as lonely as himself. No colour but white. He, the ghost of his former self, wandered alone among the ghosts of trees, and fields, and hedges. All was desolate.

CHAPTER X V I

RUDE travel is enticing to us English. Still, as the true centre of this story is in Holland, it is full time to return thither.

Ere Gerard had been gone a week, his adventures were in every mouth ; and to make matters worse, the popular sympathy declared itself warmly on the side of the lovers, and against Gerard's cruel parents, and that old busy-body the burgomaster, " who must put his nose into a business that nowise concerned him."

She whose name was so fiercely interdicted in this house was much spoken of, and even pitied, elsewhere. All Sevenbergen was sorry for her, and the young men and maidens cast many a pitying glance, as they passed, at the little window where the beauty of the village lay

" dying for love." In this familiar phrase they underrated her spirit and unselfishness. Gerard was not dead, and she was too loyal herself to doubt his constancy. Her father was dear to her and helpless ; and but for bodily weakness, all her love for Gerard would not have kept her from doing her duties, though she might have gone about them with drooping head and heavy heart. But physical and mental excitement had brought on an attack of fever so violent, that nothing but youth and constitution saved her.

Martin Wittenhaagen went straight to Rotterdam, to take the bull by the horns. The bull was a biped, with a crown for horns. It was Philip the Good. Arrived at Rotterdam, Martin found the court was at Ghent. To Ghent he went, and sought an audience, but was put off and baffled by lackeys and pages. So he threw himself in his sovereign's way out hunting, and contrary to all court precedents, commenced the conversation—by roaring lustily for mercy.

" Why, where is the peril, man ? " said the duke, looking all round and laughing.

" Grace for an old soldier hunted down by burghers ! "

Now kings differ in character like other folk ; but there is one trait they have in common ; they are mightily inclined to be affable to men of very low estate. These do not vie with them in anything whatever, so jealousy cannot creep in ; and they amuse them by their bluntness and novelty, and refresh the poor things with a touch of nature—a rarity in courts. So Philip the Good reined in his horse and gave Martin almost a *tête-à-tête*, and Martin reminded him of a certain battlefield where

he had received an arrow intended for his sovereign. The duke remembered the incident perfectly, and was graciously pleased to take a cheerful view of it. Then Martin told his majesty of Gerard's first capture in the church, his imprisonment in the tower, and the manoeuvre by which they got him out, and all the details of the hunt; and whether he told it better than I have, or the duke had not heard so many good stories as you have, certain it is that sovereign got so wrapt up in it, that, when a number of courtiers came galloping up and interrupted Martin, he swore like a costermonger, and threatened, only half in jest, to cut off the next head that should come between him and a good story; and when Martin had done, he cried out—

" St. Luke ! what sport goeth on in this mine earldom, ay ! in my own woods, and I see it not. You base fellows have all the luck. Lo you now ! this was a man-hunt," said he. " .' never had the luck to be at a man-hunt."

" My luck was none so great," replied Martin bluntly :
" I was on the wrong side of the dogs' noses."

" Ah ! so you were ; I forgot that. What would you then ? "

" A free pardon, your highness, for myself and Gerard."

" For what ? "

" For prison-breaking."

" Go to ; the bird will fly from the cage. 'Tis instinct. Besides, coop a young man up for loving a young woman? These burgomasters must be void of common sense. What else ? "

" For striking down the burgomaster."

" Oh, the hunted boar will turn to bay. 'Tis his right;

and I hold him less than man that grudges it him. What else ? "

" For killing of the bloodhounds."

The duke's countenance fell.

" 'Twas their life or mine," said Martin eagerly.

" Ay ! but I can't have my bloodhounds, my beautiful bloodhounds, sacrificed to—— "

" No, no, no ! They were not your dogs."

" Whose dogs, then ? "

" The ranger's."

" Oh. Well, I am very sorry for him, but as I was saying, I can't have my old soldiers sacrificed to his bloodhounds. Thou shalt have thy free pardon."

" And poor Gerard."

" And poor Gerard too, for thy sake. And more, tell thou this burgomaster his doings mislike me : this is to set up for a king, not a burgomaster. I'll have no kings in Holland but one. Bid him be more humble ; or by St. Jude I'll hang him before his own door, as I hanged the burgomaster of what's the name, some town or other in Flanders it was ; no, 'twas somewhere in Brabant—no matter—I hanged him, I remember that much—for oppressing poor folk."

The duke then beckoned his chancellor, a pursy old fellow that rode like a sack, and bade him write out a free pardon for Martin and one Gerard. This precious document was drawn up in form, and signed next day, and Martin hastened home with it.

Margaret had left her bed some days, and was sitting pale and pensive by the fireside, when he burst in, waving the parchment, and crying, " A free pardon, girl, for Gerard as well as me ! Send for him back when

you will ; all the burgomasters on earth daren't lay a finger on him."

Now Margaret Van Eyck had been wonderfully kind to Margaret Brandt; had broken through her own habits to go and see her; had nursed her, and soothed her, and petted her, and cured her more than all the medicine in the world; she loved her now far more tenderly than she had ever loved Gerard.

" Sweetheart," said she, " I did desire he should stay in Italy five or six years, and come back rich, and above all, an artist. But your happiness is before all, and I see you cannot live without him, so we must have him home as fast as may be."

" But how to let him know, madam ? "

" Here was this Hans Memling with me to-day," said the old lady; " he is going to Italy, girl, no later than next week."

" But how is he to find my Gerard ? "

" Why, he knows your Gerard, child. They have supped here more than once. Now, as his business is the same as Gerard's, he will visit the same places as Gerard, and soon or late he must fall in with him. Wherefore, get you a long letter written, and I'll answer for the messenger. In six months at farthest Gerard shall get it; and when he shall get it, then will he kiss it, and put it in his bosom, and come flying home."

This Hans Memling was an old pupil of Jan Van-Eyck and his sister, and the following week, sure enough, he returned from Flanders. Margaret Van Eyck gave him the letter, and a piece of gold towards;

his travelling expenses. He seemed in a hurry to be off.

"All the better," said the old artist; "he will be the sooner in Italy."

All this hurry cooled into inaction when Hans got as far as the principal hostelry of Tergou, and saw two of his boon companions sitting in the bay window. He went in for a parting glass with them; and he confided to the convivial crew that he was going to show the Italians how to paint: and that he was entrusted with a letter to a townsman of theirs, one Gerard, and read it out: "To Gerard Eliassoen, of Tergou. These by the hand of the trusty Hans Memling, with all speed."

Sybrandt stole out of the company, and went in search of Cornelis.

These two black sheep kept putting their heads together, and tainting each other worse and worse, till at last their corrupt hearts conceived a plan for keeping Gerard in Italy all his life, and so securing his share of their father's substance.

But when they had planned it they were no nearer the execution: for that required talent. But presently, as if Satan had come between the two heads, they both burst out—

"THE BURGOMASTER!"

They went to Ghysbrecht Van Swieten, and he received them at once: for the man who is under the torture of suspense catches eagerly at knowledge.

They fumbled with their bonnets, and stammered and spoke a word or two, then hesitated and beat about the bush, and let out by degrees that they wanted a

letter written, to say something that might keep Gerard in Italy ; and this letter they proposed to substitute in Hans Mending's wallet for the one he carried.

" It is my duty to aid the citizens that cannot write. But for their matter I will not be responsible. Tell me, then, what I shall write."

" Something about this Margaret."

" Ay, ay ! that she is false, that she is married to another, I'll go bail."

" Nay, burgomaster, nay ! not for all the world ! " cried Sybrandt ; " Gerard would not believe it, or but half, and then he would come back to see. No ; say that she is dead."

" Dead ! what, at her age, will he credit that ? "

" Sooner than the other. Why she *was* nearly dead : so it is not to say a downright lie, after all."

" Humph ! And you think that will keep him in Italy ? "

" Ay," said Cornelis, " our Gerard will never leave Italy now he is there. It was always his dream to get there. He would come back for his Margaret, but not for us. He despises his own family ; always did."

" This would be a bitter pill for him," said the old hypocrite. " It will be for his good in the end," replied the young one.

" What avails Famine wedding Thirst ? " said Cornelis.

" And the grief you are preparing for him so coolly ? " Ghysbrecht spoke sarcastically, but tasted his own vengeance all the time.

" Oh, a lie is not like a blow with a curtal axe. It hacks no flesh and breaks no bones."

CHAPTER XVII

[One day an unexpected visitor came to the little house at Tergou.]

THEY found a soldier seated tranquilly by their fire. The moment they entered the door he rose, and saluted them civilly. They stood and looked at him ; Kate with some little surprise, but Catherine with a great deal, and with rising indignation.

" What makes you here ? " was Catherine's greeting.

" I came to seek after Margaret."

" Well, we know no such person."

" Say not so, dame ; sure you know her by name, Margaret Brandt."

" We have heard of her for that matter—to our cost."

" Come, dame, prithee tell me at least where she bides."

" I know not where she bides, and care not."

Denys felt sure this was a deliberate untruth. He bit his lip. " Well, I looked to find myself in an enemy's country at this Tergou ; but maybe if ye knew all ye would not be so dour."

" Now hush ! " said Eli, " let none speak but I. Young man," said he solemnly, " in God's name who are you, that know us though we know you not ? "

" On the German frontier I lay at the same inn with Gerard. Many a weary league we trode together. Never were truer comrades: never will be while earth shall last. We talked of Sevenbergen and Tergou a thousand times ; and of all in this house. We had our troubles on the road ; but battling them together made them light."

" Soldier, take my hand," said Eli. " God bless thee ! God bless thee ! " and his lip quivered. It was all his reply, but more eloquent than many words.

I shall ask my readers to recall to memory all they can of Gerard's journey with Denys, and in their mind's eye to see those very matters told by his comrade to an exile's father.

After a while Giles came softly and curled himself up before the fire, and lay gazing at the speaker with a reverence almost canine ; and Kate, though timorous as a bird, stole her little hand into the warrior's huge brown palm. Whenever Gerard was in too much danger, the female faces became so white, he was obliged in common humanity to spoil his recital. " Now, dame, take not on till ye hear the end; ma'amselle, let not your cheek blanch so ; courage ! it looks ugly; but you shall hear how we won through. Had he miscarried, and I at hand, would I be alive ? "

CHAPTER XVIII

[Time passed, and Hans Memling must long ago have reached Rome and delivered Margaret's letter, and yet no sign came from Gerard. Margaret was awaiting him the more anxiously because she was shortly to give birth to his child. At last, feeling herself slighted by Gerard's family and scorned by her neighbours because she could not prove herself a wife, she persuaded Peter to leave Sevenbergen, and settle in Rotterdam, where she could find work. There in the market-place one day she was discovered by Denys, who had long been searching for her.]

IT was a sweet yet bitter day for Margaret, since it brought her a true friend, and ill news ; for now first she learned that Gerard was all alone in that strange land. She could not think with Denys that he would come home; indeed he would have arrived before this.

Denys was a balm. He called her his she-comrade, and was always cheering her up with his formula and hilarities, and she petted him and made much of him, and would not let him eat a single meal out of her house.

The English princess, now Countess Charolois, made a stately progress through the northern states of, the duchy, accompanied by her stepdaughter, the young heiress of Burgundy, Marie de Bourgogne. Then the old duke, the most magnificent prince in Europe, put out his splendour. Troops of dazzling knights, and be vies of fair ladies gorgeously attired, attended the two princesses. Richart invited all his people to meet him at Rotterdam and view the pageant.

The next day a visitor came to Margaret, an old man, venerable at first sight, but on nearer view keen and wizened.

" Ah," cried Margaret. Then swiftly turned her back on him and hid her face with invincible repugnance. " Oh, that man ! that man ! "

" Nay, fear me not," said Ghysbrecht; "I come on a friend's errand. I bring ye a letter from foreign parts."

" Mock me not, old man," and she turned slowly round.

" Nay, see," and he held out an enormous letter.

Margaret darted on it, and held it with trembling hands and glistening eyes. It was Gerard's handwriting.

" Oh, thank you, sir, bless you for this. I forgive you all the ill you ever wrought me."

And she pressed the letter to her bosom with one hand, and glided swiftly from the room with it.

When she came down again she was a changed woman.

' Denys," said she softly, ^{iC} I have got my orders. I am to read my lover's letter to his folk."

CHAPTER XIX

THEY were, **all** assembled, and waiting for her with a strange mixture of feelings.

The door opened slowly, and Margaret Brandt, somewhat pale, but calm and lovely, stood on the threshold, looking straight before her.

" Be seated, mistress," said Eli gravely, and motioned to a seat that had been set apart for her.

She took her letter out of her bosom, and kissed it as if she had been alone ; then disposed herself to read it, with the air of one who knew she was there for that single purpose.

"I do nothing doubt, my Margaret, that long ere this shall meet thy beloved eyes, Denys will have sought thee out, and told thee the manner of our parting. Therefore I will e'en begin at that most doleful day. Friend more stanch and loving had not David in Jonathan, than I in him. Be good to him, for poor Gerard's sake."

At these words, which came quite unexpectedly to him, Denys leaned his head on Margaret's high chair, and groaned aloud.

She turned quickly as she sat, and found his hand, and pressed it.

" I went forward all dizzied, like one in an ill dream ; and presently a gentleman came up with his servants, all on horseback, and had liked to have rid o'er me. And he drew rein at the brow of the hill, and sent his armed men back to rob me. They robbed me civilly enough ; and took my purse and the last copper, and rid gaily away. I wandered stupid on, a friendless pauper.

" I came to Strasbourg. And I looked down Rhine with longing heart. The stream how swift ! It seemed running to clip Sevenbergen to its soft bosom. With but a piece of timber and an oar I might drift at my ease to thee. 'Twas a sore temptation. But the fear of an ill welcome from my folk, and of the neighbours' sneers, and the hope of coming back to thee victorious, it did withhold me ; and so, with many sighs, I turned sorrowful face and heavy heart towards Augsburg.

" *January 5.*—Dear Margaret, it is a noble city, and a kind mother to arts. Here they cut in wood and ivory, that 'tis like spider's work, and paint on glass, and sing angelical harmonies. Writing of books is quite gone by ; here be six printers. Yet was I offered a bountiful wage to write fairly a merchant's accounts, one Fugger, a grand and wealthy trader, and hath store of ships, yet his father was but a poor weaver.

" *January 10.*—This day started for Venice with a company of merchants, and among them him who had desired me for his scrivener ; and so we are now agreed, I to write at night the letters he shall diet, and other matters, he to feed and lodge me on the road. But an

if I find the printing press at Venice, I trow I shall not go unto Rome, for man may not vie with iron.

" *January 18.*—In the midst of life we are in death. Oh ! dear Margaret, I thought I had lost thee. Yestreen I wearied of being shut up in litter, and of the mule's slow pace, and so went forward, and soon distanced them all. Presently I came to two roads, and took the larger ; I should have taken the smaller. After travelling a good half-hour, I found my error, and returned ; and deeming my company had long passed by, pushed bravely on ; and night came down, and the wild beasts afoot, and I bemquaned my folly ; also I was hungered. The moon rose clear and bright exceedingly, and presently a little way off the road I saw a tall windmill. Near the mill was a haystack, and scattered about were store of little barrels, tar-barrels, one or two, and the rest of spirits, Brant vein and Schiedam. I knocked at the mill-door, but none answered. I went in, and gladly, for the night was fine but cold. There was a stove, but black ; I lighted it with some of the hay and wood, for there was a great pile of wood outside, and I know not how, I went to sleep. Not long had I slept, I trow, when hearing a noise, I awoke ; and there were a dozen men around me, with wild faces, and long black hair, and black sparkling eyes.

" I made my excuses in such Italian as I knew, and eking out by signs. They grinned, and spoke to one another in a tongue I knew not. At last one gave me a piece of bread and a tin mug of wine, as I thought, but it was spirits neat. These wild men laughed a horrible laugh. I mumbled my bread, not to let them see I feared them. Then it whirled in my brain, was there

no way to escape ? Said I , ' They will not let me forth by the door ; these be smugglers or robbers.' So I feigned drowsiness, and taking out two batzen said, ' Good men, for our Lady's grace let me lie on a bed and sleep, for I am faint with travel.' They nodded and grinned their horrible grin, and bade one light a lanthorn and lead me. He took me to the very top of the mill, and there was a room with a heap of straw in one corner, and by the wall a truckle bed. He pointed to it, and went downstairs heavily, taking the light, for in this room was a great window, and the moon came in bright. I looked out to see, and lo, it was so high that even the mill sails at their highest came not up to my window by some feet, but turned very slow and stately underneath, for wind there was scarce a breath ; and the trees seemed silver filigree made by angel craftsmen. My hope of flight was gone.

" Natheless, for caution against surprise, I would put the bed against the door. I went to move it, but could not. It was free at the head, but at the foot fast clamped with iron to the floor. So I flung my psaltery on the bed, but for myself made a layer of straw at the door. And I laid my sword ready to my hand.

" And for some time I could not sleep for the boisterous mirth below. At last I dropped off. I woke with a start: the noise had ceased below, and the sudden silence woke me. And scarce was I awake, when sudden the truckle bed was gone with a loud clang all but the feet, and the floor yawned, and I heard my psaltery fall and break to atoms, deep, deep, below the very floor of the mill. It had fallen into a well. And so had I done, lying where it lay.

" I lay stupefied at first. At last I found myself looking down into that fearsome gap, and my very hair did bristle as I peered. And then, I remember, I turned quite calm, and made up my mind to die sword in hand. For I saw no man must know this their bloody secret and live.

⁴⁴ Presently thinking, all in a whirl, of all that ever passed between us, and taking leave of all those pleasant hours, I called to mind how one day at Sevenbergen thou taughtest me to make a rope of straw. I seized on the straw and twisted it eagerly, but my fingers trembled and delayed the task. Even as I twisted my rope I got to the window and looked down at the great arms of the mill coming slowly up.

" Dear Margaret, I fastened my rope, and let myself gently down, and fixed my eye on that huge arm of the mill, which then was creeping up to me, and went to spring on to it. But my heart failed me at the pinch. And it passed calm and awful by. I watched for another; they were three. And after a little while one crept up slower than the rest, methought. And I with my foot thrust myself in good time somewhat out from the wall, and crying aloud ' Margaret! ' did grip with all my soul the wood-work of the sail, and that moment was swimming in the air.

" Motion I felt little; but the stars seemed to go round the sky, and then the grass came up to me nearer and nearer, and when the hoary grass was quite close I was sent rolling along it as if hurled from a catapult, and got up breathless, and every point and tie about me broken. I rose, but fell down again in agony. I had but one leg I could stand on.

" And e'en as I lay groaning, I heard a sound like thunder. It was the assassins running up the stairs. The crazy old mill shook under them. They must have found that I had not fallen into their bloody trap, and were running to despatch me. I could neither run nor hide ; so wild the place, so bright the moon. Leaning on my sword hilt I hobbled round ; and swift as lightning I heaped a great pile of their hay and wood at the mill door ; then drove my dagger into a barrel of their smuggled spirits, and flung it on ; then out with my tinder and lighted the pile. ' This will bring true men round my dead body,' said I. But oh, Mrgaret! the fire fed by the spirits surprised me : it shot up and singed my very hair, it went roaring up the side of the mill ; and I yelled and laughed, and pierced more barrels and the very tar-barrels, and flung them on. The fire roared like a lion for its prey, and voices answered it inside from the top of the mill, and the feet came thundering down, and I stood as near that awful fire as I could, with uplifted sword to slay and be slain. The bolt was drawn. A tar-barrel caught fire. The door was opened. Not the men came out, but the fire rushed in at them like a living death, and the first I thought to fight with was blackened and crumpled on the floor like a leaf. The feet ran up again, but fewer. I heard them hack with their swords a little way up at the mill's wooden sides ; the fire and reek were at their heels, and the smoke burst out at every loophole, and oozed blue in the moonlight through each crevice. There were white faces up at my window. They saw me. They cursed me. I cursed them back and shook my naked sword : ' Come down the road I came,' I cried. ' But ye must come

one by one, and as ye come, ye die upon this steel." Some cursed at that, but others wailed. The mill caught fire. Tongues of flame darted through each loophole and shot sparks and fiery flakes into the night. And the sails caught fire one after another ; and I became a man again and staggered away terror-stricken, leaning on my sword, from the sight of my revenge, and with great bodily pain crawled back to the road. And, dear Margaret, the rimy trees were now all like pyramids of golden filigree, and lace, cobweb fine, in the red firelight. The next moment there was a loud crash. The mill fell in on its destroyer, and a million great sparks flew up, and the sails fell "over the burning wreck, and the ground was strewn with burning wood and men. I prayed God forgive me, and kneeling with my back to that fiery shambles, I saw lights on the road ; a welcome sight. It was a company coming towards me, and scarce two furlongs off. I hobbled towards them. Ere I had gone far I heard a swift step behind me. I turned. One had escaped ; how escaped, who can divine ? His sword shone in the moonlight. I feared him. Methought the ghosts of all those dead sat on that glittering glaive. I put my other foot to the ground, maugre the anguish, and fled towards the torches, moaning with pain, and shouting for aid. But what could I do ? He gained on me. Behooved me turn and fight. Denys had taught me sword play in sport. I wheeled, our swords clashed. His clothes, they smelled all singed. I cut swiftly upward with supple hand, and his dangled bleeding at the wrist, and his sword fell ; it tinkled on the ground. I raised my sword to hew him should he stoop for't. He stood and cursed me. He drew his dagger with his left ; I

opposed my point and dared him with my eye to close. A great shout arose behind me from true men's throats. He started. He spat at me in his rage, then gnashed his teeth and fled blaspheming. I turned and saw torches close at hand. Lo, they fell to dancing up and down, methought, and the next—moment—all—was—dark ! "

CHAPTER XX

THEN Margaret held out the letter to Eli, and said faintly but sweetly, " I will trust it from my hand now. In sooth, I am little fit to read any more."

" Read thou, Richart," said Eli : " thine eyes be younger than mine."

Richart took the letter.

" When I came to myself I was seated in the litter, and my good merchant holding of my hand. I babbled I know not what, and then shuddered awhile in silence. He put a horn of wine to my lips.

" *January 19.*—I sit all day in the litter, for we are pushing forward with haste, and at night the good, kind merchant sendeth me to bed, and will not let me work.

" *January 20.*—Laid up in the litter, and as good as blind, but halting to bait, Lombardy plains burst on me. Oh, Margaret! a land flowing with milk and honey ; all sloping plains, goodly rivers, jocund meadows, delectable orchards, and blooming gardens ; and though winter, looks warmer than poor beloved Holland at midsummer, and makes the wanderer's face to shine, and his heart to leap for joy to see earth so kind and smiling. Here be vines, cedars, olives, and cattle plenty, but three

goats to a sheep. The draught oxen wear white linen on their necks, and standing by dark green olive-trees each one is a picture ; and the folk, especially women, wear delicate strawen hats with flowers and leaves fairly imitated in silk, with silver mixed.

" *January 25.*—Safe at Venice. A place whose strange and passing beauty is well known to thee by report of our mariners. Dost mind too how Peter would oft fill our ears withal, we handed beneath the table, and he still discoursing of this sea-enthroned and peerless city, in shape a bow, and its great canal and palaces on piles, and its watery ways plied by scores of gilded boats ; and that market-place of nations, St. Mark his place ? And his statue with the peerless jewels in his eyes, and the lion at his gate ?

" The Italians are a polished and subtle people. They judge a man, not by his habits, but his speech and gesture. Wisest of all nations in their singular temperance of food and drink. Also here in Venice the dames turn their black hair yellow by the sun and art, to be wiser than Him who made them. Ye enter no Italian town without a bill of health, though now is no plague in Europe. The innkeepers cringe and fawn, and cheat, and in country places murder you. Yet will they give you clean sheets by paying therefor. Delicate in eating, and abhor from putting their hand in the plate ; sooner they will apply a crust or what not. They do even tell of a cardinal at Rome, which armeth his guest's left hand with a little bifurcal dagger to hold the meat, while his knife cutteth it. But methinks this, too, is to be wiser than Him, who made the hand so supple and prehensile.

" *January 26.*—Sweetheart, I must be brief, and tell thee but a part of that I have seen, for this day my journal ends. To-night it sails for thee, and I, unhappy, not with it, but to-morrow, in another ship, to Rome.

" Dear Margaret, I stood and saw the brazen chest that holds the body of St. Mark the Evangelist. I saw with these eyes and handled his ring, and his gospel written with his own hand, and all my travels seemed light; for who am I that I should see such things?

" And after this they took me to the quay, and presently I espied among the masts one garlanded with amaranth flowers. 'Take me thither.' said I, and I let my guide know the custom of our Dutch skippers to hoist flowers to the masthead when they are courting a maid. Oft had I scoffed at this, saying, 'So then his wooing is the earth's concern.' But now, so far from the Rotter, that bunch at a masthead made my heart leap with assurance of a countryman. They carried me, and oh, Margaret! on the stern of that Dutch hoy, was written in muckle letters,

RICHART ELIASSOEN, AMSTERDAM.

I sat on the bank and looked, scarce believing my eyes, and looked, and presently fell to crying, till I could see the words no more. Ah me, how they went to my heart, those bare letters in a foreign land. Dear Richart! good, kind brother Richart! often I have sat on his knee and rid on his back. And there was his name on his own ship, and his face and all his grave, but good and gentle ways, came back to me, and I sobbed vehemently, and cried aloud, 'Why, why is not brother Richart

here, and not his name only ? ' I spake in Dutch, for my heart was too full to hold their foreign tongues, and——"

Eli. " Well, Richart, go on, lad, prithee go on. Is this a place to halt at ? "

Richart. " Father, with my duty to you, it is easy to say go on, but think ye I am not flesh and blood ? The poor boy's—simple grief and brotherly love coming—so sudden—on me, they go through my heart and—I cannot go on ; sink me if I can even see the words, 'tis writ so fine."

" Good friends," said Margaret, " let me tell you how the letter ends. The skipper hearing our Gerard speak his grief in Dutch, accosted him, and spake comfortably to him ; and after a while our Gerard found breath to say he was worthy Master Richart's brother. He told Gerard of his consort that was to sail that very night for Rotterdam ; and dear Gerard had to go home and finish his letter and bring it to the ship. And the rest, it is but his poor dear words of love to me."

The pleading tone, as much as the words, prevailed, and Richart said he would read no more aloud.

Eli rose from his chair. " Wife," said he solemnly, " you will set another chair at our table for every meal: also another plate and knife. They will be for Margaret and Peter. She will come when she likes, and stay away when she pleases. Within my walls I am master, and my son's betrothed is welcome."

Catherine bustled out to prepare supper. Eli and Richart sat down and concocted a letter to bring Gerard home. Richart promised it should go by sea to Rome

that very week. Sybrandt and Cornells exchanged a gloomy wink, and stole out.

CHAPTER X X I

ABOUT two months before this scene in Eli's home, the natives of a little maritime place between Naples and Rome might be seen flocking to the sea beach, with eyes cast seaward at a ship, that laboured against a stiff gale blowing dead on the shore.

To those on the beach that battered labouring frame of wood seemed alive, and struggling against death with a panting heart. But could they have been transferred to her deck they would have seen she had not one beating heart but many, and not one nature but a score were coming out clear in that fearful hour.

The mariners stumbled wildly about the deck, handling the ropes as each thought fit, and cursing and praying alternately.

The passengers were huddled together round the mast, some sitting, some kneeling, some lying prostrate, and grasping the bulwarks as the vessel rolled and pitched in the mighty waves. One comely young man, whose ashy cheek, but compressed lips, showed how hard terror was battling in him with self-respect, stood a little apart, holding tight by a shroud, and wincing at each sea. It was the ill-fated Gerard. Meantime prayers and vows rose from the trembling throng amidships, and to hear them, it seemed there were almost as many gods about as men and women.

Suddenly, a more powerful gust than usual catching

the sail at a disadvantage, the rotten shrouds gave way, and the sail was torn out with a loud crack, and went down the wind smaller and smaller, blacker and blacker, and fluttered into the sea, half a mile off, like a sheet of paper, and ere the helmsman could put the ship's head before the wind, a wave caught her on the quarter and drenched the poor wretches to the bone, and gave them a foretaste of chill death. Then one vowed aloud to turn Carthusian monk, if St. Thomas would save him. Another would go a pilgrim to Compostella, bareheaded, barefooted, with nothing but a coat of mail on his naked skin, if St. James would save him. Others invoked Thomas, Dominic, Denys, and above all, Catherine of Siena.

Others lay flat and prayed to the sea.

^{tw} Oh, most merciful sea ! oh, sea most generous ! oh ! bountiful sea ! oh, beautiful sea ! be gentle, be kind, preserve us in this hour of peril."

A Roman woman of the humbler class sat with her child at her half-bared breast, silent amid that wailing throng : her cheek ashy pale ; her eye calm ; and her lips moved at times in silent prayer, but she neither wept, nor lamented, nor bargained with the gods. Whenever the ship seemed really gone under their feet, and bearded men squeaked, she kissed her child ; but that was all. And so she sat patient, and suckled him in death's jaws ; for why should he lose any joy she could give him ? Sixteen hundred years had not tainted the old Roman blood in her veins ; and the instinct of a race she had perhaps scarce heard of taught her to die with decent dignity.

A gigantic friar stood on the poop with feet apart,

not so much defying, as ignoring, the peril that surrounded him. He recited verses from the Canticles with a loud unwavering voice; and invited the passengers to confess to him. Some did so on their knees, and he heard them, and laid his hands on them, and absolved them as if he had been in a snug sacristy, instead of a perishing ship. Gerard got nearer and nearer to him, by the instinct that takes the wavering to the side of the impregnable. And in truth, the courage of heroes facing fleshly odds might have paled by the side of that gigantic friar, and his still more gigantic composure. Thus, even here, two were found who maintained the dignity of our race : a woman, tender, yet heroic, and a monk steeled by religion against mortal fears.

And now, the sail being gone, the sailors cut down the useless mast a foot above the board, and it fell with its remaining hamper over the ship's side. This seemed to relieve her a little.

But now the hull, no longer impelled by canvas, could not keep ahead of the sea. It struck her again and again on the poop, and the tremendous blows seemed given by a rocky mountain, not by a liquid.

The captain left the helm and came amidships, pale as death. "Lighten her," he cried. "Fling all overboard, or we shall founder ere we strike, and lose the one little chance we have of life."

The poor passengers seized on everything that was on deck and flung it overboard. Presently they laid hold of a heavy sack; an old man was lying on it, sea sick. They lugged it from under him. It rattled. Two of them drew it to the side ; up started the owner, and with an unearthly shriek, pounced on it. "Holy Moses !

what would you do ? 'Tis my all ; 'tis the whole fruits of my journey; silver candlesticks, silver plates, brooches, hanaps——"

" Let go, thou hoary villain," cried the others ; " shall all our lives be lost for thy ill-gotten gear ? " " Fling him in with it," cried one ; " 'tis this Ebrew we Christian men are drowned for." Numbers soon wrenched it from him, and heaved it over the side. It splashed into the waves. Then its owner uttered one cry of anguish, and stood glaring, his white hair streaming in the wind, and was going to leap after it, and would, had it floated. But it sank, and was gone for ever ; and he staggered to and fro, tearing his hair, and cursed them and the ship, and the sea, and all the powers of heaven and hell alike.

And now the captain cried out: " See, there is a church in sight. Steer for that church, mate, and you, friends, pray to the saint, whoe'er he be."

So they steered for the church and prayed to the unknown god it was named after. A tremendous sea pooped them, broke the rudder, and jammed it immovable, and flooded the deck. At this moment the sailors were seen preparing to desert the sinking ship in the little boat, which even at that epoch every ship carried ; then there was a rush of egotists ; and thirty souls crowded into it.

And the gigantic Dominican, having shriven the whole ship, stood calmly communing with his own spirit. And the Roman woman sat pale and patient, only drawing her child closer to her bosom as death came nearer.

Gerard saw this, and it awakened his manhood.

" See ! see! " he said, " they have ta'en the boat and left the poor woman and her child to perish."

His heart soon set his wit working.

" Wife, I'll save thee yet, please God." And he ran to find a cask or a plank to float her. There was none.

Then his eye fell on the wooden image of the Virgin. He caught it up in his arms, and heedless of a wail that issued from its worshipper like a child robbed of its toy, ran aft with it. " Come, wife," he cried. " I'll lash thee and the child to this. 'Tis sore worm-eaten, but 'twill serve."

She turned her great dark eye on him and said a single word :

" Thyself ? "

But with a wonderful magnanimity and tenderness, "' I am a man, and have no child to take care of."

" Ah ! " said she, and his words seemed to animate her face with a desire to live. He lashed the image to her side. Then with the hope of life she lost something of her heroic calm ; not much : her body trembled a little, but not her eye.

The ship was now so low in the water that by using An oar as a lever he could slide her into the waves.

" Come," said he, " while yet there is time."

She turned her great Roman eyes, wet now, upon him. "' Poor youth !—God forgive me !—My child ! " And he launched her on the surge, and with his oar kept her from being battered against the ship.

A heavy hand fell on him ; a deep sonorous voice sounded in his ear : " 'Tis well. Now come with me."

It was the gigantic friar.

Gerard turned, and the friar took two strides, and laid hold of the broken mast. Gerard did the same, obeying him instinctively. Between them, after a prodigious

effort, they hoisted up the remainder of the mast, and carried it off. " Fling it in," said the friar, " and follow it." They flung it in ; but one of the bewildered passengers had run after them, and jumped first and got on one end. Gerard seized the other, the friar the middle.

The friar uttered a short Latin prayer for the safety of his soul, and took his place composedly. They rolled along; one moment they saw nothing, and seemed down in a mere basin of watery hills : the next they caught glimpses of the shore speckled bright with people, who kept throwing up their arms with wild Italian gestures to encourage them, and the black boat driving bottom upwards, and between it and them the woman rising and falling like themselves. She had come across a paddle, and was holding her child tight with her left arm, and paddling gallantly with her right.

When they had tumbled along thus a long time, suddenly the friar said quietly—

" I touched the ground."

" Impossible, father," said Gerard ; "we are more than a hundred yards from shore. Prithee, prithee, leave not our faithful mast."

" My son," said the friar, " you speak prudently. But know that I have business of Holy Church on hand, and may not waste time floating when I can walk, in her service. There, I felt it with my toes again ; see the benefit of wearing sandals, and not shoon. Again ; and sandy. Thy stature is less than mine : keep to the mast. I walk." He left the mast accordingly, and extending his powerful arms, rushed through the water. Gerard soon followed him. At each overpowering wave the monk stood like a tower, and closing his mouth,

threw his head back to encounter it, and was entirely lost under it awhile : then emerged and ploughed lustily on. At last they came close to the shore ; but the suction outward baffled all their attempts to land. Then the natives sent stout fishermen into the sea, holding by long spears in a triple chain ; and so dragged them ashore.

The friar shook himself, bestowed a short paternal benediction on the natives, and went on to Rome, with eyes bent on earth according to his rule, and without pausing. He did not even cast a glance back upon that sea, which had so nearly engulfed him, but had no power to harm him, without his Master's leave.

CHAPTER XXII

GERARD took a modest lodging on the west bank of the Tiber, and every day went forth in search of work, taking a specimen round to every shop he could hear of that executed such commissions.

But the main cry was, " What avails this ? Scant is the Latin writ here now. Can ye not write Greek ? "

" Ay, but not nigh so well as Latin."

" Then you shall never make your bread at Rome."

Gerard borrowed a beautiful Greek manuscript at a high price, and went home with a sad hole in his purse, but none in his courage.

In a fortnight he had made vast progress with the Greek character ; so then, to lose no time, he used to work at it till noon, and hunt customers the rest of the day.

[At last an introduction was given him to a wealthy scholar, one Fra Colonna.]

He went to Fra Colonna's lodgings. Gerard entered with a beating heart. The room, a large one, was strewed and heaped with objects of art, antiquity, and learning, lying about in rich profusion, and confusion. Manuscripts, pictures, carvings in wood and ivory, musical instruments ; and in this glorious chaos sat the friar, poring intently over an Arabian manuscript.

He looked up a little peevishly at the interruption.

" Very well," said he. " Be seated. Stay ; young man, show me how you write ? " and he threw Gerard a piece of paper, and pointed to an inkhorn.

" So please you, reverend father," said Gerard, " my hand it trembleth too much at this moment; but last night I wrote a vellum page of Greek, and the Latin version by its side, to show the various characters."

" Show it me."

Gerard brought the work to him in fear and trembling ; then stood, heart-sick, awaiting his verdict.

When it came, it staggered him. For the verdict was, a Dominican falling on his neck.

The next day an event took place in Holland, the effect of which on Gerard's destiny no mortal at the time, nor even my intelligent reader now, could, I think, foresee.

Marched up to Eli's door a pageant brave to the eye of sense, and to the vulgar judgment noble.

It came straight from a tournament at the Duke's court, which being on a progress, lay last night at a neighbouring town, to execute the behests of royalty,

and on Eli emerging, with his wife behind him, saluted them. " Peace be with you, good people. Rejoice ! I am come for your dwarf."

Eli looked amazed, and said nothing. But Catherine screamed over his shoulder, " You have mistook your road, good man ; here abides no dwarf."

" Nay, wife, he means our Giles, w^ho is somewhat small of stature: why gainsay what gainsaid may not be ? "

" We are clean out o' dwarven, and tiger-cats, which may not be, whiles earth them yieldeth. Our last hop o' my thumb tumbled down the well t'other day."

Giles walked out of the house. Catherine set up a piteous cry. She saw another of her brood escaping from under her wing into some unknown element. Giles was not quite insensible to her distress, so simple yet so eloquent. He said, " Nay, take not on, mother! Why, 'tis a godsend. And I am sick of this, ever since Gerard left it."

" Ah, cruel Giles ! Should ye not rather say she is bereaved of Gerard : the more need of you to stay aside her and comfort her."

" Oh ! I am not going to Rome. Not such a fool. I shall never be farther than Rotterdam ; and I'll often come and see you ; and if I like not the place, who shall keep me there ? Not all the dukes in Christendom. Master, if we wait a month, 'twill be still the same : my mother is a good soul, but her body is bigger than her spirit. We shall not part without a tear or two, and the quicker 'tis done the fewer ; so bring yon horse to me."

Eli gave him his blessing, and bade him be honest

and true, and a credit to his folk. Catherine could not speak, but clung to him with many sobs and embraces; and even through the mist of tears her eye detected in a moment a little rent in his sleeve he had made getting out of window, and she whipped out her needle and mended it then and there, and her tears fell on his arm the while, unheeded. So the dwarf mounted the high horse, and rode away complacent.

Arrived at court he speedily became a great favourite.

One strange propensity of his electrified the palace ; but on account of his small size, and for variety's sake, and as a monster, he was indulged on it. In a word, he was let speak the truth.

It is an unpopular thing.

He made it an intolerable one.

Bawled it.

Francesco Colonna, a young nobleman of Florence, lived for the arts. At twenty he turned Dominican friar. His object was quiet study. An eager student of languages, pictures, statues, chronology, coins, and monumental inscriptions, he travelled many years in the East, and returned laden with spoils; master of several choice MSS., and versed in Greek and Latin, Hebrew and Syriac. He found his country had not stood still. His old friend Thomas of Sarzana had been made Pope, and had lent a mighty impulse to letters. All this was heaven ; and he settled down in his native land, his life a rosy dream. He knew seven or eight languages, and a little mathematics ; could write a bit, paint a bit, model a bit, sing a bit, strum a bit; and could relish superior excellence in all these branches.

Fra Colonna was charmed with his new artist, and having the run of half the palaces in Rome, sounded his praises so, that he was soon called upon to resign him. He told Gerard what great princes wanted him, and clapped a terrific price on Gerard's pen.

The great are mighty sweet upon all their pets, while the fancy lasts ; and in the rage for Greek MSS. the handsome writer soon became a pet, and nobles of both sexes caressed him like a lap-dog. It would have turned a vain fellow's head ; but the canny Dutchman saw the steel hand beneath the velvet glove, and did not presume. Nevertheless it was a proud day for him when he found himself seated with Fra Colonna at the table of his present employer, Cardinal Bessarion.

One day the cardinal sent for him, and after praising the beauty of his work took him in his coach to the Vatican ; and up a private stair to a luxurious little room, with a great oriel window. Here were inkstands, sloping frames for writing on, and all the instruments of art. The cardinal whispered a courtier, and presently the Pope's private secretary appeared with a glorious grimy old MS. of Plutarch's Lives. And soon Gerard was seated alone copying it, awestruck, yet half delighted at the thought that his Holiness would handle his work and read it.

The papal inkstands were all glorious externally ; but within the ink was vile. But Gerard carried ever good ink, home-made, in a dirty little inkhorn : he prayed on his knees for a firm and skilful hand, and set to work.

Fra Colonna had the run of the Pope's library, and sometimes left off work at the same hour and walked the

city with Gerard, on which occasions the happy artist saw all things *en beau*, and was wrapped up in the grandeur of Rome and its churches, palaces, and ruins.

The friar granted the ruins, but threw cold water on the rest.

" This place Rome ? It is but the tomb of mighty Rome." He showed Gerard that twenty or thirty feet of the old triumphal arches were underground, and that the modern streets ran over ancient palaces, and over the tops of columns ; and coupling this with the comparatively narrow limits of the modern city, and the gigantic vestiges of antiquity that peeped aboveground here and there, he uttered a somewhat remarkable simile. " I tell thee this village they call Rome is but as one of those swallows' nests ye shall see built on the eaves of a decayed abbey."

" Old Rome must indeed have been fair then," said Gerard.

CHAPTER XXIII

MARGARET seemed nearer and nearer.

But Gerard was suddenly arrested, and rooted to earth at a shop window.

His quick eye had discerned in that window a copy of Lactantius lying open. " That is fairly writ, anyway," thought he.

He eyed it a moment more with all his eyes.

It was not written at all. It was printed.

Gerard groaned.

" I am sped; mine enemy is at the door. The press is in Rome."

He went into the shop, and affecting nonchalance, inquired how long the printing-press had been in Rome. The man said he believed there was no such thing in the city. " Oh, the Lactantius ; that was printed on the top of the Apennines."

" What, did the printing-press fall down there out o' the moon ? "

" Nay, messer," said the trader, laughing ; " it shot up there out of Germany. See the title-page ! "

Gerard took the Lactantius eagerly, and saw the following—

Operâ et impensis Sweynheim et Pannartz
Alumnorum Joannis Fust.
Impressum Subiacis. A.D. 1465.

" Will ye buy, messer ? See how fair and even be the letters. Few are left can write like that ; and scarce a quarter of the price."

" I would fain have it," said Gerard sadly, " but my heart will not let me. Know that I am a caligraph, and these disciples of Fust run after me round the world a-taking the bread out of my mouth. But I wish them no ill. Heaven forbid ! " And he hurried from the shop.

" Dear Margaret," said he to himself, " we must lose no time ; we must make our hay while shines the sun. One month more and an avalanche of printer's type shall roll down on Rome from those Apennines, and lay us waste that writers be."

He set himself resolutely to read that deed of Floris Brandt, from which he had hitherto been driven by the abominably bad writing. He mastered it, and saw at once that the loan on this land must have been paid over

and over again by the rents, and that Ghysbrecht was keeping Peter Brandt out of his own. •

" Fool! not to have read this before," he cried. He hired a horse and rode down to the nearest port. A vessel was to sail for Amsterdam in four days. He took a passage ; and paid a small sum to secure it.

When he returned home there sat his old landlady with her eyes sparkling.

" You are in luck, my young master," said she. " All the fish run to your net this day methinks. See what a lackey hath brought to our house! This bill and this bag."

Gerald broke the seals, and found it full of silver crowns.

" Am I not happy, dame ? I am going back to my sweetheart with money in one pocket, and land in the other." And he fell to dancing round her.

" I thought to make you a little happier with a letter from Holland."

" A letter ? for me ? who brought it ? "

" A stranger ; a painter, with a reddish face and an outlandish name ; Anselmin, I trow."

" Hans Memling ! a friend of mine. God bless him ! "

" Ay, that is it : Anselmin. He could scarce speak a word, but a' had the wit to name thee."

" Alas ! it is not from Margaret. This is not her hand. I trow 'tis my dear friend the demoiselle Van Eyck. Oh, then Margaret's bill *will* be inside." He tore it open. " Nay, 'tis all in one writing. ' Gerard, my well beloved son ' (she never called me that before that I mind), ' this letter brings thee heavy news from one would liever send thee joyful tidings. Know that

Margaret Brandt died in these arms on Thursday sen-fiight last.' (What does the doting old woman mean by that ?) ' The last word on her lips was " Gerard " : she said, " Tell him I prayed for him at my last hour ; and bid him pray for me." She died very comfortable, and I saw her laid in the earth. So no more at present from her that is with sorrowing heart thy loving friend and servant,

' MARGARET VAN EYCK.'

" Ay, that is her signature sure enough. Now what d'ye think of that, dame ? " cried Gerard, with a grating laugh. " There is a pretty letter to send to a poor fellow so far from home. Say this had come to a fool; say I was idiot enough to believe this. Woman ! woman ! what are you doing ? " And he seized her rudely by the shoulder. " What are ye weeping for ? " he cried, in a voice all unlike his own, and loud and hoarse as a raven. " Would ye scald me to death with your tears ? She believes it. She believes it. Ah ! ah ! ah ! ah ! ah ! ah !—Then there is no God. My pretty Margaret; my sweet, my loving Margaret. The best daughter ! the truest lover ! the pride of Holland ! the darling of the world ! It is a lie. Where is this caitiff Hans ? FU hunt him round the town. I'll cram his murdering falsehood down his throat."

And he seized his hat and ran furiously about the streets for hours.

Towards sunset he came back white as a ghost. He had not found Memling. He crept into the house bent, and feeble as an old man, and refused all food. Nor would he speak, but sat, white, with great staring eyes, muttering at intervals, " There is no God."

Presently, without any warning, he jumped up, but ere he reached the door, something seemed to draw him up straight by his hair, and twirl him round like a top. He whirled twice round with arms extended ; then fell like a dead log upon the floor, with blood trickling from his nostrils and ears.

A dark cloud fell on a noble mind.

His pure and unrivalled love for Margaret had been his polar star. It was quenched, and he drifted on the gloomy sea of no hope.

Nor was he a prey to despair alone, but to exasperation at all his self-denial, fortitude, perils, virtue, wasted and worse than waste³ ; for it kept burning and stinging him, that, had he stayed lazily, selfishly at home, he should have saved his Margaret's life.

These two poisons, raging together in his young blood, maddened and demoralized him. He rushed fiercely into pleasure. And in those days, even more than now, pleasure was vice.

His heart deteriorated along with his morals.

His hand became less steady, and he could no longer write to satisfy himself. So he gave up that art, and took likenesses in colours.

But this he neglected whenever the idle rakes, his companions, came for him.

And so he dived in foul waters, seeking that sorry oyster-shell, Oblivion. Broken health ; means wasted ; innocence fled ; Margaret parted from him by another gulf wider than the grave !

The hot fit of despair passed away; the cold fit of despair came on.

Then this miserable young man spurned his gay companions, and all the world. He wandered alone. He drank wine alone to stupefy himself, and paralyze a moment the dark foes to man that preyed upon his soul. He wandered alone amidst the temples of old Rome, and lay stony-eyed, woebegone, among their ruins, worse wrecked than they.

Last of all came the climax, to which solitude, that gloomy yet fascinating foe of minds diseased, pushes the hopeless.

He wandered alone at night by dark streams, and eyed them, and eyed them, with decreasing repugnance. There glided peace; perhaps annihilation.

What else was left him ?

CHAPTER XXIV

ONE fine evening, just at sunset, Margaret lay weak as water, but safe; with a little face by her side, and the heaven of maternity opening to her.

^{cw} "Why dost weep, sweetheart ? All of a sudden ? "

" He is not here to see it."

" Ah, well, lass, he will be here ere 'tis weaned. Meantime God hath been as good to thee as to e'er a woman born; and here we have got the bonniest boy in Holland, and a rare heavy one, the saints be praised for't."

" Ay, mother, I am but a sorry, ungrateful wretch to weep. If only Gerard were here to see it. 'Tis strange; I bore him well enow to be away from me in my sorrow ; but oh, it does seem so hard he should not share my

joy. Prithee, prithee, come to me, Gerard ! dear, dear Gerard ! " And she stretched out her feeble arms. •

Catherine bustled about, but avoided Margaret's eyes.

Presently, turning round, she found Margaret looking at her with a singular expression. " Heard you nought ?"

" No, my lamb. What ? "

" I did cry on Gerard, but now."

" Ay, ay, sure I heard that."

" Well, he answered me."

" Tush, girl: say not that."

" Mother, as sure as I lie here, with his boy by my side, his voice came back to me, ' Margaret! ' So. Yet methought 'twas not his *happy* voice. Why art not happy, sweetheart ? and I so happy this night ? Mother, I seem never to have felt a pain or known a care." And her sweet eyes turned and gloated on the little face in silence.

That very night Gerard flung himself into the Tiber. And that very hour she heard him speak her name, he cried aloud in death's jaws and despair's:

" Margaret! "

CHAPTER XXV

IN the guest chamber of a Dominican convent lay a single stranger, exhausted by successive and violent fits of nausea, which had at last subsided, leaving him almost as weak as Margaret lay that night in Holland.

A gigantic friar sat by his bedside, reading pious collects aloud from his breviary. The patient at times

eyed him, and seemed to listen: at others closed his eyes and moaned.

The monk kneeled down with his face touching the ground and prayed for him: then rose and bade him farewell. " Day breaks." said he; " I must prepare for matins."

" Good Father Jerome, before you go, how came I hither? "

" By the hand of Heaven. You flung away God's gift. He bestowed it on you again. Think on it! Hast tried the world and found its gall. Now try the Church! The Church is peace. Pax vobiscum."

He was gone. Gerard lay back, meditating and wondering, till weak and wearied he fell into a doze.

The organ of the convent church burst on his ear in rich and solemn harmony.

Then rose the voices of the choir chanting a full service.

Among them was one that seemed to hover above the others, and tower towards heaven; a sweet boy's voice, full, pure, angelic.

He closed his eyes and listened.

" Ay," he sighed, " the Church is peace of mind. Till I left her bosom I ne'er knew sorrow, nor sin."

And the poor torn, worn creature wept. *

He turned with terror and aversion from the world, and begged passionately to remain in the convent. To him, convent nurtured, it was like a bird returning wounded, wearied, to its gentle nest.

He passed his novitiate in prayer, and mortification, and pious reading and meditation.

Loving but experienced eyes were on him. Upon a shorter probation than usual he was admitted to priest's

orders. And soon after took the monastic vows, and became a friar of St. Dominic.

Dying to the world, the monk parted with the very name by which he had lived in it, and so broke the last link of association with earthly feelings.

Here Gerard ended, and Brother Clement began.

The Dominicans, or preaching friars, once the most powerful order in Europe, were now on the wane ; their rivals and bitter enemies, the Franciscans, were overpowering them throughout Europe, even in England, a rich and religious country, where under the name of the Black Friars, they had once been paramount.

The zeal and accomplishments of Clement, especially his rare mastery of language (for he spoke Latin, Italian, French, High and Low Dutch), soon transpired, and he was destined to travel and preach in England, corresponding with the Roman centre.

But Jerome, who had the superior's ear, obstructed this design.

" Try him first, and temper him, lest one day we find ourselves leaning on a reed for a staff."

" It is well advised," said the prior. " Take him in hand thyself."

Then Jerome, following the ancient wisdom, took Clement and tried him.

A robber was brought to the scaffold; a monster of villainy and cruelty, who had killed men in pure wantonness, after robbing them. Clement passed his last night in prison with him, accompanied him to the scaffold, and then prayed with him and for him so earnestly that the hardened ruffian shed tears and embraced him. The

man was garotted, and Clement lost sight of the crowd, and prayed loud and earnestly while that dark spirit was passing from earth. He was no sooner dead than the hangman raised his hatchet and quartered the body on the spot. And, oh, mysterious heart of man ! the people who had seen the living body robbed of life with indifference, uttered a piteous cry at each stroke of the axe upon his corpse that could feel nought. Clement too shuddered then. But suddenly Jerome's voice sounded in his ear.

" Brother Clement, get thee on that cart and preach to the people. Nay, quickly ! strike with all thy force on all this iron, while yet 'tis hot, and souls are to be saved."

Clement's colour came and went; ahd he breathed hard. But he obeyed, and with ill-assured step mounted the cart, and preached his first sermon to the first crowd he had ever faced. Oh, that sea of heads ! His throat seemed parched, his heart thumped, his voice trembled.

By-and-by the greatness of the occasion, the sight of the eager upturned faces, and his own heart full of zeal, fired the pale monk. He felt all strung up like a lute, and gifted with an unsuspected force ; he was master of that listening crowd, could feel their very pulse, could play sacred melodies on them as on his psaltery. Sobs and groans attested his power over the mob already excited by the tragedy before them. Jerome stared like one who goes to light a stick, and fires a rocket. After a while Clement caught his look of astonishment, and seeing no approbation in it, broke suddenly off, and joined him.

" It was my first endeavour," said he apologetically.
 " Your behest came on me like a thunderbolt."

" Humph ! " said Jerome doubtfully. " Give the glory to God, Brother Clement; my opinion is thou art an orator born."

He reported the same at headquarters, half reluctantly. For he was an honest friar though a disagreeable one.

One Julio Antonelli was accused of sacrilege ; three witnesses swore they saw him come out of the church whence the candlesticks were stolen, and at the very time. Other witnesses proved an alibi for him as positively. Neither testimony could be shaken. In this doubt Antonelli was permitted the trial by water, hot or cold. By the hot trial he must put his bare arm into boiling water, fourteen inches deep, and take out a pebble ; by the cold trial his body must be let down into eight feet of water. The clergy, who thought him innocent, recommended the hot water trial, which, to those whom they favoured, was not so terrible as it sounded. But the poor wretch had not the nerve, and chose the cold ordeal. And this gave Jerome another opportunity of steeling Clement. Antonelli took the sacrament, and then was stripped naked on the banks of the Tiber, and tied hand and foot, to prevent those struggles by which a man, throwing his arms out of the water, sinks his body.

He was then let down gently into the stream, and floated a moment, with just his hair above water. A simultaneous roar from the crowd on each bank proclaimed him guilty. But the next moment the ropes, which happened to be new, got wet, and he settled down. Another roar proclaimed his innocence. They left him at the bottom of the river the appointed time,

rather more than half a minute, then drew him up, gurgling and gasping, and screaming for mercy ; and after the appointed prayers, dismissed him, cleared of the charge.

During the experiment Clement prayed earnestly on the bank. When it was over he thanked God in a loud but slightly quavering voice.

By-and-by he asked Jerome whether the man ought not to be compensated.

" For what ? "

" For the pain, the dread, the suffocation. Poor soul, he liveth, but hath tasted all the bitterness of death. Yet he had done no ill. "

" He is rewarded enough in that he is cleared of his fault. "

" But being innocent of that fault, yet hath he drunk Death's cup, though not to the dregs ; and his accusers, less innocent than he, do suffer nought. "

Jerome replied somewhat sternly:

" It is not in this world men are really punished, Brother Clement. Unhappy they who sin yet suffer not. And happy they who suffer such ills as earth hath power to inflict; 'tis counted to them above, ay, and a hundred-fold. "

Clement bowed his head submissively.

" May thy good words not fall to the ground, but take root in my heart, Brother Jerome. "

The new Pope favoured the Dominican order. The convent received a message from the Vatican, requiring a capable friar to teach at the University of Basle. Now Clement was the very monk for this : well versed

in languages, and in his wqrldly days had attended the lectures of Guarini the younger. His visit to England was therefore postponed though not resigned; and meantime he was sent to Basle; but not being wanted there for three months, he was to preach on the road.

During most of this journey Clement rarely felt any spring of life within him but when he was in the pulpit. The other exceptions were, when he happened to relieve some fellow-creature.

In due course he reached Basle, and entered on his duties, teaching in the University, and preaching in the town and neighbourhood. The brethren of his order began to see in him a descendant of the saints and martyrs.

CHAPTER XXVI

MARGARET was not without domestic anxieties. She had still two men to feed, and could not work so hard as she had done. She had enough to do to keep the house, and the child, and cook for them all. But she had a little money laid by, and she used to tell her child his father would be home to help them before it was spent. And with these bright hopes, and that treasury of bliss, her boy, she spent some happy months.

Time wore on ; and no Gerard came ; and stranger still, no news of him.

Martin sickened ; and died after an illness of nine days. Nearly all her money went to bury him decently.

On her child's birthday, Margaret did no work, but put on her Sunday clothes, and took her boy in her arms

and went to the church and prayed there long and fervently for Gerard's safe return.

That same day and hour Father Clement celebrated a mass and prayed for Margaret's departed soul in the minster church at Basle.

A change took place in Peter Brandt. His mind, clouded for nearly two years, seemed now to be clearing ; he had intervals of intelligence, and then he and Margaret used to talk of Gerard, till he wandered again. But one day, the old physician drooped his head, and gently, placidly, drifted away from earth, like an infant sinking to rest.

Clement had taught and preached in Basle more than a twelvemonth, when one day Jerome stood before him, dusty, with a triumphant glance in his eye.

" Give the glory to God, Brother Clement; thou canst now wend to England with me."

" I am ready, Brother Jerome ; and expecting thee these many months, have in the intervals of teaching and devotion studied the English tongue somewhat closely."

The two friars went preaching down the Rhine for England. In the larger places they both preached. At the smaller they often divided, and took different sides of the river, and met again at some appointed spot. Both were able orators, but in different styles.

Clement's was full of variety, and often remarkably colloquial. In its general flow, tender and gently winning, it curled round the reason and the heart. But it always rose with the rising thought; and so at times Clement soared as far above Jerome as his level speaking was below him. Clement used secretly to try and learn

the recent events and the besetting sin of each town he was to preach in.

The two friars reached Holland from the south.

Jerome, unable to preach in Low Dutch, now began to push on towards the coast, anxious to get to England as soon as possible.

[As they drew near the sea, they separated for a night, Gerard wishing to give help in a convent on their way.]

The next morning he started early, and was in Rotterdam at noon. He made at once for the port, not to keep Jerome waiting.

He observed several monks of his order on the quay ; he went to them ; but Jerome was not amongst them. He asked one of them whether Jerome had arrived ? " Surely, brother," was the reply.

" Prithee, where is he ? "

" Where ? Why, there ! " said the monk, pointing to a ship in full sail. And Clement now noticed that all the monks were looking seaward.

" What, gone without me ! Oh, Jerome ! Jerome ! " cried he in a voice of anguish. Several of the friars turned round and stared.

" You must be brother Clement," said one of them at length ; and on this they kissed him and greeted him with brotherly warmth, and gave him a letter Jerome had charged them with for him. It was a hasty scrawl. The writer told him coldly a ship was about to sail for England, and he was loth to lose time. He (Clement) might follow if he pleased, but he would do much better to stay behind, and preach to his own country folk. " Give the glory to God, brother ; you have a wonderful power over Dutch hearts ; but you are

no match for those haughty islanders : you are too atender."

Clement was deeply shocked and mortified at this contemptuous desertion. " Why, worldly hearts are no colder nor less trusty than this," said he. " The only one that ever really loved me lies in a grave hard by. I will go and pray over a grave at Sevenbergen."

Three hours later he passed Peter's cottage. A troop of noisy children were playing about the door. He turned his head hastily away, not to disturb a picture his memory treasured ; and went to the churchyard. He sought among the tombstones for Margaret's. He could not find it. He went into the church, and after kissing the steps, prayed long and earnestly for the soul of her whose resting-place he could not find.

CHAPTER XXVII

" E L I," said Catherine, " what is wormwood ? Wormwood is—to have two in the house a-doing nought, but waiting for thy shoes and mine," Eli groaned. The shaft struck home.

" Why not set them up somewhere, to give 'em a chance ? "

Eli said he was willing, but afraid they would drink and gamble their very shelves away.

" Nay," said Catherine. " Of course I mean to watch them at starting, and drive them wi' a loose rein, as the saying is."

After many discussions and eager promises of amendment on these terms from Cornelis and Sybrandt,

Catherine went to Rotterdam shop-hunting. They soon found one, and in a good street, and instantly set about* brushing it up, fitting proper shelves for the business, and making the dwelling-house habitable.

The next day, Sunday, after mass, was a bustling day at Catherine's house in the Hoog Straet. The shop was now quite ready, and Cornelis and Sybrandt were to open it next day ; their names were above the door.

Margaret had come over to help her mother-in-law, and also to shake off her own deep languor. Presently in came Joan Ketel [their neighbour, the wife of Jorian Ketel, who had once been in the service of the burgo-master of Tergou, and was now sexton at the church of St. Laurens in Rotterdam.]

" Oh, lass, what a sermon in the new kerk ! Preaching ? I never heard it till this day."

" Would I had been there then," said Margaret; " for I am dried up for want of dew from heaven."

" Why, he preacheth again this afternoon. But mayhap you are wanted here."

" Not she," said Catherine. " Come, away ye go, if y'are minded."

The sermon had begun when Margaret entered the great church of St. Laurens. Churches were not built in a year. The side aisles were roofed, but not the mid aisle nor the chancel; the pillars and arches were pretty perfect, and some of them whitewashed. But only one window in the whole church was glazed.

But to-day all these uncouth imperfections made the church beautiful. It was a glorious summer afternoon, and the sunshine came broken into marvellous forms

through those irregular openings, and played bewitching spranks upon so many broken surfaces. Nearly the whole central aisle was chequered with light and shade in broken outlines. And above, from west to east, the blue sky vaulted the lofty aisle, and seemed quite close. The sunny caps of the women made a sea of white contrasting exquisitely with that vivid vault of blue.

Margaret stood spellbound at the beauty, the devotion, "the great calm." She was now beside a pillar of the south aisle, and not above fifty feet from the preacher. She was at his side, a little behind him, but could hear every word.

Suddenly a tone of the preacher's voice fell upon her ear and her mind so distinctly, it seemed literally to strike her, and make her vibrate inside and out. Her hand went to her bosom, so strange and sudden was the thrill. Then she turned round, and looked at the preacher. His back was turned, and nothing visible but his tonsure. That tonsure, being all she saw, contradicted the tone effectually.

The whole voice grew strangely upon her. It rose and fell as the preacher warmed ; and it seemed to waken faint echoes of a thousand happy memories.

Presently, in the middle of an eloquent period, the preacher stopped.

A good many faces seemed now to turn her way. She looked behind her sharply. There was nothing there.

Startled countenances near her now eyed the preacher. She followed their looks ; and there, in the pulpit, was a face as of a staring corpse. The friar's eyes, naturally large, were dilated to supernatural size, and glaring her way out of a bloodless face.

She cringed and turned fearfully round: for she thought there *must* be some terrible thing near her. No there was nothing; she was the outside figure of the listening crowd.

At this moment the church fell into commotion. Figures got up all over the building, and craned forward; agitated faces by hundreds gazed from the friar to Margaret, and from Margaret to the friar. The turning to and fro of so many caps made a loud rustle. Then came shrieks of nervous women, and buzzing of men; and Margaret, seeing so many eyes levelled at her, shrank terrified behind the pillar, with one scared, hurried glance at the preacher.

Momentary as that glance was, it caught in that stricken face an expression that made her shiver. She turned faint, and sat down on a heap of chips the workmen had left, and buried her face in her hands.

The sermon, after wavering some time, ended in a strain of exalted eloquence, that went far to make the crowd forget the preacher's strange pause.

Margaret mingled hastily with the crowd, and went out of the church with them. They went their ways home. But she turned at the door, and went into the churchyard; to Peter's grave. And on that tomb she sat, with her face covered, waylaying the holy preacher.

The cool church, chequered with sunbeams and crowned with heavenly purple, soothed and charmed Father Clement, as it did Margaret. Then his eye fell on the great aisle crammed with his country folk; a thousand snowy caps, filigreed with gold. In the morning he had thundered; but this sweet afternoon seemed

out of tune with threats. He told them the glad tidings of salvation. The people hung upon his gentle, earnest tongue.

Presently, warm with this theme, he turned him towards the south aisle.

And there, in a stream of sunshine from the window, was the radiant face of Margaret Brandt. He gazed at it without emotion. It just benumbed him soul and body.

But soon the words died in his throat, and he trembled as he glared at it.

She was leaning very lightly against a white column. She was listening with tender, downcast lashes.

There was no change in *her*. This was the blooming Margaret he had left; only a shade riper and more lovely.

The people died out of his sight. He heard, as in a dream, a rustling and rising all over the church; but could not take his prodigy-stricken eyes off that face, all life, and bloom, and beauty, and that wondrous auburn hair glistening gloriously in the sun.

He gazed, thinking she must vanish.

She remained.

All in a moment she was looking at him, full.

At this he was beside himself, and his lips parted to shriek out her name, when she turned her head swiftly, and soon after vanished. He made a mighty effort, and muttered something nobody could understand: then feebly resumed his discourse.

The sermon ended, he sat down on the pulpit stool, terribly shaken. But presently an idea very characteristic of the time took possession of him. She had now been permitted to appear to him, and show him that

she was buried *here* ; probably hard by that very pillar, where her spirit had showed itself to him.

He came down from the pulpit and stepped through an aperture in the south wall on to the grass, and went up to the sexton.

" My son," said Friar Clement softly, " prithee tell me is any Christian buried inside the church, near one of the pillars ? "

" Nay, father," said Jorian, " here in the churchyard lie buried all that buried be. Why ? "

" No matter. Prithee tell me then where lieth Margaret Brandt ? She died about three years ago, and was buried here."

" Oh," said Jorian, " that was before my time ; the vicar could tell you, likely; if so be she was a gentlewoman."

" Alas, my son, she was poor, but born of decent folk. Her father, Peter, was a learned physician ; she came hither from Sevenbergen—to die."

Jorian put down his spade, and standing upright in the grave, set his arms akimbo, and said sulkily, " Are you making a fool of me, holy sir, or has some wag been making a fool of you ? "

And having relieved his mind thus, he proceeded to dig again. He had not thrown up three spadefuls ere he became ashamed of himself. " Why, what a base churl am I to speak thus to thee, holy father. Aha! I have it ; 'tis Peter Brandt's grave you would fain see, not Margaret's. There ; I'll show you." And he laid down his spade, and put on his doublet and jerkin to go with the friar.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WHILE Jorian was putting on his doublet and jerkin to go to Peter's tomb, his tongue was not idle. " They used to call him a magician out Sevenbergen way. Margaret is still wearying for her lad ; and Peter, he lies as quiet as his neighbours."

The friar laid a trembling hand on his shoulder :

" How long since died Peter Brandt ? "

" About two months. Why ? "

*' And his daughter buried him ? "

" Nay, I buried him, but she paid the fee and reared the stone. Why ? "

" Then—but he had but one daughter ; Margaret ? "

" Why, how now, father ? You look wondrous pale. What, in Heaven's name, is the matter ? "

" The surprise—the joy—the wonder—the fear," gasped Clement.

" Why, what is it to thee ? Art thou of kin to Margaret Brandt ? "

" Nay ; but I knew one that loved her well."

" Oh, but this is strange. Stay, what made thee say Margaret Brandt was dead ? "

" I was with Gerard when a letter came from Margaret Van Eyck. The letter told him she he loved was dead and buried. Let me sit down, for my strength fails me. Foul play ! Foul play ! "

" Father," said Jorian, " I thank Heaven for sending thee to me. Methinks I hold the clue to this riddle, and if I do, there be two knaves in this town whose heads

I would fain batter to pieces." And he clenched his teeth and raised his long spade above his head. " Foufr play ? You never said a truer word i' your life ; and if you know where Gerard is now, lose no time, but show him the trap they have laid for him."

He had been employed by the burgomaster of Tergou to repair the floor of an upper room in his house, and heard the burgomaster talking about a letter which Cornelis and Sybrandt were minded to convey into the place of one that a certain Hans Memling was taking to Gerard.

" Those two black-hearted villains are the favourites. Have not the old folk just taken a brave new shop for them in this very town, in the Hoog Straet ? There may you see their sign, a gilt sheep and a lambkin. And there the whole family feast this day; oh, 'tis a fine world. Oh, I thirst for their blood, the nasty, sneaking, lying, cogging, cowardly, heartless, boweless—how now? "

The monk started wildly up, livid with fury and despair, and rushed headlong from the place with both hands clenched and raised on high.

Jorian felt his arm grasped by a small, tremulous hand. It was Margaret Brandt.

" Well ? " said she to Jorian, trembling.

" Girl, as I stand here, he asked me whereabouts you were buried in this churchyard."

" Ah ! "

" Well, the long and the short is, he knew thy Gerard in Italy ; and a letter came saying you were dead ; and it broke thy pgor lad's heart. But I told him 'twas

neither demoiselle nor dame that penned yon lie, but Ghysbrecht Van Swieten, and those foul knaves, Cornelis and Sybrandt; these changed the true letter for one of their own."

" Oh, cruel! cruel! But he lives. The fear of fears is gone. Thank God ! "

" Yon friar is friendly to Gerard, and he is gone to Eli's house, methinks. If ever a man was mad with rage, it's yon. He turned black and white, and parted like a stone from a sling."

" Oh, Jorian, what have you done ? " cried Margaret. " Quick! quick! help me thither. You know him not as I do."

Her accents were so full of agony that Jorian sprang out of the grave and came with her, huddling on his jerkin as he went.

It was supper-time. Eli's family were collected round the board ; Margaret only was missing.

The covers were withdrawn, and the knives brandished. Then burst into the room, not the expected Margaret, but a Dominican friar, livid with rage.

He was at the table in a moment, in front of Cornelis and Sybrandt, threw his tall body over the narrow table, and with two hands hovering above their shrinking heads, he cursed them by name, soul and body, in this world and the next. " Cursed be the lips," he shrieked, " which spoke the lie that Margaret was dead ; may they rot before the grave, and kiss white-hot iron in hell thereafter ; doubly cursed be the hands that changed those letters, and be they struck off by the hangman's knife, and handle hell fire for ever; thrice accursed

be the cruel hearts that did conceive that damned lie may they sicken and wither to dust before their time, and burn in eternal fire." Then turning from the cowering, shuddering pair, he tore a letter out of his bosom, and flung it down before his father.

" Read that, thou hard old man, that didst imprison thy son, and see what monsters thou hast brought into the world."

And in a moment, as he had come, so he was gone, leaving them stiff, and cold, and white as statues. And this was the sight that greeted Margaret's eyes and Jorian's.

Eli started to his feet in a transport of rage, and shouted, " Stand clear, and let me get at the traitors. I'll hang for them." And in a moment he whipped out his short sword, and fell upon them.

" Fly ! " screamed Margaret. " Fly ! "

They slipped howling under the table, and crawled out the other side. The pair got clear of the house; and he went vainly raging after them out into the street.

He hacked down the board on which their names were written, and flung it into the chimney-place. Heavy sadness reigned in Eli's house that night.

Meantime, where was Clement ?

Lying at full length upon the floor of the convent church, with his lips upon the lowest step of the altar, in an indescribable state of terror, misery, penitence, and self-abasement: through all which struggled gleams of joy that Margaret was alive.

CHAPTER XXIX

HE set out for Tergou to confront his fatal enemy the burgomaster, and by means of that parchment to make him disgorge and give Margaret her own.

Heated and dusty, he stopped at the fountain, and there began to eat his black bread and drink of the water. But in the middle of his frugal meal a female servant came running, and begged him to come and shrive her dying master.

She took him—to the Stadthouse.

And there in bed, propped up by pillows, lay his deadly enemy, looking already like a corpse. Clement eyed him a moment from the door, and thought of all—the tower, the wood, the letter. Then he said in a low voice, "Pax vobiscum!" He trembled a little while he said it.

The sick man welcomed him as eagerly as his weak state permitted. "Thank Heaven, thou art come in time to absolve me from my sins, father, and pray for my soul, thou and thy brethren."

"My son," said Clement, "before absolution cometh confession. In which act there must be no reservation, as thou valuest thy soul's weal."

Ghysbrecht put his hands together, and began to confess with every appearance of contrition. He owned he had eaten meat in mid-Lent. He had often absented himself from mass on the Lord's day, and saints' days; and had trifled with other religious observances, which he enumerated with scrupulous fidelity.

When he had done, the friar said quietly, " 'Tis well, my son. These be faults. Now to thy crimes. Thou hadst done better to begin with them."

" Why, father, what crimes lie to my account if these be none ? "

" The seven deadly sins, art thou clear of them ? "

" Heaven forefend I should be guilty of them. I know them not by name."

" Many do them all that cannot name them. Begin with that one which leads to lying, theft, and murder."

" I am quit of that one, anyway. How call you it ? "

" AVARICE, my son ! "

" Avarice ? Oh, as to that, I have been a saving man all my day; but I have not altogether forgotten the poor. But, alas, I am a great sinner. What is the next?"

" We have not yet done with this one."

He looked puzzled and innocent.

" Hast thou ever robbed the fatherless ? " inquired the friar.

" Me ! robbed the fatherless ? " gasped Ghysbrecht ;
" not that I mind."

" My son, I am forced to tell thee thou art trifling with the Church. Miserable man ! another evasion, and I leave thee, and fiends will straightway gather round thy bed, and tear thee down to the bottomless pit."

" Oh, leave me not ! " shrieked the terrified old man.
" The Church knows all. I *must* have robbed the fatherless. Who shall I begin with ? My memory **for** names is shaken."

" Hast thou forgotten Floris Brandt ? " said Clement stonily.

The sick man reared himself in bed in a pitiable state of terror.

" How knew you that ? " said he.

" The Church knows many things," said Clement coldly. " You said, ' I will not confess to the cure, but to some friar who knows not my misdeeds. ' So will I cheat the Church on my deathbed, and die as I have lived.' But God, kinder to thee than thou art to thyself, sent to thee one whom thou couldst not deceive. He has tried thee ; he was patient with thee, and warned thee not to trifle with Holy Church ; but all is in vain ; thou canst not confess, for thou art impenitent as a stone. Die, then, as thou hast lived. Methinks I see the fiends crowding round the bed for their prey. They wait but for me to go. And I go."

He turned his back ; but Ghysbrecht, in extremity of terror, caught him by the frock. " Oh, holy man, mercy ! stay. I will confess all, all. I robbed my friend Floris. Alas ! would it had ended there ; for he lost little by me ; but I kept the land from Peter his son, and from Margaret, Peter's daughter. Yet I was always going to give it back ; but I couldn't, I couldn't."

" Avarice, my son, avarice. Happy for thee 'tis not too late."

The sick man groaned, and prayed the friar to be reasonable. The friar firmly, but gently and persuasively, persisted, and with infinite patience detached the dying man's gripe from another's property. There were times when his patience was tried, and he was on the point of thrusting his hand into his bosom and producing the deed, which he had brought for that purpose ; but after yesterday's outbreak he was on his guard

against choler; and to conclude, he conquered his impatience ; he conquered a personal repugnance to the man, so strong as to make his own flesh creep all the time he was struggling with this miser for his soul; and at last, without a word about the deed, he won upon him to make full and prompt restitution.

As soon as he was quite sure Margaret had her own, and was a rich woman—

He disappeared.

A little of this gold, a portion of this land, a year or two ago, when it was as much her own as now, and Gerard would have never left her side for Italy or any other place.

CHAPTER X X X

NOT many days after this came the news that Margaret Van Eyck was dead and buried. By a will she had made a year before, she left all her property, after her funeral expenses and certain presents to Reicht Heynes [her faithful servant and companion], to her dear daughter Margaret Brandt, requesting her to keep Reicht as long as unmarried. On this Margaret determined to go and see the house and goods, and take Reicht Heynes home to Rotterdam.

For some days Margaret dreaded, almost as much as she desired, the coming interview with Gerard. She said to herself, " I wonder not he keeps away a while ; for so should I . " However, he would hear he was a father ; and the desire to see their boy would overcome everything. " And," said the poor girl to herself, " if

so be that meeting does not kill me, I feel I shall be better after it than I am now."

While her mind was in this state, Giles came roaring, " I've hit the clout; our Gerard is Vicar of Gouda."

At court Giles' shrewdness and bluntness of speech, coupled with his gigantic voice and his small stature, made him a Power : the young Duchess of Burgundy, and Marie the heiress apparent, both petted him.

Finding Margaret unable to believe the good news, and sceptical as to the affairs of Holy Church being administered by dwarfs, he narrated as follows :

" When the princess sent for me to her bedroom as of custom to keep her out of languor, I came not mirthful nor full of country diets, as is my wont, but dull as lead.

" ' Why, what aileth thee ? ' quo' she. ' Art sick ? '

" I made my voice so soft as honey, and I said, ' Madam, one evening, a matter of five years ago, as ye sat with your mother, the Countess of Charolois, do ye mind there came into ye a fair youth—with a letter from a painter body, one Margaret Van Eyck ? '

" ' Was it not a tall youth, exceeding comely ? '

" ' Ay, madam,' said I; ' he was my brother.'

" So I told her all that passed between her and Gerard. ' Yet,' said I, ' he hath been a priest a long while, 'and no living.'

" ' Alas ! ' said she, ' I do remember my dear mother said to me, " See thou to it if I be not here." '

" I, seeing her so ripe, said quickly, ' Madam, the Vicar of Gouda died last week.'

" ' Then thy brother is Vicar of Gouda,' quo' she, ' so sure as I am heiress of Burgundy and the Netherlands.' "

And to Margaret's secret satisfaction, Giles had the new vicar cried in Rotterdam and the neighbouring towns.

But the days rolled on, and Gerard came neither to Rotterdam nor Gouda. Giles was mortified, Margaret indignant, and very wretched. She said to herself, " Thinking me dead, he comes home, and now, because I am alive, he goes back to Italy."

Sybrandt, one afternoon, in a drunken frolic, climbed on the roof of the stable at the inn he was carousing in, and proceeded to walk along it, a feat he had performed many times when sober. But now his unsteady brain made his legs unsteady, and he rolled down the roof and fell with a loud thwack on to an horizontal paling, where he hung a moment in a semicircle ; then toppled over and lay silent on the ground, amidst roars of laughter from his boon companions.

When they came to pick him up he could not stand.

On this they went staggering and roaring down the street with him, and carried him at great risk of another fall to the shop in the Hoog Straet.

" Alas, poor wretch," said Margaret. She turned very gravely to the men, and said, " Leave him here. And if you have brought him to this, go on your knees, for you have spoiled him for life. He will never walk again ; his back is broken."

The drunken man caught these words, and the foolish look of intoxication fled, and a glare of anguish took its place. " The curse," he groaned ; " the curse ! "

Margaret and Reicht Heynes carried him carefully, and laid him on the softest bed.

" I must do as *he* would do," whispered Margaret. ' He was kind to Ghysbrecht."

Her opinion was verified. Sybrandt's spine was fatally injured, and he lay groaning and helpless, fed and tended by her he had so deeply injured.

The people of Gouda petitioned the duke for a vicar, a real vicar. " Ours cometh never nigh us," said they, " this six months past."

So then Margaret went sorrowfully to the pretty manse to see it for the last time, ere it should pass for ever into stranger's hands. On their return, Reicht Heynes proposed to her to go and consult the hermit of Gouda.

" I 'll go, if 'tis but to show thee they know no more than we do." And they went to the cave.

It was an excavation in a bank of rock overgrown by brambles. There was a rough stone door on hinges, and a little window high up, and two apertures, through one of which the people announced their gifts to the hermit, and put questions of all sorts to him.

As Reicht drew near the cave a number of birds flew out of it. On this Margaret felt sure there was no human being in the cave, and gave the matter no further attention. She fell into a deep reverie while looking at the little manse.

She was startled from it by Reicht's hand upon her shoulder.

" Margaret, the hermit did speak to me."

I' God's name, what said he to thee, Reicht ? "

" Alas! Margaret, I told him thy story, and I prayed him tell me where thy Gerard is. And I waited long for

an answer, and presently a voice came like a trumpet:
' Pray for the soul of Gerard the son of Eli! ' "

" Ah! "

" Oh, woe is me that I have this to tell thee, sweet Margaret! "

" Let me get home," said Margaret faintly.

The next day Margaret disappeared all day. So the next day, and so the next. Nor would she tell any one where she had been.

She was determined to see the hermit, and question him face to face. She found that by making a circuit she could get above the cave, and look down without being seen by the solitary. But when she came to do it, she found an impenetrable mass of brambles. The resolute, patient girl took out her scissors and steadily snipped and cut till she cut her way to the roof of the cave. There she made an ambush of some of the cut brambles, so that the passers-by might not see her, and couched with watchful eye till the hermit should come out. She heard him move underneath her. But he never left his cell. She began to think it was true that he only came out at night. The next day she came early and brought a jerkin she was making for little Gerard, and there she sat all day, working, and watching with dogged patience.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE hermit of Gouda was the vicar of Gouda, and knew it not, so absolute was his seclusion.

Clement had been one night to shrive the hermit of

Gouda. He found him dying, and never left him till he had closed his eyes and buried him beneath the floor of the little oratory attached to his cell. The hermit advised him to be his successor in this peaceful retreat. " His had been a hard fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and he had never thoroughly baffled them till he retired into the citadel of Solitude."

These words and the hermit's pious and peaceful death, made a deep impression upon Clement. As soon as he was reconciled to Ghysbrecht Van Swieten, he went eagerly to his abode. The cell was vacant, and there were the hermit's great ivory crucifix, his pens, his cilice of hair, and another of bristles; his well-worn sheep-skin pelisse and hood; his hammer, chisel, and psaltery, etc.

He kneeled down and inaugurated his new life with prayer.

He divided his day into the seven offices, ignoring the petty accidents of light and dark. He learned the psalter by heart, and in all the intervals of devotion he worked hard with his hands. On moonlight nights he would steal out like a thief, and dig some poor man's garden on the outskirts of the village. He made baskets and dropped them slyly at humble doors.

And since he could do nothing for the bodies of those who passed by his cell in daytime, he went out in the dead of the night with his hammer and his chisel, and carved religious sentences all down the road upon the sandstone rocks. " Who knows ? " said he, " often a chance shaft striketh home."

These holy oracles that seemed to spring up around him like magic ; his prudent answers through his window to such as sought ghostly counsel; and above all, his

invisibility, soon gained him a prodigious reputation. This was not diminished by the medical advice they now and then extorted from him, sore against his will, by tears and entreaties ; for if the patients got well they gave the holy hermit the credit, and if not they laid all the blame on the devil.

Then his abstinence, sure sign of a saint. The eggs and milk they brought him at first he refused with horror. " Know ye not the hermit's rule is bread, or herbs, and water ? Eggs, they are birds in disguise ; for when the bird dieth, then the egg rotteth."

And by severe subdivision of his time and thoughts, by unceasing prayers and manual labour, he did in about three months succeed in benumbing the earthly half of his heart.

But lo! within a day or two of this first symptom of mental peace returning slowly, there descended upon his mind a horrible despondency. Words cannot utter it, for words never yet painted a likeness of despair. Voices seemed to whisper in his ear, " Kill thyself ! kill! kill! kill! "

One day as he lay there sighing and groaning, prayerless, tuneless, hopeless, a thought flashed into his mind. What he had done for the poor and the wayfarer, he would do for himself. He would fill his den of despair with the name of God and the magic words of holy writ, and the pious, prayerful consolations of the Church.

He went to his memory for the gracious words, and then dashed at his work and eagerly graved them in the soft stone, between working and fighting.

He begged his visitors for candle ends, and rancid oil.

" Anything is good enough for me," he said, " if 'twill

but burn." So at night the cave glowed afar off like a blacksmith's forge, through the window and the gaping chinks of the rude stone door, and the rustics beholding crossed themselves and suspected deviltries, and within the holy talismans, one after another, came upon the walls, and the sparks and the chips flew day and night, night and day, as the soldier of Solitude and of the Church plied, with sighs and groans, his bloodless weapon, between working and fighting.

And presently all was reversed ; his cell seemed illuminated with joy. His work pleased him ; his prayers were full of unction ; his psalms of praise. Hosts of little birds flying from snow, made friends one after another. And one keen frosty night as he sang the praises of God to his tuneful psaltery, and his hollow cave rang forth the holy psalmody upon the night, he heard a clear whine, not unmelodious ; it became louder and less in tune. He peeped through the chinks of his rude door, and there sat a great red wolf moaning melodiously with his nose high in the air.

Clement was rejoiced. " My sins are going," he cried, " and the creatures of God are owning me, one after another." And in a burst of enthusiasm he struck up the laud :

" Praise Him all ye creatures of His!

" Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord."

And all the time he sang the wolf bayed at intervals.

But above all he seemed now to be drawing nearer to that celestial intercourse which was the sign and the bliss of the true hermit; for he had dreams about the saints and angels, so vivid, they were more

like visions. He saw bright figures clad in woven snow.

One night it was pitch dark, and a light came at Clement's back like a gentle stroke, a glorious roseate light. It warmed as well as brightened. It loosened his feet from the ground ; he turned round, and there, her face irradiated with sunshine, and her hair glittering like the gloriola of a saint, was Margaret Brandt.

He knew it was a fiend !

He applied himself to tame the body, he shortened his sleep, lengthened his prayers, and increased his severe temperance to abstinence. Hitherto, following the ordinary rule, he had eaten only at sunset. Now he ate but once in forty-eight hours, drinking a little water every day.

On this the visions became more distinct.

One night, a beautiful clear frosty night, after a short rest, he came to his cell door.

He paused at it ; it was closed.

" Why, methought I left it open," said he. " There is not a breath of wind."

He stood with his hand upon the rugged door. He looked through one of the great chinks, for it was much smaller in places than the aperture it pretended to close, and saw his little oil wick burning just where he had left it.

And he entered his cave rapidly, and began to light one of his largest tapers. When it was lighted he shaded it with his hand from behind, and threw the faint light all round the cell.

In the farthest corner the outline of the wall seemed broken. He took a step towards the place with his heart beating.

The candle at the same time getting brighter, he saw it was the figure of a woman.

IT WAS MARGARET BRANDT.

CHAPTER XXXII

HER bosom was fluttering like a bird, and the red and white coming and going in her cheeks, and she had her hand against the wall by the instinct of timid things, she trembled so.

"Aha!" he cried. "Thou art come at last in flesh and blood. But I am ware of thee. I thought thy wiles were not exhausted. I am armed." With this he snatched up his small crucifix and held it out at her, astonished, and the candle in the other hand, both crucifix and candle shaking violently. "Exorcizo te."

"Ah, no!" cried she piteously. "Alas! work me no ill! It is Margaret."

"Liar!" shouted the hermit. "Margaret was fair, but not so supernatural fair as thou. In Nomine Dei exorcizo vos."

"Ah, Jesu!" gasped Margaret, in extremity of terror, "curse me not! I will go home. Oh, Gerard, is it thus you and I meet after all, after all?"

And she cowered almost to her knees and sobbed with superstitious fear and wounded affection.

But her spontaneous appeal to that sacred name dissolved his chimera, and let him see with his eyes, and hear with his ears.

He uttered a cry of self-reproach, and tried to raise her. "What," he gasped, shaking over her, "and is it

thou ? And have I met thee with hard words ? Alas !" And they were both choked with emotion, and coujll not speak for a while.

" Gerard, I am come to take thee to thy pretty vicarage : art vicar of Gouda, thanks to Heaven and thy good brother Giles ; and mother and I have made it so neat for thee, Gerard. And, dear Gerard, thy mother is waiting; and 'tis late for her to be out of her bed : prithee, prithee, come ! And the moment we are out of this foul hole I'll show thee a treasure thou hast gotten, and knowest nought on't, or sure hadst never fled from us so."

" My beloved," said he, with a strange mixture of tenderness and dogged resolution, " I bless thee for giving me one more sight of thy sweet face, and may God forgive thee, and bless thee, for destroying in a minute the holy peace it hath taken six months of solitude to build. My poor Margaret, I seem cruel: yet I am kind : 'tis best we part; ay, this moment."

" Part, Gerard ? Never : we have seen what comes of parting. Part ? Why, you have not heard half my story ; no, nor the tithe. 'Tis not for thy mere comfort I take thee to Gouda manse. Hear me ! "

" I may not."

" But I say you shall hear me, Gerard, for forth this place I go not unheard."

" Nay, Margaret, well thou knowest I would suffer many deaths rather than put force on thee ; but a million times dearer to me are our immortal souls. I have withstood this direst temptation of all long enow. Now I must fly it : farewell! farewell! "

He made to the door, and had actually opened it and

got half out, when she darted after and caught him by the arm.

" Nay, then another must speak for me; turn then this way one moment."

She somewhat relaxed her grasp, thinking he would never deny her so small a favour. But at this he saw his opportunity and seized it.

" Fly, Clement, fly! " he almost shrieked ; and he burst wildly away from her, and after a few steps bounded over the little stream and ran beside it, but finding he was not followed, stopped, and looked back, saw her pale face and her eyes glistening; and then in the still night he heard these words :

" Oh, God! Thou that knowest all, Thou seest how I am used. Forgive me then, for I will not live another day." With this she suddenly started to her feet, and flew like some wild creature, wounded to death.

He kneeled down and prayed God humbly to release him that very night from the burden of the flesh. Then he lighted all his candles, and recited his psalter doggedly. In the midst of which he suddenly observed a little bundle in the corner he had not seen before in the feeble light, and at one end of it something like gold spun into silk.

He went to see what it could be ; and he had no sooner viewed it closer, than he threw up his hands with rapture. " It is a seraph," he whispered, " a lovely seraph."

He fell on his knees, and gazed with ecstasy on its golden hair, and its tender skin, and cheeks like a peach. The hermit disturbed the lovely visitor. He opened wide two eyes, the colour of heaven; and seeing a strange figure kneeling over him, he cried piteously, " MUM-MA !

MUM-MA! " And the tears, began to run down his little cheeks.

Clement remembered he had left the door wide open, and he was driven to conclude that, owing to this negligence, some unfortunate creature of high or low degree had seized this opportunity to get rid of her child for ever.

" Now bless thee, bless thee, bless thee, sweet innocent, I would not change thee for e'en a cherub in heaven."

" I ont my mammy."

" Alas, sweet dove! I doubt I shall have to fill her place as best I may. Hast thou no daddy as well as mammy, sweet one? Well, my little dove, I must be father and mother to thee. What shall I do to pleasure thee, baby? Shall I tell thee a story?"

" I ikes tories," said the boy, clapping his hands.

He chanted a child's story in a sort of recitative. The boy listened with rapture.

" I ikes oo," said he. " Ot is oo? is oo a man?"

" Ay, little heart, and a great sinner to boot."

" I ikes great tingers. Ting one other tory."

But during this final performance, Nature suddenly held out her leaden sceptre over the youthful eyelids.

" I is not eepy," whined he very faintly, and succumbed.

Clement laid down his psaltery softly and began to rock his new treasure in his arms, and the child sank into a profound sleep upon his arm.

The next moment the moonlight burst into his cell, and with it, Margaret Brandt was down at his knee with a timorous hand upon his shoulder.

" GERARD, YOU DO NOT REJECT US. YOU CANNOT."

He stared and stared from the child to her, in throbbing amazement.

" Us ? " he gasped at last. And still his wonder-stricken eyes turned to and fro.

" What! " she cried, " doth not a father know his own child ? and a man of God, too ? Tis thine own flesh and blood thou holdest to thine heart."

Clement trembled. " What words are these," he stammered, " this angel mine ? "

" Whose else ? since he is mine."

Clement turned on the sleeping child, with a look beyond the power of the pen to describe, and trembled all over.

And lowered by fasts, and unnerved by solitude, the once strong man was hysterical, and nearly fainting.

Margaret was alarmed, but having experience, her pity was greater than her fear. " Nay, take not on so," she murmured soothingly, and put a gentle hand upon his brow. "Being a man of God, take courage, and say He sends thee this to comfort thee for what thou hast lost in me, being a priest, and parson of Gouda."

" I ? priest of Gouda ? Never! " murmured Clement in a faint voice; " I am a friar of St. Dominic : yet speak on, sweet music, tell me all that has happened thee, before we are parted again."

And she told him her tale, dwelling above all on the kindness to her of his parents ; and while she related her troubles, his hand stole to hers, and often she felt him wince and tremble with ire, and often press her hand, sympathizing with her in every vein.

" We have had a warning, Gerard. True friends like

you and me are rare, and they are mad to part, ere death divideth them."

"And that is true," said Clement, off his guard.

And then she would have him tell her what he had suffered for her, and many a sigh she heaved for him, and more than once she hid her face in her hands with terror at his perils, though past.

And to console him for all he had gone through, she kneeled down and put her arms under the little boy, and lifted him gently up. "Kiss him softly," she whispered. "'Tis all I can do to comfort thee till thou art in thy sweet manse yonder."

Clement shook his head.

"Gerard," said she, "I know you are wise and good. You must have a reason for what you are doing. Why are you buried alive?"

"Margaret, to escape temptation. My impious ire against those two had its root in the heart; that heart then I must deaden, and, Dei gratia, I shall. Shall I, a servant of Christ and of the Church, court temptation?"

"Let not you and I dispute," said she gently; "speak we of other things. Ask me of thy folk?"

"My sister Kate?"

"Alas!"

"What, hath ill befallen e'en that sweet lily?"

"Be calm, sweetheart, no harm hath her befallen." Then Margaret forced herself to be composed, and in a low, sweet, gentle voice she murmured to him thus: "My poor Gerard, Kate hath left her trouble behind her. She was took wi' a loss of all her pains. She lay painless best part of three days, a-sipping of heaven aforehand. And, my dear, when she was just parting, she asked for

Gerard's little boy,' and I brought him and set him on the bed, and the little thing behaved as peaceably as he does now. And she gave her little earthly treasures to her favourite's child—for you were her favourite—and her immortal jewel to God, and passed so sweetly we none of us knew justly when she left us. Well-a-day, well-a-day! "

Gerard wept.

" She hath not left her like on earth," he sobbed. " Oh, how the affections of earth curl softly round my heart! I cannot help it; God made them after all. Speak on, sweet Margaret; at thy voice the past rolls its tides back upon me ; the loves and the hopes of youth come fair and gliding into my dark cell, and darker bosom, on waves of memory and music."

" Gerard, I am loth to grieve you, but Kate cried a little when she first took ill at you not being there to close her eyes. You would not have been so cruel to your own flesh and blood knowingly, would you ? "

" Oh, no."

" Well, then, know that thy brother Sybrandt lies in my charge with a broken back, fruit of thy curse. He is very penitent; be yourself and forgive him this night."

" I have forgiven him long ago."

" Think you he can believe that from any mouth but yours ? Come ! he is but about two butts' length hence."

" So near ? Why, where ? "

" At Gouda manse. I took him there yestreen. And I said to myself, Gerard will thank me for taking Sybrandt to die under his roof; he will not grudge three footsteps to quiet a withered brother on his last bed."

Then Margaret showed hÿn, but in her own good straightforward Dutch, that his present life was only a higher kind of selfishness, spiritual egotism ; whereas a priest had no more right to care only for his own soul than only for his own body. That was not *his* path to heaven. " But," said she, " whoever yet lost his soul by saving the souls of others ! the Almighty loves him who thinks of others ; and when He shall see thee caring for the souls of the folk the duke hath put into thine hand, He will care ten times more for thy soul than He does now. Therefore, since the sheep committed to thy charge bleat for thee and cry, ' Oh, desert us no longer, but come to Gouda manse ;' since thy grey-haired mother watches for thee in dole and care ; since thy brother, withered by thy curse, awaits thy forgiveness and thy prayers for his soul, at Gouda manse—take thou up in thine arms the sweet bird wi' crest of gold that nestles to thy bosom, and give me thy hand."

" IT IS THE VOICE OF AN ANGEL !" cried Clement loudly.

" Then hearken it, and come forth to Gouda manse ! "
The battle was won.

A candle was burning in the vicar's parlour. " She is waking still," whispered Margaret.

" Beautiful! beautiful! " said Clement, and stopped to look at it.

They looked in, and there was Catherine kneeling on the hassock, with her " hours " before her.

She clasped her hands together and had half risen from her kneeling posture when the door burst open and Clement flung himself wildly on his knees at her knees,

with his arms out to embrace her. She uttered a cry such as only a mother could. " Ah ! my darling, my darling ! " and clung sobbing round his neck. And true it was, she saw neither a hermit, a priest, nor a monk, but just her child, lost, and despaired of, and in her arms. And after a little while Margaret came in, with wet eyes and cheeks, and they sat all three together, hand in hand, murmuring sweet and loving converse ; and he who sat in the middle was forced to eat a good nourishing meal, and at daybreak was packed off to a snowy bed, and by and by awoke, as from a hideous dream, friar and hermit no more, Clement no more, but Gerard Eliassoen, parson of Gouda.

CHAPTER XXXIII

HISTORY itself presents few things so strange as the footing on which Gerard and Margaret now lived for many years. United by present affection, past familiarity, and a marriage irregular but legal; separated by Holy Church, and living but a few miles from one another. Go when she would, it was always fete at Gouda manse, and she was received like a little queen.

In 1473 Sybrandt began to fail. When the poor soul found his end near, he begged Margaret might be sent for. She came at once, and almost with his last breath he sought once more that forgiveness she had long ago accorded. She remained by him till the last; and he died in the arms of the two true lovers he had parted for life.

In emergencies Gerard consulted Margaret, and she gave him advice that proved wonderfully sagacious. He had genius, but she had marvellous tact. And where affection came in and annihilated the woman's judgment, he stepped in his turn to her aid. Thus though she knew she was spoiling little Gerard, and Catherine was ruining him for life, she would not part with him, but kept him at home, and his abilities uncultivated. And there was a shrewd boy of nine years, instead of learning to work and obey, playing about and learning selfishness from their infinite unselfishness, and tyrannizing with a rod of iron over two women.

Gerard, after a considerable struggle, got little Gerard sent to the best school in Europe, kept by one Haaghe at Deventer : this was in 1477. Many tears were shed, but the great progress the boy made at that famous school reconciled Margaret in some degree.

Eight years had now passed thus, and Gerard, fairly compared with men in general, was happy.

He himself being now the right man in the right place this many years, loving his parishioners, and beloved by them, and occupied from morn till night in good works, recovered the natural cheerfulness of his disposition. He reconciled more enemies in ten years than his predecessors had done in three hundred ; and one of his manoeuvres in the peacemaking art was to make the quarrellers laugh at the cause of quarrel. So did he undermine the demon of discord. But independently of that, he really loved a harmless joke. He was a wonderful tamer of animals, squirrels, hares, fawns, etc. So, half in jest, a parishioner who had a mule supposed to be possessed with a devil gave it him and said,

"Tame this vagabone, parson, if ye can." Well, in about six months, Heaven knows how, he not only tamed Jack, but won his affections to such a degree, that Jack would come running to his whistle like a dog. One day, having taken shelter from a shower on the stone settle outside a certain public-house, he heard a toper inside, a stranger, boasting he could take more at a draught than any man in Gouda. He instantly marched in and said, "What, lads, do none of ye take him up for the honour of Gouda? Shall it be said that there came hither one from another parish a greater sot than any of us? Nay, then, I your parson do take him up. Go to, I'll find thee a parishioner shall drink more at a draught than thou."

A bet was made; Gerard whistled; in clattered Jack—for he was taught to come into a room with the utmost composure—and put his nose into his backer's hand.

"A pair of buckets!" shouted Gerard, "and let us see which of these two sons of asses can drink most at a draught."

On another occasion two farmers had a dispute whose hay was the best. Failing to convince each other, they said, "We'll ask parson"; for by this time he was their referee in every mortal thing.

"How lucky you thought of me!" said Gerard. "Why, I have got one staying with me who is the best judge of hay in Holland. Bring me a double handful a-piece."

So when they came, he had them into the parlour, and put each bundle on a chair. Then he whistled, and in walked Jack.

"Lord a mercy!" said one of the farmers.

" Jack," said the parson, in the tone of conversation, " just tell us which is the best hay of these two."

Jack sniffed them both, and made his choice directly, proving his sincerity by eating every morsel. The farmers slapped their thighs, and scratched their heads. " To think of we not thinking o' that." And they each sent Jack a truss. So Gerard got to be called the merry parson of Gouda.

Then the ambitious vicar must build almshouses for decayed true men in their old age close to the manse, that he might keep and feed them, as well as lodge them. And his money being gone, he asked Margaret for a few thousand bricks, and just took off his coat and turned builder ; and ae he had a good head, and the strength of a Hercules, with the zeal of an artist, up rose a couple of almshouses parson-built.

When the first home was finished, the question was who they should put into it ; and being fastidious over it like a new toy, there was much hesitation. But an old friend arrived in time to settle this question.

As Gerard was passing a public-house in Rotterdam one day, he heard a well-known voice. He looked up, and there was Denys of Burgundy, but sadly changed ; his beard stained with grey, and his clothes worn and ragged ; he had a cuirass still, and gauntlets, but a staff instead of an arbalest.

" Here I am lamed for life ; by what ? by the kick of a horse, and this night I know not where I shall lay my tired bones. I had a comrade once in these parts that would not have let me lie far from him ; but he turned priest and deserted his sweetheart, so 'tis not likely he **would** remember his comrade. And ten years play

sad havoc with our hearts, and limbs, and all." Poor Denys sighed, and Gerard's bowels yearned over him.

"What words are these?" he said, with a great gulp in his throat. "Who grudges a brave soldier supper and bed? Come home with me!"

"Much obliged, but I am no lover of priests."

"Nor I of soldiers; but what is supper and bed between two true men?"

"Not much to you, but something to me. I will come."

"In one hour," said Gerard, and went in high spirits to Margaret, and told her the treat in store, and she must come and share it. She must drive his mother in his little carriage up to the manse with all speed, and make ready an excellent supper.

Then he himself borrowed a cart, and drove Denys up rather slowly, to give the women time. On the road Denys found out this priest was a kind soul, so told him his trouble, and confessed his heart was pretty near broken. "The great use our stout hearts, and arms, and lives till we are worn out, and then fling us away like broken tools." He sighed deeply, and it cost Gerard a great struggle not to hug him then and there, and tell him.

They landed at the little house. It was as clean as a penny, the hearth blazing, and supper set.

Denys brightened up. "Is this your house, reverend sir?"

"Well, 'tis my work, and with these hands, but 'tis your house."

"Ah, no such luck," said Denys with a sigh.

"But I say ay," shouted Gerard. "And what is

more, I — " (gulp) " say—." (gulp) "COURAGE, CAMARADE, LE DIABLE EST MORT ! "

Denys started, and almost staggered. " Why, what ? " he stammered, " w—wh—who art thou, that bringest me back the merry words and merry days of my youth ? " and he was greatly agitated.

" My poor Denys, I am one whose face is changed, but nought else ; to my heart, dear, trusty comrade, to my heart." And he opened his arms, with the tears in his eyes. But Denys came close to him, and peered in his face, and devoured every feature ; and when he was sure it was really Gerard, he uttered a cry so vehement it brought the women running from the house, and fell upon Gerard's neck, and kissed him again and again, and sank on his knees, and laughed and sobbed with joy so terribly, that Gerard mourned his folly in doing dramas. But the women with their gentle soothing ways soon composed the brave fellow, and he sat smiling, and holding Margaret's hand and Gerard's. And they all supped together, and went to their beds with hearts warm as a toast ; and the broken soldier was at peace, and under his comrade's wing.

His natural gaiety returned, and he resumed his consigne after eight years' disuse, and hobbled about the place enlivening it ; but offended the parish mortally by calling the adored vicar comrade, and nothing but comrade.

CHAPTER XXXIV

LITTLE Gerard rejoiced both his parents' hearts by the extraordinary progress he made at Deventer.

.The last time Margaret returned from visiting him, she came to Gerard flushed with pride. " Oh, Gerard, he will be a great man one day, thanks to thy wisdom in taking him from us silly women. A great scholar came to see the school and judge the scholars, and didn't our Gerard stand up, and not a line in Horace or Terence could Zinthius cite but the boy would follow him with the rest. ' Why, 'tis a prodigy.' says that great scholar. ' Holland will hear of thee one day; and not Holland only, but all the world.' "

A month had elapsed after this, when, going on his daily round of visits to his poor, Gerard was told that the plague was at Deventer, carried thither by two sailors from Hamburg.

His heart turned cold within him. The fatal disease must have been there a long time before the tidings would reach Gouda. He sent a line by a messenger to Margaret, telling her that he was gone to fetch little Gerard to stay at the manse a little while, and would be back next day. And so he hoped she would not hear a word of the danger till it was all happily over. He went at once to the school. The boy had been taken away.

As he left the school he caught sight of Margaret's face at the window of a neighbouring house she always lodged at when she came to Deventer. He ran hastily to scold her and pack both her and the boy out of the place. To his surprise the servant told him with some hesitation that Margaret had been there, but was gone.

" Gone, woman ? " said Gerard indignantly, " art not ashamed to say so ? Why, I saw her but now at the window."

" Oh, if you saw her——"

A sweet voice above said, " Stay him not, let him enter." It was Margaret. Gerard ran up the stairs to her, and went to take her hand.

She drew back hastily.

He looked astounded.

" I am displeased," she said coldly. " What makes you here ? Know you not the plague is in the town ? "

" Ay, dear Margaret; and came straightway to take our boy away."

" What, think you I leave my boy unwatched ? I pay a trusty woman that notes every change in his cheek when I am not here, and lets me know."

" Where is he ? "

" In Rotterdam, I hope, ere this."

" Thank Heaven! And why are you not there ? "

" I am not fit for the journey ; never heed me; go you home on the instant; I'll follow. For shame of you to come here risking your precious life."

" It is not so precious as thine," said Gerard. " But let that pass ; we will go home together, and on the instant."

" Nay, I have some matter to do in the town. Go thou at once, and I will follow thee forthwith."

" Leave thee alone in a plague-stricken town ? To whom speak you, dear Margaret ? "

With this Gerard smiled on her sweetly. But there was no kind responsive glance. She looked cold, gloomy, and troubled. He sighed, and sat patiently down opposite her with his face all puzzled and saddened.

Presently she rose hastily, and tried to reach her bedroom, but on the way she staggered and swooned in

his arms. He laid her gently on the ground, and beat her cold hands, and ran to her bedroom, and fetched water, and sprinkled her pale face. She was a long time ere she revived, and when she did she found Gerard holding her hand, and bending over her with a look of infinite concern and tenderness.

" You will not leave me, then, Gerard ? " said she faintly. " Alas ! why do I ask ? Would I leave thee if thou wert— At least touch me not, and then I will let thee bide, and see the last of poor Margaret."

" Alas ! what mean these dark words, these wild and troubled looks ? " said Gerard, clasping her hands. " Where is thy pain ? What is thy trouble ? "

" The plague," she said calmly. Gerard uttered a cry of horror, and started to his feet; she read his thought. " Useless," said she quietly. " My nose hath bled ; none ever yet survived to whom that came along with the plague. Bring no fools hither to babble over the body they cannot save. I am but a woman ; I love not to be stared at."

And even with this a convulsion seized her, and she remained sensible but speechless a long time.

And now for the first time Gerard began to realize the frightful truth, and he ran wildly to and fro, and cried to Heaven for help. She raised herself on her arm, and set herself to quiet him.

" Ah, look not so, but be a man ; be a priest ! Waste not one precious minute over my body ; it is doomed ; but comfort my parting soul."

He went softly and brought her bed into the room, **and laid** her gently down. Then he prayed by her side the **prayers for** the dying, and she said Amen to each prayer.

Then for some hours she wardered, but when the fell disease had quite made sure of its prey, her mind cleared, and she begged Gerard to shrive her. " For oh, my conscience it is laden," she said sadly.

" Confess thy sins to me, my daughter : let there be no reserve."

Being gently pressed, she said she was to blame not to have done more good in the world. " I have just begun to do a little," she said, " and now I must go. But I repine not, since 'tis Heaven's will. Only I am so afeard thou wilt miss me." And at this she could not restrain her tears, though she tried hard.

Gerard struggled with his as well as he could ; and knowing her li*e of piety, purity, and charity, gave her full absolution. Then he put the crucifix in her hand, and while he consecrated the oil, bade her fix her mind on Him who died for her on the tree. •

She obeyed him with a look of confiding love and submission.

And he touched her eyes with the consecrated oil, and prayed aloud beside her.

Soon after she dozed. He watched beside her, more dead than alive himself.

When the day broke she awoke, and seemed to acquire some energy.

" Whiles I lived I went to Gouda but once or twice a week. It cost me not to go each day. Let me gain this by dying, to be always at dear Gouda—in the green kirkyard.

" Also they do say the spirit hovers where the body lies ; I would have my spirit hover near thee, and the kirkyard is not far from the manse. I am

so afraid some ill will happen thee, Margaret being gone."

" Oh, my love," cried Gerard, " if thou hast lived doubting of thy Gerard's heart, die not so ; for never was woman loved so tenderly as thou this ten years past."

" Calm thyself, dear one," said the dying woman. " Ah ! I have pined ten years for those sweet words. Hast said them, and this is the happiest hour of my life. I had to die to get them ; well, I grudge not the price."

From this moment a gentle complacency rested on her fading features. But she did not speak.

Then Gerard, who had loved her soul ~~<to~~ many years, feared lest she should expire with a mind too fixed on earthly affection. " Dearest lamb of all my fold, for whose soul I must answer, oh think not now of mortal love, but of His who died for thee on the tree. Oh, let thy last look be heavenwards, thy last word a word of prayer."

She turned on him one more sweet look of love and submission, and put her pretty hands together in a prayer like a child.

" Jesu ! "

This blessed word was her last. She lay with her eyes heavenwards, and her hands put together.

Gerard prayed fervently for her passing spirit. And when he had prayed a long time with his head averted, not to see her last breath, all seemed unnaturally still. He turned his head fearfully. It was so.

She was gone.

Nothing left him now but the earthly shell of as constant, pure, and loving a spirit as ever adorned the earth.

CHAPTER XXXV

ALL his thought was to take her away from strangers, and lay her in his own churchyard. That very evening a covered cart with one horse started for Gouda, and in it was a coffin, and a broken-hearted man lying with his arms and chin resting on it.

At noon the sorrowful cart came up to the manse, and there were full a score of parishioners collected with one little paltry trouble or another. They had missed the parson already. And when they saw what it was, and saw their healer so stricken down, they raised a loud wail of grief, and it roused him from his lethargy of woe, and he saw where he was, and their faces, and tried to speak to them. " Oh, my children ! my children ! " he cried; but choked with anguish, could say no more.

Yet the next day, spite of all remonstrances, he buried her himself, and read the service with a voice that only trembled now and then. Many tears fell upon her grave. And when the service ended he stayed there standing like a statue, and the people left the churchyard out of respect.

A fortnight after this a pale bowed figure entered the Dominican convent in the suburbs of Gouda, and sought speech with Brother Ambrose, who governed the convent as deputy, the prior having lately died, and his successor not having arrived.

The sick man was Gerard; come to end life as he began it. He entered as a novice, on probation ; but the truth was, he was a failing man, and knew it, and came there to die in peace. His manse was more than he could bear; it was too full of reminiscences of her.

Ambrose, who knew his value, and his sorrow, was not without a kindly hope of curing him, and restoring him to his parish. With this view he put him in a comfortable cell over the gateway.

But in a few days the new prior arrived, and proved a very Tartar. At first he was absorbed in curing abuses, and tightening the general discipline; but one day hearing the vicar of Gouda had entered the convent as a novice, he said, " 'Tis well; let him fkst give up his vicarage then, or go ; I'll no fat parsons in my house." The prior then sent for Gerard, and he went to him ; and the moment they saw one another they both started.

" Clement! "

" Jerome! "

Jerome was as morose as ever in his general character, but he had softened towards Gerard. What he heard in Gouda raised his feeble brother in his good opinion. " The Church had ever her holy but feeble servants," he said. " Now would I give ten years of my life to save thine. But I see it may not be. Die in peace."

And so it was that in a few days more Gerard lay a-dying in a frame of mind so holy and happy, that more than one aged saint was there to garner his dying words.

The two monks that watched with him till matins related that all through the night he broke out from time to time in praises and thanksgivings; only once

they said he wandered, and thought he saw her walking in green meadows with other spirits clad in white, and beckoning him ; and they all smiled and beckoned him.

He sent for all the monks who at that hour were keeping vigil. They came, and hovered like gentle spirits round him with holy words. Some prayed in silence for him with their faces touching the ground, others tenderly supported his head.

" Please you sweep the floor," said the dying Christian, in a voice to which all its clearness and force seemed supernaturally restored.

They instantly obeyed, not without a sentiment of awe and curiosity.

"^{w<} Make me * great cross with wood ashes."

They strewed the ashes in form of a great cross upon the floor.

" Now lay me down on it, for so will I die."

And they took him gently from his bed, and laid him on the cross of wood ashes.

" Shall we spread out thine arms, dear brother ? "

" Now God forbid ! Am I worthy of that ? "

Day broke ; and displayed his face cast upward in sileht rapture, and his hands together ; like Margaret's.

And just about the hour she died he spoke his last word in this world.

" Jesu! "

And even with that word—he fell asleep.

The next day Gerard was buried in Gouda churchyard. The monks followed him in procession from the convent. Jerome read the service. The grave was a deep one,

and at the bottom of it was a lead coffin. Poor Gerard's, light as a feather (so wasted was he), was lowered, and placed by the side of it.

After the service Jerome said a few words to the crowd of parishioners that had come to take the last look at their best friend. When he spoke of the virtues of the departed, loud wailing and weeping burst forth, and tears fell upon the coffin like rain.

The monks went home. Jerome collected them in the refectory and spoke to them thus : " We have this day laid a saint in the earth. The convent will keep his trentals, but will feast, not fast; for our good brother is freed from the burden of the flesh ; his labours are over, and he has entered into his joyful rest. 'Fix your eyes upon his life and conversation, and follow them an ye may : for he was a holy man."

Beati sunt qui in Domino moriuntur.

CHAPTER XXXVI

ELI and Catherine lived to a great age : lived so long, that both Gerard and Margaret grew to be dim memories. Giles also was longevous ; he went to the court of Bavaria, and was alive there at ninety, but had somehow turned into bones and leather, trumpet-toned.

Cornelis, free from all rivals, and forgiven long ago by his mother, who clung to him more and more **now** all her brood was scattered, waited and waited and waited **for** his parents' decease. But Catherine's shrewd word came true ; ere she and her mate wore out, this worthy rusted away. At sixty-five he lay dying **of** old age in his

mother's arms, a hale woman of eighty-six. He had lain unconscious a while, but came to himself, and seeing her near him, told her how he would transform the shop and premises as soon as they should be his. " Yes, my darling," said the poor old woman soothingly, and in another minute he was clay, and that clay was followed to the grave by all the feet whose shoes he had waited for.

Denys, broken-hearted at his comrade's death, was glad to return to Burgundy, and there a small pension the court allowed him kept him until unexpectedly he inherited a considerable sum from a relation. He was known in his native place for many years as a crusty old soldier, who could tell good stories of war when he chose.

Jerome, disgusted with northern laxity, retired to Italy, and having high connections became at seventy a mitred abbot. He put on the screw of discipline ; his monks revered and hated him. He ruled with iron rod ten years. And one night he died, alone ; for he had not found the way to a single heart. The Vulgate was on his pillow, and the crucifix in his hand, and on his lips something more like a smile than was ever seen there while he lived ; so that, methinks, at that awful hour he was not quite alone. The Master he served has many servants, and they have many minds, and now and then a faithful one will be a surly one, as it is in these our mortal mansions.

The yellow-haired laddie, Gerard Gerardson, belongs not to Fiction but to History. She has recorded his birth in other terms than mine. Over the tailor's house in the Brede Kirk Straet she has inscribed :—

" HÆC EST PARVA DOMUS NATUS QUÀ MAGNUSERASMUS."

First scholar and divine of his epoch, he was also the heaven-born dramatist of his century. Some of the best scenes in this new book are from his mediaeval pen, and illumine the pages where they come ; for the words of a genius so high as his are not born to die : they revive, they spring from the dust of great libraries ; they bud, they flower, they fruit, they seed, from generation to generation, and from age to age.

NOTES

P. 1, 1. 3. **Philip the Good**, as he was undeservedly called, was Duke of Burgundy. He had also inherited Flanders and Artois, usurped Brabant, and dispossessed Jacqueline, his ward, of Holland, Zealand, Hainault, and Friesland. His territory therefore extended from the foot of the Alps to the North Sea, and at this time Burgundy was at the height of its power.

1. 9. **curried leather** is leather dressed and coloured after tanning.

P. 2, 1. 31. St. Bavon : a hermit who lived in a hollow tree. The cathedral at Ghent is dedicated to him.

P. 3, 1. 18. **arabesques** : a type of decoration introduced into Europe by the Moors, who adopted it from Arabia.

1. 22. **the Van Eycks**. The brothers Van Eyck were the founders of the great Flemish school of painters. Hubert, the eldest, was born about 1366, travelled probably in the Mediterranean, and settled at Ghent early in the fifteenth century. Here he painted pictures for the Corporation. His masterpiece is a great polyptych (that is, a picture of many panels closed by folding doors), *The Adoration of the Lamb*, forming the altar-piece in Ghent Cathedral.

His brother, Jan, was about twenty years younger, and was Hubert's pupil. He was Court painter to Philip of Burgundy at Bruges from 1426, and is known to have visited England and Spain. He finished Hubert's polyptych and painted portraits, among them *The Man with the Pink*s.

Their pictures are remarkable for their unfading colours, and their wealth of detail. Together they perfected a new process of oil painting, with a light varnish and a colourless medium, which they mixed with their colours. The brilliance survives to this day.

The history of their sister Margaret is very uncertain. She is said by old writers to have been an excellent painter, but none of her works remain. She did not outlive both brothers, but died before Jan. Modern historians of art are inclined to doubt her existence as a painter.

P. 4, 1. 5. **vellum** : a fine whitened parchment, prepared for writing.

P. 4, 1. 9. **Terence**. He was born in 185 B.C., and came to Rome from Carthage as a slave, to become the most famous writer of Latin comedies.

1. 20. **orfèvrerie** : the craft of the jeweller and goldsmith, in which Holland was second only to Italy at the time.

1. 22. **tempera** : a coarse mode of painting in which the colours are mixed with a watery glue, white of egg, etc., chiefly used in scene painting and in staining paper for walls.

P. 5, 1. 13. **Stadthouse** : the town hall.

P. 6, 1. 13. **manchet** : a small loaf of fancy bread.

P. 11, 1. 28. **Vulgate** : the Latin version of the Bible, in those days known to very few outside the priesthood.

P. 14, 1. 16, 17. **exorcist**: one who is invested with power to cast out evil spirits, **acolyth**: acolyte, a novice in attendance on the priest.

P. 18, 1. 18. **catechumens** : those preparing for admission to the Church.

P. 22, 1. 28. **merks** : coins worth about 13s. 4d. each.

P. 25, 1. 3. **scapulary** : a short cloak covering the shoulders and sometimes drawn over the head like a cowl.

P. 29, 1. 12. **Constantinople**. The city which had been the eastern metropolis of Greek learning fell into the hands of the Turk,, who invaded Europe from the East, in 1453. The scholars fled with the treasures of learning into Greece and Italy, and so for the first time the wonders of ancient Greek literature were opened up to Western scholars, who flocked to the universities of Northern Italy where the language was taught.

P. 30. 1. 32. **betrothal** : in those days a binding ceremony, as it still is in Jewish law, of almost equal importance with the marriage rites. A betrothal before witnesses was actually a legal marriage, though an irregular one, and not complete in the eyes of the Church.

P. 44, 1. 9. **keep such a coil** : make such a fuss. 'Coil' is a very ancient word, perhaps of Celtic origin, meaning 'tumult' or 'trouble.'

P. 51, 1. 6. **soi-disant** : so-called.

P. 55, 1. 4. **the Meuse** : the river on an arm of whose estuary Rotterdam stands.

P. 63, 1. 30. **stirrup-cup** : a parting cup as a rider is in the saddle ready to set off.

P. 66, 1. 7. **refectory** : the dining-hall of a monastery.

1. 20. **Ganymede** : the page-boy and cup-bearer of Jove. It here means a pot-boy at an inn.

P. 67, 1. 20. **arbalest** : a cross-bow.

P. 67, 1. 23. **Courage** ! etc.: "Courage ! the devil is **dead**."

1. 27. **Il a bien fait**, etc.: "He has done wisely; **the** waer and the linen of this country would have made him so blr?k he would not have known himself."

1. 29. **Tiens** ! etc.: "Hullo ! here **is** someone who speaks French."

P. 73, 1. 22. **baillie** : alderman.

P. 80, 1. 30. **Remiremont** : a town in the Vosges Mountains on the eastern frontier of France, then Burgundian territory.

P. 81, 1. 16. **the Bastard of Burgundy** : Baldwin of Burgundy, illegitimate son of the Duke, Philip.

P. 82, 1. 11. **liever** : more willingly. *Lief' is derived from the old word for *dear.*

P. 87, 1. 15. **Hans Memling** : one of the best of Flemish artists. He was born between 1430 and 1435, and worked under some master-painter, possibly Van der Weyden but almost certainly not the Van K;cks, before settling at Bruges. He painted portraits, triptychs, and altar-pieces, and is remarkable for the exquisite small figures, of which there are sometimes as many as 150 in one picture. His two most famous paintings are *The Joys and Sorrows of the Virgin* and *Christ the Light of the World*.

P. 92, 1. 10. **the English Princess** : the Countess Charolois, Marie's mother, was dead. This was the second wife of Charles, the heir of Burgundy.

P. 94, 1. 19. **Augsburg** : one of the most celebrated cities of southern Germany. It was famous for its trade and its great merchant families, the Fuggers and the Weisels.

P. 95, 1. 17. **Brant vein and Schiedam** : brandy (*Branntwein* in German) and gin from Schiedam in Holland.

P. 96, 1. 3. **batzen** : coins of low value, stamped with the image of a bear.

1. 21. **psaltery** : a mediaeval stringed instrument, with a sounding-board parallel with the strings, and played by plucking the strings with the fingers or a metal instrument.

P. 97, 1. 30. **point** : a tie to keep up the long hose worn at the time.

P. 99, 1. 22. **glaive** : commonly used to mean a sword, but it is actually a weapon like a halberd fixed on a long shaft.

P. 101, 1. 29. **bifurcal** : two-pronged. Gerard means a fork, which was a novelty to him and was not in general use until late in the sixteenth century.

P. 102, 1. 13. **amaranth** : a genus of richly-coloured plants, among them Love-lies-bleeding, which were supposed never to fade.

P. 102, 1. 20. **hoy** : a large one-decked boat, with one mast.

1. 21. **muckle** : great. It is an old word which survives still in Scottish dialect.

P. 105, 1. 10. **Compostella** . the shrine of St. James at Compostella, in Spain, was a favourite goal of pilgrims.

P. 107, 1. 3. **hanaps** : goblets, a Norman word.

P. 111, 1. 2. **Fra Colonna** : the family of Colonna was an ancient one, and had become powerful in the twelfth century.

P. 114, 1. 18. **oriel window** : a window built out from a wall, forming a recess.

1. 22. **Plutarch's Lives** : Plutarch was a Greek writer who lived in the first century A.D., and wrote the lives of some of the most famous Romans and Greeks, of Alexander, Julius Caesar, and Coriolanus, for instance. There are many translations of them. On Thomas North's translation into English Shakespeare based his Roman plays.

P. 115, 1. 23. **Lactantius** : a writer*, of the fourth century A.D. about whom very little is known, though there are many manuscripts of his work, an introduction to Christianity written in very graceful Latin.

P. 116, 1. 12. **Opefa et impensis**, etc. " Printed at Subiaco, A.D. 1045, by the labour and at the cost of Sweynheim and Pannartz, pupils of John Fust." The earliest block printing dates from 1423, and the first printing by movable types from 1439. John Fust was one of the earliest master-printers, and his pupils Sweynheim and Pannartz took the process down into Italy, first to Subiaco, and in 1467 to Rome. By the end of the century there were presses in fifty-one towns, and the manuscript copiers like Gerard lost their livelihood.

P. 118, 1. 1. **sennight** : a week (i.e. seven nights).

P. 122, 1. 12. **pax vobiscum** : "Peace be with you"—the common form of greeting and farewell from a priest in those days.

P. 123, 1. 7. **Dominicans and Franciscans**. The Dominican Order was founded in 1216. The friars wore white robes and hoods and black cloaks, and were known as the Black Friars. They were supposed to devote their lives exclusively to teaching and preaching ; consequently many popes and cardinals and distinguished scholars sprang from the Order. The Franciscans or White Friars, from their habit, were also founded in the thirteenth century, and taught a life of strictest poverty.

By the fifteenth century, many had forgotten that St. Francis and St. Dominic had founded their Orders with the same ultimate ideals, and much jealousy and even hostility arose between the two Orders.

P. 125, 1. 11. **the trial by water**. Trial by ordeal was an appeal

to the judgment of God to declare the accused innocent or guilty. If he were innocent, God would perform a miracle to save him. It had many forms—by fire, by water, by poison, by battle—an . was a relic of very primitive customs. It began to die out in England when trial by jury was fully developed, and was abolished by Henry III, but it still persisted in other parts of Europe, especially in Church Courts.

P. 12b", 1. 30. **the University of Basle** : this was a new university founded in 1459 by Pope Pius II

P. 127, 1. 2. **Guarini** : he is better known as Veronese, because he was a native of Verona. He lived from 1370 to 1460, and taught Greek, which he had learnt at Constantinople, in the universities of Northern Italy.

P. 144, 1. 29. **Gouda** : a town about twelve miles north-east of Rotterdam.

P. 145, 1. 2. **cried**, that is, by the town crier.

P. 148, 1. 12. **cilice** : a garment made of rough haircloth, often worn by hermits to harden them to physical discomfort.

P. 152, 1. 17. Ir **Nomine**, etc. : " In the Name of God, I cast you out." Margaret was terrified by the Latin words, which were regarded with superstitious fear by the simple people.

P. 159, 1. 28. **Hours** : the book of services set for the appointed times in the day.

P. 100, 1. 18. **irregular but legal** : that is to say, not recognised by the Church, because Gerard was a priest, but complete in the eyes of the law, so that little Gerard could inherit his parents' property as a legitimate son.

P. 161, 1. 14. **Haaghe's School** : one of the schools founded by a famous educational Order, the Brethren of the Common Life. Many old manuscripts of books of the Bible and writings of the early fathers were collected there, and the place was renowned for its calligraphy, and later for its printed texts. Haaghe, a famous schoolmaster, was known also as Hegius.

P. 165, 1. 24. **consigne** : French, watchword.

P. 166, 1. 13. **the Plague** : throughout the fifteenth century Europe was frequently visited by epidemics of the plague, as violent as that of the Black Death in England the century before. Brussels and the neighbouring towns were devastated in 1485. Many cases of plague, like that of Margaret, are very quickly fatal.

P. 174, 1. 12. **trentals** : a set of thirty (cp. French, trente) successive daily masses for the dead.

1. 17. **Beati sunt . . .** : " Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."

P. 175, 1. 30. **Haec est . . .** : " This is the little house in which the great Erasmus was born." The Latin words form a hexameter.

P. 175, 1. 31. **Erasmus.** Desiderius Erasmus (the names are the Latin and Greek forms of Gerard) was ordained priest in '486, but could never be prevailed upon to become a monk. He came to England as a teacher twice and met Latimer, Grocyn, Linacre and Colet, and was the friend of Sir Thomas More. He was in 1509 Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity and Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge. He lived upon presents from wealthy ecclesiastics because he would not take fees from poor students. But he was restless, and left England to visit the famous universities of Europe, making Basle his centre, and passing back and forth between England, Flanders, and Basle. He would take no Church preferment, but lectured and wrote, striving to spread the new culture, until his death in 1536. Most famous are his *Colloquies* and his letters, but his theological works are very numerous. His style is vivid and picturesque, his opinions always reasonable and moderate in an age of growing religious controversy. He left his mark upon the education of every country which the Renaissance had reached.

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